

Shepherd University Board of Governors
May 7, 2008
Agenda Item No. 10

STRATEGIC PLANNING UPDATE

Dr. Mark Stern, Vice President for Academic Affairs, will provide an update from the Shepherd University Strategic Planning Committee. This update will include a recommendation of the committee of a vision statement for the Board to discuss; a SWOT analysis of Shepherd; and a report from the Graduate Education Sub-committee.

ADOPTION OF THE PROPOSED SHEPHERD UNIVERSITY VISION STATEMENT

The Shepherd University Strategic Planning Committee has been working since the beginning of the academic year to expand on the development of the new Mission Statement and to complete the process of creating a Vision Statement for the University. After discussion at the March Board of Governors meeting, the committee continued its work on a new vision statement to include a branding sentence preceding the full statement.

The following was agreed to as a recommendation to the Board of Governors by the Strategic Planning Steering Committee for the Shepherd University Vision Statement:

Shepherd – A Premier Liberal Arts University

*We will be a nationally respected community of learners where passion, purpose,
and experience unite to inspire individuals to shape the world.*

The following resolution is recommended for adoption by the Board:

RESOLVED, That the Shepherd University Board of Governors adopts the Vision Statement as presented in the Agenda Book.

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE: SWOT ANALYSIS

The SWOT analysis identifies Shepherd University's internal **strengths (S)**, internal **weaknesses (W)**, external **opportunities (O)**, and external **threats (T)**. In other words, the SWOT Analysis identifies the current strategic state of affairs at Shepherd University.

Importantly, the SWOT Analysis is developed by using a quantitative ranking system. The ranking system enables the analysis to focus on those areas that have the greatest impact on the university. As a result, the SWOT Analysis identifies the most important strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

The SWOT Analysis does not provide strategic objectives. The next step is for the Strategic Planning Committee via the Steering Committee to develop a strategic plan for the University. The strategic plan should focus on issues identified in the SWOT Analysis and other seminal documents, like the stakeholder survey and the state compact. The strategic plan will utilize the university's new vision as its guide, as well as the University's mission and core values.

The strategic plan will incorporate goals and objectives with benchmarks to monitor progress.

For the purposes of this presentation, focus will be on the top three strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Internal Strengths

S1) Our faculty and staff are invested in the success of our students.

Shepherd University's greatest strength is the extent to which the faculty and staff are invested in the success of our students. Students are generally the faculty's first interest. We conduct university-wide, learning-centered assessment. We have an active Office of Teaching, Learning, and Instructional Resources, and our VPAA encourages the scholarship of pedagogy.

S2) Our core values are real to us.

Our recently developed core values statement is widely acknowledged and was unanimously accepted by the decision making panels of the university. However, in order to become part of the cultural definition of the university the core values must be "sold" by senior administration. They need to be made operational by way of a comprehensive strategic plan.

S3) We have vibrant art, music, and cultural programs.

Shepherd University has a strong Performing Arts Series at Shepherd (PASS) as well as a compelling Appalachian Heritage Writers' Project. Our music program has highly competitive admissions requirements, our art program has a widely respected professional component, and the Contemporary American Theater Festival has no peer.

Internal Weaknesses

W1) We suffer from the absence of a shared vision¹.

The absence of a shared vision is our most glaring weakness² because without a shared vision there is no focused effort on the future. For the strategic plan to be successful there must be a clearly stated and publicly encouraged vision.

W2) We suffer from the limited availability of financial resources.

Financial constraints are a reality. On an FTE basis, Shepherd University is funded at 55% of its peers.

¹ It is important to note that the SWOT document reflects a particular moment in time. For the most part, the document was developed through numerous conversations during the Spring 2007 term. The fact that the University has now adopted a vision statement demonstrates the fluidity of strategic concerns. There is still, however, an underlying concern; even though the University has adopted a vision statement, until the vision statement becomes the guiding principal for all parties within the university, the weakness remains.

² Many authorities (only a few listed below) have identified the necessity of a shared vision for unleashing human potential. Perhaps no one has been quite as succinct as John Kotter who said, "Vision is essential." Bennis, W.G. & Nanus, B. (1985). *Leaders: The strategies for taking charge*. New York: Harper & Row. Drucker, P. F. (1973). *Management: Tasks, responsibilities, practices*. New Your: Harper & Row, Publishers. Publishers. Eagles, D. (2003). *Facilitating shared vision in the organization*. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 27(5), 208-219. Kotter, J.P. (1996). *Leading change*. Boston, MA; Harvard Business School Press. Kouzes, J.M. & Posner, B.Z. (2002). *The leadership challenge* (3rd ed.) San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Senge, P.M. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York: Currency Doubleday.

W3) We suffer from institutional rigidity.

We are constrained by a culture that is slow to adopt change and where territories are entrenched³. There is a certain degree of cynicism and some accuse others of inflexibility (e.g. certified graduation and reified general studies curriculum⁴). A lack of systems thinking hinders the development of programs that may not have appeal within certain enclaves. There is no cultural management.

External Opportunities

O1) Shepherd University enjoys a special location⁵.

