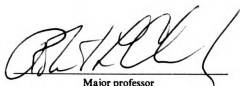26807052

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Denise Anne Mazur

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A STUDY OF THE STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PROCESS AT A PRIVATE COLLEGE

By

Denise Anne Mazur

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF THE STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PROCESS
AT A PRIVATE COLLEGE

By

Denise Anne Mazur

The purpose of this study was to observe the impact of
participation in the strategic management process in the
higher education setting. Findings are based on information
from members of the college community about their
perceptions and experiences over the course of a two year
strategic planning effort at a private college.

A qualitative research design was employed, which
included a questionnaire distributed to trustees, faculty,
staff, students and alumni and interviews of staff and
faculty. From this study the major findings were as
follows:

Overall, those who participated in the strategic
planning activities were more knowledgeable about the
institution's mission and the strategic planning
process. However, organizational behaviors both
affected the on-going culture and management of the
organization and were a major influence on the success
of the strategic planning process.

Participation in itself was not enough. The
quality of the participatory activities affected
knowledge and commitment. The portions of the
strategic planning process which were most successful

were those in which the college community perceived that they had strongly influenced the process outcomes.

The study also revealed that the success of the strategic planning process and strategic plan was hindered because the process was not well communicated to the college community. In addition, the effectiveness of the strategic planning process was mitigated because the roles of process leader and executive leader were held by one person, the President, and these two roles conflicted.

Also, the study determined that defining a strategic vision as part of the strategic planning effort was an important and necessary part of the process.

Recommendations made in this study drew on the realization that participation should be part of the strategic management process to the greatest extent possible. Perhaps most important, however, the participatory activities must be conducted so that members of the organization perceive that they had the opportunity to participate if they chose and that their involvement had impact on the products of the process. Also, to clarify the focus of the strategic goals, definition of an institutional vision should be a formal step in the strategic management process.

Dedicated to my parents, Genevieve and Walter Mazur

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CHAPTER I

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Purpose

One of the characteristics of strategic management is broad-based participation. How significant is participation in strategic planning? What is the role of participation in building organizational support and ownership of strategic goals?

This study seeks to answer these questions by observing strategic management in a college setting and focusing on the impact of participation in the strategic planning process. Particularly, this study examines the links between participation and knowledge of strategic planning, and between participation and commitment to strategic goals.

Statement of the Problem

<u>Definition of Strategic Management</u>

To begin, it is necessary to define some terms which are used in this study. In this study, the term "strategic management" means a broad, overall managerial approach and all of the aspects which are included in it. The term "strategic planning" refers to the portion of the strategic management approach in which institutional goals are formulated. These goals are labeled "strategic goals."

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One definition of strategic management is "a process for developing and implementing a shared vision of success" (Loomis & Sharpe, 1990). In another definition, Pearce and Robinson (1988) describe strategic management as "the set of decisions and actions resulting in formulation and implementation of strategies designed to achieve the objectives of an organization" (p. 6). From another viewpoint, Kotler and Murphy (1981) state that strategic management encompasses "the process of developing and maintaining a strategic fit between the organization and its changing marketing opportunities" (p.471).

All definitions of strategic management assert that it is primarily concerned with interactive relationships with the environment. It is a dynamic process in which organizations take actions designed to lead to responses from the external environment (Lorange, 1984).

Strategic Management Model

Organizations differ in the processes they use to formulate and direct their strategic management activities. Strategic management models vary in formality and level of detail. However, the basic components of the strategic management model are similar in all models. (See for example, Below, Morrisey, & Acomb, 1987; Cope, 1981; King & Cleland, 1978; Pearce & Robinson, 1988; Steeples, 1988; Steiner; 1979; Wheelen & Hunger, 1988; and others).

Eight critical areas comprise the strategic management model. The strategic management model as shown in Figure 1 is this researcher's attempt to visually display the eight components. The model shows how the components are related and the sequence of the process. (See Figure 1).

The description by Pearce and Robinson (1988) of the process of strategic management is similar to most strategic management models. The process steps are:

1. Determining the mission of the organization, including broad statements about its purpose, philosophy and goals.

2. Developing the organization's profile by analyzing internal conditions and capabilities.

3. Assessing the organization's external environment, in terms of both competitive aspects and general contextual factors.

4. Identifying the desired options derived from the organizational profile and assessment of the external environment in light of the organization's mission.

5. Strategic analysis and choice of long-term goals and long-term strategies needed to achieve the desired options.

6. Developing annual objectives and short-term strategies compatible with long-term objectives and grand strategies.

7. Implementing objectives and strategies based on budgeted resource allocations and emphasizing the matching of tasks, people, structures, technologies and reward systems.

8. Reviewing and evaluating the strategic management process as a basis for control and as input for future decision making.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT MODEL
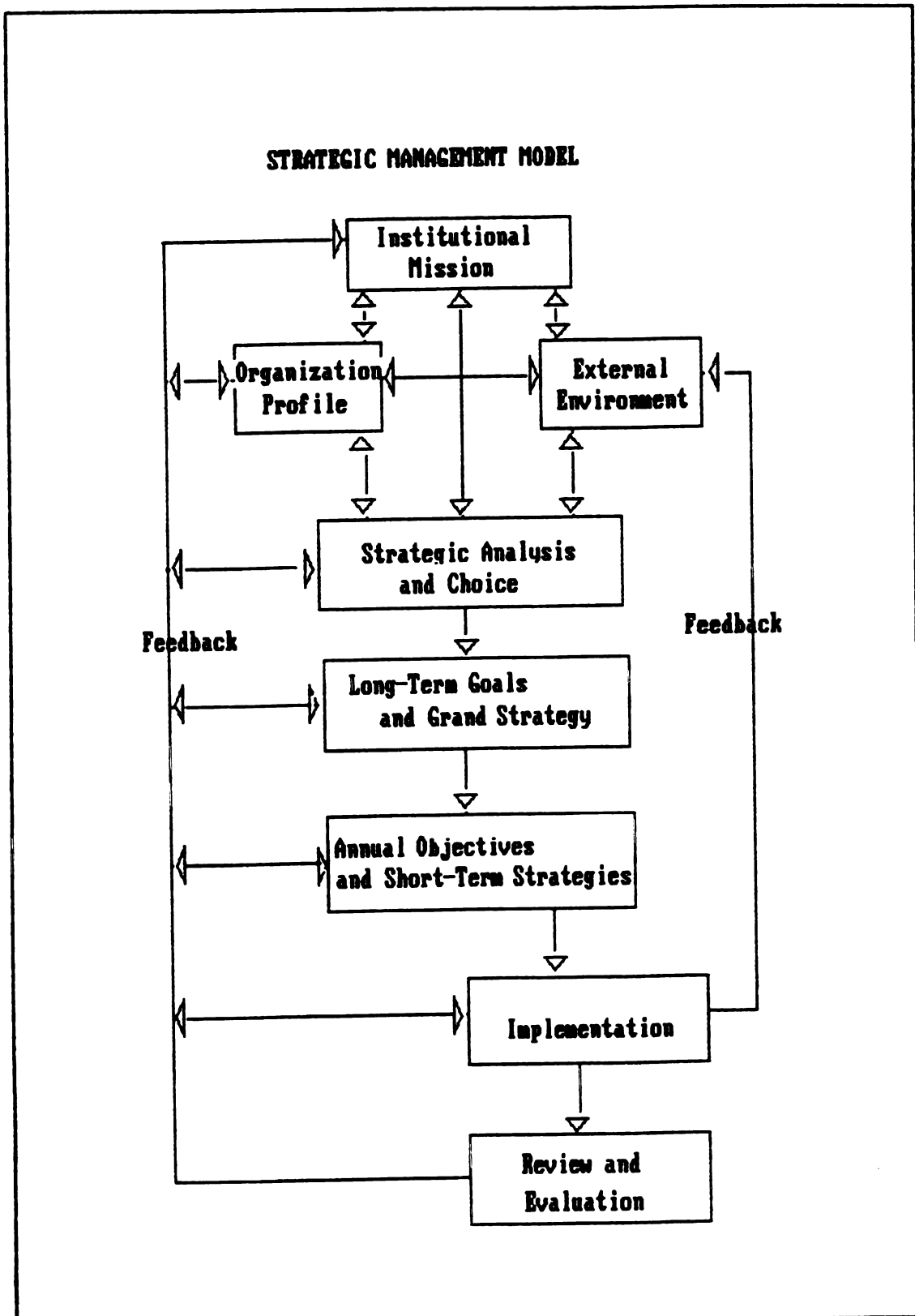
Figure 1

The model also includes the concept of feedback. Feedback has two dimensions. First, in the overall view, feedback indicates if the actions taken in the implementation phase do, in fact, have impact on the external environment. Second, at the process level, feedback provides the means for continuously encouraging participation (Wheelen & Hunger, 1990).

Although it is not identified as a formal step in the strategic management model, the development of a vision statement may also be considered as part of the strategic management process. In strategic management, the process is directed at achieving outcomes. An institutional vision statement is a way to visually or verbally express this direction.

A vision statement describes where the organization wants to be at a specific future point. It does not restate the mission, but incorporates the mission as a statement of the present. It serves to inspire and focus the efforts of the organization. Cope (1987) states "vision provides conceptual glue and momentum, and illuminates shared purposes". As a informal process step in the strategic management process, a vision statement is developed concurrently with the strategic goals.

As a concept, development of a vision statement receives uneven treatment in scholarly literature. Some scholars do not discuss the vision statement as a discrete

concept, but address the idea of defining a focus throughout the strategic management process. Others refer to the concept of a vision statement, but as an informal activity in the strategic management process.

Strategic Management in the Higher Education Setting

Strategic management is a management tool which has wide acceptance in the business world (Gray, 1986). Colleges and universities are also adapting and using strategic management principles as a management process.

Many essential characteristics are common to both business-oriented organizations and educational institutions. These characteristics are the basis from which organizations become involved in strategic management. They include:

a) the need to interact meaningfully with the environment

b) the requirement to secure funds to carry out the organization's mission and to meet the needs of the client base, and

c) the need to establish a mission, scope of services and to set goals (Cope, 1981).

However, there are also clear differences between the business world and academe which require that the strategic management approach be made suitable to the education environment. Cope (1981) points out that colleges typically have many objectives and that achieving consensus on priorities is difficult. He states that the decision-making process in colleges is different from that in business,

because the constituency base is broader, with many interest groups desiring to influence decisions, and the lines of authority are more blended.

Cope (1981) defines the decision making elements which are unique to the college setting as having the following characteristics:

(1) political considerations may dominate;
(2) decision making is more likely incremental;
(3) latitude in policy may be narrower;
(4) qualitative evaluation tools are blunter; and
(5) participative decision making among professionals is the likely norm (p. 19).

Issues Management in Higher Education

In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s a number of events, economic, sociological, technical and political in nature, had major impact on higher education in the United States. It is likely that these events will continue to influence higher education long into the future. Apps (1988) identifies the events influencing higher education today as including:

changes in student enrollments;
curriculum shifts;
competition among colleges and universities and with other providers;
potential for cooperation;
new ideas about teaching and learning, including the influence of technology;
financial considerations (p. 35).

Although higher education institutions are different from other organizations in some ways, the principles of strategic management have been perceived as a means to effectively manage environmental issues while simultaneously

directing the on-going activities of the institution (Kotler & Murphy, 1981; Orwig, 1980).

Some principles of strategic management as defined by the business world transfer quite easily to the educational setting. But some aspects of strategic management models do not correspond to the organization and issues in educational settings. For these areas, educators find themselves adapting and creating alternative processes to fit the needs of educational institutions.

The relationship between a higher education institution's strategic management process and how the organization adapts to strategic management has not been examined. This research effort focuses on one aspect of that relationship, the impact of participation.

The literature on strategic management identifies participation as an important part of the process. Furthermore, the literature reports that knowledge and commitment are promoted by participatory activities. For example, Cope (1987) states: "participants develop a wider and deeper working knowledge." He explains that when the "participating actors" (faculty, administrators and so on) are involved in the process, "the result is a strategic framework consistent with the realities and values of the participants" (p. 40).

In another example, Pearce and Robinson (1988) describe participation as a benefit of strategic management. They

assert that employees are more likely to accept decisions developed from group participation than decisions handed down to them, because they have a greater understanding of the alternative options. Furthermore, "involvement of employees in strategy formulation improves their understanding of the productivity-reward relationship in every strategic plan and thus heightens their motivation" (p. 9).

Knowledge and commitment are facets which indicate "ownership" or organizational adaptation. The literature describes participation as a way to enhance knowledge and commitment. The purpose of this research effort was to learn whether those who participated in the strategic planning process at one college demonstrated greater knowledge of and commitment to the organization's strategic mission and goals than did those who did not.

Design of the Study

Research Questions

The research questions guiding the study were exploratory. Initially, I was interested in what the people at the college thought about the strategic planning process and what they perceived as significant aspects. Did it make a difference to the results of the strategic planning process, if they participated in the process?

As the study progressed and more data was acquired, new questions emerged. Later questions focused on issues

related to participation. Why were there differences in knowledge and commitment in different parts of the process?

