



Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology
Strategic Plan 2015 – 2020
Approved by Faculty & Staff 5/20/15
Approved by the Board of Trustees 6/11/15

Context

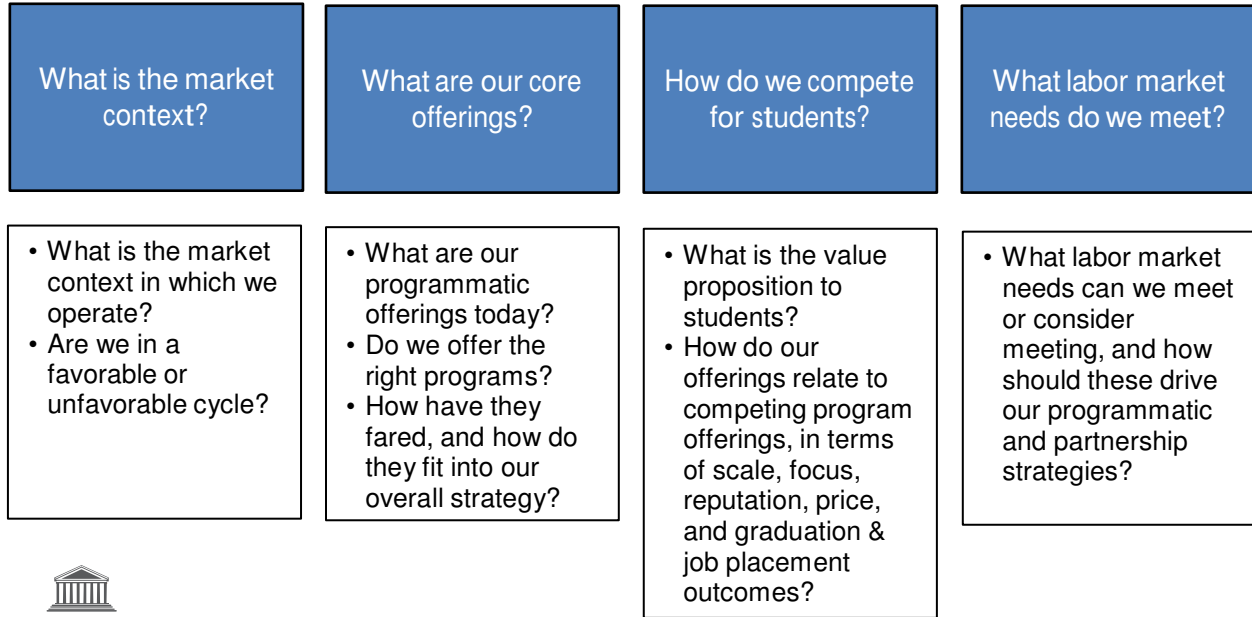
Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology (BFIT) provides higher education that incorporates hands-on technical training in over a dozen technological fields from automotive service to health information technology to manufacturing. In the 2014-15 academic year, the college enrolled about 500 young men and women from the greater Boston area. BFIT provides an exceptional value for individuals who want to develop technical skills that are in high demand along with 21st century workplace skills such as communication, critical thinking, information literacy and professionalism. Faculty and staff provide intensive and individualized support that promotes high levels of success. The college's high rate of graduation and placement along with moderate tuition and extensive financial aid provide an excellent return on students' investment of time and money.

Franklin attracts determined students, who arrive with varying degrees of preparation to excel in college. In response, Franklin provides academic and other services to help each student make a successful transition to college, to thrive while in school, and to move into good paying work or advanced education. These services include a free additional semester for academically underprepared students; unlimited free tutoring by faculty; an early alert system to facilitate identification, tracking, and management of students' challenges; and social supports for students experiencing personal difficulties.

Following an industry-wide drop in enrollment at two-year colleges in 2010, the college has been growing—though not as fast as employment in the industries served by the college and not fast enough to permit reinvestment in the college's facilities and programs. In 2014, through the generosity of a board member, the college engaged the Parthenon Group to research the college's strategic position and to explore options for growth. This planning discussion coincided with a larger public discussion regarding the affordability and value of higher education, the lack of alignment between Massachusetts' public two-year colleges and employers, and the commonwealth's future workforce needs in technology fields.

During the 2014 research and planning effort, the college and Parthenon reviewed workforce and market data; compared internal processes at the college with those of competitors; and interviewed students, graduates, employers, and other stakeholders. The process also involved a board level committee, a subcommittee of faculty and staff as well joint meetings and community wide forums over the course of nine months. The findings provided objective validation of BFIT's identity as a college of opportunity, clearly outlined the market opportunities for BFIT's core strengths, and provided recommendations for strategic

improvements that can advance the college’s mission. The engagement provided the college with significant data that supports a strategic framework for goal setting for the next five years. Here is a summary of the core principles that guided decision-making in this strategic planning process:



Individual departments have also developed key tactics that align with the strategic framework described. These tactics are assessed regularly by senior leadership level. BFIT’s budget is developed annually by college leadership following a set of assumptions aligned with the strategic plan, with input from all departments.

Basic Findings

This strategic planning process has affirmed the 21st century relevance of the college’s basic purpose and mission as an institution of economic opportunity and personal empowerment.

Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology (BFIT) is an affordable, urban college serving the Boston region and committed to student success and career readiness in technology fields. Through personalized support, hands-on learning, and industry-informed curricula, BFIT prepares graduates for work, life-long learning, and citizenship.

Labor market trends confirm that the program offerings of the college provide entrance and advancement in industries with growing workforce needs. These fields provide career paths with the prospect of pay that will support middle class families. In several areas, the demand for workers is growing faster than the college, suggesting that BFIT should aggressively seek to expand its partnerships with employers.

