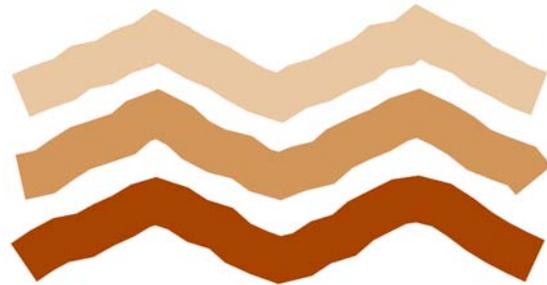


**RIO
HONDO
COLLEGE**



THE PLANNING PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

Good administrative practice mandates that a college use a formal planning / evaluation model. In addition, the institutional effectiveness standard for accreditation requires a planning process that uses the results of evaluations in the planning of activities designed to accomplish the college mission.

Planning is generally defined as the set of actions and decisions made that lead to the development of strategies and the implementation of activities designed to help the college accomplish its adopted mission. Planning helps the administration allocate resources, adapt to changes in the environment, and coordinate activities leading to fulfilling the commonly accepted mission. The Rio Hondo College District Mission is as follows:

Rio Hondo College is a collaborative center of lifelong learning which provides innovative, challenging, and quality educational offerings for its diverse students and community.

The annual planning process evolves out of the college's core planning documents – the Educational Master Plan, the Resource & Facilities Master Plan and the District-wide Goals, Objectives, and Key Performance Indicators.

The specific purposes of annual planning are the following:

- ◆ To demonstrate a relationship between the long-range strategic plan and the chosen annual objectives of the institution
- ◆ To provide a linkage between annual plans, program review, student learning outcomes, and resource allocation / budgeting
- ◆ To provide a basis for assessment of institutional progress in a fiscal year

THE PLANNING PROCESS

What is planning?

Planning is the process by which Rio Hondo College (RHC) accomplishes its mission. It occurs and benefits everyone at all levels of the college, from the foundational level and smallest units to the college as a whole. Through the planning process, units examine where they are now, think about where they want to be or how they can be improved, and then create a plan for how to get from where they are to where they want to be. Not only does planning focus the activities of the program/unit/area to achieve its goals, it also lets all other units of the college, especially those in the same area, know about the goals on which each program, unit, or area intends to work. Thus, planning improves the efficiency and effectiveness with which the college functions and avoids conflicting goals among college offices. It also helps individuals make better-informed decisions about allocation of resources and the future of the college. Lastly, planning helps the college meet accountability mandates set by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). In its simplest form, planning consists of three phases: 1) develop a plan, 2) implement the plan, and 3) evaluate the results of the plan's implementation in preparation for the next plan.

Now that we have said what planning is, we need to say something about what it is not. Planning is sometimes confused with being a process to request new resources such as budget increases, new personnel, new equipment, or additional space. This confusion is not surprising because the planning forms ask for what resources might be needed to accomplish a particular goal. More will be said later about the process for obtaining new resources to accomplish a particular goal. Planning is linked to budgeting. Most of the linkage occurs through the decisions of where to reallocate the existing resources or allocating additional resources of the program, unit, area, or college to achieve the goals it has set for itself. For example, when a unit decides to allocate resources for someone to go to a conference to further a goal of staff development, the decision has linked the planned goal to the budget. However, sometimes new resources are requested to accomplish a goal. In those cases there are specific processes by which the requests compete with other requests for the limited new resources available at the college. The processes vary depending upon the kind of resource requested (personnel, equipment, etc.) and are described later in this chapter.

How is planning organized at RHC?

