

NEASC STANDARD TWO PLANNING AND EVALUATION

The institution undertakes planning and evaluation appropriate to its needs to accomplish and improve the achievement of its mission and purposes. It identifies its planning and evaluation priorities and pursues them effectively.

DESCRIPTION

Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology has been proactive in planning for the College at multiple levels over the past five years, resulting in an overall process that is more effectual, particularly with the 2007/08 development of the College's first 5-year strategic plan. The 2007/08 Strategic Plan was created by a committee consisting of the College's Board of Director's, and members of the College community, and was reviewed and approved by the full BFIT community. The plan was updated in 2009, and again in spring 2011 with the installation of a new College President. Utilizing the strategic plan as a roadmap, members of the BFIT community continue to evaluate and revise goals, policies and procedures to identify and prioritize objectives, and to achieve the mission and purposes of the College.

The College President began reviewing the 2009 Strategic Plan in January 2011, which involved meeting with the Academic Chairs and Administrative Directors of the College's departments, and with the Board of Directors, to discuss ideas about the future vision of the College and the planning process. In addition to those meetings, the President created a President's Administrative Council (PAC), with whom he meets bi-weekly to discuss the College's day-to-day operations, vision and planning. Based on the gathered data, the President drafted the 2011-2016 Strategic Plan and presented it to the PAC, to the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors, and then to the entire Board, where the plan was approved and presented to the full College community at a forum in March 2011.

The College has consistently evaluated and updated its Mission and Vision Statement, allowing it to guide the core values of the College. This began with the 2007/08 strategic planning process, and more recently included a day-long workshop where representatives from the BFIT community gathered to evaluate the goals of the College and update the mission, vision, and values (see Standard One). Consistent evaluation such as this has culminated in a set of core principles that are representative of the goals included in the 2011-2016 Strategic Plan.

An outcome of strategic planning has been the creation of new processes for evaluation such as the Academic Program Review and the Student Learning Outcome Assessment that were both formally implemented in 2007/08. More recently, administrative departments have created tactical plans with goals and objectives that serve to meet the vision of the 2011-2016 Strategic Plan.

With the hiring of a new CFO in early 2010, a process of formalizing financial planning, and working with the President to manage the 2011 planning process was established. Budgets, including the first capital

budget, were created to support the strategic plan. The 2011-16 Strategic Plan also includes a five-year financial plan, with projections, showing the long-term financial viability and stability of the College. Multiyear financial planning is an area that the PAC has begun to address, beginning with the inclusion of the five-year financial projections as a long term budgeting process as stated in the strategic plan. The goals set forth in the strategic plan work to “*develop and adopt a financial model that is predictable, repeatable and sustainable.*” The new CFO, President, and PAC have also begun to discuss long-term financial planning, as well as discuss the evaluation of the 2011-16 Strategic Plan for internal and external opportunities and constraints.

In 2010, all departments were asked to create departmental budgets which would serve as a guide for the year. The budgeting process occurs at the administrative, departmental, and academic department levels. Academic budgets are determined in consultation with the Dean of Academic Affairs and are based on department needs to fulfill program outcomes. Administrative budgets are developed based on the financial requirements to meet the goals and objectives of each department. All budget planning is in keeping with the mission of the College.

The College has continued to focus on technology planning since the NEASC Focus visit in 2009, and has identified it as a priority in the 2011-16 Strategic Plan, stating in section 3.3.4 that on an ongoing basis the College will, “*improve the Information Technology and instructional technology infrastructure.*” To that end, the College has outsourced all IT functions, and entered in to a formal contract with CMIT Solutions, with the company’s owner acting as the Director of Information Technology at BFIT. The IT Director works in accordance with the College’s Information Technology Advisory Committee (ITAC), whose purpose is to review and make recommendations to the College administration concerning policies and procedures for developing and managing information technology for instruction, communication, institutional data and research, and the needs of the campus as a whole. In its advisory role the committee is responsible for strategic technology planning. The committee comprises representatives from both internal and external IT personnel, campus management information systems, and elected members of the BFIT staff and faculty. Because of the committee’s recommendations in 2009, the student e-mail system was revised, the student portal was created, and faculty computers and projectors were installed in many classrooms. Additional details regarding the accomplishments of CMIT Solutions and future planning are available in their FY10 Annual Report to the College. Periodically faculty and staff have provided feedback regarding the effectiveness of CMIT Solutions, and concerns are addressed by ITAC.

In an effort to plan and allocate resources within the college, the Office of Career Services conducts exit surveys and 6 month post graduation surveys of graduates. Information like employment, pay rate, related to field, and/or transfer to continue education is acquired. Data is compiled and put into a report. The report allows verifiable information, showing what students have gained as a result of their education, as well as evidence of graduate success. The information is shared with Department Chairs, faculty, and administration. Department Chairs use the information when conducting APR (Academic Program Review) and for planning and resource allocation. (See Standard 4 for details) A general statement of the college’s placement rate is located on the landing page of the college’s website. If the

public inquires more information regarding placement and rates, details are provided by the Office of Career Services. (See Standard 10 for details)

To address the planning for infrastructure and deferred maintenance concerns, a committee comprised of faculty, staff, administration, board of director members, and industry experts was organized and met on several occasions in 2010. An outcome of their work was to commission the firm of BLW Engineers, Inc. to undertake a comprehensive infrastructure study and determine the most pressing needs to address deferred maintenance. The findings of BLW Engineers, Inc. were presented to the Board of Directors in January 2011. The prioritization of needs and the undertaking of specific projects is an effort in progress as financing becomes available (see Standard 8 for details).

