

Criterion Five—Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

Core Component 5.C.

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

Ball State University has used the strategic planning process for more than a decade to guarantee the institution has a clear and well-defined direction with the means to achieve its goals. The conclusion of *Education Redefined: Strategic Plan 2007–2012* illustrates the complete planning cycle, including its systematic and integrated nature.

Strategic Plan 2007–2012

In January 2005, a 26-member task force composed of faculty members, students, administrators, and professional staff from across the campus began the process of creating a new strategic plan to become effective as *Strategic Plan 2001–2006* concluded. The task force was charged with devising a plan that would enhance Ball State's distinctiveness and guide the university's direction and growth while maintaining a focus on undergraduate learning. The archives of *Education Redefined: Strategic Plan 2007–2012* include the agendas and minutes of the strategic planning process.

The final iteration of the plan included refined mission and vision statements, strategies, four goals, and more than 100 performance objectives. This plan became the road map that allowed all members of the Ball State community to travel together. With a wide array of objectives, everyone on campus had a role in "Education Redefined." Progress was measured and reported each year in the following documents:

- *Year One Progress Report: A More Distinctive University*
- *Year Two Progress Report: Building on Our Momentum*
- *Year Three Progress Report: Strategic Plan at Midterm*
- *Year Four Progress Report: Demonstrating Our Value in a Changing World*
- *Year Five Progress Report: Moving Toward the Next Level of Distinction*

In addition to the annual progress reports, the university posted on its website a Strategic Plan Progress Metrics chart tracking the level of achievement for each performance objective.

Strategic Plan 2012–2017

Ball State's strategic planning process resumed in early 2011 as a university-wide task force began its work to develop a new plan for the next five years. The task force structured the planning process and evaluated the 2007–2012 plan and its outcomes. During summer and early fall 2011, input was gathered from more than 20 groups and approximately 450 individuals, and the task force analyzed and interpreted the data from those stakeholders at the end of 2011.

The first version of *Strategic Plan 2012–2017* was presented to the university's senior academic and

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administrative personnel in February 2012. During the spring, the draft was shared with a variety of other groups on campus, including student leaders. As the draft was edited, the different iterations of the plan were posted on the university's website, and feedback was continuously solicited. Concurrently, appropriate staff members were preparing performance indicators for each outcome measure in the draft plan. As was done with the previous plan, the final performance indicators will be used to track the new strategic plan's progress over its five-year implementation. A draft of *Strategic Plan 2012–2017* was presented to the Board of Trustees on October 17, 2012. Completion and approval of the final plan are pending.

Subcomponent 5.C.1.

The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.

Ball State's resources are allocated to support and enable faculty, staff, students, administrators, and other stakeholders to accomplish the institution's mission and strategic plan objectives. Based upon budget requests and input from all campus units, the university's administration prepares an annual proposed general fund budget for the institution that is ultimately approved by the Ball State Board of Trustees. This process allows units to propose continued and new activities that are aligned with Ball State's mission and strategic planning goals.

Funding Sources

University resources specifically allocated for strategic initiatives are available from various sources. In recent years, expense reduction and reallocation in the general fund budget have provided funds for strategic plan activities. Substantial resources are also available for strategic plan purposes from the recent Ball State Bold capital campaign, which raised more than \$210.8 million in private gifts. For example, 133 new endowed scholarships—many of them merit based— were created through the campaign to help the university attract high-quality students. Other campaign contributions are available to foster immersive learning and attract nationally recognized faculty.

While providing adequate funding for the university's strategic plan initiatives is challenging, the allocation of resources should be reviewed and should be more closely aligned with specific purposes. Both Randy Howard, vice president for business affairs and treasurer, and Phil Repp, vice president of information technology, stressed the importance of aligning resources with strategic plan objectives.

Fiscal Challenges

A more difficult task is adapting resources to strategic objectives during times of unexpected fiscal stringency. In 2009–10, for example, the Indiana legislature and the governor instituted reductions in existing funding for the state's public universities. Ball State, of necessity, was forced to implement a \$15.2 million reduction in its overall operations. In response, "utilizing an open process that enabled every employee to participate, the university implemented a plan that met the target over the remaining 18 months of the biennium. The final plan reflected Ball State's commitment to academic excellence and the need to invest in the future, while being mindful that the uncertainty of future appropriations demands careful cost containment." For more on this process, see subcomponent 5.A.5.

Describing the fluidity of the current fiscal environment, Howard observed, "We are challenging each

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potential objective to make sure that the limited resources being used are being put to the area that will move Ball State forward farther.”

Subcomponent 5.C.2.

The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.

Metrics for all of Ball State’s strategic plan objectives are established and monitored periodically by the university’s senior administration. Solutions are proposed for objectives that are not being met and/or where improvements could be made. For example, Randy Howard, vice president for business affairs and treasurer, noted that the university has become more sensitive to the issue of persistence toward graduation—a special interest of state legislators—and has instituted special measures such as awarding a financial discount to students who graduate within four years and reducing tuition for summer courses.

