

**STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS;
PANNING IN A COLLEGE OF BUSINESS:
THE CASE OF NIKITA COLLEGE OF BUSINESS**

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ABSTRACT

In the face of stiff competition for scarce funds to effectively navigate the affairs of business schools, college deans have to come up with strategic plans to ensure that various opinions and inputs of stake holders including faculty and staff are accommodated. Additionally, such deans are expected to come up with goals and objectives designed to strengthen their colleges, and at the same time satisfy the internal and external constituents about the feasibility of such a plan. One of the popular approaches used is through strategic plan as deployed by Nikita college of business.

INTRODUCTION

What are the challenges today's Business Schools administrators face? Business Schools are undergoing changes as profound as those that transformed to days businesses and industries to the dynamic and global enterprises that they have evolved. These changes are part of a larger transition in our society-the transition of strategic planning in higher education into the "information age" as well as transition into the "global age". The influence of economic, social and cultural forces, some friendly and some hostile, is growing at an exponential rate. Today, however, business schools have to be more competitive and, as a result, have become more quality driven and assessed on the basis of value added per dollar of student investment in tuitions.

Today's dean has to be not only an academic leader, but also an entrepreneur, a financial analyst, a market and competitive analyst, and a public relations specialist. Additionally, a dean is expected to be a general manager and a team builder. It is evident that traditional methods of short range- planning, with their focus on budgets, staff, tuition, grants, etc, have become inadequate for our business schools. Faced with much the same situation, the profit sector institutions have over the past decade, developed a body of concepts and techniques known as

"strategic management". Strategic management provides a framework for expanding the dean's role and helps them respond to a rapidly changing technological and competitive global environment.

As business school needs change, the most successful schools will be those that respond proactively to the new demands. In addition, changing social values and increasing governmental interaction will demand response from business schools if they are to thrive and succeed, instead of being reluctantly carried along into the twenty-first century.

Contemporary strategic management differs from traditional long-range planning in that it emphasizes discerning and understanding an organization's external environment, including competitive conditions, threats, and opportunities. Strategic management helps managers develop a greater sensitivity to the changing external world and helps an organization to thrive by capitalizing on its existing strengths and avoidance of potential threats.

In its simplest form, the strategic management process can be structured round six basic questions and processes.

QUESTIONS	PROCESSES
Where is the school currently?	Situation audit
Where do we wish it to be in the future?	Mission, Objectives, Goals
What steps do we take to achieve the desirable state?	Strategy Formation
Who will do what?	Structure, Tasks Forces
What is the schedule of events?	Action Plans, Timetables
Is the school going where we planned for it to go?	Outcome Assessment, Corrective Actions

Strategic management and planning will enable an institution to attain desired goals, meet community and societal expectations, anticipate future problems, take advantage of “profitable” (in the larger sense of the word) opportunities; in short, it can provide the member of the institution with a “game plan.” It should be pointed out that the most difficult stage in strategic management process is strategy implementation. Successful strategy implementation hinges on the ability of managers and deans to motivate their subordinates, which according to David (2011) is more an art than a science. It also involves adopting the right leadership style Watkins (2009), determining the necessary cornerstone in the implementation process Crittenden (2008), as well as those involved in the strategy implementation Miller and Wilson (2008).

STRATEGY FORMATION

The Hour-Glass Model

Any comprehensive model used to analyze the universities strategic management process must be a dynamic one that considers the system open and changing constantly. It must focus on the effect society and the environment at large has on an organization, and how an organization’s actions, in turn, affect the environment and society. Many of such comprehensive models exist and include those of Hitt, et. al (2011), Wheelen & Hunger (2004), and Fred (2011, p.15).

One model, however, that is very useful in describing the process of strategy formation is the Peters and Tseng model. Peters and Tseng (1983) identify the following succession of steps as basic to strategic planning which is in line with the questions and processes set earlier:

1. Identifying the organization’s current position including present mission, long-term objectives, goals, strategies and policies.
2. Analyzing the environment for opportunities and threats.
3. Conducting an organizational audit and self assessment.
4. Identifying the various alternative strategies based on the situation audit and relevant data.
5. Selecting the best alternatives and prioritizing them.
6. Gaining acceptance of the chosen strategies from the constituency.