Our location affords us two significant strategic opportunities: The ability to attract students at out-of-state tuition rates⁶ and the large number of potential students within a 2-hour driving range⁷. There is a third, missed opportunity: Our location affords opportunity for urban education. In addition we do not utilize the urban press and media opportunities that our location affords us.

O2) Shepherd University enjoys a good reputation with area employers.

Our reputation among regional employers⁸ provides an opportunity because a significant number of the region's professionals are Shepherd graduates. Our reputation for academic excellence and our secondary accreditation in five programs⁹ help to sustain the employability of our graduates. However, our students do not always score well on critical thinking skills¹⁰ which may jeopardize our reputation.

O3) Employers expect employees to have teamwork and problem-solving skills.

³ At the same time that the school is looking to adopt a computerized scheduling system, academic buildings are still enclaves controlled by deans. There was a push recently, for instance, to move the History Department of out White Hall to the schoolhouse. The extra space, both office and classroom, in the Erma Ora Byrd building is being held in reserve.

⁴ The reification occurs because the general studies curriculum is effectively controlled by departments. It is very difficult to adopt a change if an impacted department objects. A comparison of the current GS curriculum and the 1965 offerings supports this assertion.

⁵ The SWOT analysis is internally dialogic. For example, External Threat 11, which is not included in this BOG summary, identifies the threat associated with the lack of public transportation and the limited highway access to Shepherdstown.

⁶ Shepherd University's out-of-state headcount has grown to 43% according to Highlights of Academic Affairs Data, May 10, 2007 (16).

⁷ According to Dr. Sharon Kipetz, most students prefer to attend a university that is within a 2 hour drive from home.

⁸ In fact, a number of regional employers recruit on campus. Jen Spataro estimates that at least 85% of Shepherd grads live within a one-hundred mile radius of campus.

⁹ The five programs are Music, Business, Social Work, Education, and Nursing.

¹⁰ According to the Collegiate Learning Assessment Institutional Report 2005-2006, an assessment tool that "provides colleges and universities with information about their students' performance on tasks that require them to think critically, reason analytically, solve realistic problems, and write clearly," Shepherd University seniors are performing "Below" what would be expected (4-6). Another assessment tool, the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP) shows that 82% of our sophomores are "Not Proficient" when it comes to critical thinking. While this is in line with the national average, to date Shepherd University has not established an assessment benchmark. The NSSE report also provides a moment for caution: "Shepherd seniors were *more critical* than students in the three comparison groups in believing that their experiences at Shepherd would contribute to their ability to solve complex, real-world problems" (8).

We are aware of the demand for teamwork skills and decision-making skills in the workplace, and we need to be more purposeful in developing these skills within our students¹¹. We tend to rely on student organizations to provide this experience rather than developing curricular approaches.¹²

External Threats

T1) We are aware that the State of West Virginia does not adequately fund institutions of higher education.

The public universities in West Virginia have become state assisted rather than state supported institutions. Currently, 23% of Shepherd University's operating revenues come from the state. The state also limits in-state tuition increases.

T2) We are aware that West Virginia's political powerbase is focused on other regions of the state.

The state legislature tends to see the eastern panhandle as uniquely affluent within the state and without a need for legislative or financial support. With a new president, a fresh network of political support will have to be developed.

T3) We are aware that there is growing competition for students in higher education.

Many substitutes for higher education exist. Programs such as industrial internships, military service programs, distance-learning programs, two-year programs, and for-profit universities all compete for the same demographic that we would like to see attend Shepherd.

¹¹ Both the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) and the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP) assessments tools raise some concerns. The 2005-2006 Institutional Report (CLA) shows that our seniors score below the expected level. And, while the 2005-2006 report shows that our freshman score at the expected level, the Fall 2006 numbers show that our students are scoring below the expected level. When looking at the MAPP report which tests students at the sophomore level, 82% of our students are not proficient critical thinkers. At this point, national comparisons are not available, and once we do have national comparisons, we will be able to set assessment goals. Additionally, once we have longitudinal reports from both CLA and MAPP, we'll be in a better position to identify trends at Shepherd.

¹² According to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) 2005 Data and Comparison Report, "First-year students and seniors both reported being less likely to work with a classmate outside of class to prepare for class assignments than was common for our selected peer group, other baccalaureate/general studies schools or national norm" (4).

GRADUATE EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT

The report of the Graduate Education sub-committee of the Strategic Planning Committee focuses on a single, overarching goal: to develop a culture of graduate education at Shepherd University. Such a culture, we believe, will be key to Shepherd's future growth and development as a regional center of education, culture, and economic development.

The major sub-goals attached to this overarching goal are:

- To create a structure for the autonomous administration of graduate programs.
- To establish professional standards for graduate faculty and provide appropriate compensation for their contributions.
- To create a structure to support teaching, research, and laboratory assistantships for graduate students.
- To ensure that campus facilities and support services are available to graduate students and consistent with national standards for graduate education.

The sub-goals and specific action plans articulated in the report are those that, in the judgment of the committee, are necessary to take Shepherd University to the next level of excellence and prepare it to offer further graduate programs in the future.

The members of the graduate committee are: Dr. Michael Austin (chair), Dr. Scott Beard, Dr. Margie Kiter-Edwards, Dr. Anna DeVito, Dr. John Adams, and Dr. Mark Patton.