In observing strategic management in an organization, both process and outcomes can be studied, as separate but connected aspects. This study is limited to how people reacted to the process of strategic management as it occurred in a college setting.

Originally, it was intended that the development of the mission would be tracked as a thread running throughout the strategic planning process. Mission development is one of the first activities in the strategic planning process. Also, it is recognized as a foundational and continuously referenced aspect of strategic management. The mission has an important effect on organizational performance (Wheelen & Hunger, 1990). Thus, one can observe its development as a way of observing the strategic process as a whole.

However, as the data gathering progressed, it became apparent that while the mission development was a continuous thread throughout the process as anticipated, other topics or "threads" were equally significant to observe.

Background of the Study

Research Site

The research site was a private college located in a medium sized city in Midwestern United States. College X, as it will be called, is a religion-associated, liberal arts

institution with an enrollment of about 3000 full time and
part time students at the time of the study.

A distinguishing feature of College X is that since the
early 1970s, the institution has provided substantial educa-
tional opportunities for non-traditional as well as for
traditional students. While the College does continue to
maintain a strong and specific religious dimension, this
facet is not an exclusive viewpoint. The college has been
careful to generate an image as an institution where
students from all backgrounds are encouraged to enroll, and
the student body is representative of a mix of all ages and
backgrounds.

Strategic Management at College X

Historically, before 1987, planning at College X
consisted of annual budget planning and some periodic long
range planning efforts. In the last few years leading up to
1987, the College did not engage in formal planning at all.

In 1987, the newly appointed President of College X
launched a strategic planning effort. The two year process
resulted in the first completed planning cycle which
included a strategic plan and full or partial implementation
of some of the strategic goals. Strategic management
approaches to integrate the process into all aspects of
college administration were also initiated. For example,
strategic goals were reviewed as part of the Annual Report.

The strategic planning process at College X included

the basic components as described in literature on strategic management. The process included developing a mission, recognizing environment impacts and assessing the internal conditions. Strategic goals and objectives were set and implementation efforts were underway. Evaluation activities were instituted.

Since the college was working toward incorporating a strategic management approach into administrative processes, this institution was a suitable setting at which to conduct research aimed at contributing to the body of knowledge regarding strategic management.

Subjects

Success of strategic management and the inherent strategic planning process is dependent on involvement of members of the organization. For example, Below, Morrisey & Acomb (1987) define the strategic management process as "the on-going involvement of operating executives and managers" (p.3). Steiner (1979) describes strategic planning as a process which includes political, social and organizational aspects. Newman (1986) states that "to move from strategic planning to concrete results strategy must permeate the behavior of many people" (p.9:2).

All of the subjects for the study were members of the College X community. They were chosen to represent those groups that are common to all higher education institutions. The groups can be categorized as key stakeholders within the

college community and include faculty, staff, students, trustees and alumni.

Research Methodology

Qualitative Research

The qualitative method of inquiry was selected for the project because of compatibility between qualitative research and the purposes of the project. The goal of qualitative research can be described as follows: "to develop an understanding of the meaning which particular events have for the observed and then to place those meanings within a larger theoretical framework provided by the researcher" (Sears, Marshall, Moyer & Otis-Wilborn, 1986, p. 1).

Tierney (1988) notes that the qualitative approach "stresses the need to unearth the symbols and discourses that guide the creation and maintenance of organizational reality" and that the researcher "interprets the organization as a web of signification that is collectively spun by the organization's participants" (p. 6). The interpretation is accomplished through "rich depiction of detail, portrayal of process in an active mode, and attention to the perspectives of those studied" (Firestone, 1987, p. 20).

Research Tools

The sources for data consisted of a questionnaire followed by unstructured interviews, which were supplemented

with review of pertinent written documents and observation of the day to day life at the college.

The questionnaire was given to a random sample of individuals representing each of five groups: faculty, staff, students, trustees and alumni. The individuals included both those who had and those who had not participated in strategic planning activities at the college.

As a part of the qualitative approach, the questionnaire was used to provide information to build understanding about the meaning of particular events in the organization to individuals in that setting. The questionnaire collected information about the subjects' general knowledge of the organizational mission and strategic planning at College X.

By including all groups within the college community, an overall base of data pertaining to perceptions of strategic management at the college was obtained. In addition, responses to the questionnaire helped guide the content of interview questions.

Interviews were conducted with individuals representing groups actively involved in administration of the college: the administrative staff and faculty. Ten individuals were interviewed. Identity of all interviewees was confidential, except as being identified by representative group or function and whether or not the individual participated in strategic management activities at the college.

Consistent with the features of qualitative research, the interviews served to help develop a full, rich description of individuals' perspectives on a particular event. The purpose of the interviews was to gather information about college members' perceptions of the strategic planning process in terms of their knowledge of and commitment to the mission and goals of the strategic plan. Interview questions reflected these concerns and also reflected the results of the questionnaires.

Written documents helped explain the structural and procedural aspects of the organization. The researcher's participation in the routine of the college helped build an understanding of the cultural dimensions. These activities helped round out the understandings gained from the questionnaire and interviews.

Limitations

The scope of the study was limited to the strategic planning portion of the strategic management process and did not include assessment of the quality of the strategic plans or outcomes. In addition, individuals involved in the study were limited to those people who interacted directly with the college: trustees, staff, faculty, students and alumni.

Pilot Study

The methodology was pilot tested in two studies. The first study consisted of telephone interviews with students in the Graduate Management Program at College X. The

purpose of the study was to acquire student opinion about a published format for an adult student orientation program. The second study consisted of personal interviews with adults enrolled in graduate degree programs at various institutions. The purpose of the second study was to observe how adults managed the time demands of combining typical adult responsibilities and attending college. In both cases, the methodology included conducting and recording interviews, analyzing the content of the interviews, and writing observations and conclusions.

Importance of the Study

In the business world, the theoretical concepts of strategic management have been widely studied. However, higher education institutions are more recent in adopting the principles of strategic management. The implications for strategic management in the higher education setting are still emerging. Previous studies include many aspects of strategic management and planning in the college setting, but do not focus on the relationship between participation and the fostering of knowledge and commitment.

The qualitative approach is a method that acknowledges the research participants' world as a network of cultural constructions, social relationships, and historical influences, and is based in values. Analysis and rich description of the commonalities and contradictions that

operate in an organization contribute to a better
understanding of the reality of the participants.

In this study, the focus was the relationship between
individuals' involvement in the institution's strategic
planning process and their knowledge and commitment to the
mission and goals of the strategic plan. Knowledge about
these relationships leads the way to change and improvement
in strategic management in the higher education environment.

Summary

Knowledge about strategic management in the field of
higher education is still developing. The link between
participation and support and ownership is not well
understood. This study observes perceptions of strategic
management, seeking information about the relationship
between participation in the strategic planning process and
knowledge and commitment.

CHAPTER II

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Regarding the Design of the Research

The first point to note is that the research studies participation by gathering data about two topics: knowledge and commitment. According to Webster's Dictionary, knowledge is defined as "the fact or condition of knowing something with familiarity gained through experience or association." Knowledge, or lack of knowledge can be observed in several ways, both directly and indirectly.

The second topic, commitment, is defined by Webster's as "the state of being obligated or emotionally impelled." Another way of expressing the concept of commitment is the colloquial expression "ownership". Commitment is an abstract quality, considered by social psychologists to be an aspect of the concept of attitude (Fishbein, 1967). Attitudes are observed by indirect means, such as observing verbal expression or overt behavior (Zikmund, 1984).

The second point is that the approach to the research questions was influenced by the phenomenological perspective of qualitative research. Weber (1949) describes qualitative research as *wirklichkeitswissenschaft*--"an empirical science of concrete reality." He states, "our aim is the

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understanding of the characteristic uniqueness of the reality in which we move" (Weber, 1949, p. 72). Phenomenology is concerned with understanding human behavior from the participant's own frame of reference (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975).

The idea of studying an event from the participant's point of view, at the location of the event, is addressed as the concept of theoretical sampling by Glaser and Strauss. They state that the purpose of the one institution sample is to provide data from which to "discover categories and their properties, and to suggest the interrelationships into a theory" (in Denzin, 1967, p. 106).

In this way, one may consider one educational institution as a microcosm containing all the representative, or generic parts of any higher education institution. Studying one institution, College X, provided the opportunity to pursue this approach.

Thirdly, at the onset of the research effort, it seemed valuable to have a "thread" to follow in studying people's perceptions of the process. For this reason, the subject of the college mission was selected, because it is a foundation piece in the strategic planning process.

However, in the course of conducting the research, it became evident that other facets of the process were equally valuable in learning about the strategic planning process at College X. Observations about knowledge of and commitment

to the college mission were noted, but in the end, became one of several observations about the strategic planning process.

Methodology

The qualitative methodology offered the opportunity to study broad themes and to learn what the issues were to the people involved. There is a substantial body of literature about qualitative research (e.g. Blumer 1970; Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Cusick, 1983; Firestone, 1987; Gold, 1970; Jacob, 1988; Tierney, 1988 and Weber, 1949).

Basically, qualitative research employs procedures which produce descriptive data such as people's own written or spoken words and observable behavior. The underlying assumption is "classes of events are better understood through intensive examination of carefully selected particular cases" (Lundsteen, 1986, p. 7).

In this method, data analysis is inductive, discovering patterns emerging from the data. The final product is a thick description of meaning conveyed from the subjects' viewpoints.

The qualitative research project begins with a search for categories, starting with general research questions, rather than the quantitative approach of testing a hypothesis (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975 and Tierney, 1988). Hypotheses are developed from the data as they emerge and

form an interpretative framework to explain the event
(Sears, Marshall, Moyer & Wilborn, 1986).

The major techniques of qualitative research are
participant observation and personal documents. Participant
observation is a period of social interaction between the
researcher and the subjects. During this period, data is
collected unobtrusively and systematically analyzed.

Personal documents encompass those materials in which
people reveal in their own words their view of their life,
an event in it or other aspects from their own perspective.
Unstructured interviews are included in this category.

One way to describe qualitative research is to contrast
it with quantitative research. Quantitative research, as
part of the positivist paradigm, is value impartial. Using
the study of organizations as an example, the quantitative
methodology assumes that organizations exist as rational
entities. Quantitative research assumes that the researcher
understands subjects' responses "to the extent that other
researchers would reach the same conclusion if they studied
the same data" (Tierney, 1988, p. 5). Questions asked and
conclusions reached are value neutral. The researcher is
deliberately and specifically detached from the research
context. Also, a quantitative researcher assumes that
others who read the findings understand the meanings as the
researcher says they are.

By contrast, qualitative research is based on the assumption that organizations are a social fabrication which include the history of the organization, the environmental context and the influence of the members of the organization. Organizational values are a critical part of understanding the nature of the organizational reality.

Qualitative research takes the form of an interpretative study. Initially, a qualitative study focuses on broad questions and specific details evolve during the course of the study. In studies about organizations, such as this study, the researcher interprets the organization as a complex mesh of culture, values, beliefs and actions of the collective body of the organization's participants.

The researcher explains the interpretation through a "rich depiction" of concrete details and "strategic comparison" (Firestone, 1987, p. 19). This description is infused with the researcher's "value-conditioned interest" (Weber, 1949, p. 76.)

In addition, the qualitative methods incorporate flexibility. The researcher is continually adapting to emerging data because data are constantly analyzed: while the data are being gathered and after the data gathering is completed. It is expected that conflicting themes will be discovered as part of the on-going process (Martin, 1988; Tierney, 1988). Firestone (1987) notes that the "criteria

for good qualitative analysis include searching for competing explanation and negative evidence" (p.19). Qualitative research seeks to expose contradictions to more closely describe the reality as perceived by the participants as opposed to isolating a single point of view.

This study follows the principles of Symbolic Interactionism, a major approach in qualitative research. Symbolic Interaction is the concept that social reality is created by the participants of the event and that a true understanding of the reality comes from participating in the event (Blumer, 1970; Bogdan & Taylor 1975; Cusick, 1983). In this theory, people are constantly defining their reality, based on "input" from the environment around them. This reality is best observed by being part of it.

This study can also be described as having an ethnographic slant. Ethnography is rooted in anthropological research. Ethnographic studies observe human behavior in its natural setting and examine carefully selected particular cases, typically employing multiple techniques of data collection (Bjork, 1984; Jacob, 1988; Lundsteen, 1986).

Research Tools

The research tools used to gather data consisted of a questionnaire followed by unstructured interviews, all of which was supplemented with some review of pertinent written

documents and observation of the day to day life at the
college.

Questionnaires

Probably the major value of the questionnaire as a
research tool is the economy of being able to gather
information in quantity without taking up the time of the
researcher. In addition, a questionnaire can provide an
opportunity to elicit information that a respondent might be
reluctant to give in a face to face situation, or might not
have time to formulate in an on-going interview. The
questionnaire format is efficiently summarized and analyzed
by computer, so that the researcher can move quickly to the
stages of interpretation and explanation.

