



Strategic Plan 2011-2014

Discussion paper

This paper outlines our proposed program to develop the University of Sydney's next Strategic Plan.

OBJECTIVES

Getting the Strategic Planning process right is crucial because the decisions we make now – and the way in which we make those decisions – will determine our direction and position us for years to come.

- We want Sydney and its stakeholders to embrace a shared, aspirational vision of its future, and to decide on a coherent set of priority actions we will take as a community towards achieving that vision.
- We want to build on our current efforts to implement the previous Strategic Plan 2007-2010 within our academic units and through the cross-university Vice-Chancellor's Work Slate projects.
- We want the strategic planning process to create ongoing capabilities and behaviours in our people so that we continue to base all of our decisions on an understanding of our external challenges and opportunities, our stakeholders' needs, our competitors' strategies and our own strengths and weaknesses.
- Ultimately, we want to harness the intellectual energies that have been unleashed within our academic community in the past decade, to meet the aspirations we have for our institution and for its impact on our greater community.

APPROACH

We propose to involve a rigorous process of defining the questions to be investigated, forming a set of hypotheses, developing methodologies for data collection, analysis and synthesis, and finally drawing conclusions that can be subjected to and withstand intellectual challenge.

The "Big Question" we propose to investigate is:

"How can we create and sustain a university that will, for the benefit of both Australia and the world, maximise the potential of the brightest researchers and most promising students, whatever their social or cultural background?"

This question in turn generates a series of challenge questions about how we prosecute our mission of research and teaching, through the key people we seek to support, in the service of our greater community – such as:

- How can we leverage our multi-disciplinary research strengths to create integrated solutions to complex systemic problems?

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- How can we create an environment that attracts the brightest creators of new knowledge and the most effective educators of inquisitive minds?
 - How can we identify and maximise the potential of our most promising students, given their diverse social and cultural backgrounds?
 - How can we become truly global citizens, ensuring that our activities all benefit both Australia and the world?
 - How can we best deploy our shared resources to support and sustain the crucial activities of our staff and students?

METHODOLOGY

We propose that the process involve five parallel streams of activity, briefly outlined as follows:

- Reference to governing bodies
- Engagement with stakeholders
- Evidence-based analysis
- Regular two-way communications
- Capability building

1. Reference to governing bodies

This involves up-front scoping and periodic review sessions with Senate, SEG, VCOM and the Academic Board to ensure that the strategic plan fully respects our leadership and governance processes. This will start with agreement about the “Big Question” we seek to answer.

2. Engagement with stakeholders

Stakeholders are people and organisations that we need to satisfy in order to get something we need (money, talent, permission) to pursue our mission¹. We will therefore undertake a ‘Great Conversation’ with our staff, students, alumni, government, the professions and industry to articulate what they really want from us (their needs) and what we really want from them (our objectives). Understanding these “exchanges” will form the basis for our institutional strategy.

Several methodologies and technologies will be used for this, including themed lunch-time discussion sessions, focus groups, questionnaires and an intranet information exchange site to ensure that all interested stakeholders have an opportunity to provide feedback and contribute to the process.

3. Evidence-based analysis

We will second staff from our faculties and hire students through SydneyTalent, to collect, analyse and synthesise data and report on the findings using research terminology. This will be a practical demonstration of evidence-led practice and utilise the research expertise of the academic community to confirm and validate the hypotheses. A multi-method approach will collect qualitative and quantitative data on external trends, competitor benchmarking and analysis, scenario planning, and financial modelling.

4. Regular two-way communications

The findings will be reported and reactions sought through a series of Green Papers (September 2009) and draft White Papers (November 2009 and February 2010) put out for comment and

¹ Concepts based on Kenny, Graham, *Strategic Factors*, (President Press, 2001)

consultation. A communication plan will be developed to engage and inform stakeholders using multiple media such as websites, e-mails, and personal contacts, led by key university leaders including the VC, DVCs and Deans as well as professional support staff leaders.

5. Capability building

Building institutional strategic planning capability and establishing a strategic planning continuum will be a critical outcome of the process. We will also have established a new strategic planning precedent and transformed strategic leadership practice within the University of Sydney.

STAGED TIMING

A staged approach will incorporate milestones tracking progress in the research methodology:

Stage 1: Define questions and, hypotheses and methodology (May to June 2009)

VCOM discussion - 29 April
VSOG Discussion – 7 May
SEG Discussion – 14 May
Academic Board Discussion – 27 May
Alumni Forum - 9 June
Milestone: Senate pre-work assigned – 15 June

Stage 2: Preliminary data gathering and consultation (July to September 2009)

Senate pre-work returned – 15 July
Senate Strategy off-site - 1 August
SEG Strategic Forum off-site – 10/11 or 13/14 August
Academic Board Strategy Session – 26 August
VSOG Strategy Session – 27 August
Milestone: Green Paper (issues and hypotheses) published - 15 September

Stage 3: Further data gathering and consultation (September to November 2009)

University community conversation – September/ October 2009
Preliminary check against 2010 budget plans – October 2009
Milestone: Strategy White Paper published - 15 November 2009

Stage 4: Refine conclusions (December to March 2010)

Feedback and Comments on Strategy White Paper - December/ January
Milestone: Draft Strategic Plan – 1 February 2010
VCOM Draft Strategic Plan review – February 2010
SEG Draft Strategic Plan review – February 2010
Academic Board Draft Strategic Plan review – February 2010
Milestone: Draft Strategic Plan to Senate - March 2010

Stage 5: Define action implications (March to April 2010)

Milestone: Measures and implementation initiatives – April 2010

Stage 6: Publish the results (May to June 2010)

Milestone: Input into 2011 budget planning process