These questions are consistent with Drucker’s (1974) question, “What is our business”

Strategic management implies more than just the construction of plan for directing the business schools. It is, more importantly, an approach to management that encourages key administrators and faculty members to think innovatively and act strategically-with the future in mind. It is a way of thinking that can best be compared to that of sailboat skipper who checks the conditions, knows his craft’s capabilities, senses opportunities and threats, and, based on this information, continually repositions its craft in a manner gauged to make the fastest progress towards a changing destination.

Strategic management is especially relevant in the business schools because of the dramatic changes taking place in the world of business and industry who hire the business graduates and in light of the following:

- Government at several levels is becoming increasingly involved in defining standards for the university services for which it invests and funds.
- The current abundance of business schools and rapidly changing technology may lead to more competition and diminishing resources.
- Competition among business schools is increasing for limited qualified faculty on demand, locally and internationally.
- New b-schools are emerging locally and globally to compete with existing business school.

This turbulent environment raises the need for a process, a way of thinking, an attitude that encourages deans of colleges of business to continuously monitor the environment and orchestrate the use of available resources so they can gain a competitive advantage.

7. Preparing long-range and short-range plans to support and carry out the strategy.
8. Implementing the plans and conducting an ongoing evaluation and assessment of progress.

used to show how these complex functions are related and interact with each other.

THE HOURGLASS MODEL

To apply strategic management in any four year institution’s college of business, will utilize the above steps and the questions and processes framework in a model portrayed as “Hourglass Model”. The proposed model is an adaptation of the “hourglass” model by Simyar (1977, 1985, 1988), See Figure 1. This model employs an open systems approach in which the strategic management process is affected by a number of external and internal environmental factors or “inputs,” and the system produces actions or “outputs” which, in turn, affect the environment and, as a result, the inputs. The dynamic nature of the model is well-suited to the diverse and ever-changing environments faced by most complex organizations, particularly the turbulent environment faced by the business schools and institutions in the higher education sector. The validity of the hourglass model framework is not affected by the complex, often vague, and sometimes contradictory functions of the education sector; rather, it can be

The hourglass model depicting strategic planning and implementation process, received its name precisely because it is analogous to an hourglass. The inputs (environmental factors) enter at the top of structure; and the outputs (the organization’s actions) exit at the bottom. In other words, the particles flowing from top to bottom are environmental variables affecting the organization. These variables must be scrutinized and assessed so that the organization can formulate and implement a proactive, successful and effective strategy. In addition to environmental variables, the model allows for two other forces which should be assessed and strongly considered in the process of strategy formation, namely, (1) the expectations and values of the organization’s stakeholders and, (2) the organization’s internal strengths, limitations, and values, as well as the results of the past actions (see the following illustration in Figure 2).

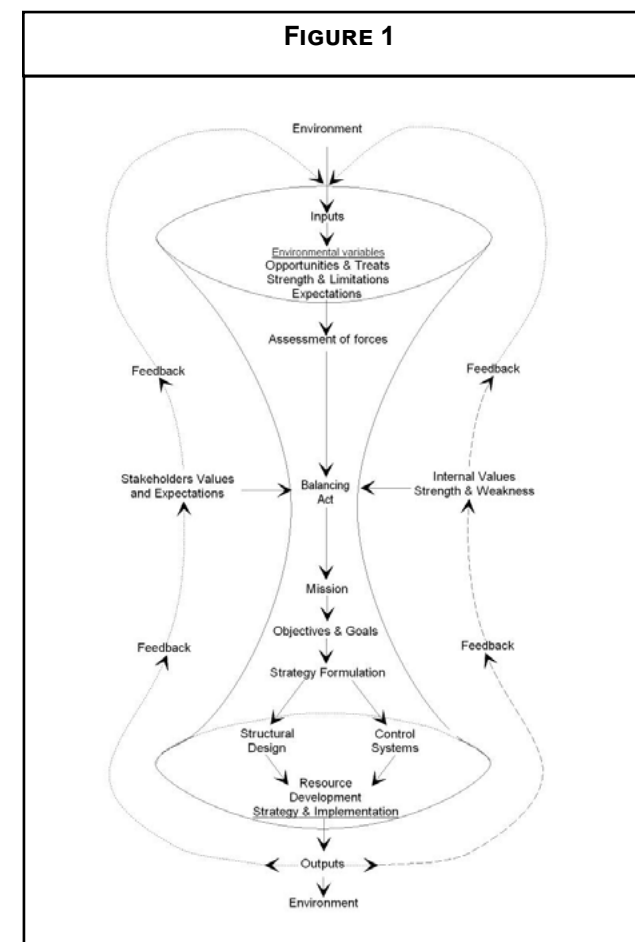
The stakeholders represent the local and federal governments, the general public, politicians at the appropriate levels (federal, state, and municipal), and other members of the government involved that monitor the educational services, students and alumni, university officials and other colleges in the university, and members of the profession. Stakeholders may be either individuals or groups, and their relative power can and does change over time, as do their expectations and values.

