AQIP Category Five: Leading and Communicating

Processes (P)

5P1 – Defining and Reviewing the Institution’s mission and values

The institution’s mission was last reviewed in 2002 when the more succinct mission statement was crafted by a committee of faculty, students, staff and administrators. The statement was shared with the University community and comments were used to revise the statement.

The values are reviewed and applied whenever a new process is developed.

5P2 - Setting Directions that Align with Mission, Vision and Values

The Strategic Plan 2006-2011 provides the context for setting directions that aligns with mission, vision and values (See 8C1-2; Table 8.1 shows alignment of mission, vision and goals). Action plans and strategies that contribute to the strategic goals will be developed within each level of the University. Departmental and unit plans will be communicated to the Strategic Planning Committee which will evaluate appropriateness to mission, vision and strategic goals and periodically report to the University community (Figure 8.3).

Executive leadership is involved in this through Presidential involvement in the Strategic Plan, through Vice Presidential leadership at the division and department levels and through mid-level leaders working to align department and unit plans with division and University-wide strategies and vision.

Presidential, vice presidential, Strategic Planning and Budget and Planning committee members have provided the leadership in requiring that quantitative or qualitative measures [See 8P5] be developed for each goal and objective. Individual development toward mission, vision and values is supported through the performance appraisal and the tenure process--which encourage service and leadership. Several employee recognition awards target mission and values issues. These awards are presented each year at a gathering of appreciation for all staff within our institution. These include awards for teaching excellence, service excellence and scholarship excellence. A recent addition is the Spirit of Sts. Francis and Clare for an employee exemplifying the lives of our patron saints.

5P3 – Setting directions that take into account needs and expectations of current and potential students and key stakeholders

Students needs and expectations are assessed annually through both Student Services and Institutional Effectiveness/Retention Committee. Needs of potential students are explored through environmental scans conducted periodically through the Center for Innovation, the Regional Education Academy for Leadership (REAL) and Solutions. As needs are identified, new courses, certificates and major programs are proposed and implemented.

5P4 - How do leaders make decisions

Future opportunities are sought primarily by using the institution’s relationship with the external environment. Institutional leaders from the President to program directors seek input from advisory boards and other institutional groups coupled with internal stakeholder review.
assessments (e.g., surveys, focus groups, and taskforces). The President’s Advisory Board brings leaders from the business, religious and government sectors to advise the University on future directions. Disciplinary advisory boards keep program directors and faculty abreast of industry needs. Most importantly, Board of Trustees members actively participate in strategic and facilities planning.

These mechanisms all bring external voices into the university. University leaders also go out into the community. For example:

- The university continues to be involved in discussions with City of Joliet officials regarding redevelopment and academic integration within the surrounding community.
- University development leaders, along with our President, have reached a nationwide audience through our Visions and Voices program.
- USF Solutions offers consulting and problem solving assistance to business, government and not-for-profits.

All of these efforts inform the university as it sets direction, develops or revises curriculum and plans for the future.

5P5 - Decision Making Processes

Decision-making processes mirror leadership and communication structures. Decisions made within the formal governance structures are hierarchical; those made within the operational groups are more localized, especially when they involve routine planning and implementation.

Decisions made within the formal governance structures include:

- Curriculum development and approval
- Annual budget development (recommendations from departments, colleges, et cetera, are eventually approved by the Board of Trustees)
- Personnel policies (benefits, compensation, hiring, termination)
- Admissions standards

Decisions made within the informal structures include:

- Special Event planning
- Oversight of implementing policies and processes
- Operational planning, especially when it crosses divisional lines (recruitment strategies, registration procedures)

The operational groups (a part of the informal decision-making structure) also may make recommendations to one or more of the formal bodies for final decision. Typical recommendations include tuition and fee pricing strategies, management and negotiation with vendors for outsourcing of essential functions, and parking policies.
5P6 - Data-Based Decision Making

The University began to develop Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in Spring 2006. In Fall 2008 a Dashboard and KPIs were introduced to the Board of Trustees. The KPIs selected are, for the most part, among the many kinds of data the University has collected for some time. However, for the most part the data were used to inform one or more areas but were not widely disseminated. These indicators now inform the Board of Trustees, President and Vice Presidents as they evaluate performance at the institutional level and to inform decision-making at the college, departmental and division levels. See Table 8.8 for updates.