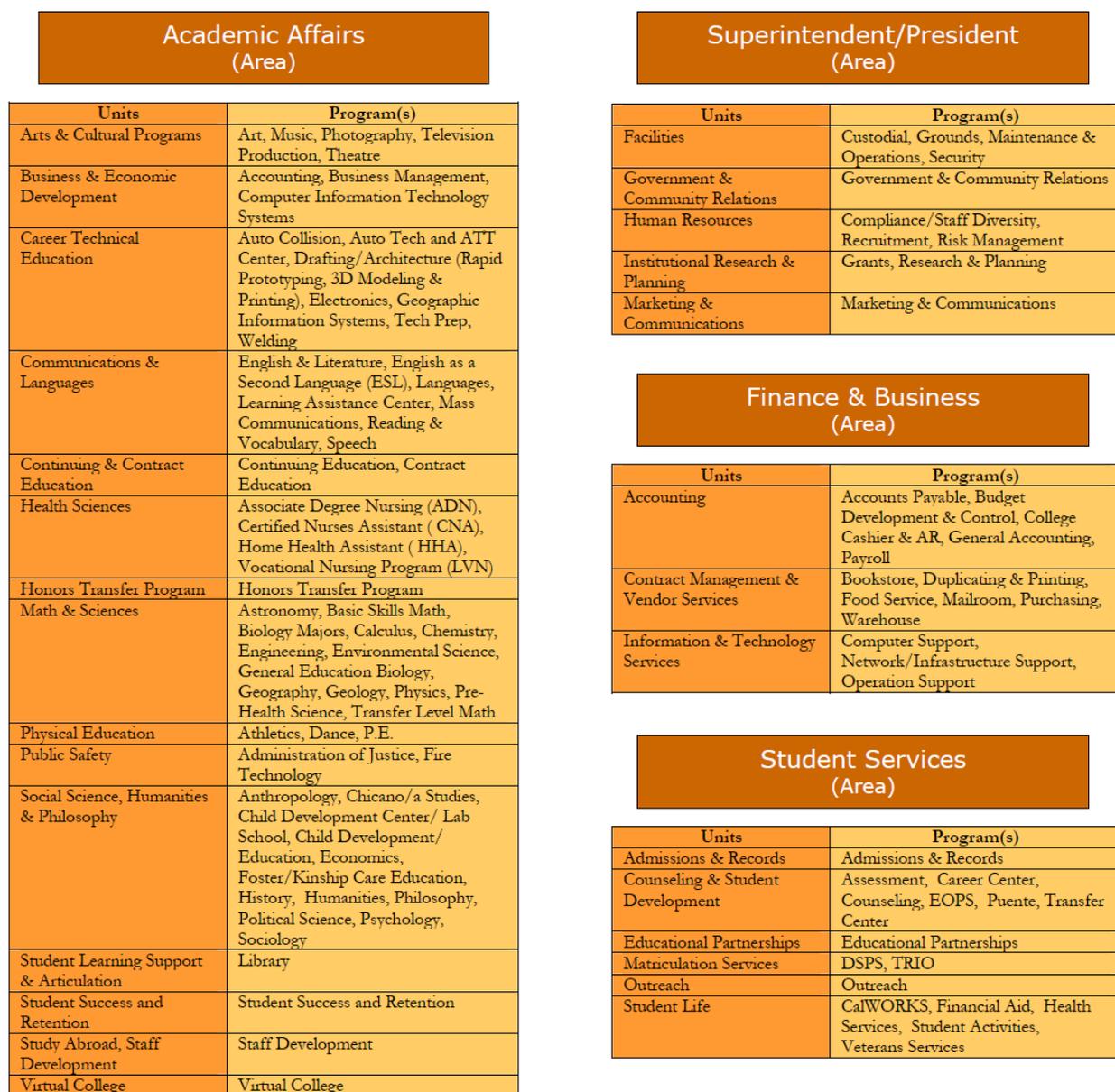
RHC uses a “bottom-up” approach organized around four levels of planning. The foundational level is the program. Programs can be disciplines within a division, such as the Nursing program in the Health Sciences Division, or they can be offices or programs within a unit, such as the Gear Up program in the Educational Partnerships unit, or the operations and maintenance office within the Facilities Services unit.

The next level of planning is the unit—examples are instructional divisions, Admissions and Records, or Information Technology. Generally, several programs will make up a unit, especially in the case of divisions such as Math and Sciences or Arts and Culture, each of which contains several programs; however, it is possible that a unit may consist of only one program, especially in the areas outside of instruction. For example, the Marketing and Communications unit contains only Marketing and Communications. Such exceptions aside, plans developed at the unit level are based upon the plans developed by the programs that make up the unit.

The third planning level is the area, of which the college has four: Academic Affairs, Student Services, Finance and Business, and the President's area. The plans developed at the area level are based upon the plans of the units that make up the area.

The fourth and largest planning level is the entire college. The college-level plan is developed by a districtwide Strategic Planning Team / Planning and Fiscal Council (PFC) and the Institutional Effectiveness committee. It uses the area-level plans to develop the overall goals of the college. Figure 1 displays how the college is organized into programs, units, and areas. Though the areas appear at the top of the Planning Chart, keep in mind that the area goals are based upon those that rise up from the programs and units.