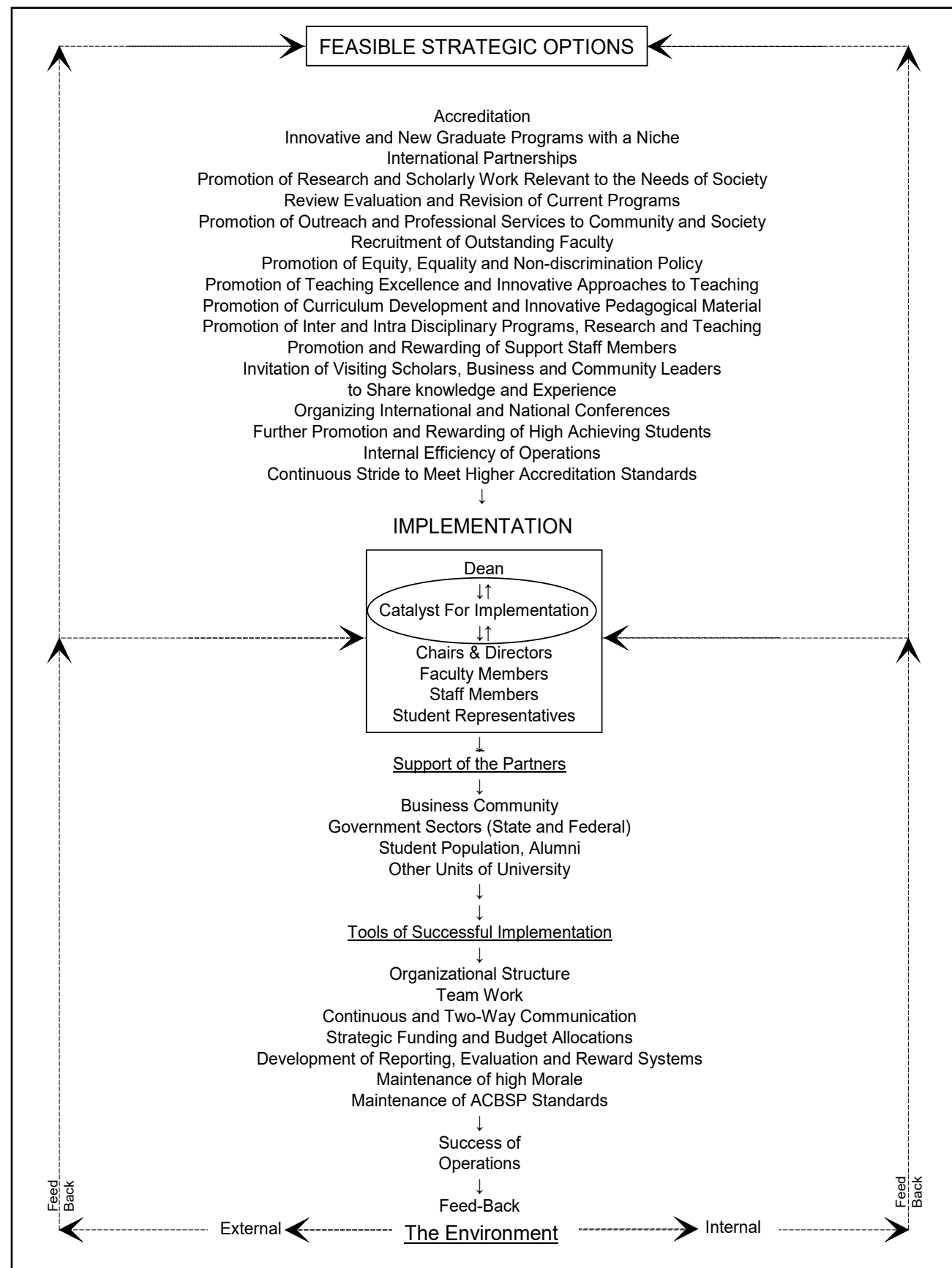
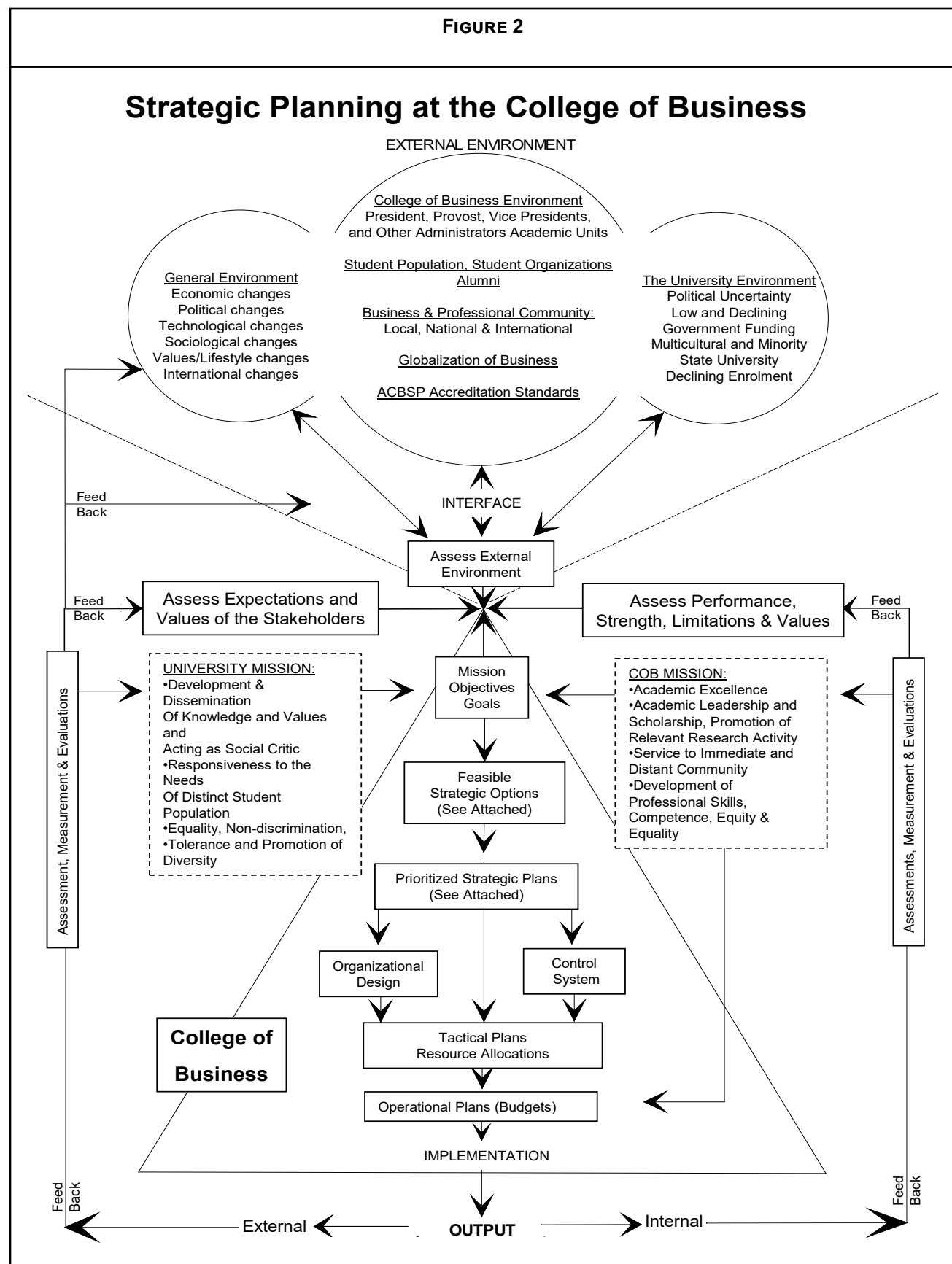
Deans (the agents of the stakeholders) must assess the impact of all forces on the college and maintain a delicate balance among them in order to achieve optimum efficiency and effectiveness in setting goals and in formulating and implementing an appropriate strategy. Simyar (1985), refers to this as a “balancing act” or even “balancing art”. Successful strategists are those who reach a level of competence (or perhaps perfection) in this “art” given a specific context or environment.