This effort was initiated in 2005-2006 with the initial identification of KPI’s. The University will continue to use them to track institutional progress at the institutional-wide level.

Because many of these indicators are benchmarked and trend-lines are either developed or can be developed, institutional achievements can be evaluated. For example, retention data, instructional technology and student satisfaction are routinely compared to national data and to peer institutions. While overall retention rates are in the mid-point of the national and peer rates, the University’s rates of retention and graduation for African-American students is below those of both peers and similar institutions nationally [See 3R2]. This led to the creation of the Office of Diversity charged with meeting the needs of all minority students but with a particular emphasis on African-Americans. This effort was inaugurated in fall 2006.

In addition to the Dashboard and KPIs, data is gathered and analyzed in other areas. Table 5.3 summarizes the data gathered, the use, the department responsible, and the frequency of review.

Table 5.1: Data in Addition to KPIs Gathered to Inform Decision-Making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geo-demographic</td>
<td>Adapt student recruitment strategies</td>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic department assessment of student</td>
<td>Plan and implement curriculum and pedagogical</td>
<td>All academic departments</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning outcomes</td>
<td>changes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade distributions</td>
<td>Student needs for learning support to determine and respond to changing needs</td>
<td>Academic Resource Center</td>
<td>Every Semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Alerts, Midterm Warnings, Academic</td>
<td>Student needs for learning support to determine and respond to changing needs</td>
<td>Academic Resource Center</td>
<td>Every Semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Exit Interviews</td>
<td>Student satisfaction and identification of institutional issues to inform planning</td>
<td>Colleges</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical incident reports</td>
<td>Assess hardware/software problems and develop solutions</td>
<td>Academic and Information Support Services</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee performance appraisals</td>
<td>Support employee development</td>
<td>All departments</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni giving</td>
<td>Improve Annual Fund strategies</td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitor tuitions</td>
<td>Set tuition to maintain market position</td>
<td>Budget and Planning Committee</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial aid packaging</td>
<td>Assess efficacy of target changes to financial aid awards in determining entering class</td>
<td>Financial Aid and Admissions</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Student Clearinghouse</td>
<td>Determine where non-enrolled applicants attended to better target recruitment</td>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enrollment projections</td>
<td>Annual budget development</td>
<td>Budget and Planning Committee</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual enrollment</td>
<td>Assess accuracy of projections</td>
<td>Budget and Planning Committee</td>
<td>Every Semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIRP</td>
<td>Freshman attitudes</td>
<td>Faculty understanding of attitudes and expectations of entering class; provision of support services</td>
<td>Biannual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educause Core Data Survey</td>
<td>Benchmark information technology against similar institutions</td>
<td>Academic and Information Support Services</td>
<td>Biannual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One year out alumni survey</td>
<td>Student satisfaction; self-reported learning outcomes; employment data</td>
<td>Academic Departments</td>
<td>Annual</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Center for Education Statistics: Library Statistics Program</td>
<td>Build and maintain research information resources</td>
<td>Library</td>
<td>Biennial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory</td>
<td>Student satisfaction</td>
<td>Retention Committee</td>
<td>Biennial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSSE and BSSE</td>
<td>Student engagement</td>
<td>Retention Committee</td>
<td>Biennial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**5P7 - Communication**

Recommendations and reports flow to higher levels in the formal governance structure, and decisions made at upper levels are communicated to the head of the appropriate governance body, and then from head to committee chairs. The flow diminishes below the committee-chair level. Little official communication occurs between the major governance bodies, but plenty of information is shared informally due to the small nature of our institution, our emphasis on a family-type integration in social settings and (very importantly) cross-population on committees by official and executive leaders.

In the operational group arena, information and communication flows mainly upward to vice presidents, deans, etc. Responses from administrators trickle back down to the groups.