Against a national backdrop of decreasing college enrollment and demographic shifts that reflect a decrease in white middle-class high school graduates from college-going families, BFIT has seen a slight increase in students over the last several years (11% from 2011 to 2014). And although the competition by colleges for students is intense, the city of Boston and its

metropolitan area is home to many thousand young people with exactly the background that would especially benefit from the advantages provided by the affordable, supportive and work-oriented education provided by BFIT.

The Parthenon Group captured this assessment with a clear recommendation: BFIT can succeed over the next five years by focusing on its existing core as a way to build incremental enrollment. This core includes the following components:

- Core Market – Greater Boston
- Core Pedagogy – Hands-on instruction with strong student support
- Core Approach – Employer partnerships

Such a strategy is distinct from other options common in the sector, such as recruiting in a larger geographic area and diversifying academic offerings.

While this strategy recommendation builds on existing competencies, Parthenon pointed out that historic under-investment in marketing compromise the college's ability to attract a larger pool of prospective students. In contrast, a small number of non-profit private institutions in New England have been very successful employing outreach tactics akin to those of the for-profit trade schools and colleges. Our planning team concluded that such assertive outreach could form a superb combination with BFIT's excellent value.

The college also needs to consider its options for continuing operations in a building with significant deferred maintenance. Student interviews and focus groups revealed that those who chose Franklin find the physical plant adequate for learning, but not pleasant or attractive. Meanwhile, faculty have continually expressed concern about outdated or deficient technology and inefficiently designed classrooms in addition to other issues which all stem from the outdated facilities. Although the college needs to form a longer-term plan for its building, short-term investments should be targeted and cost-effective in enhancing the learning environment, addressing the faculty's technological and educational needs in classrooms and labs while also attracting students and partners.

The mission of BFIT attracts faculty committed to improving outcomes for the college's diverse student body. Yet, the technological focus of the curriculum attracts practitioners who generally have the opportunity to earn more practicing rather than teaching their craft. The slow growth of the college has not allowed faculty salaries to rise even in line with other colleges. Thus, the college faces a strategic risk of the erosion of its expertise and faces immediate challenges in recruiting faculty. Additionally, as changes and advancements occur in technology fields at a rapid rate and new methods of teaching are continually being introduced that address different learning styles in newer generations of college students, the faculty require leadership in order to continually learn and advance in the areas of their specific expertise while also gaining academic development opportunities focusing on new and unique methods of teaching and educating as a whole.

In short, the college needs to invest in marketing and industry outreach to grow its student body. Incremental revenue can be applied to most pressing facilities needs and shore up faculty salaries.

Next Steps, Key Strategies and Goals

The “core” strategy assumes incremental enrollment growth coupled with significant expansion of employer partnerships. Both of these will require an investment in outreach. In turn, this investment requires intentional focus on philanthropy. Thus, the Board of Trustees has launched the Accelerator Campaign to raise \$6 million over five years. This fund will support the following tactics:

1. **Staff, external services and other resources** to carry out an intentional, deep marketing effort within greater Boston as the most efficient approach to increasing enrollment **with a goal of 268 additional students by FY 2020**. This effort should be a collaborative venture that integrates Admissions, a new Marketing Department, Employer Partnerships and senior management. Specific tactics include:
 - a. Deepen the relationship with the Boston Public Schools at an administrative level, beyond the individual school guidance counselor level.
 - b. Grow partnerships with community-based agencies to create a pipeline outside of traditional referral sources.
 - c. Create a multimedia marketing plan that reaches the whole potential demographic (18- 24 year olds) in a 25 miles radius.
2. **Increase employer partnerships** in relevant fields to achieve **placement of at least 95% of graduates** and expand internships and other workplace learning. The college will target key large employers and employer groups who commit to partnering with Franklin on curriculum development and job placement with a goal of 66 partnerships by 2020.
 - a. Revitalize departmental industry advisory groups.
 - b. Increase availability of summer internships.
 - c. Expand workplace-based learning experiences (job shadowing, site visits) for students in every program, and campus-based volunteer opportunities for industry professionals.
3. **Continued investment in the systems and personnel that support retention and student success** in pursuit of a graduation rate of at least 70 percent by 2020.
 - a. Enhance assessment incoming students and build a rigorous model of student risks to guide deployment of improved coaching and other resources to promote student development.
 - b. Increase usability and sophistication of student tracking and intervention.
 - c. Expand availability of college-friendly term-time employment.

Vision & Goals

The management and trustees of Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology hold the following vision for the success of this strategy. Through expanded marketing & outreach and continuous improvement, by 2020:

- Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology (BFIT) is a leader in developing the technical workforce to meet evolving industry needs;
- BFIT's effectiveness in delivering industry-relevant, work-ready curricula to a diverse student body is compelling to students, philanthropists, talent, and industry; and
- BFIT is financially strong and growing, and its physical plant is stable and attractive.

Conclusion

The Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology was founded upon the bequest of Benjamin Franklin, to create opportunities to train the young people of Boston in the trades. With cooperation of the City of Boston and support from philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, the Franklin Foundation opened the school in 1908 to continue Franklin's aims into the 20th century. These aims, to develop an educated and productive citizenry through training in practical arts, remain relevant in the 21st century.

The region and the nation has seen a decline in opportunity for young people to find work that provides upward mobility while industrial growth is limited by lack of suitably educated workers. By expanding outreach to community, potential students, and employers, Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology will continue to grow its ability to close both of these gaps through its strong student support and industry-informed curricula.