History

In 2007, the Division of Student Affairs at Trinity University committed to the development of a strategic plan. With a long history of highly-functioning units and functional areas, the division was merely a sum of its parts. While there were understood commitments to student service, support, development, and education, there was no unifying plan. The Student Affairs plan, for better or worse, was untethered: there was no campus strategic plan in place to connect strategies.

The division crafted and launched the strategic plan in 2008, with the guidance of the leadership team and the involvement of all members of the staff. The heart of the plan included a vision statement, a new mission, learning outcomes, and strategy. Additionally, the plan was accompanied by the development of a Divisional Assessment Team with representatives from all areas. The success of the plan hinged on the work of this important committee, which aided tremendously in strategic planning, implementation, and assessment.

Goals and Measures of Success

The Student Affairs strategic plan specified four goals and one or more measures of success for each goal. As described below, five of the eight measures of success were achieved.

Goal 1: Integrate curricular and co-curricular learning through programs and services.

Measures of Success:

- By 2013, five comprehensive strategies will be implemented to communicate the Student Affairs Common Learning Outcomes to faculty.
  - This measure of success was not achieved although several strategies were employed. First, the strategic plan was posted on the Web page and shared with all members of the faculty. Second, annual reports, including the strategic plan, were shared with the faculty electronically. Finally, a three-step plan was developed to send video to the faculty. The first was a video ambush that asked selected professors if they knew the learning outcomes (they didn’t). This was distributed to the faculty with a list of the outcomes. The second video featured Student Affairs staff members muddling through their version of the outcomes. This was also distributed. The third and final video was to feature faculty, describing with great articulation, the learning outcomes. The final video was abandoned. It was clear that the outcomes were not memorable and that the faculty was either unresponsive or negative about the videos.
- By 2013, 50% of all new or redeveloped programs will have at least one faculty partner.
  - This measure of success was not achieved, although collaborations with faculty expanded during 2008-2013. A review of Assessment Summaries for the 42
strategies that entailed new and redeveloped programs indicated that 8 (19%) had faculty partners. A review of the assessment summaries also indicated that many of these 42 strategies were not amenable to a faculty partner. A goal of 50% faculty partnership was unrealistic; those who specified this measure of success probably could not have envisioned the diversity of strategies that would ensue.

Goal 2: Develop global citizenship via intercultural competency and a commitment to service.

*Measures of Success:*

- By 2013, at least eight programs related to global citizenship will take students outside the borders of Trinity University. Specifically, two will be national, two international, and four in the local or regional area.
  - This measure of success was achieved. There were three national Alternative Spring Breaks (Washington DC, San Francisco, New Orleans), four international Alternative Spring Breaks (Dominican Republic and three years to Dominica), and four local or regional service programs in San Antonio and Brownsville/Matamoros.
- By 2013, 75% of students will identify one behavior change related to Common Learning Outcomes C1-C6 [the Intercultural Understanding and Diversity cluster of CLOs].
  - This measure of success was not achieved. Indeed, there was no attempt to assess this outcome due to the difficulty of its assessment.
- By 2013, 75% of students in post-service evaluations will show measured growth related to increased knowledge of a particular social issue.
  - This measure of success was achieved. Of the 14 service programs took place, 9 of the programs’ assessments included a question about increased knowledge of a particular social issue, with 82% of respondents replying affirmatively. The absence of an assessment of this outcome for five service programs was an oversight during the process of creating the assessment instrument.

Goal 3: Nurture leadership development through programming that is rooted in the theoretical framework of the Social Change Model of Leadership Development.

*Measure of Success:*

- By 2013, 75% of leadership development programming will be rooted in the Social Change Model of Leadership Development.
  - This measure of success was achieved. All leaderships programs utilized the SCMLD. Those programs are Leadership Academic (an academic course), Sophomore Leadership Initiative, Mission: Change, Student Organization Training, Student Leadership Conference, and Community Leader Training.

Goal 4: Develop Common Learning Outcomes and utilize assessment techniques to measure student learning.

*Measures of Success:*

- All departments are measuring the CLOs of at least 80% of their programs and services.
This measure of success was achieved. All of the 42 strategies that entailed new and redeveloped strategies related to programs and services promoted and assessed one or more CLOs.

- Through data integration, the division of Student Affairs can demonstrate student learning on each of the CLOs.
  - This measure of success was achieved, but barely. There was wide variation in the number of programs that promoted the 24 CLOs. Four CLOs were promoted in only one program each at the low end of the frequency distribution whereas eight CLOs were promoted in 10 or more programs at the high end of the frequency distribution. The following section will specify the 24 CLOs and their distribution across programs were outcomes on CLOs were assessed.