Chairs of operational groups report that it is sometimes difficult to get information from administrative departments. Some now note, however, that the president and vice presidents (once perceived as not creating adequate opportunities to share information with the campus community) have made good strides in a positive communicative direction.

Cabinet was originally created to enhance information flow and is evolving to achieve its full potential. Information flow from this group to constituents was inconsistent and some matters brought for consideration to Cabinet were ambiguous. Over the last two years Cabinet has been restructured with some new members added and others strategically removed. The new Cabinet structure functions using previously solicited agenda items along with brief reports from members "for the good of the order." If there are no significant agenda items to be discussed at the assigned monthly meeting then Cabinet does not convene.
A flow chart diagramming information flow is found in Figure 5.1

Figure 5.1: Information Flow
5P8 - Communicating a Shared Vision

Developing and communicating a shared vision is a part of the processes of developing and implementing the Strategic Plan [See Category 8]. In addition, the University has several other communication mechanisms. These include:

- Face-to-face meetings between senior administrators and various constituents.
- “Breakfast with the President” was held every semester to allow the President to meet informally with faculty, staff and administrators.
- The President’s “State of the University” address which occurs as the University welcomes faculty back to campus in August.
- Trustee membership on the Strategic Planning Coordinating Committee, and feedback sessions with every department to garner ideas for implementing the strategic plan.
- University-Wide Town Hall Meetings
- Performance Appraisal processes for administrator and staff which include discussion of mission.
- The tenure process that ensures alignment among faculty.
- Monthly meetings of the leadership of the three formal governance bodies, the president, provost and the vice presidents.
- Cross pollination of members within many different divisional committees.
- 1% Day
- Administrator and Staff Council
- Academic Assembly
- “We Are One Day” – University-wide beginning of academic year workshop

5P9 - Encouraging, Developing and Strengthening Leadership Skills

Leadership skills are encouraged, developed and strengthened through: 1) participation in governance, 2) professional development, 3) tuition reimbursement and exchange, 4) performance appraisals, 5) terminal degree funding 6) mentoring, and 7) leadership conference support.

The three formal governance bodies, Administrator and Staff Council, Academic Assembly and Student Government Association, provide a variety of roles in which leadership ability may be developed, from committee membership or chair-ship through holding an individual office. Administrators, staff and faculty are all strongly encouraged to attend meetings and participate in governance activities.

All employees are evaluated through formal processes and all employee evaluation systems include acknowledgement or evaluation of service and other leadership activities.

5P10 - Leadership Succession

We hire institutional leaders through open collaborative processes. Once a person has been hired, orientation processes include a formal discussion of mission, vision and values. This is
true for Trustees as well. New members of the Board of Trustees have a two-day orientation into the culture of higher education, the strategic vision and objectives and issues facing the University.

Plans have been discussed to officially select current university staff that can be identified as good fits for future leadership succession. This includes a program for administrative terminal degree reimbursement.

**Results (R)**

**5R1 - Measuring Leadership and Communication**

Formally and quantitatively, several mechanisms are in use. Every three years all senior administrators receive a 360-degree evaluation.

The University administered a Mission Integration Survey once, in 2005; this provided indirect information on faculty and administrator perceptions of leadership and communication.

In gathering data for the Systems Portfolio, campus leadership within both the formal governance and operational groups were surveyed about where and from whom they received information, where they sent information, and what information was difficult to obtain. Information is also gathered informally and anecdotally through the informal information apparatus (Figure 5.1).

Information on leading and communicating is most regularly gathered through formal meetings. These include those between the leadership of the formal governance organizations, the President and the Vice Presidents, periodic informal town hall sessions and other interactive sharing sessions.

The strategic plan development process [See 8P1 – 8P3] also provides information on leadership communication, which feeds into the development of strategic plan objectives. Since this strategic plan process is interactive, it yields information on leadership and areas of poor communication.

All of the aforementioned information-gathering mechanisms should continue as scheduled since they provide pivotal feedback on effectiveness of communication, satisfaction with leadership and leadership behaviors, understanding of and alignment with strategic institutional directions, and emerging issues and concerns.

