www.mnsu.edu/toolbox
Centennial Student Union 173
(507) 389-6076

Strategic Planning and Goals

"Simply put, strategic planning determines where an organization is going over the next year or more, how it's going to get there and how it'll know if it got there or not. The focus of a strategic plan is usually on the entire organization." Goal-based planning is the most common and starts with focus on the organizations mission, goals to work toward the mission, strategies to achieve the goals, and action planning (Center MacNamara, Free Management Library).

Tips on Developing Strategic Plan

• Be sure members understand your group's mission and purpose.
• Take a critical look at where the organization currently is.
• Complete a SWOT Analysis.
• Prioritize your priorities.
• Get buy-in.
• Determine what success will look like, and be sure to take the opportunity to acknowledge "small wins."

FLEXIBILITY MATTERS
McNamara says that one of the biggest problems with plans is that they are sometimes shelved and never used again. Part of this is due to the misperception that they are set-in-stone directions and that they can't be modified. When you develop a plan, do so with the knowledge that it should be dynamic and change as the organization's needs change or as resource availability changes. Inflexibility will cause the plan to become stagnant and will stunt creativity and innovation in your organization.

Why: Strategic Plan?

You organization needs to know where it is, where it wants to be, and how it will get from point A to point B. Getting to point B needs to be congruent with your group's overall mission and purpose, and it needs to be realistic.

strategic plan is a tool that, when used correctly, can be viewed and understood by many people. It provides a roadmap, and it can be used as an accountability tool.

What is a SWOT Analysis?

A SWOT Analysis is a tool often used in business. SWOT is an acronym that stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. When identifying these things, we need to be list:
• those things we do well and want to continue doing well.
• Things we don't do well and know we need to improve upon
• Things that we could be doing that we aren't taking advantage of yet.
• Things that, if left unaddressed, could be problematic for us or our organizations.
Being able to identify these things will allow us to establish priorities in our strategic plan.

Information borrowed from the Free Management Library
http://managementhelp.org/plan_dec/str_plan/str_plan.htm

www.mnsu.edu/toolbox
Centennial Student Union 173
(507) 389-6076

Goal Setting 101

Often times, we are tempted to set goals that sound something like this:
"I want to commit more time to studying and get a better GPA." While this sounds nice, there are no teeth to this goal-no standards to meet. Goals need to be SMART.

S=Specific
M=Measurable
A=Achievable
R=Realistic
T=Timely

Goals that are SMART are easier to interpret, and we can more effectively be held accountable to them. Something like this is a SMART goal: "During the Fall semester, I will spend 3 hours per day studying or doing class work in the library. Doing this will help me achieve a 3.0 GPA."
This goal is specific; it gives a particular number which we will know whether or not we have met. It is certainly achievable and realistic, and it gives a particular timeframe for accomplishment.

Steps for Developing a Basic Strategic Plan
(Carter McNamara, Authenticity Consulting)

• Draft a Mission Statement
o If you are affiliated with a inter/national organization, you may already have one of these!
o Succinctly states what the purpose of your organization is.
o The Mission needs to drive the goals that you will develop later.
• Draft a Vision Statement
o What are the benefits provided by your organization?
• Draft a Values Statement
o What are the overall priorities or principles that guide how you want your program to operate?
• Conduct an External Analysis
o What factors, outside of the organization (think university policy, student demographics, technology, costs, etc.)?
o What are the greatest opportunities your organization has? What are things it is not currently doing or taking advantage of that it could?
o What are the greatest threats facing your organization? What should you be working to overcome or avoid?
• Conduct an Internal Analysis
o How is the organization doing operationally? What things could it be doing differently? Does your current officer and responsibility structure make sense?
o What are the organization's greatest strengths?
o What are the organization's most significant weaknesses?
• Identify Strategic Issues
o What major issues is your group facing (look at your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats)
o Is the issue important or urgent? Focus on important issues. Urgent issues need an immediate fix-one you may not be able to be strategic about.
o What issues can you actually influence? Be careful not to be to narrow or too broad.
o Clearly articulate the issues so that someone outside the organization can tell what you're talking about.
• Identify Goals and Strategies
o Goals address the issues identified.
o Goals should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely).
o Strategies will provide steps for achieving goals.
o Determine who will do what and by when.
o How will you know if things are being achieved?