**The Common Learning Outcomes**

The 24 CLOs were clustered into four themes: Personal and Leadership Development, Health and Wellness, Intercultural Understanding and Diversity, and Social Responsibility. Some CLOs were broad (e.g., A1, “Demonstrate identity development . . .”) whereas others were narrowly focused (e.g., B2, “Describe safe sexual health practices”). Consequently, during the course of five years, the number of programs that promoted each of the 24 CLOs varied widely. Here are the CLOs:

**A. Personal and Leadership Development**
1. Demonstrate identity development through the articulation and/or integration of personal values, beliefs and attitudes.
2. Articulate a situation or experience that demonstrates how individual actions supported expressed values or beliefs.
3. Identify completion of a set goal.
4. Name the specific contributions of group/team members related to completion of a particular goal.
5. Learn to create shared aims and values for a group.
6. Demonstrate conflict management skills.
7. Establish meaningful priorities through effective time management.
8. Demonstrate practical competence through acquisition of knowledge and skills, and its application to life management and career development.

**B. Health and Wellness**
1. Define the essential concepts for achieving optimal levels of fitness and nutrition.
2. Describe safe sexual health practices.
3. Utilize safe sexual health practices.
4. Name the consequences of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use on themselves and the community.
5. Identify signs and causes of mental health concerns characteristic of college students.
7. Make informed choices that result in healthy behavior.

**C. Intercultural Understanding and Diversity**
1. Identify various dimensions of diversity that includes race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability and age.
2. Be aware of multiple cultures in the community that are different from one’s own.
3. Seek out information and or experiences to increase knowledge about at least one culture.
4. Articulate the benefits of a culturally diverse local and global community.
5. Demonstrate an increased willingness to discuss, participate in conversation or activity about a topic that is considered difficult or uncomfortable.
6. Learn the basic skills of ally development.

D. Social Responsibility
1. Identify contemporary social issues.
2. Articulate how individual and collective actions have an impact on local and global communities.
3. Engage in action for positive change in the community, region, nation, or world.

Each year of the strategic plan, new and redeveloped programs that promoted one or more CLOs were included as strategies for that year. In addition, CLOs were also integrated into ongoing programs that received assessment. The following frequency distribution chart provides data for each CLO for Non-Strategic Plan programs as well as for new and significantly revised programs (Strategic Plan programs). Including both types of programs acknowledges the importance that the assessment of learning outcomes has attained within Student Affairs, a major benefit of the strategic plan.
Exemplary Strategies

During the five years of the plan, the seven offices in the division of Student Affairs implemented scores of strategies designed to enhance the work of the division. Each strategy supported at least one of the plan’s four goals, and many supported one or more of the plan’s 24 Common Learning Outcomes. The most exciting strategies that emerged from the plan were new or re-envisioned programs and services that promoted the Common Learning Outcomes. To highlight the plan’s emphasis on student learning, most of the exemplary strategies described below reflect this emphasis.

Campus & Community Involvement

Alternative Breaks
Since 2008, 91 students have participated in 13 Alternative Breaks that have been offered during fall, winter, and spring breaks. Alternative Breaks have occurred in San Antonio, Brownsville, New Orleans, Washington, D.C., and San Francisco as well as internationally in Dominica, the
Dominican Republic, and Mexico. All Alternative Break programs had educational, volunteer, and reflection components. The pre-trip educational component included discussions about community service, diversity issues, and logistics of the trip. Students traveled together with a faculty and staff team. Learning outcomes varied slightly across the programs. Overall, this strategic plan initiative addressed Common Learning Outcomes A1, C1, C2, C3, C5, D1, D2 and D3.

New Student Orientation Diversity Session
Dramatically re-envisioned in 2010, this program introduced diversity as a concept that is celebratory rather than divisive for its audience of first-year students. Various aspects of diversity were illustrated through videos, skits and stories by students, faculty, and staff. The diversity session included a self-reflection component for students to think about multiple aspects of their identity. Students were challenged to discover ways they play a role in a diversity journey and were encouraged to share their stories with others during their tenure at Trinity. This strategic plan initiative addressed Common Learning Outcomes A1 and C2.

