2014-15/2018-19 Unit Strategic Plan Review

Unit: College of Education
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Provost's Guidelines, June 2013	Provost Nick Jones "pillar"	President Eric Barron "major topic"
1. Executive Summary/Highlights		
Overall, this is an extremely strong plan -- well-organized and well-written. It does an excellent job of telling the story of how the College got to where it is today and what challenges lay ahead. The plan describes how the College has enacted several major changes in the last few years, including eliminating degrees and programs, consolidating departments, and modifying budget practices to be more strategic in addressing needs. (Most of these changes were the result of the Core Council recommendations specially and previous strategic planning cycle generally.) The plan builds off of these changes and makes good use of data in assessing current needs and predicting trends. The approach clearly has been systematic and participative, informed by data, and smart and well-organized in general. All of the major planning areas are addressed, though some could use a bit more specificity. Also, the plan could benefit from an executive summary.		
2. An articulated vision of the unit's future over the next five to ten years.		Excellence
The College's clear and focused vision in centered around eight key areas that will be the focus of effort over the next several years (pp. 6-8): • The Learning Sciences • STEM Education • Early Childhood Education and Child Well-Being and Protection • Language Acquisition and Utilization • Diverse Literacies • Prevention and Intervention Sciences • Education and Civil Rights • Organizational Studies These key areas are a result of the recognition that faculty and students must be prepared to work in educational environments that are constantly changing in many ways, including the use of technology and the increasing diversity of schools. The goals in each of these areas generally include conducting more research in these areas and developing instruction for student teachers that will make them more capable in these areas.		
3. A discussion of specific strategies to achieve the vision.		

The specific strategies to achieve success in the given key areas are represented on pages 8 to 37. They include addressing changes in student enrollment patterns (that are most likely the result of changes in the teacher certification process), improving and expanding strategic partnerships, creating teaching endorsements (specializations), and improving the use of technology in student teacher training. They follow clearly from the given vision.

While this section is detailed and well-reasoned, it can be difficult in some instances for a reader to determine how the plans' authors consider each strategy satisfying their goals for each of the key areas. It might be useful to link strategies and goals to the relevant key areas in much the same way that different strategies were connected to one or more diversity planning challenges. Additionally, some of the strategies and related actions could benefit from more specific information on management considerations (timeline, resources, leadership, etc.).

4. For academic units: A discussion of plans, progress, and initiatives in learning outcomes assessment.	Transforming Education	Student Engagement; Student Career Success & Economic Development

There is a strong, clearly stated commitment to assessing learning outcomes generally, and the College may do a good job in that area. That said, there is no specific discussion in the plan about the process of assessing specific learning outcomes in the plan by program. The College does plan to improve its data gathering for the purpose of program evaluation in light of recommendations of their teaching accrediting agency CAEP (pp. 40-42). A description of possible learning outcome indicators might be useful.

Regarding transformation and student engagement, the plan highlights several impressive innovative teaching initiatives, such as the intersection between cognitive science and technology and instruction, creating learning spaces (e.g., the Krause Innovation Studio), and prevention and intervention sciences. The College has plans to improve efforts to keep in touch with graduates to provide career support (p. 29). There are also plans to create teaching endorsements (specializations) to make graduates more marketable than they already are.

5. Strategic performance indicators structured around unit level goals.

The College identifies several strategic indicators relevant to the given goals: tracking of faculty retirement projections to plan strategic rehires relevant to key areas, World Campus and residential program enrollments, data gathering on student graduates to evaluate programs, and more (pp. 42-43). Some of the goals have more specific indicators than others.

It might be useful to make more specific connections from the indicators given to the goals subsumed under each key area.

6. Diversity planning	Valuing and Exploring Our Cultures	Diversity and Demographics; Accessibility

The College emphasizes a strong commitment to diversity in both student and faculty recruitment and educational programming. The plan describes strategies to respect diverse literacies (p. 7), creating special teaching endorsements related to diversity (p. 9), evaluate all current courses for diversity content (p. 24), promoting diversity activities and highlight diversity research on the College's website (p. 47), and more. The plan is also

structured to emphasize a strong commitment to diversity by identifying diversity challenges and using footnotes to indicate every point in the plan related to one or more of these challenges. It is a comprehensive presentation, though it might have been useful to have some additional information on the assessments they referred to in developing these initiatives.

Regarding demographics, the plan details how the changing demographics in Pennsylvania have affected enrollments in certain programs in the College (p. 9) and ways the college is trying to address this programmatically. Besides always trying to make best use of scholarship money and other student support funds, the College is looking for ways to provide better support for non-traditional students, such as creating credit for work experience policies (p. 29) and rearranging administrative structures to improve service to such students. Overall, the College of Education and this plan address diversity extremely well.

7. Core Council follow-up.

In response to the Core Council, the College has (p. 65):
- Consolidated academic departments (completed),
- Reduced under-enrolled courses (on-going),
- Created World Campus programs (on-going),
- Merged and eliminated programs (completed),
- Created more IUGs, integrated undergraduate and graduate programs (on-going).

This section of the plan seems somewhat less descriptive than the rest of the plan and readers might benefit from some additional detail, such as some discussion about the data that influenced the decisions about World Campus offerings, for example. That said, the College of Education clearly followed through upon the Core Council's recommendations – some of which entailed difficult decisions and actions – positively and substantively.

8. Information on practices that promote integrity and ethical behavior.

The plan references the accrediting agencies relevant to the College (CAEP, APA, CACREP, CORE) and also AERA (pp. 66-67). The plan indicates that the codes of ethics espoused by these agencies are meant to be taken as the College's ethics. Links are provided to these codes. All of that is fine. It might be beneficial for the plan to also include a link to the Penn State's Ethics and Compliance website as well as a discussion on how the ethics espoused by the above agencies are to work at Penn State specifically. This would include specific goals, timetables, and metrics.

9. Discussion of how the unit is contributing toward Penn State's goals for sustainability.   Stewarding Our Resources

The College's commitment to sustainability involves reviewing current courses for sustainability components and adding more, creating Green Teams, creating a sustainability committee, and making green infrastructure improvements (p. 67). Some more detail on these efforts might be useful for the plan.

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A few specific strategies for cost savings are described (p. 12) including the continued restructuring of human resources to increase efficiencies and the continued use of centralized purchasing for IT. Also, the College is being more strategic in how it allocates faculty positions and research monies.

10. Correlation of strategic initiatives to budget planning and adjustments.

The plan highlights a few new budget planning strategies (p. 68), including vacant position funds going back to the Dean for reassignment; department heads can make arguments for why they should receive funds for a position, and the value of these arguments are assessed relevant to College goals. Similarly, the distribution of research incentive funds has been altered in a similar fashion. Several other budget planning discussions are integrated in the discussion on the Core Council recommendations and other places. The College does connect budgeting to its strategic aspirations.

Promoting Our Health

Building Our Digital Future	**Technology**

There were a few mentions of using technology to improve the College's mission. As mentioned previously, using computers for remote supervision of student teachers, creating more online offerings, preparing content for use on mobile devices (29), and switching to virtual computer systems for faculty and staff (to save on computer turnover). There is some brief discussion about better using technology to improve the student teacher mentoring experience by making supervisors available more often through remote technology (p. 17).

Additional Observations

The College of Education should be commended for taking planning seriously and creating a thoughtful, informative, and powerful plan.