There are many sources on the techniques of
constructing, administering and analyzing questionnaires.
Development of a questionnaire involves a number of
technical considerations such as reducing errors in the form
of unintentional biases and other imperfections in design.
Sources used to assist in producing the questionnaire in
this study included Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Campbell, 1967;
Deming, 1970; and Richardson, Dohrenwend, & Klein, 1965.

Interviews

The interview is a good research tool for gathering
information from participants about a past event which was
undocumented. Richardson, Dohrenwend and Klein (1965)
describe the interview as a valuable research tool for "the

study of motives, attitudes, skills, opinions, health--or of anything else that is 'inside' an individual and is not directly reflected in observable behavior or appearance" (p. 19).

As a research tool, the interview offers the researcher a way to dig deep into issues with the respondents. During an interview, question responses can be enhanced as there is the opportunity to clarify ambiguous responses, to probe inconsistent responses, and to ask for amplification. Also, the researcher has the opportunity to check his or her own interpretation of the data with that of the respondents (Payne, 1951; Richardson, Dohrenwend, & Klein, 1965).

The ability to take advantage of the interview as a research tool, is of course, tied to the skill used in planning and conducting it. There are many sources of information on the various aspects of interviewing, such as interview types, interview techniques, and the role of the interviewer. Selected examples include Bogdan & Taylor (1975); Garrett (1972); Payne (1951); Richardson, Dohrenwend, & Klein (1965); and Zikmund (1984).

Participant Observation and Review of Written Documents

Participant observation is a research tool which helps the researcher discover important issues and identify individuals who are likely to have relevant information. Also, the organizational culture of the setting is more easily noted by an outside observer: "a respondent who, as a

member of the culture, is likely to believe his customs are universal and hence, neither novel nor interesting to the investigator" (Richardson, Dohrenwend & Klein, 1965, p. 10).

Written documents provide information about past events. They supplied supplemental information and sometimes, information overlooked or withheld by respondents.

Procedures

Research Site

The identification of a potential research site was based on appropriateness of the selected institution to the topic and on feasibility for conducting the study. College X was selected for two reasons:

> First, this particular college had a history, over the past twenty years, of innovative programming. It was among the first institutions in the U.S. to offer programs designed for the needs of adult students and to integrate those programs with traditional-age student programs. This suggested that the institution was capable of and had a precedent for pro-active management, one of the hallmarks of strategic management.

> Second, the college had, within the last two years, initiated a strategic planning process and was engaged in steps to integrate strategic management into the day to day administration of the college.

In Bogdan and Taylor (1975) pre-field work activities directed at gaining access to conduct the study at a selected site may include obtaining approval from a "gatekeeper" (p.30). Initially, the concept of a study of a strategic planning process at a college and the question of whether the administration at College X would be receptive

to such a study conducted at that institution was informally discussed with some of the college's administrators and the President of the college.

With an encouraging response at that point, the project was presented formally to the President of the college. The project proposal was received with enthusiasm and the President permitted full access to the institution to conduct the study.

During the period of data gathering, the President resigned. At that time, the project was presented to the Acting President, who also encouraged the project.

The Questionnaire

The data collection began with a questionnaire to collect preliminary data. The purpose of the questionnaire was to identify significant issues and determine some of the broad perceptions of strategic planning held by members of the college community. Also, the information was used in developing broad questions for the interviews which followed.

The population sample for the questionnaire included each group of "stakeholders" from the college: trustees, staff, faculty, students and alumni. To preserve confidentiality, participants were selected to represent each of the five groups, but not identified individually. The sample included both individuals who had participated in

the strategic planning process and those who had not.

Questionnaires were distributed as follows:

> a) Questionnaires were sent to alumni and trustees. All of the trustees and a random sample of alumni were sent the questionnaire.

> b) Questionnaires were collected from students by selecting three classroom settings which represented a cross-section of the college's students and administering the questionnaire during class time of each one.

> c) For staff and faculty, questionnaires were distributed directly to individuals who returned the questionnaire to an on-site location.

The questionnaire consisted of ten Likert-type attitudinal items. The format was selected because it is simple to administer and considered to be reliable (Allport, 1967; Edwards & Kenney, 1967; Tittle & Hill, 1970; Zikmund, 1984).

The questionnaire consisted of ten statements including seven items regarding the strategic planning process and three items related to the college's mission. In addition, respondents were asked to indicate if they had participated in the college's strategic planning process. (See Appendix A).

The questionnaire items were developed from work by Meredith, Cope and Lenning (1987), Pearce and Robinson, (1988), Cope (1987) and the official mission statement of the college.

Of 140 questionnaires which were distributed, 110 completed questionnaires were collected, a response rate of

seventy-nine percent. Among the groups, one hundred percent each of the Faculty, Staff and Students who were asked to complete a questionnaire complied with the request. For the groups who were mailed questionnaires, the response rates were forty-seven percent for Trustees and forty-three percent for Alumni. The questionnaire responses were coded and organized for computer entry. Data were analyzed at the descriptive level following methodology described in Weiss, (1968); Zikmund, (1984) and others.

Data were analyzed in terms of summary information, by the total sample and by variables. Means were computed for overall total scores and for breakdowns by variables such as group, participation or non-participation, and questionnaire items. Frequencies and percentage distributions were calculated.

Interviews

Interview participants were selected from faculty, staff and administrators. Ten individuals participated in interviews, of eleven who were asked. Half of the respondents had participated in the strategic planning process and half had not.

For purposes of confidentiality, the identity of the individuals was masked. However, since the study was qualitative, information concerning the background and setting of the study was included in the analysis. This

information identifies the organizational position held by the individuals.

The purpose of the interviews was to gather information about college members' perceptions of the strategic planning process in terms of their knowledge of and commitment to the mission and goals of the strategic plan. Interview questions reflected these concerns and also reflected hypotheses that emerged from the results of the questionnaire.

Interview respondents were contacted in person or by telephone and asked to participate in the study. The interviews were conducted on campus. Each interview was about one hour in length.

The interview format was unstructured, beginning with broad open-ended questions with more specific questions and probes interjected during the interview as the topics surfaced. This procedure combined features of both the structured and unstructured interview (Richardson, Dohrenwend, & Klein, 1965; Zikmund, 1984; Payne, 1951).

Each interview was conducted using a question guide (See Appendix B). The guide consisted of open-ended questions directed toward collecting information from each respondent regarding (a) general knowledge about organizational mission; (b) his or her perception of the mission of the college; (c) general knowledge of strategic planning theory; and (d) his or her perception of strategic

planning at that college. Questions were modified as necessary to ensure clarity of meaning to the respondent or to obtain a more explicit response.

The interviews were tape recorded with permission of the respondents. One interview was not taped, at the request of the respondent, and in that case, detailed notes were taken by the researcher. Complete transcripts were prepared by the researcher.

To maintain confidentiality, the tapes were coded so the actual transcriptions do not include the name of the interviewee. At the conclusion of the data gathering period, letters of appreciation were sent to all of the interview participants.

Coding and analysis of data proceeded, using techniques adapted from Bogdan and Taylor (1975), Ross (1988), Tierney, (1988) and others. Data from the interviews were handled in the following manner:

> First, the complete set of interviews was read through once to gain an overall impression of the data and to begin to note broad themes emerging from the data.

> Next, the interviews were read again and this time categories were noted and listed.

> This process yielded a list of categories which were studied and organized by themes, frequencies, similarities, patterns and discrepancies.

> Copies of the interviews were cut into coded units in order to look at similar pieces of data together.

> Notes were taken during the process to record emerging hypotheses.

Finally, the magnitude of each of the patterns or discrepancies was closely reviewed.

The analysis of the interviews, the questionnaire data, and other collected data were studied as a whole.

Participant Observation and Review of Written Documents

Since many of the questionnaires were distributed to respondents on a "walk-in basis," there were several opportunities to engage in informal conversations with members of the college community and to generally observe the day to day workings of the college. Also, the phone or personal contacts leading to interview appointments provided a rich source of dialogue with college members. These conversations and observations were noted in a journal and reviewed with the other data.

In addition, during the data gathering, people referred to various official files and other written materials which were related to or impacted the strategic planning process. These documents were reviewed and observations about them were included in the data analysis.

Validity and Reliability

The interview data, together with the questionnaire data, notes from participant observation and study of written documents, provided the basis for a thorough and systematic analysis.

Triangulation

The use of multiple methods, called triangulation, helps establish validity and reliability. The intent of

triangulation is to corroborate the research analysis by using a combination of data gathering methods (Bjork, 1984; Lundsteen, 1986; Schoen & Warner, 1983; Tierney, 1988).

Multiple sources of data are useful for verifying information about the same event from different participants. Also, examining differing kinds of data contributes to confidence in the analysis, supporting validity of the research. In this study, data were gathered from five groups of people (staff, faculty, students, alumni and trustees) and through the use of the multiple tools of a preliminary questionnaire, an unstructured interview and supplemental participant observation and review of written documents.

Reliability and validity are enhanced by rich descriptions and selected comparison, which is accomplished by including quotes from interviews, descriptions of organizational aspects of the setting, and excerpts from the history of the organization illustrating the organizational culture in action (Firestone, 1987). In this way, "the qualitative study provides the reader with a depiction in enough detail to show that the author's conclusion makes sense" (Firestone, 1987, p.19).

Fostering Validity and Reliability

During the research effort, methods for fostering validity and reliability were employed as discussed by Campbell (1967); Cusick, 1983; Deming, 1970; Firestone,

1988; Ross, 1988; Zikmund, 1984 and others and included as follows:

As a validity check, the questionnaire was reviewed by individuals familiar with survey development techniques. Also, the questionnaire was pretested to improve reliability of the instrument.

The questionnaire was administered on a trial basis to associates, who were similar in makeup to the sample groups. Comments from the testers assisted in clarifying some questions and in some cases rearranging the question sequence or eliminating bias aspects. Coding and analysis followed established procedures.

The interview questions were grounded upon questionnaire data and on notes from site observations and study of written documents.

Validity checks were utilized during the interviews by use of certain question formats and observation of the manner of responses. Examples include questioning inconsistent responses, being aware of the respondent's level of knowledge of the topic and the respondent's motives for participating in the interview, and using probe questions to elicit more information (Garrett, 1972; Payne, 1951; Richardson, Dohrenwend & Klein, 1965).

Interviews were taped and then transcribed as a reliability measure. Transcripts of the interviews were coded and analyzed for both reoccurring and conflicting themes.

The results were compared to theories developed from data previously analyzed, looking for contradictions and inconsistencies.

Summary

The research design of this study is characterized as a qualitative approach, including different forms of observation of participants in the setting. The qualitative method provided the opportunity to gather data about participation in strategic planning from the point of view

of those involved in the strategic planning process and then
to form an interpretative framework to explain the findings.

CHAPTER III

Review of Related Literature

Strategic Management in Higher Education

Colleges and universities first turned to strategic management in the late 1970s. A crisis provoked recognition of the need to plan and manage so that both long-term and short-term results could be consistently achieved.

Since the late 1970s, higher education has been characterized by highly charged issues involving large-scale changes in education. The tremendous growth of colleges and universities in the 1960s and 1970s gave way to declining enrollments and fiscal cutbacks.

By the early 1980s, the issues facing higher education were staggering: retrenchment, constricting finances, competition with business and other colleges for students, physical plant needs, demographic changes, shifts in curriculum, changing student clientele, rapid growth of technology, aging faculty, competition for new faculty, and increasing outside control.

About the same time in the business world, the principles and practices of strategic management were rapidly becoming a widely adopted management tool. Basically, as a management model, strategic planning

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incorporates and expands on components of previous generations of planning models and focuses on optimizing the organization's resources in a competitive scenario (Steiner, 1979; Winstead & Ruff, 1986).

Today, many scholars and practitioners view strategic management as a broad, overall managerial planning approach. Research conducted by Gluck, Kaufman and Walleck (1982), found that organizations evolved through four developmental stages in managerial planning, with the most advanced stage being strategic management:

Stage 1: Budget planning - schedule and meet a budget
Stage 2: Forecast based planning - predict the future
Stage 3: Strategic planning - externally oriented planning
Stage 4: Strategic management - create the future (p. 1:25).

In this view, strategic planning is the goal formulation phase and strategic management is the most advanced, comprehensive level of planning (Pearce & Robinson, 1988).

Like the business world, many educational institutions are evolving through stages of managerial planning. Institutional budget planning and forecasting efforts of previous years had provided educators a basis for strategic management activities (Norris & Poulton, 1987).

Early Directions

Strategic management in higher education is a field where much of the literature is experiential and intuitive examination of practice. Also, scholars in this field have drawn on concepts from disciplines such as organizational

behavior and business management to support their ideas. In recent years, as the concept of strategic management has evolved from a "new" idea to an accepted management model in higher education, more research testing the propositions is occurring.

The early literature on strategic management in higher education primarily focuses on strategic planning. Although Gluck, Kaufman and Walleck (1982) described the difference between strategic management and strategic planning in 1982, literature of the early 1980s referred exclusively to strategic planning. It was not until the late 1980s that strategic management began to appear in the literature, in terminology and as a concept.