Figure 2 illustrates how the hourglass model can be adapted to a particular environment and characteristics of any college of business (COB), and how it is utilized for strategy formation and implementation.

The Model’s Components and the Criteria Utilized in Strategic Planning and Implementation

Effective planning and strategy implementation require providing answers to all the relevant questions (a – h) asked hereunder. The responses provide perspective, and





insight to the entire process, and the first useful question is:

1. Do you use a formal process to set the strategic direction for your business school or program?

One aspect of environmental analysis which the hourglass model presents very effectively is the importance of selecting relevant information from the mass of data that could be collected. Any dean of college of business, with a small subcommittee of faculty members, can engage in collection of data and information in order to set the formal process of strategic planning using the framework of "hourglass model". The information obtained by screening the three forces-environmental factors, stakeholders' values, and internal strengths and weakness provide the oasis for the establishment of COB's strategy. Before formulating the strategy, the committee determines the broad mission, the objectives, and goals of the college within that of the university. In doing so, it is instructive for committee members to weigh many internal and external factors that can affect those strategies and the ability to realize them. Some of those factors include current levels of performance, internal strengths and limitations, high expectations, values of the stakeholders and financial resources.

2. Do faculty and staff members participate or have a voice in this process?

Faculty and staff members should be active participants in the strategic planning process. The first draft of any proposed "Strategic Plan", along with the other agenda items and documents can be distributed well in advance or prior to any college special meeting or "college retreat" which can take place in any conference facility outside the campus. In that special meeting, all the faculty and staff of the college of business are expected to attend.

The dean of college can on behalf of the subcommittee, present the committee's draft proposal and allow discussion to follow. In-puts and recommendations are expected to be made by members of faculty and staff to the draft proposal. Pursuing this, the various strategies identified by the subcommittee, faculty and staff are prioritized, and can be classified as "short and long term strategies" (see Figure 2, Feasible Strategic Options listing). Following the approval of the proposed strategic plan, all the members of the college can be organized and grouped to appropriate task forces to prepare implementation plans and time tables for the action plans of the prioritized strategies. The appropriate task forces are expected to work diligently on their strategic action plans and implementation timetables. On the second day of the retreat, each task force is expected to make a presentation of its proposal. Each proposal should be discussed thoroughly and neces-

sary modifications made and approved by the participating group members. The process is essentially participatory in nature, as it is shared vision and ideas, accepted and committed by members of the college of business. Some of the strategic options could be identified as "Short Term Strategies" and balance as "Long Term Strategies", to be implemented upon the actualization of the short term strategies. Depending on what is agreed upon, prioritization may be revised or re-prioritized. For example the following task forces could be charged to propose and implement the following Programs where they are required:

- Accreditation Task Force
- Graduate Programs Task Forces:
 - MBA Program
 - Master of Accountancy for Accounting Majors
 - Master of Accountancy for Non Accounting Majors
 - International Programs and Partnerships
- Outreach and Professional Services
- Promotion of Scholarly Activities and Research

With the preparation of this document, each task force or team is expected to work in such a way as to make sure they are on schedule with regard to the timetable and action plans. Any problems or bumps on the road are expected to be reported to the dean for timely action.