Figure 1



What is program review?

Program review is done once every five years at RHC. It is an extensive, in-depth self-examination and evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of a program, and explains how well the program is meeting its mission. Program review also sets goals and objectives to guide the program to better meet its mission and to improve the program. There is a very close relationship between program review and annual program planning. Annual program planning is done during each of the intervening years between program reviews. Annual program planning examines, modifies, and updates the goals and objectives developed during the program review. Thus, it can be seen that program review is the basic core element of planning and that the annual planning process focuses on updating the program review plan and keeping it current.

If a program has not yet conducted a program review, it is still obligated to complete a program plan because it provides necessary input for the unit plan. Therefore, until a program completes its first program review, it should do a less-data-intensive program plan and update it annually.

The following describes when program review and an annual program plan are completed. When program review is completed in the fall, then the program does not have to complete an annual program plan for that year. The program level planning obligation has been met. Twenty percent of the college's programs conduct a review each year.

What is the calendar for conducting planning at RHC?

The entire planning cycle takes four years. The cycle is:

Year 1: districtwide institutional goals, objectives, and key performance indicators are developed. These districtwide goals are developed from area plans and consideration of the external environment in which the college must operate.

Year 2: Using the districtwide institutional goals, objectives, and key performance indicators as guides, programs develop their plans. Program plans become the basis on which unit plans are developed. The unit plans, in turn, form the basis on which area plans are developed. Twenty percent of the college programs conduct a program review instead of an annual program plan.

Year 3: The program, unit, and area plans developed during year two are implemented. However, if the necessary resources are available, plans can be implemented in the same year they are developed, i.e., in the second year.

Year 4: The plans that are implemented during the third year are evaluated. During the first few years after the development of the planning process, the evaluation will consist of only identifying which goals and objectives have been completed, and which are ongoing, placed on hold, or eliminated. After a couple of years, and when the planning process has become institutionalized, the evaluations should become more elaborate and should assess the degree to which plans have achieved their goals / objectives and the impact on the unit as a consequence of goal attainment.

The four-year cyclical nature of planning at RHC would seem to imply that the college develops plans only once every four years. However, four years between developing new plans for programs, units, and areas is too long in today's rapidly changing world. The solution used at

RHC is to restart a four-year planning cycle every year so that at the end of the first four years, there are four sets of plans, each of which is at one of the four planning steps. Even though programs, units, and areas have annual plans, many goals may take several years to be accomplished. Therefore, these plans will usually contain the goals and objectives from prior years, often with objectives changing and evolving as progress has been made on the goals. See Figure 2 for an illustration of this four-year four-track concept for the years 2007-2008 through 2011-2012.

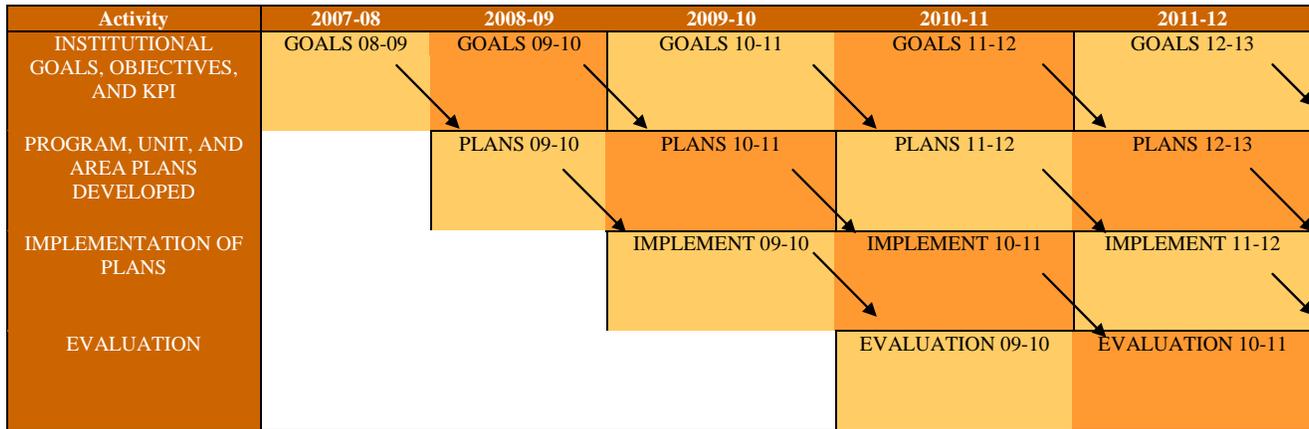


Figure 2

While the entire planning cycle takes four years, each year the planning cycle starts during the third week of the fall semester with the distribution of planning forms and guidelines. Six weeks are allowed for each level of planning. Therefore, program level planning extends from weeks 3 through 8 of the fall term. Unit level planning occurs over weeks 9 through 14. Area level planning occurs during the winter intersession.