**5R2 - Results**

Leadership roles and communication are most effective within the formal governance structures and least effective across structural boundaries. There has been a substantial growth in the use of operational groups to create cross-functional linkages among those who share responsibilities for events such like registration and student check-in but the development of communication paths between these groups is in its infancy.

This analysis indicates that the most salient area for improvement of processes and systems for the University at this time is communication. The analysis of information flow presented in Figure 5.1 indicates that communication of information and data flows primarily up the
organizational chart with weak communication linkages down to colleges, departments, committees and operational groups, finally with unofficial communication swirling through the “informal information apparatus.”

As part of USF’s continued effort to create and continuously improve a communication plan that promotes understanding of mission, challenges, goals, growth, programs, diversity and services to both internal and external audiences, we redesigned our web presence in 2009. Our University Relations department conducted extensive qualitative and quantitative research with students, graduates, staff, faculty, new residents, long-time residents, employers, the Board of Trustees and an outside firm to create an exciting new web identity. Figure 5.2 below details the symbolism behind the University’s new online communication tool.
The University used the HERI Faculty Survey to assess faculty attitudes, experiences, concerns, job satisfaction. The last survey was in 2008. The HERI Faculty Survey is nationally normed so comparisons may be made with similar institutions. Of particular relevance was the finding that a lower percentage of USF faculty than the national sample reported that the statement “Faculty are typically at odds with the administration” was descriptive of our institution. As a result of efforts to improve existing communication structures, USF Leadership has developed a revised communication system consisting of the following elements found in Figure 5.3 below.
5R3- Comparisons

In order to compare our efforts in leading in communicating, USF needs to collect data internally and then compare it to external data. At this time we have yet to do an internal assessment. We are looking to develop a survey for this purpose and find a tool to use that allows comparisons externally. We have identified this as an area of weakness.

Figure 5.3: USF Communication System

Improvements (I)

5I1 - Improving Leadership and Communication Processes

Using the analysis of formal and informal data on communication flow, the process for working on improvement begins with continual discussions with the Provost and Vice Presidents and President and widened to include the leadership of Academic Assembly, Administrator and Staff Council and the Student Government Association. Throughout these discussions ideas are generated and the following needs were identified as essential to improving the overall leadership and communication process:

- Continuation of regular meetings with the leadership of the three governance organizations with the President and Vice Presidents to share information and concerns
- Continuation of regularly scheduled Town Hall and Brown Bag meetings focusing on brief communications from leaders along with 15 minutes of question time
- Increased “management by walking around”
- Open communication sessions: Breakfast with the President, open Administrator and Staff Council meetings and open Academic Assembly meetings
• Regular communication regarding implementation of the 1) USF Strategic Plan, 2) Campus Master Plan and 3) Budget and Planning Committee

The “nested” departmental-level planning that is a part of the Strategic Plan process (See 8P3) aids communication in that it gives members of the university community an opportunity to see where their particular role fits into the overall plan.

The effect of these steps, and others to be determined over the upcoming year, will be evaluated using informal feedback from students, faculty, staff and administrators as well as through discussions with campus leaders. The University is investigating if there is a survey instrument that would annually evaluate communication effectiveness of the campus.

Two new systems have been added to our campus technology network. The university has installed a new PA system that operates on our telephone system and allows us to broadcast important safety and security information in case of emergencies or bad weather. With this system, each university building is now capable of broadcasting different messages during emergencies or incidents. We have also a new system that can send voice, text and/or email messages to communicate with everyone when the situation dictates. A good example of this system is that we can now send out messages to your preferred form of communication.

Starting Fall 2009, the enhanced Portal will provide a versatile, targeted, and immediate form of communication for the USF community by providing each student, faculty, administrator, and staff with individualized access to information pertinent to their position.

5I2 - Setting Targets for Leading and Communicating

Targets for leading and communicating are driven by the University mission, values and strategic plan. This direction is used by the governance infrastructure, Budget and Planning Committee, AQIP teams, and the Cabinet to improve leadership and communication. Targets are set by the Vice Presidents, communicated institutionally, and monitored by the Vice Presidents, President, and Board of Trustees.