In the literature of the early 1980s. the emphasis is on conveying the value of strategic planning to higher education administrators and introducing models of the strategic planning process. The literature centered on the basics, describing the components of the process, benefits to the organization, planning pitfalls, and how to do strategic planning.

Proponents of strategic planning stress its qualities of flexibility, environmental awareness, entrepreneurship, participation and development of direction. Strategic planning is described as a method responding to the need for higher education to adapt in order to survive constrained

resources and in the case of many colleges, a questionable future.

Keller (1983), in making a particularly strong case for the necessity of strategic planning as a way to help educational institutions manage the drastic changes and fierce competition, draws up a description of strategic planning as it applies to the academic situation. He distinguishes strategic planning from long range and other planning models by identifying six key characteristics:

1. Strategic planning is proactive rather than reactive.

2. Strategic planning focuses on staying in step with the changing environment.

3. Strategy development is competitive in orientation.

4. Strategic planning concentrates on decisions, not plans.

5. The process is participatory; both politically and psychologically sensitive.

6. Long term survival of the institution as a whole is the first priority. (Keller, 1983).

Proactive Stance

As a management system, strategic planning has been compared to long range planning. In this comparison, long range planning is described as a closed system which assumes a static future, whereas strategic planning is an open system, which assumes organizations are dynamic and constantly changing (Cope, 1981).

Long range planning is focused on predictions based on present conditions. Strategic planning is proactive, a

process of setting goals describing where the organization wishes to be strategically in relation to the competition and then to devise action plans to get there. Analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the institution, refining the unique mission of the institution and analysis of the external forces that might affect the institution's ability to fulfill its mission are all part of the process (Sapp, 1987).

Strategic planning is described as a way of planning that moves beyond both the subjective limits of incrementalism and the over-emphasis on quantitative tools of management science. Incrementalism, which is a highly political process of small steps of progress, lacks the rational, analytical component incorporated in strategic planning. Management science techniques may overlook intuitive thinking, which is part of strategic planning (Jean, Posey & Smith, 1984; Johnson, 1987; and Keller, 1983).

Awareness of the Changing Environment

The situation analysis is an assessment of the internal and external environments. It is a major concept in the strategic management process and has received considerable attention in higher education. There are numerous articles and chapters on techniques for environmental scanning, forecasting, analysis of competition, and assessment of resources (See for example, Morrison, Renfro & Boucher,

1984). These writings reflect a focus on the part of higher
education scholars, to a major phase of the strategic
management process, the environmental assessment. The
environmental assessment is the set of activities in which
the institution identifies external opportunities and
threats and internal strengths and weaknesses (Wheelen and
Hunger, 1990).

Competitive Focus

The forward focus and competitive, market orientation
of strategic planning has been emphasized by Kotler and
Murphy (1981), Orwig (1980) and others. Compared to
operational planning, or day to day planning, strategic
planning is characterized as institutional-wide strategy
development tied to changing marketing opportunities.
Opportunities and threats identified in the situation
analysis relate to a comparative position with other
institutions. Goals are formed, based on the environmental
analysis, and implementation plans are developed (Kotler &
Murphy, 1981).

Kotler and Fox (1985) present the marketing orientation
as essential to the present needs of higher education, in
terms of serving the long-term interests of both consumers
and society. They suggest that strategic planning benefits
institutions by providing a tool to:

1) assist in achieving greater success in fulfilling
the institution's mission by identifying the best
mission and improving the match between mission and
students,

2) better satisfying the needs of students, donors and others by stressing measurement and satisfaction of those consumer needs,

3) improving the ability to attract marketing resources, including students, employees, volunteers, donations, grants and other support, and

4) improving efficiency in marketing activities, including management and coordination of program development, pricing, communication and outreach.

Decision Based

Lelong and Shirley (1984); Orwig (1980) and others identify decision areas relevant to colleges and universities which are part of the strategic planning process. Lelong and Shirley (1984) state that six major strategic decision areas should be addressed:

1. Institutional mission and purpose.

2. Clientele to be served

3. Goals and outcomes for student learning, societal contributions, and institutional development.

4. Program mix.

5. Geographic service area.

6. Comparative advantage, the unique feature of the institution.

Participative Process

In the literature of the early 1980s, discussions about participation in the strategic planning process referred to convincing influential members of the college to support and become involved in strategic planning activities. Discussions about cultural adaptation and political negotiations focus on building acceptance of strategic

planning as a management tool (Keller, 1983; Kotler &
Murphy, 1981).

It is interesting to note that the traditional autonomy
of higher education institutions remains controversial, as
Thomas (1980) noted:

> To many academics who truly inhabit ivory towers the
> idea of any accountability--except to themselves--or of
> any corporate strategy may appear to be anathema. Yet
> that very attitude is a policy. What is now being
> challenged is whether it is a viable one for survival
> in the real world that universities have done so much
> to create (p.70).

While the early literature on strategic planning in
higher education centers on introducing and selling
strategic planning, it also includes technical management
science techniques, common to the business world, to support
the strategic management process. These management science
support tools, designed for the business world, in many
cases, had not been used in the academic setting. Examples
include Trend Impact Analysis (Morrison, Renfro & Boucher,
1984); Force Field Analysis; Probability Diffusion Matrix
(Cope, 1981); SBU positioning (Cope, 1987); and BCG
Growth/Share Portfolio Matrix (Keller, 1983; Kotler &
Murphy, 1981). Educational institutions have had to work
through both assimilating the overall system of strategic
planning and sorting through and working with technical
tools originally developed for the business world (Norris &
Poulton, 1987).

Long-Term Survival

In sum, strategic planning was widely acclaimed as the managerial approach which was badly needed for the long-term survival of educational institutions. As Sullivan (1981) noted: "...the financing of education, the conduct of education, and the activities of education are in fact moving the university into the marketplace; a business challenge requiring an effective managerial stance" (p. 154).

A number of higher education institutions initiated strategic planning efforts in the early and middle 1980s. McMillan (1988) reports that in a 1988 survey by Peat Marwick Main and Company, eighty percent of 713 colleges and universities polled said they use some form of strategic planning. Also, she reports that from 1980 to 1988, membership in the Society for College and University Planning rose 30 percent, from 1400 to 1852 members.

Present Development

As more colleges and universities began to work with the strategic planning process, the concerns shifted to improving and refining their efforts and moving farther on the continuum to true strategic management. In later literature, strategic planning centers on process components: a thorough situation analysis, assessment of the competition, evaluation of strategic choices and allocation of resources.

The definition of strategic management as a concept which is broader than strategic planning continues to develop. Cope (1987) expands the Gluck, Kaufman and Walleck definition of strategic management, adding the dimension of institutional vision. He states that in strategic management, the process is vision driven, the strategic decision-making framework is well established, and the culture and value system of the organization are supportive (Gluck, Kaufman and Walleck, 1982; Cope, 1987).

Since the middle 1980s, in the field of higher education, the literature on strategic management and strategic planning reflects a shift in emphasis. The dominant themes are related to implementation issues and focus on topics such as the presidential leadership role, broad-based ownership of strategic goals, and the process as a dynamic function. Also, the literature begins to include more empirical studies. (See for examples, Below, Morrisey, & Acomb, 1987; Cope, 1987; McMillan, 1988; Meredith, 1990; Sapp, 1987; Shirley, 1988; and Steeples, 1988).

The Role of Leadership

In a study conducted at the University of Colorado, Boulder, Meredith (1990) surveyed 133 individuals involved in institutional planning. He found that the top five indicators of successful planning, in rank order are:

        CEO support
        Excellent communication
        Leadership
        Participative process
        Good Data Analysis Support

Of the top five indicators, CEO support and leadership are

first and third. Furthermore, the remaining three

indicators are processes and support services that the CEO

should be especially instrumental in generating and

supporting.

Importance of Vision

The role of leadership is critical to the success of

planning and implementation. The roles of the CEO, or

college president are several and complex. As top manager,

the CEO initiates the planning effort, oversees training of

planners, conveys the value of the effort, manages the

process in terms of keeping everyone "on track" to keep the

process moving (Below, Morrisey & Acomb, 1987).

But more critical, as a leader, the CEO inspires,

nurtures, and stimulates the birth of a shared vision.

Then, it is the leader's job to keep that shared vision in

front of everyone, constantly, as the driving force behind

the institution's activities. It is the dimension of a

shared vision as the foundation for planning and

implementation that defines true strategic management (Cope,

1987; Gluck, Kaufman & Walleck, 1982).

Clugston (1986) conducted a study at the University of

Minnesota of the relationship between strategic choices and

ranking of environmental factors. He found the "environment" that mattered most to faculty is the quality of the institution, in areas such as teaching, scholarship, research publications and graduate student placements. He observed that despite "the fragmentation of academia and its anarchic properties" there is significant agreement on the primary importance of institutional quality. He concluded that "what is needed is the capacity and resolve of decision-makers to agree on what quality is and to build it" (Clugston, 1986, p. 29).

Chan (1990) ties leadership to the responsibility for accomplishing change in institutional culture, as a prerequisite for effective implementation of strategic goals. She adds that, for change to be effective in organizations, three components must change together: the culture, the identity and the mission. Success of the task of accomplishing change in the three components rests on good leadership. Again, the concept of a shared vision is addressed. Chan (1990) proposes that, in addition to engaging in change management techniques such as creating readiness, overcoming resistance and institutionalizing change, the leader must articulate a vision.

Broad-Based Ownership of Strategic Goals

Pearce and Robinson (1988) state that in order to make a strategy truly operational, the strategy must be "institutionalized", that is, to permeate the day to day

life of the organization (p. 357). Shirley (1987) states: "Without meaningful involvement, it is impossible to achieve ownership of the decisions being made as a result of planning" (p.19).

Lack of involvement of key constituencies was a major weakness of planning in the 70s and 80s (Loomis and Sharpe, 1990). Faculty participation is a particularly difficult aspect, given the long-standing tradition of faculty autonomy and academic freedom (Chan, 1987; McMillan, 1988). Faculty members have acknowledged that although strategic planning has given them a stronger voice in campus issues, they don't always support the goals (McMillan, 1988).

Encouraging ownership of strategic goals is also facilitated by the institution's reward system. Chan (1987) reports that a study conducted at DePaul University indicated that "faculty interest in participation was focused at the organizational level where direct and tangible rewards are delivered"(p. 24). In colleges and universities, meaningful rewards are those which contribute to the academic culture and sense of community. These rewards or incentives are those which relate to improved work conditions and faculty vitality (Chan 1987).

After initial attempts at strategic planning, it became apparent that mission development, analysis of the internal and external environment, goal setting and action plan development resulted in a plan, but not necessarily in

implementation. Douchette, Richardson and Fenske (1985) propose that the planning process also requires an interface to link the abstract ideas of the mission and goals to concrete actions.

Donnithorne (1990) proposes that the dilemma of a gap between the qualitative, abstract goals and the quantitative, concrete actions can be resolved in the long run, "not through rational analysis, but through the non-rational operation of institutional politics over time" (p. 4).

The interface is essentially a political process, involving negotiations with the institution's various constituencies, who might agree on the mission and goals, but usually have very different priorities for allocation of scarce resources to achieve them (Douchette, Richardson & Fenske, 1985).

In issues such as allocation of scarce resources, the problems erupt from differing points of views. Historically, educators have unsuccessfully tried to resolve these issues by introducing new data. However, political negotiation, which involves activities which attempt to influence decisions, is more effective (Donnithorne, 1990).

Keller and McCreery (1990) describe the process as one in which people move from emotional positions, to begin to mix reason and emotions and then gradually move to changing their views. Ultimately, Keller (1990) states, "People move

on from the decision into the implementation." The
political interface works slowly and subtlety over years of
time. The organizational purpose and structure of the
institution change correspondingly and slowly.

As educators have become more skilled in strategic
management, they realized that some elements of the
strategic planning process also functioned as support to the
implementation process, as well as a development tool for
determining institutional direction. For example, the
function of a mission statement has expanded.

In the early 1980s, many institutions, for the first
time, dealt with constructing a mission that stated the
fundamental, unique purpose that set the institution apart
from others of its type and identified the scope of its
operations in product and market terms (Pearce and Robinson,
1988). Then, in the later 1980s, researchers began to
explore the relationship between the mission and achievement
of strategic goals.

For example, Douchette, Richardson and Fenske (1985)
conducted a study in which constituency groups ranked the
mission statements of the Arizona State Board, the State
Community College system and internal operating missions.
In their conclusions, they propose that a mission statement
about specific activities of the college rather than
general, non-controversial goal statements would provide the
first bridge, or interface between broad, abstract goals and

concrete actions. Supporting this interpretation of the function of a mission, Chan (1987) comments that if the mission doesn't articulate the teaching, research and service expectations and the unique institutional characteristics, or if sufficient deliberations were not provided, faculty lose interest in strategic planning.

All strategic management literature stresses communication as vital to a successful process. Communication is the most mentioned "word of advice" in the writing of institutional planners. In the college and university setting, methods for increasing communication have unique outlets. For example, in higher education, one channel for enhancing participation is strengthening participation through the faculty governance body (Chan 1987).

