Choosing Our Direction

Strategies for the Future

Final Document

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At Owens Community College, strategic planning is as much about celebrating successes as it is about planning for the future. From a technical institute with only 200 students in 1965, to a community college with well over 40,000 students in 2004, Owens has emerged as a leader in higher education with skyrocketing enrollments, expanded programs, and new state-of-the-art facilities.

With over 27 consecutive semesters of enrollment growth, Owens Community College is the fastest-growing higher education institution in the State of Ohio and one of the fastest growing in the nation. In fact, since its conversion to a comprehensive community college in 1994, Owens has more than doubled its enrollment.

In response to student and community needs, the College now offers more than 160 academic programs on the Toledo- and Findlay-area Campuses, and facilities have expanded to meet those needs. For example, the Center for Fine and Performing Arts represents the sixth new building added to the Toledo-area Campus since 1994, following the Fire Science/Law Enforcement Center; Library; Audio/Visual Classroom Center; Math/Science Center; and Student Health and Activities Center. The new 60-acre Findlay-area Campus is now under construction and will open to students in the fall of 2005. Also, the College will break ground in the spring of 2004 for the new Fire & Police Training Center for Homeland Security.

Although higher education subsidies have seriously declined, Owens Community College remains among the State’s most fiscally sound institutions. At the same time, tuition is among the lowest in the State.

Clearly, much of Owens’ growth has occurred during the last decade, and the rapid changes that define the College require thoughtful and collaborative approaches in order to ensure future success.

Toward that end, this Strategic Plan is about organizational vitality. It is about students and discovering new avenues toward meeting students’ needs. It is about enhancing our community connections and partnerships. The vision here is collaborative, innovative and evolutionary, a pathway to continuous improvement, designed to grow and change with our students’ and our communities’ needs.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the installation of the current college administration, Owens Community College has embarked upon a direction that will help ensure the future success and sustainability of the college. One of the principal initiatives of the new administration was to restructure a formalized process for strategic planning at Owens Community College. This program was designed to enhance and capitalize upon the efforts of the Institutional Effectiveness Process (IEP), which was established in 1993. While the IEP was a focused attempt to offer a systematic framework into the planning and program evaluation of college operations, its application was limited to the Academic Divisions.

The President’s vision was to expand the IEP model to a broader campus wide program. Therefore, in July of 2001, the new president created and empanelled the College Planning Council to provide a multidisciplinary and “grass roots” action team. This council was asked to develop a plan that would provide a comprehensive planning function as well as to address the North Central Association’s concern for the college to form a “comprehensive planning process linked with institutional effectiveness and student assessment.”

Following an exhaustive process to better understand the environment, community and marketplace, as well as examine internal capabilities and external forces, the Owens Community College Planning Council resolved to identify opportunities to create a strategic advantage in the postsecondary education market. To that end, the Council, with the support and approval of the College Administration and the Board of Trustees, moves to advance its strategic plan Choosing Our Direction. This plan will put forward and promote six central strategies to shape the future direction of the college.

1. Focus on Student Success
2. Improve Organizational Vitality
3. Promote Institutional Advancement
4. Improve Responsiveness and Increase Collaboration
5. Foster a Collaborative Culture
6. Develop a Delivery Strategy for Service Regions

These six strategies present a broad and encompassing agenda for the future course of Owens Community College. These defined business strategies represent the thoughtful priorities of an extensive and valued collection of backgrounds and experiences.

To offer greater clarity in the announcement of the plan and assure its subsequent success, the Council identified and designed a number of program objectives to help
advance these strategies. These objectives offer a clear path on how to successfully achieve each of the college’s strategies. Designed into each of these objectives will be a number of measurable indices (Key Performance Indicators) to allow the systematic monitoring of the plan’s implementation.

This ongoing monitoring and reporting of the plan’s implementation will assure that the strategy remains a dynamic process that will be responsive to the current and future needs of the college.