3. Have you established your business school or program's key strategic objectives and the timetable for the current planning period?

As stated in part (b) above, the key strategic options have been identified, ranked in order of priority, assigned to task forces with timetables established for implementation. While Figure 2 depicts the process and individuals or task forces involved in design and implementation of the selected strategic options, Table 2.1, is used to list key strategic options and the timetable for implementation.

4. Do you have action plans for this planning period?

Table 2.1 above shows how the timetable and action plans are established ranging from what period to submit self study to implementing such goals as higher degree programs in accounting and business administration..

5. Do you have long term action plans?

The Bucca State University administration requires all deans to submit an annually revised and updated "Long Range Plan" for their colleges. However, the college of

Key Strategic Choices	Goals	Timetable
1. ACBSP Accreditation	To be granted accreditation from ACBSP	The objective is to submit self study by a definite date.
2. Design and Implementation of Graduate Programs	MS Accounting and MBA Programs	Completion of Programs and implementation, conditional upon approval by appropriate state Board of Higher Education
3. International Partnership Programs	Joint Venture and Exchange with overseas universities	Partnership proposal with overseas universities to be submitted to partners at a specified date
4. Outreach and professional services	To offer certificate and non-certificate programs to the community	Establishment of an Advisory Board.
5. Promotion of Scholarly Activities and Research	To motivate and encourage faculty members research and other scholarly activities	Implementing such measures as monthly luncheon research presentation, Best researcher of the year award, best teacher of the year award, conference travel funding, etc.

business can start its own long term planning process, as indicated through initiating faculty and staff retreat. Strategic Options for longer term are listed in **Figure 2** and beyond the ones identified in parts a) to c), above.

6. Do you develop your key human resource plans as part of your business school or program's short- and long-term strategic objectives and action plans?

This process may or may not be in place as of yet. Some vacant positions at the college of business may exist which need to be filled. For example, a position in management and a second one in finance or accounting can be vacant. However, with a proposed implementation and action plans of the "Graduate Programs" Taskforce, which includes a section of the resource analysis and impact of the programs, the human resource requirements will be met or fulfilled. This will directly tie all the resource requirements to the strategic plans.

7. Have you established performance measures for tracking progress relative to your action plans?

The Strategic Management process has just been initiated following the faculty and staff retreat. The only performance measures can be said to be the temporary standards established for accreditation taskforce members on their self study report preparation tasks. All the other strategic choices may be at various design and negotiation stages. However, it is necessary to point out that before implementation of all the newly established "strategic options", whether short or long-term, performance measures and standards of assessment of outcomes must be established.

8. Have you communicated your objectives, action plans, and measurements to all the faculty, staff, and stakeholders as appropriate?

The Dean and the strategic management sub-committee have just prepared and presented the framework of "hourglass model" in order to synchronize, harmonize and enforce goal congruence among the various taskforces. The appropriate task forces are expected to work on their goals and objectives, strategic action plans and implementation timetables during the 2 days of the retreat. Each task force is expected to make a presentation of its proposals, action plans and timetables as well as constraints facing the particular strategic choice. Each proposal should be discussed thoroughly and presented to the members of the college of business and necessary modifications made and approved by group members. The process was participatory, shared vision and ideas, and accepted commitment by members of college of business. The first four strategic options can be identified as "Short Term Strategies" and the balance of strategies as "Long Term Strategies", to be implemented upon the actualization of the short term strategies. It was agreed that at a later time, the prioritization may be revised or re-prioritized as the case may be.

THE COMPONENTS OF THE "HOURGLASS MODEL"

Mission

The mission of Nikita college of business is a sub-mission of that of Bucca State University (BSU). There should be complete congruence and harmony among the two missions, if not, the conflict and lack of harmony will be dys-

functional and attainment of objectives and goals will be next to impossible. The mission of college of business is stated as follows: "to attract, admit, educate and graduate quality and employable students for the future job markets." Although this mission statement is not word by word corresponding to the university's mission, however, the spirit is in compliance with that of the Bucca State University's mission. This mission statement consistent with any other mission statement, reveals what the institution is, whom it wants to serve, and how to serve those people, David (2011, p.44).