Kark (1990), Sapp (1987) and others stress the need to communicate the process and the products developed from the process. Also, Kark stated: "it is important to have consensus if you really expect to implement a plan" (Presentation, 1990). He also cautioned that it is up to the CEO to communicate especially those goals affecting quality of life and infrastructure aesthetics.

Process as a Dynamic Function

Although the literature of strategic management has always addressed its dynamic quality, institutional planners have found that it is slow going convincing people.

Organizations need to learn to recognize types of change. Nadler and Tushman (1989) distinguish between incremental changes, those designed to improve efficiency and effectiveness within the existing value system, and strategic changes, those that have an impact on the value system, structure and culture of the organization.

In early literature, scholars sometimes suggested that strategic planning might require a change in the organizational culture. Since then, research and practical experience have demonstrated that organizational change through change in the culture is essential for successful planning (Loomis & Sharpe, 1990; Pearce & Robinson, 1988).

Linking all levels of planning, institution-wide, campus-wide, and department and program levels, promotes the strategic management as a dynamic function (Steeples, 1988). Present day planners have expressed concern with finding ways to link budget to planning and other links between planning and implementation (Meredith, 1990). Improving linkage between budget and planning is important for the success of strategic planning.

Some colleges and universities link portions of the institution's budget to strategic goals (Steeples, 1988). These budget portions, called strategic budgets are employed simultaneously with operating budgets. The standard focus of an operating budget is control and evaluation of business as usual. A strategic budget specifies resources for

programs and activities necessary to meet strategic goals (Pearce and Robinson, 1988). Another variation tried by some institutions, is an incentive plan, in which institutional-wide competition for extra funds is based on proposed plans for activities which support the strategic goals (Steeples, 1988).

The role of leadership and vision, the essentiality of ownership of strategic goals and the dynamic qualities of the strategic planning process have been studied by researchers and strategic planning experts. Little information, however, exists on precisely how participation best supports these and other aspects of the strategic planning process. No one has studied the relationship between organizational participation and increasing knowledge of and commitment to the strategic mission and goals.

Summary

In the field of higher education, strategic management is evolving as a management tool. Early concerns focused on introducing and initiating strategic planning activities. Presently, some educators are focusing on working more successfully with strategic management concepts. Efforts are focused on issues surrounding the role of leadership, gaining broad-based ownership and infusing strategic management concepts as a dynamic process in the organization. At this point, little is known regarding the

link between participation and fostering knowledge and commitment in strategic planning efforts.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

Review of Qualitative Research Technique

In qualitative research, data analysis is an ongoing process. Researchers note themes, formulate ideas, and raise new questions continuously throughout the study. The research effort begins with broad questions and areas of interest. As the study progresses, the researcher refines some ideas and discards others.

It is typical for the researcher to ask broad questions to encourage subjects to talk about areas related to the initial questions. But the researcher also asks specific questions to refine and clarify the body of information, as it builds.

Therefore, at the conclusion of the data gathering period, the researcher has some ideas that have emerged during that time. In the data analysis stage, the researcher refines the ideas, searches for supporting and conflicting themes and unearths new ideas.

Similar to a kaleidoscope with patterns changing when the ring is turned, certain themes only reveal themselves when the data are viewed in a certain manner. For this reason, the data were examined in as many ways as possible

in order to understand their significance. Indeed, the
collected data provided a rich mosaic of information in
which some unexpected and contrasting themes were found.

The Data

The analysis of the data revealed interesting
observations about strategic management at College X. But
the data also revealed themes which affected the day to day
culture and management of the organization as well as being
major influences on the strategic planning process.

The questionnaire data supported the initial premise
that those who participated in the process are more
knowledgeable than those who did not participate. From the
interview data, it was revealed that the strategic planning
process is influenced by organizational forces in the areas
of organizational values, leadership and communication. The
effects of these forces impacted individuals' commitment to
the strategic goals.

Questionnaire Data

The initial research question centered on two premises:
those individuals who were involved in the strategic
planning process at College X (a) had a better grasp of the
concepts of strategic planning and (b) were more committed
to the goals of the strategic plan. The questionnaire
focused on gathering initial information about knowledge of
strategic planning at the college.

Participation as an Indicator of Knowledge

The questionnaire data supported the first premise as generally true. Four of the five subgroups who participated in the strategic planning activities had higher scores regarding knowledge overall of the mission and strategic planning than those who did not participate (See Table I). Although the questionnaire was limited in scope, it demonstrates certain inclinations, at least in an individual's expressed thoughts, regarding knowledge about the college's mission and strategic planning process.

Within the subgroups there were inconsistencies regarding participation and knowledge. For the subgroup "Staff" those who participated did not have higher scores overall or for questions about strategic planning. For the subgroup "Alumni" those who participated did not have higher scores regarding knowledge of the mission (See Table I).

Related Observations

For the questionnaire items pertaining to the mission, the higher the score, the closer the response was in agreement with the official mission of the college. For this category, the Trustees had the highest score and the Students had the lowest score (See Table I).

For the questionnaire items related to strategic planning, the higher the score, the closer the response indicated a perception of agreement with strategic planning concepts as defined by experts and espoused by college

Table I

QUESTIONNAIRE
MEANS FOR ALL GROUPS BY TOPIC AND BY PARTICIPATION

	All Groups N=110	Trustee N=20	Faculty N=22	Staff N=21	Student N=30	Alumni N=17
TOTAL						
Overall	22.89	26.55	22.23	22.67	21.33	22.47
Participated	24.14	27.33	22.69	22.50	26.00	26.50
Did Not Part.	22.06	25.38	21.56	23.20	21.17	21.93
MISSION						
Overall	7.95	9.35	8.41	8.52	6.20	8.12
Participated	8.75	9.67	8.46	8.56	7.00	7.50
Did Not Part.	7.42	8.88	8.33	8.40	6.17	8.20
STRAT.PLANNING						
Overall	14.94	17.20	13.82	14.14	15.13	14.35
Participated	15.39	17.67	14.23	13.94	19.00	19.00
Did Not Part.	14.64	16.50	13.22	14.80	15.00	13.73

administrators. For the strategic planning items, again, the Trustee group scored highest. Faculty and Staff had the lowest scores (See Table I).

Of the five constituency groups, the Trustees most strongly perceived strategic planning and the mission of the college as it was intended to be. Why was this so? A look at the roster of Trustees reveals that two-thirds of the membership are top executives from the local community: individuals in leadership roles, responsible for corporate level planning. These individuals might have melded their own experiences in corporate level planning with their perceptions of planning at the college. Also, the distance between the Trustees and the day to day affairs of the college might have resulted in a more idealized perception

than the perception of those in the trenches--the staff, faculty and students.

The Student group had the weakest score on perceiving the mission as it was intended, but were second highest in perception of strategic planning. It was anticipated that the Student group might score lower overall than other groups, because students were only nominally involved in the strategic planning activities. Yet, for the strategic planning items, the Student group scored above average, even though only a few students participated in the strategic planning process. However, for the mission questions, the Student group had the lowest score of all groups. The Students indicated a perception of the college's mission that is different from that of the faculty and administrators.

Faculty and Staff had the weakest scores on perceptions of strategic planning. Of those who completed the questionnaire, fifty-nine percent of Faculty and seventy-six percent of Staff participated in the strategic planning activities (See Appendix C). Plus, the Strategic Plan was disseminated college-wide and process activities reached throughout the campus. Therefore, the lower scores were not likely a result of lack of involvement, but had some other cause.

New Questions

The questionnaire data suggested that participation in the strategic planning process activities might have influenced knowledge on the part of some of those who participated, but with mixed results for others. At that point, as is typical with qualitative research, new questions emerged:

Why would participation produce mixed results and not a consistently high level of scores reflecting knowledge?

Did participation also produce mixed results for commitment?

These questions were pursued in the interviews.

Interview Data

Having learned from the questionnaire that participation got mixed results, the researcher used the interviews as an opportunity to try to learn more about why there were differences in knowledge and commitment among those who participated. Also, the interviews generated information about commitment to the strategic mission and goals.

The interviews provided data that indicated that the strategic planning process was inseparable from the overall organizational behavior of the institution. Themes that emerged from the interviews centered on issues in organizational values, leadership, communication. These themes also indicated issues which are unique to planning in an educational institution. (See Appendix D).

Description of the Findings

Regarding the interview data, the use of open-ended questions in the interviews resulted in data which formed a conversational style of narrative. Often, an interviewee related a story or incident to explain his or her point. However, the strategy used in describing the data was to convey the viewpoint of the majority of the interviewees. For this reason, the researcher decided not to include long quotations, but to provide composite statements reflecting the perspectives of the interviewees. The interview data, along with information from the questionnaires, journal notes from observations of the setting and review of planning documents were organized into the following description of the strategic planning process as it occurred at College X.

Organizational Forces

The most significant observation regarding the strategic management approach at College X was the influence on the process of the organizational forces of organizational values, leadership and communication.

Paradoxes In Organizational Values

A striking characteristic of College X was the tendency toward paradoxes in organizational values.

Unity/Autonomy Paradox

The most frequently observed example was the unity/autonomy paradox. This is the paradox of faculty

seeking a sense of unity while at the same time holding on to a traditional view of faculty autonomy.

Some interviewees commented about the positive value of faculty working elbow to elbow with other members of the college in group activities in the strategic planning process. The belief that working together was good for the college was expressed in comments such as one from a faculty member who stated, "the best of it, I think, was the getting people together in these groups...Because we are all here for a common cause. The ones who do the job really know their jobs, but they don't particularly know all the facets from other areas and how those people see."

Yet others indicated that faculty were reluctant to be grouped together with other constituency groups in task forces and seminars. One faculty member, after citing the integration of members of the college community as a negative process, said "when we met, this faculty was particularly sensitive about being grouped with janitors, secretaries and administrative assistants. I think that for faculty, it would have been more effective if it had met separately."

One administrator said the faculty "felt their voice should be heard in a special way. They felt that when they were put together with other people who were not faculty members, who had a different perspective on things, they felt it diminished the level of their voice."

Proactive/Conservative Paradox

A second example is the proactive/conservative paradox. Although the college has a history of proactive leadership, individual members of the college community tend to be conservative in outlook. Change at the college is absorbed slowly.

An administrator expressed this paradox giving examples of the progressive bent of the previous President, who instituted in the early 1970s, innovative programs for adult students, an evening business school curriculum, and a program for women. The administrator went on to say that regardless of the innovations, "the faculty make decisions very slowly."

One professor reflected that the proactive behavior of the former president was initially difficult for some faculty to absorb. He said, when the adult program was implemented, "this was a new idea to some of our faculty. You had to take some of the faculty just about kicking and screaming into the adult classroom."

The administration of the next President was proactive also. He instituted strategic management approaches as well as implementing major renovation and development programs. But college staff still retained a basically conservative outlook.

Some administrators and faculty commented that having a balanced budget was a priority. Others commented that

finding an individual from within the local area, rather than from outside the local area, was an important consideration in a presidential search. For many of the college staff, the resignation of the President and a Vice President were generally viewed as shocking and quite upsetting.

Community/Separateness Paradox

Third, was the paradox of community/separateness. The culture of the college included placing a high value on helpfulness, dedication and service. The concept of "community" is frequently used by the members of the college to express these values.

However, although the college continually refers to itself as a "community" there is a distinct separateness among constituency groups. Few of the interviewees spoke of awareness or interest in the concerns of the Trustees, the governing body of the college. In all of the research notes and interview data there are only three notations of comments from college members regarding the Trustees. Yet, some group planning activities were initiated in response to specific concerns of the Trustees.

The faculty body saw itself as a separate entity from the administrators. The students had a very different view of the mission of the college than the staff and faculty. Also, it is interesting to note that only the out-going President and the in-coming Acting President expressed

awareness of the different constituency groups and the relationships between them.

Quest for Leadership

It seems there were two differing sets of expectations regarding the role of the college's leader. Both the President as CEO, and the staff and faculty as the body of the organization sent mixed signals regarding their needs in leadership.

The President, who resigned during the time the study took place, articulated both a desire for participation but also a personal belief in his role as a directive leader. The presidential search, four years earlier, had identified the participative management style as one criteria for selection. Indeed, one professor pointed out "we were very, very clear in our recruiting for the President. In the ad that went into the Chronicle, there was a paragraph on participative areas."

The President was clear in stating that he considered participation important. He deliberately included participatory activities, saying "my starting point is the conviction that organizations make progress to the extent that a large number of the participants are energetically engaged in some sense of common enterprise." He also said "in order to make that happen, I think the planning process that calls on the insights and perceptions and so forth of a

large number of participants needs to be put into place in any organization."

The President, however, was also clear in articulating that he chose a directive role as chief administrator and for the strategic planning effort. He said "I think that the President has to exercise some leadership, even though my emphasis is on community vision. There's a variety of leadership models and you have to be what you are. I place more emphasis on leadership than some models." The result was a mix of leadership styles that appeared to be difficult for the college community to assimilate.