Where do the districtwide institutional goals, objectives, and key performance indicators come from?

The districtwide institutional goals, objectives, and key performance indicators are updated from the area plans with consideration given to the external environment in which the college functions. The college’s Strategic Planning Team / Planning & Fiscal Council (PFC) convenes each year and updates the districtwide institutional goals, objectives, and key performance indicators. It has a committee – the Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) – that drafts the college goals by first reviewing the prior year’s college goals, deciding which have been completed and which need to be carried forward to the next year, and then reviewing the current year’s area goals to update and modify the college goals in that same year. The Strategic Planning Team / PFC finalizes the drafts of the districtwide goals by reviewing the current year’s area plans and the prior year’s districtwide goals and then modifies the draft of the annual goals prepared by the Institutional Effectiveness Committee. Thus, while the districtwide goals are reviewed and updated annually based upon area goals, they remain very stable, evolving only slowly over time.

How does planning relate to budgeting?

Earlier it was said that planning is not a process to request the allocation of additional resources. Yet, we all know that institutional planning has an impact on the college budget because new resources are often sought as a means to accomplish the goals and objectives within a plan.

However, very little of the annual college budget is discretionary, which can be allocated to support new resources needed to implement plans. Who, then, decides on how the college's limited resources are allocated? Most commonly, planning links to budgeting and the allocation of resources through the decisions unit managers make when deciding where to use their resources. For example, does the unit manager decide to reallocate existing resources to staff development or to buy a computer? The decision to allocate resources also depends upon the type of resources requested. For example, Basic Skills funds are allocated by the State Chancellors Office to the District and then on to the Basic Skills Committee.

The Planning and Fiscal Council (PFC) can review and move forward recommendations about resource allocation that could result in certain planned innovations receiving resources instead of others. The activities of the PFC related to the planning process can be summarized as follows:

- ◆ Monitor and facilitate the planning process
- ◆ Ensure that the annual planning process integrates the core planning documents – in addition to establishing a means for their update, ties to the improvement of SLO's and linkage to the budget
- ◆ Evaluate the degree to which plans have achieved their goals / objectives and the impact on the unit as a consequence of goal attainment
- ◆ Finalizes the drafts of the districtwide goals by reviewing the current year's area plans and the prior year's districtwide goals
- ◆ Modify the draft of the annual goals prepared by the Institutional Effectiveness Committee
- ◆ Annually receive and review the college's mission statement and the districtwide institutional goals, objectives, and key performance indicators
- ◆ Bring a districtwide perspective in reviewing the fiscal aspects of implementing the college's institutional goals, objectives, and key performance indicators
- ◆ Review alternative funding resources prepared by VP Business, such as matriculation, CTE, grants, and the RHC Foundation if funds are available
- ◆ Review budget related section prepared by VP Business, which includes recommendations about resource allocations (e.g., potential sources of funding, such as college budget, matriculation, or CTE) and a listing of personnel changes occurring in the budget (e.g., new hiring of faculty and classified employees and changes to positions)
- ◆ Use the draft of the goals, area plans, and last year's college goals to develop goals for next year

What is an example of the District's typical unrestricted general fund expenses?

The following summarizes how most of the college's budget in a typical year is non-discretionary. The approximate budget each year is as follows:

- ◆ 86% of the unrestricted expenses are in employee salaries and benefits
- ◆ About 5.1% of the expenses are in insurance, utilities, student book grants, and related expenses
- ◆ About 8.9% of the expenses are in supplies, operating costs and equipment

How do individuals connect resources so plans are implemented?