Completing a comprehensive approach to the planning process, the Council provided the strategic, tactical and operational components to planning when it designed specific Action Steps to direct the implementation teams. These Action Steps represent the actual measures by which the college will realize each objective. These steps have been formalized into a comprehensive project plan with measurable goals and the responsible parties acknowledged, thereby allowing effective project management.
CHOOSING OUR DIRECTION

The Plan

The strategic plan developed for Owens Community College provides the framework for future operations and services to be provided by the college. As such, it is a comprehensive strategy that recognizes the need to be sensitive and responsive to all of the college’s customers, both internal and external. This plan is formulated and articulated in the six strategies described below. These strategies were designed to address certain operational and services limitations that were identified through an in-depth and responsive Gap Analysis. It should be recognized that the aforementioned Gap Analysis was conducted in 2002, and as such, certain recognized issues have already received immediate attention.

FOCUS ON STUDENT SUCCESS

“We will identify and value all students and connect them to their academic and career goal through instruction, services and experiences that exceed their expectations.”

As a critical strategy, Focus on Student Success recognizes that the college’s primary function is to serve and meet the needs of our student population. Through the Division of Student Services, Owens Community College has acknowledged its responsibility to its students. This division is charged with offering a comprehensive array of services including; academic counseling, instructional services, financial assistance, as well as career counseling and development. The intent of this strategy is to formulate and provide a partnership between Owens Community College and the student to assure the student’s success in their established academic goals.

Through the work of the College Planning Council, areas of concern and focus (Gap Analysis) were identified to address the value and college need for the strategy, Focus on Student Success.

- Transfer Service
  Inadequate services for transfer students
  Need for a Transfer Center to centralize articulation agreements, facilitate transfer concerns, evaluate transcripts, answer questions
  Lack of adequate services translated into lost opportunities to support student success
A number of applied associate degree graduates lack the opportunity to complete baccalaureate studies due to lack of credit transferability

- Advising
  Need for more full-time advisors to service growing enrollment
  Need to formalize orientation for new students
  Need to decentralize responsibility for assessing experiential credit to the academic advisor

- Retention
  Enhance student engagement
  Large population of undecided students (undeclared majors), lack of connectivity, impedes student success
  First generation college students are twice as likely to drop out, need for more interventions to support them
  Gap exists between high school graduates academic competencies and collegiate level competencies to enter OCC
  Gap exists between services offered and knowledge of incoming students
  Late registration policy does not support student success
  New faculty must be aware that enrollment and retention are viewed as college-wide responsibilities
  Need to provide more support for college life issues and be more flexible in responding to diverse needs
  Need for student mentoring and tutoring

- Improve access
  Lack of shuttle transportation on the Toledo Campus and between the Toledo and Findlay Campuses
  Toledo campus shuttle only services downtown Toledo
  Scheduling of classes/facility usage needs to be synchronized with availability of parking
  Student accessibility to part-time faculty is a problem

- Assessment
  Need for more and better student outcomes measures
  Lack of a means to assess computer literacy among students
  Need for more background data on incoming students in order to identify determinants of student success
Need for some method of assessment other than proficiency testing
Lack of means to systematically gather information about withdrawals—need for a much more aggressive approach to finding out why students leave
Need for a mechanism to track patterns so that predictive factors can be identified

As Owens Community College embarks upon this partnership with each one of its students, this strategy recognizes the need to effectively and accurately measure their acquired knowledge and proficiency in their established program. To address the above concerns and better serve the needs of its students, the College will Focus on Student Success through the pursuit of the following objectives:

**Objectives**
- Establish a strong student connection with the college that begins prior to the first day of class and continues beyond completion
- Establish a comprehensive process for assessing student learning outcomes

**IMPROVE ORGANIZATIONAL VITALITY**

“We will continuously monitor, evaluate and align available resources to ensure that the college has a highly trained, competitively compensated and diverse workforce that has adequate supports and logical processes and procedures to accomplish their missions.”

In an effort to be a competent and valuable organization for postsecondary education, the Council recognized the need to advance and further the college’s Organizational Vitality. This strategy supports the college’s need to be the most effective organization it can be, with a clear and rational plan. This begins with clearly enunciating a vision and mission for the college and following with the most productive operations to support that vision.

The strategy will endeavor to advance the proficiency of all college operations and to integrate them into one collective process. The intent is to provide a systematic measurement and evaluation of operations so as to allow routine assessment and appropriate performance improvement. Through a carefully designed benchmarking process, the strategy will allow Owens Community College to further strive to be a “Best Performer” in the postsecondary education marketplace.

