

## **Council Plans Content and Process**

**Approved by College Council on October 31, 2005**

The governance system includes six area councils each of which is focused on a different aspect of the college. These area councils must prepare plans that will provide direction for the work of the college in a three or so year period. The directions are intended to guide the work of the college in the following years. It's expected that each Area Council plan will consist of only a few (three to five) directions. Ultimately, these directions will be submitted to the college for implementation.

“The more successful SPCs (strategic planning committee) in sum tended to be those that had struck a proper balance between lofty abstraction and preoccupation with detail. If their mandate or practice kept them on an ethereal plane, immersed in highly abstracted principles and divorced from more tangible issues, the evidence shows that such an activity could not sustain itself. Conversely, if the SPC let itself get sucked into operational details, however important it may have been for some to take them on, then the SPC in effect could not get to the business of thinking strategically- and the primary purpose for establishing an SPC went unfulfilled.”

(Strategic Governance, How to Make Big Decisions Better” Jack Schuster et al, American Council on Education. Oryx Press 1994p.185)

Council plans should be developed in the range between general, broad statements at one end of the range and detailed specific actions. The plans should provide direction and could include a few goals to help clarify the direction. It's important that these directions aim at a level of specificity that is neither too detailed nor too ethereal. It's difficult to hit that target. A good rule of thumb is, if the direction reads like an assignment to a chair/director/unit it is too detailed and, if the direction reads like an oracular saying that can be interpreted in many ways, its' too ethereal.

*Litmus test to see if the plan is at the correct level:*

1. Does the plan provide direction to the entire college? If the answer is yes, then the level is probably too broad.
2. Does the plan provide directions to an individual, a department/division, a unit, a committee? If the answer is yes, the level is probably too specific.
3. Does the plan provide direction to the college within the individual scope of the council<sup>1</sup> responsible for that area? If the answer is yes, then the level is probably just right.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the first item under the Scope of Work for the Learning Council is: Develop a strategic learning plan for instruction and learning support (includes library, instructional labs. etc).

Some examples that might help councils determine if the plans are too broad or too specific are listed below:

*Example 1:*

**Too Broad:** Help students transition from Lane and to Lane.

**Too Specific:** Expand college classes available to high school students.

**Just right:** Focus on the successful transition of high school students to Lane.

*Example 2:*

**Too Broad:** Actively contribute to diversity in our community.

**Too Specific:** Require all new staff to complete a college-approved diversity training during their first year at Lane.

**Just right:** Lane's leaders will communicate clear expectations for staff and students to create an inclusive, respectful environment.

*Example 3:*

**Too Broad:** Establish a welcoming environment at Lane.

**Too Specific:** Create a student commons on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Center Building.

**Just right:** Create an indoor space on the 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue Campus for students to gather to relax or to work in small groups.

### **Council Plans Components:**

- Identify the vision, mission or purpose of the plan and identify how the plan is aligned with the college's Strategic Directions for 04—08.
- Identify the goals/outcomes for three years.
- Identify the framework to measure outcomes that are aligned with the institutional effectiveness measures.
- Identify in the plan the midterm "checking process" to measure progress towards meeting the intended outcomes.

### **Process for developing council plans:**

- Internal scan and external scan as part of the development of the plan.
  - Internal scans should include attention to Unit Plan Initiatives related to the Council's work; review of council plans from other councils; review of the college plan (strategic directions), Board mandates.
  - External scans should include community needs; opportunities and threats; demographics of service area; economic, employment and political trends; Legislative mandates.
- Focused time in developing a draft council plan.
- Present draft plans to appropriate groups and the College Council for feedback.
- Finalize plan and forward to College Council.
- Plan forward to the president for approval.

Council plans will be known as Council Directions to provide a uniform reference to them and to distinguish them from Strategic Directions of the College which is the responsibility of College Council and unit Plans which is the responsibility of units. (Unit plans can be found on the college web site at: <http://www.lanec.edu/oiss/unitplans.html>)

Collaboration should be a guiding principle in Council work. Councils should share information, work jointly when appropriate (example: when a Council is working toward a plan that will require support from or integration with a plan by one or more other Councils.) ask each other questions, etc.

The College Council will ultimately oversee integrating the work of the Councils. Councils will interact with each other in the process of developing their Council plans /Council Directions. The College council will facilitate meetings during the year to support/facilitate sharing of planning and development; however, the Councils should take the lead in working with each other whenever appropriate.