Though very little of the budget is available to fund resources requested through the planning process, there are several ways to obtain resources. First, the program, unit, or area manager can reallocate existing resources within their cost center to further an objective or goal. This is by far the most common way that funds can be obtained to accomplish the goals of a plan. Secondly, resources can be requested from higher planning levels. Specifically, a program could seek resources from the unit, area, or college level. Thirdly, and very frequently, resources can be sought from categorical sources, such as CTE funds. A fourth way would be by having a plan incorporated into the plans of a higher planning level and then compete with other resource requests for the limited available resources, such as grants, CTE, and other external funding.

The principal evaluation criteria used in deciding whether or not to incorporate a planning request for resources into a higher level's plan are the following:

- Availability of resources to meet the need
- Clear identification of the problem or enhancement to be addressed by the goal or objective
- Evidence or sound rationale that allocation of a requested resource would help solve the problem or implement the enhancement identified by the goal or objective

Figure 3 below will give an idea of how different requests follow different paths toward being included in the college budget. Of course, not all requests will find their way to being included in the budget -- even those requests for which there is a strong need, such as replacement of faculty or classified employees. Following the figure is a description of the steps in each resource allocation path.

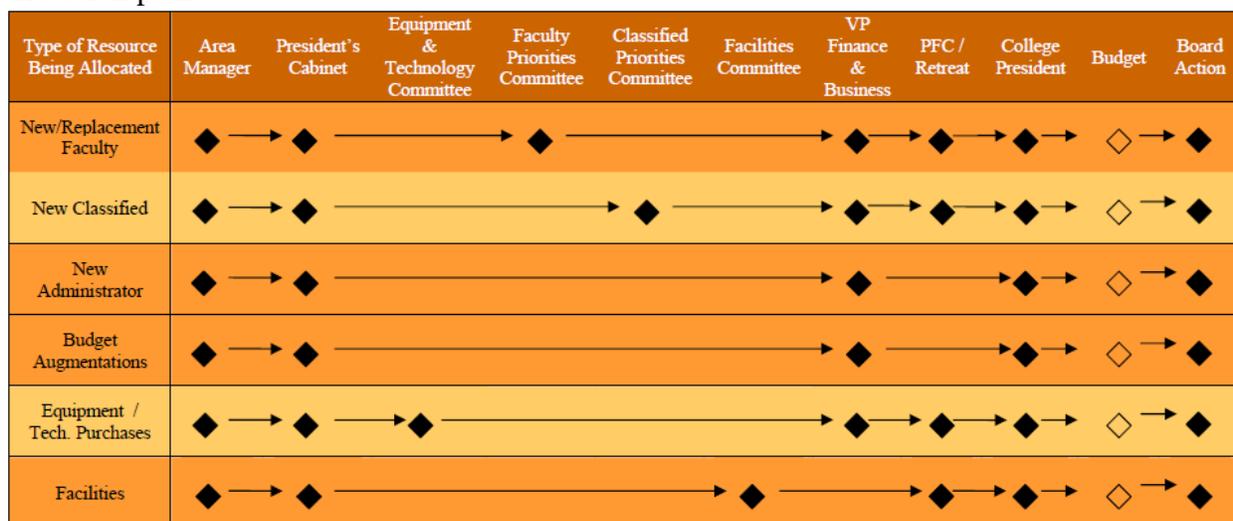


Figure 3

Faculty positions Requests to fill vacant faculty positions or to create new positions arise from the plans of those units that have faculty. They are submitted to the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Student Services, who bring them to the President's Cabinet for review before being forwarded to the Faculty Priorities Committee. The committee reviews the rationale and supporting information for each request and discusses the merits of each request. The committee makes a prioritized list of faculty positions to be filled. The Vice President of Finance and Business assesses the number of replacement and new faculty related to state

requirements and presents the results, the prioritized list, and the estimated cost of the new positions, to the PFC. The list is sent to the college President for authorization to fill the positions following the prioritized list. Any exceptions to following the list's order of priority are reported back to the committee with supporting rationale. The authorized positions are placed into the college budget for board action. Once approved, unit managers are notified that they may fill the positions.

Classified positions Requests for new classified positions arise from unit plans. They are submitted to the area managers who bring them to the President's Cabinet for review before being forwarded to the Classified Priorities Committee. The committee reviews the rationale and supporting information for each request and discusses the merits of each request. The committee makes a prioritized list of classified positions to be filled. The Vice President of Finance & Business assesses the number of replacement and new classified staff and presents the results, the prioritized list, and the estimated cost of the new positions to the PFC. The list is sent to the college President for authorization to fill the positions following the prioritized list. Any exceptions to following the list's order of priority are reported back to the committee with supporting rationale. The authorized positions are placed into the college budget for board action. Once approved, unit managers are notified that they may fill the positions.