To further Organizational Vitality, the Council focused on identified concerns to direct their efforts.
- Mission, vision, values and structure
Align mission, vision, values, & structure
Establish a vision for the Findlay Campus
Community suggests that OCC’s mission should emphasize technical education
Toledo and Findlay Campus differences need to be acknowledged and valued as an asset
The need for “purpose statements” in the current mission statement is not clear
Mission needs to be reworded to speak to the needs of the market, expectations of and for students, and anticipated market trends
Lack of focus—college tries to be all things to all people—need for focus on things that OCC can do best
Vision and values statements need to be developed
Role of distance education is not addressed in the mission statement

• Integrated planning
  Lack of systematic integrated planning and thinking
  Integrate initiatives:
    Technology Plan
    Master Facility Plan
    Strategic Marketing Plan
    Expanded use of technology
    Strategic HR Planning
  Need to use the current planning process and a foundation for forming and continuously reviewing a strategy for the college

• Integrated systems and processes
  Need to seriously look at how OCC does business
  Need to streamline systems and processes
  Need for an integrated strategic approach to process and systems development
  Integrate systems including Curriculum Development, Planning & Budgeting
  Credit/non-credit
  Align policies and procedures
Need for an internal process to initiate and develop new ideas

- Engage in rigorous assessment
  Need for organizational performance measures
  Need for comprehensive student outcomes measures
  Need for a central information clearinghouse
  Decisions need to be data driven as opposed to opinion driven
  Need to identify transfer students’ perceptions of OCC
  Need for more comprehensive program and service review, with published criteria for evaluation, mechanisms to identify needed changes, performance expectations, etc.

- Establish and implement a comprehensive technology plan
  Gap in recruitment, retention, and compensation for information technology staff—OCC is not competitive in market
  Lack of formal strategic technology plan
  Technology demands exceed the college’s human and fiscal resources
  Mismatch between competency-based instruction and delivery capabilities; delivery systems do not address competencies
  Lack of knowledge about and use of technology by faculty and staff
  Insufficient training
  Need better support to be able to use technology effectively in the classroom, in teaching, and in service delivery
  College needs to address the technology “haves” and/or ”have nots” across departments, divisions, service units and campuses
  Need for more faculty training, orientation and awareness
  Need for a Chief Information Officer
  Distance learning and alternative forms of delivery need to be expanded—in time it should be possible to complete an entire degree online
  Competitors’ online services such as student registration and payment create expectations that the College cannot currently meet

With a recognized need to be the best it can be, Owens Community College will pursue a strategy to Improve Organizational Vitality, and thereby better serve its students, faculty,
employees and community. To further this strategy, the Council has identified the following objectives:

**Objectives**

- Revamp the College's Mission, Vision and Values Statements and align the College's organizational structure accordingly
- Develop and implement an integrated human resources plan that includes addressing the needs of part-time faculty and staff
- Establish and implement a comprehensive information technology (IT) plan
- Integrate the information technology, master facility, and strategic human resources planning processes
- Evaluate outcomes with appropriate objective measures
- Develop and implement a comprehensive organizational diversity plan

**PROMOTE INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT**

“We will enhance our image as Northwest Ohio’s #1 Choice in higher education in order to attract additional students, increase sources of revenue and heighten community awareness of our mission.”

For Owens Community College to continue to excel and position itself as a leader in the postsecondary education business, *Promoting Institutional Advancement* was developed as a major strategy. *Promoting Institutional Advancement* focuses upon the public image and community awareness of the college. The strategy seeks to enhance the image and build awareness of Owens Community College within the local and regional community and pursue a clear “Branded” marketing approach. This initiative will serve to increase the college’s involvement with local high schools and employers, so as to market to our primary customers and supporters.

Additional efforts to develop and pursue non-traditional sources of revenue were cited as a vital function of this strategy. Working in concert with the College Foundation, this strategy will endeavor to assure the financial support and viability of the organization.

The Council identified significant opportunities for *Promoting Institutional Advancement* as a result of their following gap analysis review.