Objectives

Objectives are simple expressions of the desired future states of an organization. Achieving objectives moves an organization closer to achieving its overall purpose or mission. Objectives can be classified into one of three categories: primary, development, or maintenance.

Primary objectives focus on performance improvement. Development objectives focus on the development of new programs and services or existing duties that require re-organization. Maintenance objectives are used to ensure that existing programs and service levels do not deteriorate due to emphasis on new areas. A hierarchy of objectives in the rank order of importance is produced in the hourglass model (Figure 2) should be recommended by the faculty and staff at the end of their retreat. However, given the dynamic nature of environment and the stakeholders, the order and composition of objectives could change.

As previously noted, the achievement of objectives moves an organization closer to achieving its overall purpose. Therefore, objectives should follow the initial purpose or mission of the university as well as the college of business and should not chart new and independent paths. Any one purpose or value can give rise to several objectives. Also, objectives may be continuously refined and updated in response to the feedback information fed into the system from the output loop. Finally, all objectives be they annual or long-term should be measurable, consistent and clear.

Goals

Goals are precise, well specified targets that are to be achieved within a given time frame. Goals should be developed independently of specified objectives, but rather should focus on specific portions of objectives. One objective can give set to several goals, and it should be assumed that when an organization attains one of its goals, it is that much closer to achieving its objective, and, in turn, its purpose

The results specified by goals should be measurable. Those that can be measured directly such as a target number of students to be recruited or a retention rate, are classified as quantifiable goals. "Qualitative goals" must be measured indirectly through the use of indicators. Quantifiable goals permit administrators to measure not only the direction of change in a variable, but also the precise magnitude or degree of change. With qualitative goals, however, administrators can only determine the direction of change, not the precise magnitude. For that reason, qualitative goals should not be used if quantified measures can be found.

Like objectives, quantifiable goals can be classified into categories. Primary goals are aimed at changing existing conditions and improving present levels of performance. Maintenance goals, on the other hand, focus on maintaining existing conditions or levels of performance.

Primary goals can concentrate on changing existing conditions externally or internally. The direction of change has already been specified by the objectives. It is up to the planners to decide what magnitude of change is realistic given existing conditions and resource constraints.

Maintenance goals, similarly, are based on maintenance objectives, and can specify what is to be changed, in what direction, by how much, and when. If specific and adequate attention is not given to maintaining already effective service or levels of performance, they may deteriorate and require an even greater commitment of resources. Obviously, quantifiable goals should specify the results to be achieved, not the activities to be pursued.

Qualitative goals should be used only when:

1. The desired results cannot be expressed in quantified terms, or
2. The desired results can be quantified, but cannot be measured except with considerable difficulty or expense.

Like quantifiable goals, qualitative goals can be classified into primary or maintenance categories. Again, the major difference between quantifiable and qualitative goals is that with qualitative goals, the desired results cannot be easily quantified (that is, it is not easy to define how any existing condition is expected to change). Further, it may be not be as easy to define what is to be changed.

Indicators can be used to assess progress in achieving qualitative goals. Indicators are easily quantifiable results which have a logical relationship to the qualitative goals. Administrators should make sure there is a definite relationship between indicators and a qualitative goal, because while it may be difficult to measure performance improve-

ments using indicators, it may be difficult to justify new programs or the continuation of existing programs in the absence of quantitative data.

ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN

Many researchers have studied the relationship between organizational structure and strategy. As early as 1954, Peter Drucker carried out a research study involving two organizations and concluded that it took these organizations years to develop the structures they felt best enhanced the implementation of their strategies. Later in 1962, Chandler concluded that, when a business introduces a new strategy, it must also change its structure accordingly if it is to operate at optimum efficiency. More recent studies (Raymond and Snow, 1978) acknowledge that the relationship between structure and strategy is very complex. Byars (1984) states that "a chosen strategy cannot be effectively implemented without developing a sound organizational structure." He draws four general conclusions based on these studies:

1. Management's strategic choices shape the organization's structure.
2. Strategy and structure must be properly aligned if the organization is to be successful in achieving its objectives.
3. Organizational structure constrains strategy.
4. An organization can seldom veer substantially from its current strategy without major alterations in its structure.