Sophomore Leadership Initiative (SLI)
SLI was a program for sophomores that consists of a series of six workshops that focused on individual leadership development. Participants began by exploring the personal history that has shaped their identities. Then, through a variety of inventories and discussions, participants identified their leadership styles, personal strengths, and values (including the congruence of their values and their actions). They were encouraged to set short-term and long-term goals based on the information they had gathered. Workshops included small- and large-group experiential activities, as well as opportunities for reflection. This strategic plan initiative addressed Common Learning Outcomes A1, A2 and A3.

Career Services

Trinity Internship Policy
This strategy is an example of an initiative that did not involve student learning yet advanced the work of the division. Career Services—in collaboration with faculty, the Registrar’s office, and the ad hoc committee on internships—developed an integrated university-wide definition of and structure for internship programs. In years to come, this major development will lead to enhanced student learning during internships. This strategy is a superb example of collaboration between Student Affairs and Faculty Affairs in pursuit of an integration of curricular and co-curricular learning, one of the four goals of the strategic plan.

Counseling Services

“Step Up” Bystander Intervention Training
This program provided students with multiple strategies for intervening when they encounter situations that should be stopped or prevented (e.g., sexual assault, alcohol poisoning, verbal slurs, hazing). Since its inception during the 2010-2011 academic year, the Step Up team has provided training for Residential Life staff, Orientation Team Leaders, and most members of social sororities and fraternities. This strategic plan initiative addressed Common Learning Outcome D3.
The Optimal Buzz

Although only two-thirds of first-year students consume alcohol during fall semester, by their senior year more than 90 percent will. This alcohol education program taught first-year students a strategy for low-risk drinking. More specifically, for those drinkers who intend to experience some physiological pleasure from alcohol, the program taught a method for keeping one’s BAC in the .04 to .06 range. This “optimal buzz” BAC range provides a balance of pleasurable effects while keeping the risk of negative consequences very low. This strategic plan initiative addressed Common Learning Outcome B7.

Dean of Students Office

Annual Dean of Students Half Marathon Challenge

The Dean of Students trains over 50 students annually to run a half marathon, culminating in a local race late each fall. The program features a food drive that is related to the observations of the socioeconomic disparity between neighborhoods where the group trains. This strategic plan initiative addressed Common Learning Outcome B7 and D1-D3.

Disability Services

Self-Advocacy Skills Development

The coordinator of Disability Service for Students developed a rubric to measure the self-advocacy skills of first-year students registered with the DSS office. The coordinator assessed self-advocacy skills during 24 students’ intake process and during subsequent one-on-one meetings to track the development of their skills. This strategic plan initiative addressed Common Learning Outcome B6.

Health Services

Introduction to U.S. Healthcare for International Students

Since its inception in 2008, this program has provided new international students with information and guidance for accessing healthcare in the United States. The program included information about accessing medical care, identifying appropriate levels of care (i.e., going to TU Health Services vs. the emergency room), and understanding various aspects of the U.S. healthcare system including fee for care, PPOs, and common terms associated with insurance claims. This strategic plan initiative addressed Common Learning Outcome B6.

STD Testing Rubric

Using a rubric developed by Health Services, the nursing staff assessed individual student/patient learning associated with STD testing. This assessment enabled the nursing staff to evaluate the students’ knowledge in the area of sexual health, identify areas of knowledge deficit and provide guidance/information where needed. This strategic plan initiative addressed Common Learning Outcomes B2 and B3.

Residential Life
**Alcohol Programming**

Prior to their arrival on campus, all first-year students completed an interactive and personalized online educational course, AlcoholEdu, the enabled them to evaluate their drinking habits, learn how to drink in moderation, and learn how to help others who are disruptive or in danger. During Alcohol Awareness Week, Residential Life Office members offered alcohol and drug awareness trivia games, provided substance abuse speakers, and brought a drunk-driving simulator to campus. The first-year students were also required to attend a program provided by Counseling Services that teaches a low-risk drinking strategy (The Optimal Buzz, described above). This strategic plan initiative addressed Common Learning Outcomes B4 and B6.

**H.O.P.E. Hall**

The Homelessness Outreach Pursuing Education (H.O.P.E.) Hall provided students with an opportunity to serve their community while learning more about the homelessness epidemic and its many facets. Students from a multitude of backgrounds and various academic areas of interest explored these aspects of homelessness through weekly service excursions. The students then returned to their residence hall where they participated in small group reflection activities to help them process the experiences. In addition to their weekly group volunteerism, each student also selected a service project that focused on homelessness. This strategic plan initiative addressed Common Learning Outcomes A1, A2, C2, C3, C5, D1 and D3.