The college community while ambivalent about how much authority they thought a leader ought to wield, was nonetheless very sensitive to the nuances of the leadership exhibited by the President. Some interviewees said that they perceived the president's actual style as different than his stated style. One faculty member described the leadership style as "sending mixed messages."

The members of the college community, however, were sending mixed messages too. The organizational paradoxes meant that as a group, staffers and faculty had conflicting ideas in their view of the leadership role of the President. For example, some of those interviewed indicated that they believed that the President should determine the vision for the organization. Yet, several people expressed the opinion that the President had too much control of the process.

Communication Problems

Closely related to organizational paradoxes and leadership needs, many of the interviewees expressed frustration regarding communication lines at the college. Problems in communication style went both ways. The President felt it appropriate that he take a strong role in meetings and other situations. For example, regarding implementing strategic planning, he explained: "I wanted it to be clearly understood from the beginning that the principal planner is the President...and I wanted to get it working properly."

At the same time, college members, particularly faculty, falling back on traditional rights of academic freedom, did not hesitate to speak their mind in a straight-forward manner. The straightforward style was sometimes very blunt. The interview transcriptions are sprinkled with comments such as "I tried to tell him" and "there were those of us who talked with him about it" and "I was arguing that..." and "I saw him do this and I called him on it."

Also, a communication gap occurred between administration and the college regarding campus affairs. For example, some individuals spoke of resentment of capital improvements which were made, angrily saying they thought the money should have been put into employee salaries. As one administrator pointed out, funds for capital improvement projects were tied to sources which restricted how the funds

were used. Yet, these restrictions were not well communicated to the college community.

The effects on the institution of organizational forces demonstrate that the college, like all educational institutions, is organizationally complex. The aspect of complexity is also apparent in observations of the college's experience with the strategic planning process.

Impact of the Strategic Planning Process

Overall, the strategic planning process resulted in changes in how college members thought about the college and its surrounding environment and in how they conducted planning. Within the elements of the process, there were strengths and problems. In addition, the quality of participatory activities affected the process.

Chronology of the Process

A chronology of the major events of the strategic planning process was constructed from the data. It provides a context for understanding pieces of data and emerging hypotheses as they fit into the overall picture.

Between 1987 and 1990, the chronology of the strategic planning process at College X included the following major events:

1987	College-wide work sessions to review mission statement
1987	Small task force composes narrative for mission statement

1987	College-wide task forces discuss, research and submit position papers on external/internal issues and desired goals
Winter, 1988	President synthesizes task force output on issues, goals and programs
Winter, 1988	President completes draft of major goals areas and issues
Spring, 1988	President's Planning Council reviews and refines objectives submitted by task forces
Summer, 1988	Strategic Plan published and disseminated college-wide
1988, 1989	Strategic Plan goals evaluated as part of Annual Report (Discontinued in 1990)
Winter, 1990	Update to Strategic Plan published in pamphlet format and disseminated college-wide

The chronology shows that the process included a substantial amount of participation by the college community. It also shows that the President had a predominant role in the process.

Strengths of the Process

The strongest elements of the strategic planning process were conveying the benefits of planning to the college community, gaining commitment to the strategic mission and completing a strategic plan.

Benefits of Planning

One strength of the process was the assimilation by the college community of the benefits of planning. For example, interview data indicated that members of the college community were more aware of environmental forces affecting

the institution because of the strategic planning
activities. Interviewees referred to topics such as
awareness of demographic trends, and issues in institutional
financial survival. Others spoke of the role of strategic
planning as a marketing tool.

Almost all of the interviewees articulated a sense of
the essential purpose for planning. Most felt that
strategic planning should be a guide, a process that helps
provide direction for the institution.

Since strategic planning was initiated at the college,
planning had become a part of unit and division management.
Divisions were engaging in more systematic planning,
following the general thrust of the strategic plan. As one
professor explained, awareness of the benefits of planning
"had reached into units, they do unit planning now, which
they didn't do before."

Commitment to the Strategic Mission

Another strength was that most of the college
administrators and faculty who were interviewed expressed
strong commitment to the strategic mission as a result of
the process. Significantly, each individual interpreted the
mission in a very personal way but always within the context
of the official wording.

The official mission statement of College X is as
follows:

> The mission of "X" College is to provide for a liberal
> arts education with a career orientation in a Catholic,
> Christian context to all students capable of profiting
> from such an education regardless of their sex, age,
> religion, ethnic or racial background.

Various individuals described the same mission
statement as primarily focused on each of these areas:
service, access, diversity, academics, career development,
and liberal arts. It is significant to note, regardless of
the personal interpretation, most of the interviewees
believed that consensus on the mission had been attained as
a result of strategic planning process activities.

A Strategic Plan

And finally, the process resulted in a viable strategic
plan. Commitment to the goals in the plan varied. But
overall, the plan was considered to be a good product by the
faculty and staff and most people supported it in some
degree. Certainly, the potential to improve a plan always
exists, but the fact that a substantial strategic plan was
produced was a good accomplishment.

Problems of the Process

There were two major problems associated with the
process: a lack of vision and a lack of ownership of the
strategic goals.

Desire for a Vision

All of the interviewees expressed a desire for an
institutional focus or vision, a result which was not
attained through the strategic planning process. In fact,

the President and some of the staff and faculty described
the process activities devoted to defining a vision as a
complete failure.

Actually, that a lack of vision was a "problem"
constitutes a partial success. Regardless of individual
feelings about the success or problems of the strategic
planning process, the process had opened people's eyes to
the value of a vision as a guide for planning and
implementation.

However, the interviewees stated the conviction that
the lack of vision was a serious hindrance to proactive
management of the college. Some individuals expressed the
feeling that the strategic plan did not exude a sense of a
whole and that a vision statement would have provided a more
cohesive focus for the plan. As one administrator said, "I
think we lack a sense of direction. I don't think the plan
has helped to clarify that at all. Therefore it's very
difficult for us internally and for the public externally to
have a clear vision as to what the college is."

Uneven Commitment to Strategic Goals

The second weakness was a perception of a lack of
ownership of the strategic goals. This is in sharp contrast
to the almost universal commitment to the institution's
mission. For this facet, interviewees varied in their
perception of how the process led to the formulation of
goals. Some felt their contributions were altered.

In fact, the process for goal development was different from that for mission development. The activities began with college-wide discussions as in the mission development. However, instead of college members writing the first rough draft of the goals, the President took on the task.

Effects of Participation on Commitment

Almost all of the individuals interviewed spoke of a strong ownership or commitment to the strategic mission. Furthermore, a strong support for the mission was evidenced whether the person had participated in the development of the mission or not (See Table II).

Support for the strategic goals, also a development activity in the strategic planning process, was more uneven among the interviewees. Also, while questions about the mission elicited primarily supportive comments, questions about the strategic goals drew a wide range of responses, from negative to positive.

For the strategic goals, a third category emerged: partial commitment. Some individuals were unwilling to verbally support the strategic goals in their entirety, but did indicate limited support (See Table III). Since this indicated a new category of "Partial Commitment," the data was reviewed again to determine if the data about the mission also supported a middle category, but it did not. The responses about the mission were clearly either "strong commitment" or "lack of commitment".

Table II

INTERVIEWS
COMMITMENT TO MISSION BY PARTICIPATION

	Faculty (N=4)	Admin/Staff (N=6)	Total (N=10)
Strong Commitment			
Participated	2	3	5
Did Not Part.	1	2	3
Total	3	5	8
Lack of Commitment			
Participated	1	1	2
Did Not. Part.	0	0	0
Total	1	1	2

Table III

INTERVIEWS
COMMITMENT TO STRATEGIC GOALS BY PARTICIPATION FACTOR

	Faculty (N=4)	Admin/Staff (N=6)	Total (N=10)
Strong Commitment			
Participated	0	2	2
Did Not Part.	0	1	1
Total	0	3	3
Partial Commitment			
Participated	2	0	2
Did Not Part.	1	2	3
Total	3	2	5
Lack of Commitment			
Participated	1	1	2
Did Not. Part.	0	0	0
Total	1	1	2

Perception of Participation

The data showed that a *quantity* of participatory activities was not enough to result in successful participation by the members of the organization.

Perception of the *quality* of the participatory activities
had a crucial effect on the success of the strategic
planning process.

Everyone on the campus had been invited to participate
in seminars designed to raise issues pertaining to the
mission and to express opinions on what the mission ought to
be. Then, a small group of people actually wrote drafts of
the mission statement. Everyone was aware that the small
cross-section of the campus community had been tapped to
compose sections of narrative to express the sentiments of
the community about the mission.

For development of strategic goals, everyone on campus
was invited to participate in a series of meetings. Then,
the President took on the job of synthesizer, to pull
together the results of the campus-wide discussions.

He explained that, "I had notes taken and tried to put
them together after meeting with everyone. And I did meet
with everyone. Then I studied the notes for the
commonalities and themes and began to get a sense of what
people's concerns were."

The President pointed out that he "was very careful to
keep it very loose." He said, "I didn't want to draw the
blueprint prematurely. But the shape was there."

While the President was working in a way that he felt
was helping the process along, some members of the college
community interpreted his effort differently. The planning

process began to be perceived as the President's agenda more than the consensus of the community.

As the strategic planning effort continued, the development of strategic goals and objectives and the development of a vision continued. Top administrators were aware that commitment was flagging among some of the college membership. The President continued to utilize the college-wide discussion format for the strategic planning process. However, outcomes of the process continued to be viewed by the college community as strongly being the design of the President.

Regarding this issue, interviewees were asked: what would you do to improve participation? Several specific suggestions were given by the interviewees, including:

> -use the faculty governance structure for input and consultation
> -assigning team leader roles to faculty and staff who exhibit leadership qualities
> -improve feedback mechanisms to include communicating to people the process and products being developed
> -improve feedback mechanisms to include evidence of openness and responsiveness to the input of community members
> -incorporate feedback as a formal process activity such as small group discussions and written comments
> -circulate written drafts of the products at each stage of the process
> -keep the strategic plan "in front" of people
> -install visual displays depicting progress on strategic goals
> -include a feedback loop for each stage of the process

Reviewing this list, one can see that many mechanisms might be appropriate. In all cases, the role of feedback is cited

as very important. Feedback had been insufficient in the
college's strategic planning process.

Effects of Organizational Forces on the Strategic Planning Process

Unity/Autonomy Paradox

In 1989, the college instituted a Humanities Program
which was installed as a requirement for students earning a
Bachelor's degree. The program was developed and taught by
a group of twelve faculty members, which later expanded in
number. The faculty were from the disciplines of Business
Administration, Education, English, Biology, History, Art
History and Communication.

These individuals met weekly and also conducted a month
long seminar each summer, in continuing management and
development of the Humanities Program. Like many small
colleges, at College X extra responsibilities are accepted
as part of the job description. The motivation for several
people from diverse backgrounds to spend substantial time
working together on the program was not monetary.

This type of dedication and willingness to work toward
an effort to benefit students demonstrates values held
strongly by the college community. It is important to this
group of people to work together for a common enterprise.
This example reflects a facet of the unity/autonomy paradox
in which unity is a desired organizational value. The
successful completion of a strategic plan, despite some
uneven acceptance of its goals also reflects the importance

to the college of unity, as much as the ambivalence about participation and lack of ownership reflect the values of autonomy.

Proactive/Conservative Paradox

The college community had a history of proactive leadership under two recent presidents, from about 1969 to 1986, and from 1986 to 1990. However, the proactive decision made by the President were often met with initial resistance and reluctance.

The leadership style for both of these presidents had strong authoritarian overtones. The staff was long accustomed to the authoritarian leadership of the former President. The new President clearly stated a personal preference to be a directive leader, but that he would blend that with large-scale group participation.

Strategic planning, as a highly participative format, was a new experience for many of the college community. The conservative, slow to change inclinations of faculty and staff, and the somewhat authoritarian bent of the President meant that truly embracing the high involvement and participation of strategic planning required that before anything else, recognition had to be given to long-standing patterns of behavior among the members of the college.

For the President, this meant acknowledging the authoritarian behaviors which conflicted with the participative strategic management processes. For the

faculty, this meant acknowledging conservative behaviors which included resisting change. Some of the faculty resisted participation even though participation was identified as a desired managerial feature. Everyone needed to learn new skills and it would take time and some trial and error. At the time of the study, the college had just completed a strategic planning process cycle for the first time. One experience with a new process is probably not enough to accomplish the kinds of changes needed by the college.

Community/Separateness Paradox

Just as a shift from a history of top-down leadership style to participative management required everyone to assimilate change, being a community within the college meant moving beyond rhetoric into actions. Again, the first strategic planning cycle laid groundwork and provided initial opportunities for sub-groups in the college to begin to learn these skills. For example, the college-wide sessions in the early part of the process was the first time different constituencies had ever worked together on a common project.

Quest for Leadership

The President took the role of chief planning officer, specifically in charge of the strategic planning process. In this capacity, the President brought in the strong directive qualities from his self-chosen leadership style

into a process which is inherently participative in nature.
At the same time, the staff and faculty sent double signals
to the President about the kind of leadership to which they
would respond.