APPRAISAL

Strengths

- In 2007 the College began its strategic planning process that continues to include the input and evaluation of the full BFIT community. The process has been fluid throughout, has not veered from the College's overall mission, and has culminated in a strong 5-year strategic plan that guides administrative and academic functions of the College.
- Academically, two essential evaluation processes have been established, the Academic Program Review and Student Learning Outcome Assessment. The Faculty Academic Advisory Committee (FAAC) developed the Academic Program Review and the first programs were reviewed in academic year 2007/08. The process has since expanded to include external evaluation for every department. Student Learning Outcome Assessment has been in place at the College since 2005. Every department must include quantitative and qualitative data in their assessments, as well as report on and evaluate how College-wide Initiatives are being met within their programs.
- The Admissions Department created and implemented action plans in several key areas: expanding the College's articulation agreements; continuing to increase new student enrollment; and establishing a regular evaluation process for all aspects of enrollment management. Improving retention rates has also been targeted with the November 2010 establishment of a Retention Committee. This committee is charged with developing and implementing a Strategic Student Retention Plan which reflects a major goal of the 2011-16 Strategic Plan of raising the graduation rate to 70% by 2016.
- The addition of a CFO in spring 2010 has addressed the College's need for a formal and organized approach for budgeting its resources and the process has been streamlined to include departmental planning.
- In spring 2010 the College updated and standardized the faculty evaluation process. This includes a standard evaluation form and process, with yearly reviews of full-time faculty by department chairs, faculty self-evaluations, reviews of academic department chairs by the Dean of Academic Affairs and

reviews of the Dean of Academic Affairs by academic department chairs. In an ongoing effort to improve the quality of services provided by the Department of Student Affairs, the Dean of Students conducts annual personnel evaluations encompassing not only individual accomplishments of the department directors but also departmental goals and achievements in their specific areas. With the hiring of a part-time Director of Human Resources in spring 2011, all evaluation processes will be reviewed.

- Student course evaluations have been reworked and integrated with the Course Management System (CAMS) to create a more effective method for reporting data to department chairs and instructors. Course evaluations are used in the faculty promotion process, by department chairs in evaluating course success from the student's viewpoint, and by faculty to improve teaching and course content.
- The College is strengthening competitive standing within the higher education marketplace with an assessment and revision of financial aid awarding methodology. The College has reorganized recruiting efforts to target market strongholds and perceived new opportunities. Each Admissions Department staff member has specific territorial responsibilities. When finances permit, the College will hire a Director of Marketing to lead and implement the branding, marketing, and communications efforts.

Concerns

- Through methods such as the APR and the CAMS system, the College has improved its ability to gather data over the past few years. However, there continues to be challenges assessing the data and results of data collection are not consistently coordinated and utilized for improved planning.
- The College needs to develop improved methods for communicating inter-departmentally regarding resource allocation, operational plans and personnel.
- Though multiyear planning goals have begun with the 2011-16 Strategic Plan, more detailed evaluation is needed to better understand the analysis of internal and external opportunities and constraints.
- The graduate response rate to the college's post-graduate surveys is currently low. Follow-up for detailed feedback requires more time and human resources in order to produce timely placement statistics.
- The Development Office was reestablished in 2008 to achieve the fundraising and grants initiatives of the College. The Development Office achieved 78% of its goal to raise 1.4 million in 2009/10. To improve their success rate, the 2011-16 Strategic Plan states specifically in section 3.1.3 that, "*the Development Office must present a detailed annual plan with mission-based goals to expand*

financial support from foundations, individuals, governments and alumni. Administration and all Directors must support the implementation of this plan.”

- There is no consistent tool by which technology planning and implementation is assessed across the College community to ensure the needs of all constituencies are being met.

Projection

- A system will be developed by which administrative, operational, and departmental plans and goals will be communicated by departmental and administrative leaders college-wide.
- To enhance the College’s ability to assess its long and short term planning goals, including analysis of internal and external opportunities and constraints, and to share information among multiple constituencies within the College, BFIT will hire an institutional research coordinator as budgetary funding permits.
- The majority of the College’s academic programs have been through an Academic Program Review, with the exception of the newest programs. A schedule for second reviews and for new program reviews will be implemented. The expansion of this evaluation process will help strengthen institutional effectiveness.
- The Department of Student Affairs plans to administer exit interview surveys to students at the end of the academic year, beginning spring 2012, to gauge not only their successes in achieving their stated goals but also how effectively these goals aligned with the students' experience across the Department of Student Affairs. Continued refinement and administration of the existing surveys is also planned.
- A new position of Assistant Director (full time personnel) has been approved and presently recruiting. Projected time to have position filled is September 1, 2011.
- In fall 2011 the ITAC committee will research and create a formal tool to be utilized regularly by the entire community which measures the effectiveness of CMIT Solutions in meeting broad based and individual needs, and evaluates the technological infrastructure of the College.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The College recognizes the importance of efficient and effective planning and evaluation in overall institutional effectiveness and has made significant progress in planning and evaluating over the past five years. Data is used to achieve the strategic goals of the College based on the 2011-16 Strategic Plan.