- Enhance image and increase awareness
  Community perception is that the college is not highly engaged in the community
  Community suggests wider involvement of College administrators and faculty in community activities
Too little involvement in high schools
Need for a comprehensive strategic marketing plan that establishes Owens’ “brand”
Additional resources are needed for niche marketing
Need to provide clearer awareness in the community as to what the college has to offer to support resource development (make the best kept secret the best known institution)
Need for additional data about the percentage of recent HS graduates who directly matriculate OCC
Decrease in the percentage of students coming from suburban & private schools--need to understand reasons that suburban & private school student choose 4-year institutions over 2-year colleges
18.7% students did not choose OCC because the desired program not available; need to identify what they were looking for

• Pursue non-traditional sources of revenue
  Current public policy is focused on a reduction of dollars for higher education
  There is a lack of investment from outside revenue sources
  College has not transitioned to a quality improvement paradigm to offset the affects of reduced revenue
  State of Ohio funding formula is a problem for the College
  Need to seek alternative funding through grants, technology fees, foundation, sponsored chairs, etc.
  Retention, as it is cheaper to keep current students than to recruit new ones
  Need to explore introducing technology fees
  Need to identify alternate means for resource development (private sector, local tax, revenue projections, tuition, state aid)

As the competitive marketplace for Owens Community College continues to intensify, the advancement of a positive and viable public image takes on added importance. Our students, community employers, and foundation supporters will be the groundwork of the college’s future success. To assure their active support and the College’s Institutional Advancement the Council offers the following objectives:

**Objectives**

• To establish a strong, recognizable brand for the College
• To increase awareness among the K-12 student audience
• To increase awareness among community organizations
To increase awareness among Owens' internal audience
Develop an overall fund development plan to increase revenue
To increase awareness among the business and industry audience

**IMPROVE RESPONSIVENESS AND INCREASE COLLABORATION**

“We will develop and enhance collaborations and partnerships.”

To embrace all of the dimensions of our community and serve a wide array of educational customers, a strategy to *Improve Responsiveness and Increase Collaboration* was developed by the Council. The challenge was presented to reach out and develop an ever-growing number of partnerships with schools, employers or social service agencies. This effort will broaden the college’s customer base, expand our image and visibility, as well as provide a conduit for the transfer of information regarding the educational needs of the community.

Review by the Council identified a number of issues that could be resolved through a strategy to *Improve Responsiveness and Increase Collaboration*.

- Community collaborations and partnerships
  Need to know more about the perceptions of 4-year universities toward 2-year institutions to determine whether it affects our potential to collaborate with 4-year partners
  Need for partnerships with publishers or booksellers--use their research to augment OCC’s curriculum development, monitor trends, etc.
  Need to provide more internships to become more involved in the community
  Need to work with social service agencies to address the needs of the underserved in urban areas
  Need for stronger collaborations and partnerships with K-12, business and industry, and 4-year colleges and universities
  Need to review enrichment offerings for K-12 students

- Improve College responsiveness
  Need for more systematic intelligence gathering about future skills demands
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Mismatch between competency-based instruction and delivery systems
Gap between college programs and varied business needs in each county
Need to focus on labor markets associated with each campus
Lack of assessment procedures for the unemployed
Lack of soft skills/critical thinking skills
Lack of means to provide lifelong learning opportunities to graduates and updating necessary for licensure
College is missing the opportunity to retrain people
Skilled trades/workforce need continuous review for quality improvement

To address the priority to become a more responsive organization to our community and to solicit partnerships based upon common gain, the strategy to Improve Responsiveness and Increase Collaboration will pursue the following objectives:

Objectives

- Develop and enhance strategic partnerships
- Review and modify the Advisory Committee process and structure.
- Determine student needs

FOSTER A COLLABORATIVE CULTURE

“As employees of Owens Community College, we will value, promote and create opportunities that support a collaborative culture based on the core values of trust and respect, embracing diversity, participation, open communication, innovation and risk taking, equity, and community building.”

The Council understands that one of the college’s greatest assets is the dedicated faculty and staff that daily carry out the mission of the organization. In an effort to allow the faculty and staff to more effectively perform their duties and thereby achieve job enrichment and optimal performance, a strategy to Foster a Collaborative Culture was developed. This strategy acknowledges that a work environment characterized by cooperation and mutual respect will serve to advance the goals of the organization while offering satisfaction and fulfillment to the college employees.

