

For many colleges, the words “strategic plan” prompts several kinds of responses: eye-rolling, quizzical looks, shoulder shrugs, or heavy sighs. Eckel and Trower (2019) note that, in spite of promises that “This plan will not sit on the shelf (this time)”, very few strategic plans have very little impact.

For the last several years, the College of Education and Human Development (EDHD) at Bowling Green State University has engaged in an increasingly collaborative process that focuses less on creating the “perfect plan” and more on engaging key stakeholders (including faculty, staff, and students) in discussions about a common identity and strategies that can connect these principles to institutional objectives and priorities. The result of this ongoing process includes deeper understanding of the College’s Conceptual Framework, improved visibility of the College’s collective work, and increased transparency in decision-making and priority-setting.

One key strategy that the College Leadership Team (comprised of department chair, school directors, associate and assistant deans, and dean) focused on was developing a Conceptual Framework that emerged organically from conversations and work with faculty and staff:



This Conceptual Framework provides a vehicle for identifying what an “EDHD Experience” should mean for everyone in the College. When developing the EDHD Strategic Plan, this Conceptual Framework serves as an anchor that keeps the discussions focused on the “big ideas” and principles that are important to our collective identity and work.

Additionally, regularly scheduled meetings have been reorganized into College -wide gatherings in which faculty and staff are divided into small working groups (that include representation across rank, discipline, and roles) to identify, discuss, prioritize, and commit to objectives and actions in the EDHD Strategic Plan. These semi-structured discussions require participants to make connections between the EDHD Conceptual Framework and BGSU’s University-level Strategic Plan.

Finally, this process is repeated with the EDHD Leadership Council (external advisory group), undergraduate, and graduate students. This wider involvement ensures that the EDHD Strategic Plan is visible and holds the College leadership and other members accountable.

Through this process, the plan is widely known, prominently displayed, and infinitely messy – but never “sitting on the shelf”.

Eckel, P. & Trower, C. (2019). Stop planning! Inside Higher Ed. Retrieved 8/26/19
(<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2019/02/14/colleges-need-rethink-strategic-planning-opinion>)