Because structure and strategy are so closely linked, a formal strategic management process must involve choosing a structure that will enable an organization to implement plans and attain desired goals. The appropriate structure may take the form of proper reporting relationships or may involve the creation of new sections to more effectively handle problem areas. Nikita College of Business at BSU has recently gone through an organization change to facilitate implementation of its strategic options adopted at its October 2005 retreat. However, further restructuring is a must prior to implementation of its new initiative and implementation of new graduate programs.

Control Systems

In order for strategic management and its implementation to succeed, the administrator must identify control mechanisms which will ensure that planned activities are not only carried out, but are also helping the college move toward the attainment of its objectives. It is crucial

that deanery develop a means to accurately assess measure and identify deviations. Sometimes, the manner in which controls are instituted results in antagonisms, non-compliance, and poor performance on the part of faculty and staff, the need for closer supervision of individuals, and high administrative and monitoring costs. One control system which is becoming increasingly popular is the "identification" with performance goals. Not only is this method more cost-effective than bureaucratic or forced compliance controls, it is also well-suited to educational services because individuals can readily identify with and support the societal objectives behind the performance goals they are expected to pursue.

Resource Development

Changing educational needs (for example, increased demand for a fifth year of accountancy to be able to sit for CPA exam) means that accounting education and training programs must be altered to ensure that colleges of business will be able to satisfy student demands. Facilities must also be altered (or new ones established) and, in time of inflation and fiscal constraint, innovative measures must be taken to obtain funding and appropriate resource allocation for these activities. In other words, there is need for resources to be allocated in ways that are consistent with meeting the needs of the program and all the stakeholders. In this context, the resources required may include human, financial, physical, and technological resources, and their allocation must be prioritized to achieve the desired objectives.

Strategy Implementation

Implementation is the most critical component of strategic management. This can be explained by McConkey's (1988) assertion that change comes through strategy implementation and evaluation, not through the plan. During each step in the process of formulating, evaluating, and selecting strategic alternatives, deanery must carefully consider the implementation requirement. They should also consider the possibility that stakeholders and other external groups as well as funding agencies may resist a new plan, and determine the optimum way to cope with such resistance, should it occur. Any changes, and the reasons for making them, should be communicated to all stakeholders. Administrators and stakeholders should then agree on the best way to accomplish the changes. Participation in the planning process by representatives of all forces in university or the college will result in understanding, buying into and commitment, improved motivation, productivity, internal job satisfaction, and ultimately, efficient implementation and operation of programs.

This outcome, undoubtedly, requires a supportive culture, and if none exists, should be cultivated to avoid strategy implementation becoming a paper tiger, or buzz word. Once decisions have been made about its future direction, a college must implement a plan, continuously evaluate its progress, and alter it if conditions so dictate.

Output and Feedback

The main function of strategic planning is to satisfy the long-term needs of community and society in general and the stakeholders in particular. The output in the hourglass model can be classified into major groups: community-oriented and stake-holders –oriented. The continuous feedback shows how the outputs affect community, the external and internal environments, and the stakeholders, which, in turn, affect each other, and eventually go back into the system as inputs through the feedback loop. Theoretically, this impact on the system and environment completes the input-output loop of this dynamic hourglass model.

CONCLUSION

College of Business Deans must give more attention to the formulation and implementation of strategies that will put their college in the best position to be proactive to the changes in their environments. Irreversible societal, economic, political and technological trends indicate that universities and colleges must restructure, reorganize, and reconceptualize their strategies and organizations. Strategic management is one approach that any college of business can use to achieve this reorganization and restructuring. A dynamic and complex process, strategic management requires the involvement and commitment of all levels of stakeholders, faculty and staff. Deanery, in particular, must put a great deal of effort into the process if it is to succeed. The utilized model of strategic management is a valuable tool that has enabled the Nikita college of business (COB) to match its strengths and weaknesses with environmental opportunities and threats, and, finally, with the expectations of the stakeholders, to implement its strategies to achieve its objectives and goals.

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