At the time of his appointment, the President stepped
into a setting in which faculty and staff had functioned for
seventeen years under a President whom several people
referred to as having an authoritarian style of leadership.
Although the college community had sought a participative
leader, they were on new ground when it came to actually
working in that kind of relationship.

One person described the situation the President faced
when he was appointed by saying that the administrators were
used to working under "an authoritarian leader who said I
will tell you what to do, you come to me with your ideas and
I will tell you it's o.k." This person went on to say, "He
(the new President) sees he can't just use participative
talents...people are not very accustomed to working on their
own."

The change between the last two Presidencies also meant
a change in approach to institutional planning. During the
last years of the previous President, the college did not
have a structured form of institutional planning. Then, the
new President implemented strategic management processes.
One administrator said "we went from what you'd call no
planning in the sense of structured planning to a lot of

structured planning." He went on to say that "it snowballed into this fast movement and people feeling like they weren't part of it at that point."

During the planning process, the President stepped in to move the process along by synthesizing the output of group activities directed toward developing strategic goals. That effort was viewed by many as being coupled with other actions taken by the President which reflected some authoritarian tones. After that, for college staff, participatory activities were viewed with skepticism as they wrestled with a mix of desired values and long held, entrenched responses to an authoritarian leadership style.

Communication Problems

Community mindedness is a very important organizational value at the college. An air of helpfulness and friendliness is very much a part of the day to day environment of the college. As a reflection of this value, the verbal communication style on the campus is informal. Even the President is addressed by his first name.

The communication misconnections between administration and staff appear to be influenced by the informal communication patterns. Some of the comments of the interviewees illustrate tense verbal exchanges both sides may have later regretted. Significantly, these often testy exchanges occurred in circumstances in which basic rules of effective communication were breached. For example, all of

the members of the college community spoke in a very
straight-forward manner to convey their concerns. It
appears that a little diplomacy in verbal style on
everyone's part might have softened the harshness of some of
the messages.

The result of the communication difficulties was a good
deal of mixed feelings and perceptions. It is ironic to
note that all of those interviewed were quick to point out
that the President clearly sought participation. Yet, at
the same time, some people perceived that the plan was
strongly the President's own agenda.

Some people said that they agreed with the goals as
written in the strategic plan. But others talked about
their own reluctance to being committed to the strategic
goals, as well as their perception that others had a lack of
commitment to the goals. It appeared that the impacts of
the strategic planning process were tangled together with
organizational problems.

Summary

The questionnaires indicated that overall, those who
participated in the strategic planning process responded
with higher scores regarding their understanding of the
institution's strategic mission and the strategic planning
process. However, the questionnaires raised the unexpected
question: why did some participants have lower scores
regarding knowledge of the mission and strategic planning?

The interview data revealed that organizational behaviors both affected the on-going culture and management of the organization and were a major influence on the success of the strategic planning process. Participation in itself was not enough. The quality of the participatory activities affected knowledge and commitment. The portions of the strategic planning process which were most successful, as revealed by the interviews, were those in which the college community perceived that they had strongly influenced the process outcomes. Also, the interviews provided information about the importance of defining a strategic vision as part of the strategic planning process.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview of the Study

This study sought understandings about the role of
participation in the strategic planning process. The
qualitative research approach provided the opportunity to
learn about participation from the point of view of those
involved in the strategic planning process. A theoretical
framework was presented which organized the observations
into an overall context.

The general questions explored in the study were:

Do people who participate in a strategic planning
process have more knowledge and commitment to the
strategic mission and goals than those who do not
participate?

Why were there differences in knowledge and commitment
in different parts of the process?

Data were obtained from a questionnaire distributed to
trustees, faculty, staff, students and alumni, interviews of
staff and faculty, review of pertinent written documents and
observations of day to day activities at the college.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions were drawn from the data which were
collected and analyzed during the study. The data are

comprised of information from members of the college community about their perceptions and experiences over the course of a two year strategic planning effort.

Consistent with the principles of qualitative research, those perceptions and experiences are considered to be representative of a typical college. With this consideration in mind, the recommendations include a discussion of implications for the field of higher education.

Conclusion 1.

OVERALL, WITH SOME EXCEPTIONS, THOSE WHO PARTICIPATED IN STRATEGIC PLANNING ACTIVITIES WERE MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE MISSION AND STRATEGIC PLANNING.

The questionnaire results indicated that those at College X who participated in strategic planning activities responded with higher scores regarding knowledge of the institution's strategic mission and the strategic planning process. In four of the five subgroups, those who participated had higher scores than those who did not.

The participatory activities served as a valuable tool in two ways. The activities helped convey information about what strategic planning is and should be. Also, participation helped keep staff informed about the products of the strategic planning process.

Recommendation 1.

INCLUDE PARTICIPATORY ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS TO ENHANCE STAFF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE PRINCIPLES OF STRATEGIC PLANNING AS WELL AS TO REINFORCE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE PRODUCTS DEVELOPED DURING THE PROCESS.

Participation encompasses several aspects. It involves refining communication skills, incorporating feedback activities and employing creativity to develop activities that provide meaningful experiences. One faculty member at College X described the purpose of participation as "demonstrating the action of the process." In other words, participatory activities should inform people of the direction of the process and what is happening in the process at a given time.

Conclusion 2.

ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES OF THE INSTITUTION AFFECTED THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS.

At College X, paradoxes in organizational values caused a push-pull effect which hindered the effectiveness of the strategic planning process. Organizational values conflicted with each other and affected the strategic planning process in contradictory ways.

College faculty both contributed to strategic planning activities for the sake of unity and resisted involvement as a reflection of faculty autonomy. Also, conservative inclinations of some college staff meant that new programs took time and planning to be accepted even though the leadership position was proactive. In addition, working together across organizational functions was a new experience for the college community and some members embraced it while others resisted it.

Awareness of the organizational values and culture behind these paradoxes and deliberate acknowledgment of the opportunities and problems associated with them probably would have improved the strategic planning process. The members of the college were not prepared for the participation and group involvement which are part of strategic management. If the college had engaged in pre-planning steps to foster a successful process, less effort might have been expended on overcoming lack of commitment and resistance to the process.

Recommendation 2.

AS A PRE-PLANNING STEP, PLAN HOW TO WORK WITH FACTORS IN THE CULTURE AND VALUE STRUCTURE OF THE ORGANIZATION WHICH AFFECT MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES.

First, an organization planning to engage in a strategic planning effort should conduct a realistic assessment of these factors, asking questions such as:

How are decisions really made?

What organizational values affect managing the institution?

What is the internal political structure of the institution?

Second, strategies must be implemented which will help maximize those factors which can enhance the process and will help resolve problems which hinder the process. The support and leadership of the CEO play a strong role in this effort. The CEO should both be an example of desired behavior and should implement rewards and controls for

desired behaviors. Although the factors in the culture and value structure that affect management are subtle and may not be easy to manage, if they are not given recognition, the success of the strategic management process is compromised.

Conclusion 3.

THE COMBINATION OF PROCESS LEADER AND EXECUTIVE LEADER AS THE ROLE OF ONE INDIVIDUAL, IN THIS CASE THE PRESIDENT, MITIGATED THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROCESS.

At College X, the on-going evolution of a leadership model which would be acceptable to all of the college community interfered with the success of the strategic planning process. The college was moving toward embracing a participative style of management. Both the President and the college staff were using and experiencing a mixture of old and new styles and methods, trying to achieve a participative style. Issues related to this developmental aspect of college administration were confused with issues pertaining to the strategic planning process.

One person both leading the organization and leading the strategic planning process hampered the success of the strategic planning effort. This point is illustrated by looking at some of the successes and problems of the strategic planning process.

Successes such as conveying the value of planning to the college community and completing a strategic plan were aided by effective process management. The President of the

institution was very committed to installing strategic management at the college and was successful as a process leader in carrying through this objective.

By comparison, the problem of uneven acceptance of the strategic goals was the result as the President's role as leader of the college became tangled with his role as process leader. For example, during the process component in which strategic goals were developed, the President changed the process steps. Group involvement was reduced and the President's own involvement increased. When the President became more involved, the members of the college interpreted this as a leadership initiative and perceived a minimized place for their own involvement.

Recommendation 3.

THE FUNCTION OF PROCESS COORDINATION SHOULD BE SEPARATE FROM THE FUNCTION OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE.

Regardless of the leadership model chosen by the Chief Executive, this leadership position represents the elements of formal authority as well as influential power. The process leader requires support from the CEO in the form of visible commitment to the strategic planning effort and relies on the authority and power of the institutional leader for that support. The job of process leader is complex, calling for skills as a coordinator, a trainer, a people manager, a production manager and a creative problem solver.

The strategic planning process leader must represent both the CEO and the organization's staff and others involved in the process. The functions of the CEO and the process leader are different and difficult to combine.

Conclusion 4.

THE SUCCESS OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS AND THE STRATEGIC PLAN WAS HINDERED BECAUSE THE PROCESS WAS NOT WELL COMMUNICATED TO THE COLLEGE COMMUNITY.

The steps of the process were not well communicated to the members of the college community in advance or during the process. In terms of improving this situation, the staff and faculty indicated a wide variety of alternatives. The most important, however, was that the opportunity for feedback should be provided throughout the entire process.

The more successful portions of the strategic planning process at College X, such as conveying the value of planning and the development of the institutional mission, incorporated several approaches for communication and consultation. The President met with small groups at his home, the college met as a whole in Saturday workshops, small groups worked together to synthesize the input. The less successful components of the process, such as developing strategic goals and defining an institutional vision, did not include as many variations of communication or as many opportunities for involvement of staff or other key stakeholders.

Recommendation 4.

COMMUNICATE THE PROCESS STEPS AND PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR
FEEDBACK TO THE MEMBERS OF THE ORGANIZATION BEFORE THE
PROCESS BEGINS AND AT REGULAR INTERVALS DURING THE PROCESS.

Steps of the strategic planning process should be
communicated in advance and repeated during the process,
much like a learning process. Reinforcement of the steps of
planning that have or will occur and repeated information
about the progress of the process enhance the success of the
strategic planning effort. Planners should use several
methods of communication and consultation. Communication
activities should include providing a periodic synopsis of
the process and products being developed. Opportunities for
feedback should be constantly worked into the process.

Interpersonal communications should be highlighted,
rather than large, formal meetings. Visual communication
should be used when possible, such as a chart of the
process, or diagrams of the development of products.
Written formats should be short and easily digestible, such
as a newsletter. The process should include the opportunity
for verbal communication as well, such as small group
consultations for feedback during the process.

Conclusion 5.

A PROCESS STEP INVOLVING PARTICIPATION BY COLLEGE MEMBERS
WAS MORE SUCCESSFUL IF THE COLLEGE COMMUNITY PERCEIVED THAT
THEY HAD INFLUENCED THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRODUCTS OF THAT
PROCESS COMPONENT.

The quality of the participative activities was an
important factor in enhancing the strategic planning process

at College X. The mixed results of participation activities
showed that success was reduced when people perceived that
their participation was superficial and did not influence
the outcomes of the process.

Early in the strategic planning process at College X,
the President met with nearly every group in the college
community. Then, college-wide discussion and workshop
sessions were conducted. Small groups then synthesized the
ideas of the community. Development of the mission, which
included these process steps, was successful in that it
resulted in knowledge and commitment, or ownership, on the
part of the college community. In this process format, the
products came from the participants.

For the goal development, the steps were changed by the
President. He reduced group involvement and increased his
own involvement by eliminating synthesis of the input by
small groups and performing this task himself. For the
development of a vision statement, only the initial college-
wide discussions were held. Ultimately, commitment to
strategic goals and definition of a vision suffered as a
result of a perception of the President's involvement as
more influential than the involvement of the staff and
faculty.

Recommendation 5.

IN THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS, THE RESULT OF A
PARTICIPATORY ACTIVITY SHOULD BE THAT PEOPLE FEEL THEY
INFLUENCED THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRODUCTS OF THAT PROCESS
COMPONENT.

A quantity of participatory activities does not guarantee success in enhancing participation, and consequently building knowledge and increasing commitment. People need to feel they have impacted the process, or that they have had the opportunity to impact the process if they have chosen to be involved. The form or quantity of participation can be varied, as long as the members of the organization feel that their opportunity to participate will result in influencing the products of the process.

A participatory activity must include a feedback component to be meaningful. The faculty and staff interviewed at College X clearly indicated that feedback was essential. It is important that participatory activities be interactive. For example, activities such as requesting comments on drafts would require people to be involved in the process.

In the college setting, the faculty governance group and staff governance body should be utilized as a major participatory tool. At College X, bypassing the faculty governance group and working in a college-wide setting created an impression of minimizing the voice of the faculty membership. As a process tactic, conducting communication sessions with each group on their own "turf" would help build credibility for the process.

Conclusion 6.

MEMBERS OF THE COLLEGE ASSOCIATED THE FAILURE TO DEFINE A VISION WITH THE PERCEPTION THAT THE STRATEGIC PLAN LACKED UNITY AND THAT THE PROCESS DID NOT HAVE A CLEAR FOCUS.