Administrative Positions These requests may arise from a program, unit, or area plans. Each area compiles a prioritized list of requests and rationale to present to the President's Cabinet. The Vice President of Finance and Business then takes the list to the college President. The College President assures funding for the finalized position. The authorized positions are placed into the college budget for board action. The area managers are notified as funding is provided.

Budget augmentation requests These requests may arise from a program, unit, or area plan. Each area compiles a prioritized list of requests and rationale to present to the President's Cabinet. The Vice President of Finance and Business then takes the list to the college President. As the budget is created and the amount of funds available for budget augmentations becomes known, items are funded from the list in priority order. The area managers are notified as funding is provided.

Equipment / Technology requests These requests arise from program and unit plans. Requests may be for either instructional or non-instructional equipment / technology and are processed as separate categories because of differing funding sources and spending restrictions. Each area manager prepares two lists (one for instructional and one for non-instructional equipment / technology) and provides the list to the President's Cabinet. The equipment / technology request are reviewed by the Equipment and Technology Committee to assure compatibility with existing equipment / technology. The Vice President of Finance and Business assesses the available funds for each and presents the results, the prioritized list, and the estimated cost of the equipment / technology to the PFC. The list is sent to the college President for authorization to fund the prioritized list. Any exceptions to following the list's order of priority are reported back to the committee with supporting rationale. The authorized positions are placed into the college budget for board action. Once approved, unit managers are notified.

Facilities requests These requests can arise from any planning level. A request is brought to the President's Cabinet by the area manager. The President's Cabinet recommends possible solutions to the request for space. The Director of Facilities shares the proposed solution with the Facilities Committee and receives its recommendations. The Director of Facilities recommends to the PFC

a proposed solution and any expected costs. The PFC provides the President with the planning solutions. The President authorizes the allocation of campus space and any expected costs. The area managers are notified.

How do emergencies relate to planning and budgeting?

Since emergencies are never planned in advance, they are not included in the planning process. However, items such as scheduled maintenance or replacement of aging equipment should be included in plans as a way to avoid emergency catastrophic equipment failures. When unplanned events (emergencies) do occur, the funds needed are identified at that time. Often, this may involve a transfer of funds within a unit's or area's budget to another.

How do CTE or matriculation funding relate to planning?

All planned projects, regardless of funding sources—whether the college general fund, CTE, or a grant— must be included in program, unit, and area plans. In addition, activities connected to specialized plans (Technology, Facilities, Academic, etc.) should also be included in the plans. The guiding principle is that the program, unit, and area plans should reflect all projects that are focused on improving the program, even if a grant is funding the project and no college resources are being sought. This is necessary to facilitate the coordination of activities in the program and college as well as the integration with the planning process.

DISTRICTWIDE STRATEGIC PLAN

What is the Districtwide Strategic Plan?

The combination of the districtwide institutional goals, objectives, and key performance indicators, along with the college budget, forms the annual components of the Districtwide Strategic Plan (DSP). The DSP also contains information on issues such as: a summary of college characteristics, the strengths and weaknesses of the college, and external opportunities and challenges for the college. The other specialized plans (Technology Plan, Facilities and Resource Plan, and Educational Master Plan) also make up parts of the DSP. The DSP is written by the Strategic Planning Team / PFC and the Institutional Effectiveness Committee.

How do all of the parts of the planning process fit together?

The following shows how the parts of the planning process fit together:

- From the area plans, goals are updated and used by the Institutional Effectiveness Committee to develop a draft of the districtwide institutional goals, objectives and key performance indicators.
- The Strategic Planning Team / PFC use the draft of the goals, area plans, and last year's college goals to develop goals for next year.
- The resource requests from the area plans are separated according to the type of resource requested, such as facilities, technology, etc.
- Each resource request flows through PFC committees such as Facilities, Staffing, and Equipment and Technology as it competes for inclusion in the budget.
- The districtwide institutional goals, objectives, and key performance indicators and the college budget go to the Board of Trustees. The two documents are also brought together as part of the Districtwide Strategic Plan.