The Councils’ evaluation and review identified a number of issues to be addressed by a strategy to Foster a Collaborative Culture.
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- Fostering a Collaborative Culture
  Need for an environment that promotes innovation and risk taking
  Need for more effective use of internal expertise
  Need to continue to build a culture of mutual respect that is caring and sharing
  Long-term employees value the College’s technical orientation but newer employees are more focused on arts and sciences and a truly comprehensive community college
  Relationships are improving across college constituencies but there remains room for improvement
  College efforts to push decisions to the appropriate level of decision-making are working but need support
  Need for an overall/College-wide outcomes assessment process
  Core values that drive our culture (e.g. diversity) need to be defined
  Communication expectations differ greatly across constituencies but deficiencies need to be rectified
  Need to continue the transition to a participatory culture
  Need to increase participation at all levels of the organization

With a concern for cooperation and collaboration among staff and faculty, this strategy will be supported through the following objectives:

**Objectives**
- Build a culture of mutual respect
- Reassess the College's governance structure
- Push decisions to appropriate level
- Define core values
- Rectify communications deficiencies
- Continue & increase participation at all organizational levels

**DEVELOP A DELIVERY STRATEGY FOR OWENS COMMUNITY COLLEGE’S SERVICE REGION**

“We will establish a conceptualization, delivery strategy, and resource requirements for our service region.”

A part of the college’s unique success of the past has been the ability to fashion the organization to meet the current needs of its student population. Remaining sensitive to
these needs is the cornerstone of the college’s strategic edge. To **Develop a Delivery Strategy for Service Regions** remains a vital and viable part of the make up of Owens Community College. These business decisions must be and are made within the context of the optimal use of resources relative to the business return.

To develop teaching/learning models that are conducive and compatible to a superior learning experience, the Council reviewed a number of pertinent issues.

- **Determine Optimum Size for OCC**
  - Determine optimum enrollment
  - Identify delivery strategies
  - Address facilities needs
  - Classroom space is currently inadequate for the enrollment
  - Parking is limited depending on time of day
  - Students who have a class from 11-11:50 in CDT and another from 12-12:50 in CH face impossible difficulties
  - New construction needs to include appropriate consultation
  - Growth in staff (e.g. janitorial) needs to match growth in facilities
  - Need more data on whether OCC should consider locating in other regions
  - Need for a hard look at existing facilities and current usage to see how and/or what the College has can be used more optimally
  - Location of community sites and satellites needs to be reviewed

To respond to the unique and ever-changing needs of the student population, Owens Community College will endeavor to tailor programs and delivery strategies to meet the demands. To that end, the Council offers the following objectives:

**Objectives**
- Determine and define service regions
- Establish a preferred delivery model for defined target segments
- Develop an enrollment projection methodology
- Develop alternative delivery models related to an aggressive and a moderate baseline
- Detail specifics of each delivery model
SUMMARY

For the past thirty months, significant efforts and resources have been dedicated to the development of a strategic plan capable of moving Owens Community College further into a position of leadership in the postsecondary education marketplace. Developed and adopted with input from every corner of the organization, this plan shares the ownership of all who are associated with the college. Furthermore, the Board of Trustees and College Administration remains committed to this process as the development of the plan moves into implementation.

With the presentation of this document and the release this plan, Owens Community College begins a planning process that will sustain the College’s success through the future. Choosing Our Direction is more than a document, it is a process. It is the framework that advances those priorities critical to our organization as well as the ability to adapt to new forces and new priorities. With this dynamic process, we will advance a plan today, assess its impact, and redesign the plan for tomorrow.

All pertinent factors have been examined and considered allowing the vital priorities of the organization to be acknowledged in this document. With a clear and measurable plan for the future, Owens Community College embraces their current and future challenges with the knowledge that the college’s course has been thoughtfully planned and that sufficient internal resources have been identified to meet the needs. As mentioned in the Executive Summary, the Council included in the development of the plan, clearly stated Action Steps to facilitate the implementation of each strategy.

The college’s success has not been, nor will be by accident. Only by the attentive review of our priorities and plan will we be assured of the most prudent business direction.