At College X, faculty and staff who were interviewed were unanimous in stating that the strategic planning process and the resulting strategic plan suffered in effectiveness because a vision or focus was not successfully defined. For them, a vision statement was clearly perceived as a needed and important guide for the process.

Recommendation 6.

INTEGRATE THE DEFINITION OF AN INSTITUTIONAL VISION AS A FORMAL STEP IN THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS.

While the literature addresses the inclusion of a vision statement in strategic planning, the development of an institutional vision is typically not described as a formal process step. Adding definition of a vision as a formal process step would accentuate its purpose in the process. By defining a vision, a picture of the future is composed. People can respond to a visual or verbal picture in a more concrete way, than they can to abstract strategic goals.

The vision statement is a future focus. A written vision statement might take the form of describing a desired future scenario.

Establishing a vision statement as a formal process step may be a substantial factor in aiding an organization in implementation of the strategic goals. For example, the

vision statement may be a valuable product in helping achieve planned changes that must occur in the culture of the organization in order to successfully implement strategic goals.

A vision statement is developed after an initial mission statement is defined and concurrent with the formation of strategic goals. A revision of the strategic management model includes developing the vision as a formal step. (See Figure 2). In the revised model, the step of defining a vision is located at the point in the process where thinking is fluid and strategic direction is becoming established. Positioned here, as a process component, definition of a vision serves to crystalize a concrete focus which will enhance the continuing process.

Concluding Remarks

It is noteworthy that the conclusions and recommendations of the study were possible because the research methods which were used guided the gathering of the data in specific ways. Also, a result of the research effort was the formulation of topics for further study.

Observations Regarding The Methodology

Triangulation posed opportunities and challenges. Use of multiple methods is complex in a research effort. However, employing multiple means of gathering data was very fruitful.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND VISION MODEL

Figure 2
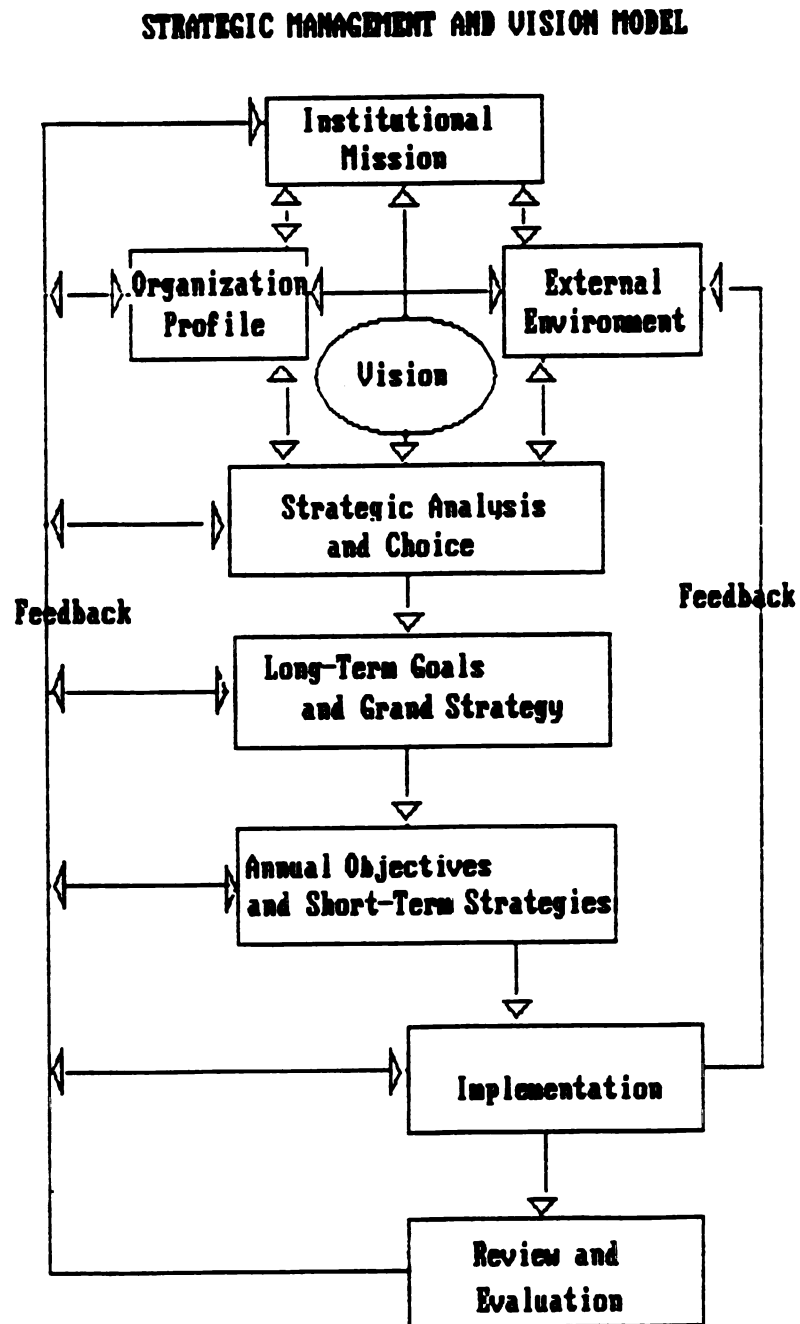
The questionnaire provided an efficient method to find out that participation resulted in knowledge about strategic planning, but with mixed results. The questionnaire raised the unexpected question: why did some who participated have relatively low scores regarding knowledge of the mission and strategic planning?

The unstructured interviews then provided the opportunity to pursue why that was the case. The interviews provided a wealth of data about perceptions of strategic planning. The open-ended questions provided a format to gather the new unexpected data. Issues about the impact of organizational behavior were not part of the original question guide, and would not have been revealed in a structured interview, or if only the questionnaire had been used. Also, the interviews provided information about the importance of defining a vision as a strategic planning component.

Reviewing planning documents and talking with members of the college helped form a description of the culture and values of the organization. This description helped give more meaning to the data.

Further Questions

This research effort studied participation and its impact in strategic management. Many questions remain about this topic.

For example, College X was not adequately prepared for the participative nature of strategic management. There is little research on the pre-planning aspects of strategic management in higher education which might have guided College X.

The College X experience showed that the CEO should not take the role of process leader. Strategic planners would benefit from additional information which summarizes the organizational skills and key roles needed for strategic management in a higher education setting, particularly in terms of how those roles relate to on-going organizational functions.

Further study might include investigating how to plan for and manage change as a joint process with strategic planning. Another area of study might be the design of mechanisms which enhance strategic management activities by utilizing the organizational structures common to higher education, such as the faculty governance body. Also, the appropriate role of trustees in strategic management is not well developed.

This study also found that definition of an institutional vision is a significant aspect of the strategic planning process. A survey could be conducted to learn about other colleges' experiences in developing a vision statement. Also, the question arises: is commitment

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encouraged if a vision statement is incorporated as a process tool?

Strategic management offers opportunities for improving effectiveness in managing colleges and universities. Learning more about participation has provided insights which may be used to assist education administrators in maximizing those opportunities.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

STRATEGIC PLANNING PERCEPTIONS QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is part of a study of strategic planning in a college setting. The data collected from the questionnaire will contribute to information about the college's strategic planning process. You are being asked to complete the questionnaire because you are part of the college community. Your participation is voluntary. However, in order to truly represent the thinking of the college community it is important that each questionnaire be completed and returned.

You may be assured of complete confidentiality. The questionnaire has an identification number on it for data sorting purposes only. This is so we may check off which group (student, faculty member, etc.) in the college community you are part of, when the questionnaire is returned. Your name will never be placed on the questionnaire.

INSTRUCTIONS

Please respond to each of the items 1-10 by indicating the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement by circling your response using the code below. If you would like to explain your response to any item, please do so on the back of the questionnaire.

Strongly Disagree 1
Somewhat Disagree 2
Uncertain 3
Somewhat Agree. 4
Strongly Agree. 5

	Disagree				Agree
1. The primary educational goal of this college is liberal arts with a career orientation.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The purpose of the college's mission statement is more to inform students than to guide institutional management.	1	2	3	4	5
3. At this college, new programs become instituted as a reaction to outside influences, such as competition or enrollment changes.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Strategic planning relies primarily on quantitative analysis, rather than qualitative analysis.	1	2	3	4	5
5. This college places high priority on access to educational opportunities for students of all backgrounds.	1	2	3	4	5
6. The strategic planning process should be conducted once every three to five years.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The mission statement of this college is regularly reviewed and redefined in terms of the college's purpose.	1	2	3	4	5
8. In managing the college, it is more important to 'do the right thing' than to 'do things right.'	1	2	3	4	5
9. At this college, it is the intent that religious aspects have a presence, but do not affect day to day affairs.	1	2	3	4	5
10. A vision for the future guides the strategic planning process.	1	2	3	4	5

Male_____ Female_____
If Student: Full-time_____ Part-time_____
Age: Under 25___ Between 25 and 50___ Over 50___
If Faculty: Full-time_____ Part-time_____
All: Have you worked on strategic planning activities at the college: 0 hrs.___ 1-10 hrs.___ 11-30 hrs.___ 31 hrs. or more___

100

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

In broad terms, what does a strategic planning process mean to you?

What is the strategic planning process at this college?

What does a mission mean to you?

What is the mission at this college?

How did you participate in the strategic planning process?

What has been the best and worst of the college's strategic planning effort?

What would you do to change the process?

APPENDIX C

CHARACTERISTICS OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS

Table IV

CONSTITUENCY GROUPS

	N	%
Trustees	20	18.18
Faculty	22	20.00
Staff	21	19.09
Students	30	27.27
Alumni	17	15.45
Total	110	100.00

Table V

CONSTITUENCY GROUP BY PARTICIPATION

	Participated		Did Not Participate		No Response	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Trustees	12	60.0	5	25.0	3	0.0
Faculty	13	59.1	9	40.9	0	0.0
Staff	16	76.2	5	23.8	0	0.0
Student	1	3.3	29	96.6	0	0.0
Alumni	2	11.7	15	88.2	0.	0.0
Total	44	40.0	63	57.2	3	2.7

Table VI

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS

	Number	Percent
Students		
Full time	10	33.30
Part time	20	66.70
Faculty		
Full time	19	86.37
Part time	3	13.63
Sex		
Female	56	50.91
Male	54	49.09
Age		
Up to 25 yrs.	8	7.27
25 to 50 yrs.	71	64.55
50 and above	28	25.45
No response	3	2.73
Hours Part.in Strat. Plan.		
0	63	57.27
1 to 10 hrs.	25	22.73
10 to 30 hrs.	10	9.09
31 hrs. plus	9	8.18
No response	3	2.73

APPENDIX D

LISTING OF INTERVIEW RESPONSES

Frequency	Topic
10	-lack of common vision
10	-impact of resignations
9	-value of working together but want autonomy
8	-lack of ownership of goals
7	-president had too much control
6	-chronology of the process
6	-conservative outlook
6	-problem of getting ownership
6	-vision is crucial
6	-offered ways to get participation
6	-importance of planning
6	-faculty complaints but choose not to be involved
5	-stress in climate
5	-pres. attempting to get involvement
5	-felt process failed
4	-strategic plan was successful
4	-good that college worked together
4	-felt the group participation was superficial
4	-felt more group participation was needed
4	-demonstrated understanding of str. pln.
4	-demonstrated lack of knowledge of str.pln.
4	-strategic plan should be a guide
4	-purpose of planning to set direction
4	-personal interpretations of the mission
4	-awareness of environmental issues
4	-good the college worked together
4	-felt that people's work was altered
4	-president's role to set vision
4	-faculty complaints but choose not to be involved
4	-lack of communication from administration to faculty
4	-pres. leadership style different than stated
4	-felt pres. perceived high involvement
4	-referred to task forces
4	-process resulted in a separation of faculty from administration

LISTING OF INTERVIEW RESPONSES (CON'T)

Frequency	Topic
4	-lack of feedback actions
3	-lack of communication from president
3	-clarity of leadership style was needed
3	-lack of commitment
3	-strategic plan as a picture of a whole
3	-emphasis on physical plant
3	-group activities had some success to form consensus
3	-mission functions as a working tool
3	-referred to adult programs
3	-mission should be general
3	-college was seeking change
3	-trustees wanted a niche developed
3	-short flyer effective communicator of plan
3	-mission should be general
3	-low priority on academics in plan
3	-study groups the start of loss of commitment
3	-faculty autonomy desired
3	-addressed strategic evaluation being dropped from annual report
2	-clearinghouse unsuccessful
2	-recognition of constituency groups
2	-think short flyer is a new plan
2	-college not strong on access
2	-the Christmas letter
2	-perceived the PPC as a monitor
2	-first plan was too long
2	-change in leadership style not assimilated
1	-important to find leaders in the ranks
1	-faculty leaders were not tapped
1	-college community needs to integrate
1	-felt vision should come from community
1	-believed participation was building
1	-perceived no pressure on religion
1	-structure is a issue

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