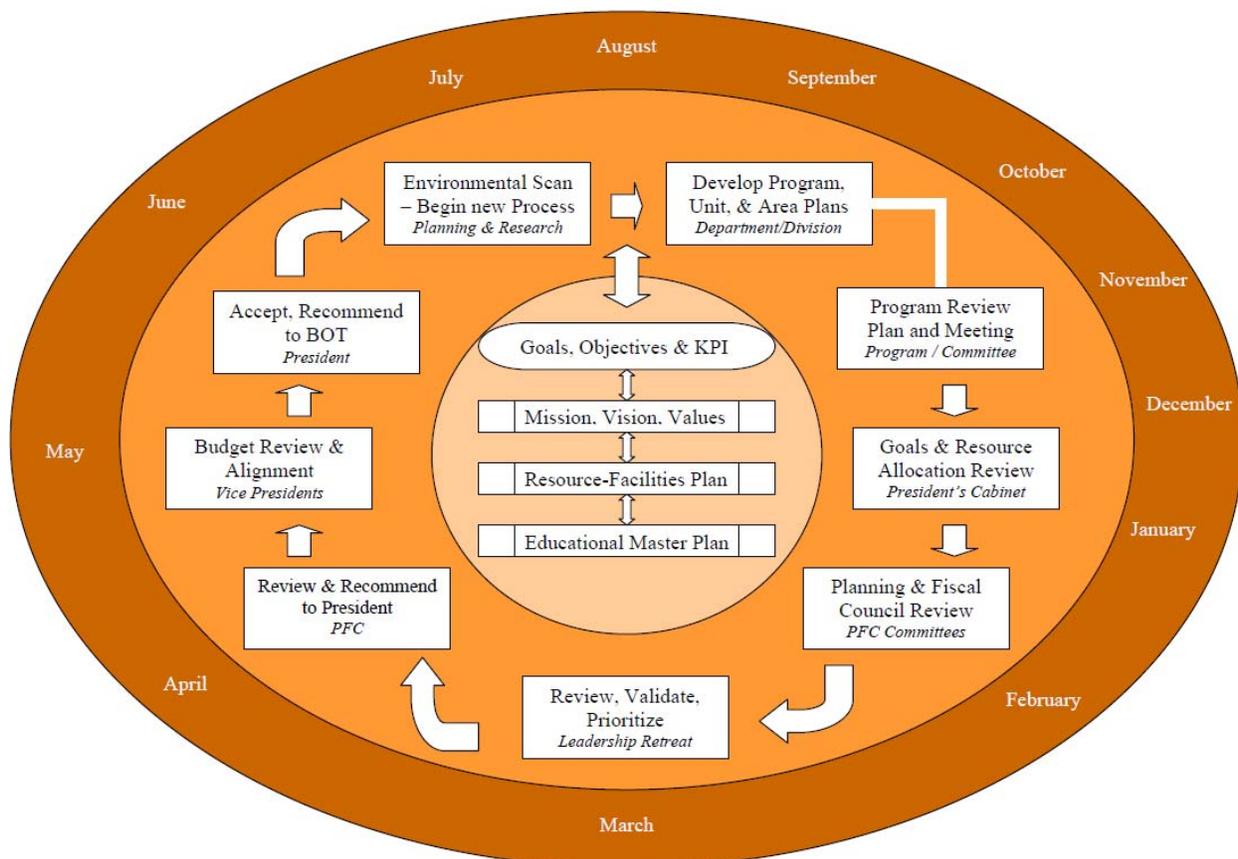


Figure 4

How does the district planning process relate to specialized plans such as the Educational Master Plan and Resource and Facilities plans, i.e., how are the plans integrated?

As a learning-centered institution, the Educational Master Plan provides guidance to the planning process and to the development of other specialized plans.

When integrating the general college planning with various specialized plans, the following factors need to be balanced:

Given the process by which the various specialized plans are integrated into the general planning process. The following process is applicable to both the unit and area planning levels:

1. The Unit/Area Planning Team must include in their unit plan all activities they plan to perform that involve the use of technology, facilities, or matriculation services, even if a goal or objective has its own funding through a grant, CTE, etc. If the goal/objective has its own funds, the unit plan would indicate the source of the funding and indicate that no additional resources are needed.
2. The goals of the specialized plans, especially the Educational Master Plan and Technology Plans, are updated annually from the annual Area Plans. This annual updating accomplishes several things. It keeps these specialized plans current, enables them to adjust over time as the college changes, and integrates them with the planning process.