**Freedom and Citizenship**

As a part of the REAL LIFE Program, Freedom and Citizenship brought attention to cultural and diversity issues during the first year of students’ residency. In 2009, Freedom and Citizenship was redesigned to target social awareness issues and maximize student participation through a more collaborative facilitation method. Freedom and Citizenship consisted of a variety of events including a social awareness bulletin board competition, speakers offered to the entire campus community, and hall events. This strategic plan initiative addressed Common Learning Outcomes D1, D2 and D3.

**Going Green in the Residence Halls Campaign**

The Residential Life Office partnered with Facility Services to launch this campaign as a means to encourage students to be more environmentally conscious (“go green”). Eco-Reps—students who were passionate about conserving energy, water, and recycling—were assigned to every residence hall and educated residents each month on a specific topic related to going green. The Eco-Reps also supported and promoted RecycleMania, Campus Conservation Nationals, and the Give and Go program with Facility Services. This Strategic Plan initiative addressed Common Learning Outcomes A5, C5, D1 and D3.

**Assessing the Strategic Plan: Looking Back**

The Strategic Plan stimulated a period of significant professional development among its individual members. It also stimulated the intentional refinement of programs and services in light of the goals and learning outcomes that comprised its core. A discussion among members of the division identified the following benefits that we derived from the plan.
What we gained as individual professionals:
- De-mystification of the assessment process.
- Enhanced assessment skills (e.g., writing learning outcomes and creating assessment questions and rubrics linked to learning outcomes).

What we gained as departments:
- Intentionality of programs and services that increased our ability to address and serve students holistically.
- Motivation to solicit and hear student voices through assessment data.
- Methodical assessment of programs and services using templates that we developed to guide the planning, assessment, and reporting phases.
- Freedom to let go of programs that provided inadequate outcomes.

What we gained as a division:
- An enhanced emphasis on student learning in our work.
- Expanded opportunities for collaboration with colleagues within the division and with other university colleagues, especially faculty.
- A shared process across departments for planning, assessing, and reporting results of programs.
- Ability to share best practices with colleagues (e.g., via posting Assessment Summaries on the division’s assessment Web page).

Based on individual, departmental, and divisional experiences with the strategic plan, there are several recommendations as we go forward with strategic planning for the next five years:
- Keep it simple to maximize clarity and buy-in.
- Be flexible; modify the plan and its execution as needed during its implementation.
- Allow each department freedom to choose the theory or theories that drives its work rather than expecting one theory (e.g., the Social Change Model of Leadership Development) to be a good fit across diverse departments.
- Replace our homegrown Common Learning Outcomes with the CAS Learning and Development Outcome Domains, which are comprehensive and standardized within the Student Affairs profession.

**Beyond the Strategic Plan: Looking Forward**

The division of Student Affairs is currently engaged in implementing its next strategic plan. Experience has already led to more effective planning. The upcoming plan includes an ongoing foundation, integration with the campus-wide plan, a review of programs and services, and utilization of newly adopted outcomes:
- The vision, mission, and values were reviewed during the 2012-2013 academic year and affirmed. The mission has held up over time and is memorable: it emphasizes the liberal arts education, is simple and clear about serving, supporting, and challenging our students, and focuses on the individual and his or her role in the larger community.
- The Trinity Tomorrow strategic plan is the first of its kind at this institution. It has been approved and is under review for implementation. Unlike 2007, the division has an anchor upon which to build the new plan.
The new plan is being called Student Success Matters: A Strategic Agenda. This maintains the emphasis that undergirds the mindset of the institution and division. Whereas the former plan was program focused, the new plan is focused on implementation of strategies from the broader plan. As a result, the plan serves as an agenda for the division.

While the Trinity Tomorrow plan calls for departmental reviews, the divisional agenda had already set upon that course by utilizing the functional area standards specified by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS).

The CAS learning and development outcomes will serve as the outcomes utilized for assessing both existing and new programs and services.

Summary

As educators, the goal of the members of the Student Affairs staff is to create a learning environment that is meaningful, cohesive, and exemplary. Our strategic planning process during the past five years has strengthened our efforts to optimally serve and teach Trinity University students. The strategic plan shifted the mindset of the Student Affairs team in terms of how we plan, implement, and assess the educational impact of our work. As we move into the next phase of strategic planning within the division, we are excited to support the University’s new strategic plan while further strengthening our work with guidance from the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education.