

Components of a Strategic Plan & Assessment Progress Report

1. MISSION

This is a brief statement, not more than 1-3 sentences, that outlines the purpose of the unit and how the unit helps the university achieve its mission.

Example: The Office of Strategy Management and Institutional Effectiveness advances the mission and values of The American University in Cairo by facilitating evidence-based decisions and a culture of planning and assessment. SMIE is the University's official source of information about itself, its peers and its educational environment. (SMIE)

Vision: A vision statement answers the question, "Where do we want to go from here?" It articulates your unit's dreams and hope for the future and sets the direction for planning.

Example: Our vision is to be a world-class university internationally recognized for its leadership and excellence in teaching, research, creative expression, and service. (AUC)

Values: The ethical ideals of your unit. These ideals should be internalized by your unit's faculty and staff and should be the framework upon which all decisions are made. You should draft a definition of each value, so faculty and staff understand what is meant by the term. Here is a list of commonly-used values:

<http://www.ethics.org/resource/definitions-values>

Example: Diversity: We seek to treat all individuals with dignity and fairness and to promote understanding and respect for diversity of perspectives, traditions and experiences. (AUC)

2. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Internal Analysis

Strengths: Characteristics which contribute to your unit's ability to achieve its mission. *What advantages does your unit have? What do you do better than anyone else? What unique aspects can you draw upon that others can't? What do people in your field/location see as your strengths?*

Example:

- Growing enrollment in undergraduate and graduate programs, continuing education and professional education programs
- Increasing enrollment selectivity, with less than 40% of all applicants currently being admitted
- A significant network of loyal and committed alumni in locations throughout the world and a legacy of multi-generational enrollment (AUC)

Weaknesses: Characteristics which limit your unit's ability to achieve its mission *What could you improve? What should you avoid? What are people in your field/location likely to see as weaknesses? What factors lose you students/faculty?*

Example:

- The JRMJ journalism program is not ACEJMC accredited.
- Location of new campus from downtown Cairo and its impact on ability of faculty and students to engage in the media industry as well as have access to guest speakers.
- Quality of students in English needs considerable improvement.

External Analysis

Opportunities: Political, technological, socioeconomic, educational changes that could create opportunities to advance. *What opportunities might your strengths create? If you overcame a weakness, would that create an opportunity? What interesting trends are occurring? Changes in your market/field? Local changes? What is the likelihood of it occurring and what is the potential impact if it does?*

Example:

- Multiple factors and forces are increasing the visibility and importance of SMIE and its core functions, primarily: planning, assessment, research/information, and resource allocation. Among these are:
 - Increased importance of institutional ranking local, regional and world-wide

- Middle States process for reaffirmation of accreditation
- change of leadership in the academic area (SMIE)

Threats: Political, technological, socioeconomic, educational changes that could threaten your ability to achieve your mission. *What obstacles does your unit face? What are competitors doing? Is the technology changing? Changes in your market/field? Local changes? What is the likelihood of it occurring and what is the potential impact if it does?*

Example:

- An increased focus on quality and accountability in academic programs. AUC needs to ensure that all of the university's programs are academically rigorous and challenge students to develop the skills and abilities needed in today's knowledge-based economy.
- The transition to life on the New Cairo campus, from long commute times and lack of public transportation to increasing traffic congestion and dangerous roads (AUC)

3. GOALS

Where do you want to be at the end of the plan? Goals should be “big picture items,” not necessarily time-bound, and generally not more than three to five. For administrative and academic support units, unit outcomes can be substituted for goals.

Example: Lead and direct the university’s planning process and the continuous assessment of our academic programs and administrative units to enhance institutional effectiveness, improve efficiency through the optimization of business processes (SMIE)

4. OBJECTIVES

Objectives must be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART). Each goal may have several objectives.

Example: Develop, manage and track the university strategic plan as well as support integrated planning at all institutional levels. (SMIE)

- **STRATEGIES**

- Strategies are the specific actions the unit will take to achieve its goals and objectives. Beginning and completion dates will allow a unit to track its process, as will performance benchmarks.

- **RESOURCES**

- List here any funds over and above your annual operating budget that you will need in order to achieve this objective. These costs will be ready for you to add to a planning matrix if your unit has been targeted for investment. Please indicate in the description if these funds are likely to be offset by anticipated grants or other revenues, or if it represents a permanent increase to revenues.

- **ASSESSMENT**

- **ASSESSMENT METHODS/MEASURES**

- List the direct and indirect methods you will use to measure how well students are achieving these outcomes.

- **Example:**

- **Key Performance Indicators:** How will you assess whether or not you’ve achieved your objective?

- **TARGET LEVELS/BENCHMARKS**

- Describe the desired level of performance or criteria that represents success at achieving your outcome.

- **RESULTS/FINDINGS**

- Report on the most important results and findings.

- **ANALYSIS AND ACTION PLAN**

- Explain how results will be used to improve the department and how they will be communicated. Also, explain what changes were recommended to improve the department and when they will be implemented.