

4.2 Planning processes at the institution define and, to the extent possible, align academic, personnel, fiscal, physical, and technological needs with the strategic objectives and priorities of the institution.

Evidence:

The university's evolving **Strategic Plan** illustrates Sonoma State's institutional vision in key areas, representing essential values that characterize the university. The areas are academic programs, community engagement, diversity, enrollment management, external support, faculty and staff development, infrastructure, quality of student experience, and sustainability. The objectives listed in the plan under each of these areas include proposed initiatives designed to achieve each objective, and Spring 2007 Convocation was devoted to discussion of these objectives and **initiatives**.

Sonoma State University continues to develop its planning processes in an effort to align the university's resources with its mission, as described in the **Sonoma State University Mission Statement Policy**. Evidence of this ongoing alignment effort can be found in a variety of places, such as the work of the main university committees involved in the planning process. The University Planning Steering Committee (UPSC) (see <http://www.sonoma.edu/uaffairs/strategicplan/#committee>), which is comprised of all top-level administrators, and faculty, staff, and student representatives, is the oversight body guiding strategic planning. The UPSC has identified strategic areas to focus on, including academic programs, community resources, diversity, enrollment management, external support, faculty and staff development, infrastructure, quality of the student experience, and sustainability. Cutting across these areas, key "macro issues" are academic quality, the budget, communication/transparency, diversity, enrollment growth and management, external relations, human resources issues, residential life, technology, and the Green Music Center project.

Each of these "macro issues" and the questions subsumed within each topic area were discussed at the Spring 2007 Convocation, which was devoted to group discussion of the university's emerging **Strategic Plan**. As a direct result of the USPC identifying specific needs in certain areas, the President's Budget Advisory Committee (**PBAC**) and the AABAC recently allocated \$200,000 each for the next five years for instructional technology and faculty development. *NOTE: PBAC minutes for February not yet posted.*

Since 2003, the university has engaged in a comprehensive **strategic planning process**, which is designed to assess and prioritize needs and resources, and then to effectively align the two. **Academic Affairs** is the hub of this planning process, which began with an initial series of planning meetings designed to provide guidance in identifying priorities and allocating resources within the Academic Affairs division..

In 2003, these planning efforts led to the creation of the **Academic Affairs Strategic Planning** Committee, which worked on creating draft documents, delineating the key initiatives created, circulating them to the campus community, and incorporating community feedback into the revised **Academic Affairs Strategic Planning** document.

Community input was solicited in a variety of ways, such as the October 2003 Academic Affairs Division Community Meeting for Strategic Planning, which addressed a very broad range of topics related to SSU culture and values. These efforts were instrumental in the university's decision to create a university-wide strategic plan, and thus in Fall 2005, the University Planning Steering Committee (UPSC) was created.

The committees and subcommittees of the **Academic Senate** oversee the specific aspects of strategic planning that fall within their purviews. Chief among these is the **Educational Policies Committee**, which has primary responsibility over the curriculum and academic standards of the university. The EPC includes several standing subcommittees which focus on specific academic areas such as university standards, general education, graduate education, program review, and grade appeals.

The process of striving to align the institution's academic needs and strategic objectives is also illustrated clearly in the **General Education Initiative**. This is a major ongoing curriculum revision project that is General Education Committee (a subcommittee of the EPC).

Another example of Sonoma State's planning in order to best align academic needs and resources with the institutional mission is illustrated by the university's work on facilitating graduation. The **action plan** for facilitating graduation (June, 2006) describes the steps taken to streamline the graduation process. The items enumerated in the action plan include developing indicators for monitoring graduation progress, and seeking feedback from a team of CSU peer reviewers to discuss best practices for facilitating graduation. The October 2006 CSU Peer Review team visit on the subject of facilitating graduation is outlined in the exit meeting notes (see <http://www.sonoma.edu/aa/10.16.06> **Exit Meeting Notes.pdf**). The reviewer team noted some of SSU's strengths that contribute to its good graduation rate, but also noted some significant improvements that could be made. The review team made specific suggestions for amelioration in some areas.

The alignment of personnel needs with the university's priorities is reflected in the work of both the Human Services and the Academic Affairs units, which oversee recruitment and hiring of non-academic and academic employees, respectively. A significant change in the faculty recruitment/hiring process began in Fall semester 2004 when SSU began using an electronic application process for faculty hiring. Since 2001, the number of faculty has grown (see also CFR 3.1).

Fiscal planning is the responsibility of the **SSU Administration & Finance** Division and this includes attempting to align budgetary needs and resources across all divisions of the university. The A&F Strategic Planning statement can be found at: **A&F CMTE**. The main committees involved in this process include the President's **Budget Advisory** Committee and a variety of committees which provide for **faculty input** into budget matters on an advisory basis.

The physical infrastructure planning needs of the university are addressed through the **SSU Administration & Finance :: Campus Reengineering Committee**, which assesses the needs of the physical plant/maintenance units, and which engages in the process of planning for new structures (e.g., the Shulz Information Center in 2000) or retrofitting existing buildings.

Campus planning for the university's technology needs is reflected in the work of the **SSU Information Technology** department (part of Administration and Finance). Evidence of the alignment of resources with campus technology needs is reflected in the workstation "refresh" program, which resulted in 102 new workstations (approximately 25%) being replaced beginning late 2006. The refresh program is proceeding with the goal of refreshing faculty and staff workstations every four years (per Katie Pierce). Another example of campus planning for technology needs is the retrofitting of the Darwin classroom building, which was completed in 2006. Before the retrofit, Darwin had two tech classrooms, two general purpose computing labs, and two Computer Science computing labs. The retrofit resulted in a gain of seven new "tech" classrooms, for a total of 9 tech classrooms in this building, with 2 computer labs dedicated to Computer Science and no general purpose computing lab (per Bruce Carpe). Evidence of IT's awareness of the critical importance of information security is their establishment of a dedicated Information Security Officer position in 2007.

Like many institutions, the Sonoma State University's planning and resource allocation strategies are partially dependent on factors which can fluctuate each year (e.g., the California Legislature's budget priorities). The alignment of resources and mission is a critical goal of the highest importance, and because of this the process of identifying and allocating resources to be used to support SSU's mission is a complex and sometimes contentious process. Nonetheless, the "alignment" process continues to generate thoughtful commentary and input from a variety of stakeholders on how best to accomplish alignment, for instance as evidenced in this position paper **Core Academic Priorities Require University-wide Solutions**.