Strategic Assessments

In addition to the metrics for strategic plan initiatives, numerous other assessments conducted on campus are connected to Ball State’s strategic goals and objectives. For example, the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) survey has been used to assess the experience of tenure-track faculty members. In April 2012, a report from the task force charged by the university’s provost to review the results of the 2010–11 COACHE survey presented its observations and recommendations on five issues: expectations for achieving tenure, salaries, work-life issues, scholarship support, and mentoring. In addition to a careful review of the 2010–11 data, the task force considered the recommendations made following the 2007–08 administration of the COACHE survey and a 2009 report on mentoring for junior faculty members.

Ball State’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) also administers a number of surveys to students and other campus constituencies in an effort to better understand the areas in which the university is succeeding or needs improvement. The following surveys are posted on the OIE website:

- MAP-Works (first-year students, sophomores, and transfers)
- National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
- Senior Survey
- Alumni Survey
- Graduate Exit Survey
- Coalition on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) Survey of Tenure-Track Faculty Members

Transfer Initiatives

As a result of the 2012 MAP-Works survey and other data sources, Ball State has implemented a number of new initiatives for retaining transfer students. Examples include the hiring of a transfer coordinator in the Office of Admissions and four Transfer Student Ambassadors who work with new transfer students. Based on the MAP-Works data, half of the ambassadors focus on programming and assistance for first-year transfers, and the others assist advanced transfer students. Also as a result of the data and the task

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force recommendations, the university has developed earlier opportunities for transfer students to connect with Ball State's Career Center during their orientation program.

Subcomponent 5.C.3.

The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspective of internal and external constituent groups.

Ball State's planning process is comprehensive, involving the entire institution. It begins with the senior administration approving a format to be used by each member of the President's Cabinet to make a presentation of funding, personnel, and other compelling issues in their areas of responsibility. Once the format is determined, the vice presidents ask their direct reports to present issues within their areas to support the request. This process ensures budgets are being developed more from the bottom and rolling up in the organization. The results of these meetings and presentations form the basis for strategic funding for the next year's budget. Ultimately, the new university budget delineates how each initiative will be addressed and the related funding. While not everyone throughout the institution will be completely pleased with the results, they will have a voice in the process.

The university's planning process also considers the views of external constituencies. In addition to parents and students, three very influential constituencies are the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, the Indiana General Assembly, and the State Budget Committee.

Indiana Commission for Higher Education

ICHE is a 14-member public body created in 1971 to:

- define the educational missions of public colleges and universities
- plan and coordinate Indiana's state-supported system of postsecondary education
- review budget requests from public institutions and the State Student Assistance Commission
- approve or disapprove for public institutions the establishment of new programs or expansion of campuses

ICHE is a coordinating agency that works closely with Indiana's public and independent colleges. The commission is not a governing board, but it is extremely important and has substantial influence. ICHE reviews university budget requests and makes a biennial recommendation on higher education funding to the State Budget Committee.

Indiana General Assembly

The state legislature's perspective of higher education is a much-considered element in the university's planning process. Making college more affordable and improving college completion rates are two significant objectives of the legislature. To assist in this effort, Ball State has established the Completion Scholarship for students who finish their degrees in four calendar years or less. This scholarship is a \$500 tuition credit.

In addition, Ball State is developing and implementing a Student Success Plan. As part of this initiative, all freshmen who have declared a major will create a graduation plan before the end of their first

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semester. These plans will be entered into the new DegreeWorks system so students can use them each semester when preparing to register. Other details of the Student Success Plan are being developed.

State Budget Committee

Every other year, Ball State's president presents the university's biennial request for state operating and capital appropriations to the Indiana legislature's State Budget Committee. This presentation emphasizes how the budget request and the goals and outcomes of the university's strategic plan support Indiana's broad strategic directions for higher education.

Subcomponent 5.C.4.

The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.

Subcomponent 5.C.5

Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

Ball State plans on a comprehensive basis, reflecting internal and external realities while preserving the flexibility necessary to respond to unforeseen situations. As a matter of routine, Ball State considers a number of assumptions during its budget building process. They include such factors as:

- size of the freshman class
- student retention rates
- tuition rates
- state appropriations
- employee salary increases
- employee health care costs
- utility expenses

Sensitivity analyses are run based on these assumptions to determine their impact on the overall budget. From these analyses, the university examines possible changes in the budget assumptions and what "trade-offs" would result. This process leads to an examination of areas where the evaluation of metrics has shown improvements could be made. For example, Ball State has become more sensitive to the issue of student persistence toward graduation, a special interest of the state legislature. As a result, the university has instituted a financial discount for students who graduate within four years and has reduced tuition for summer courses.

Ball State's planning process also anticipates other emerging considerations such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization, and these are incorporated into the strategic planning. For example, education is an increasingly significant contributor to globalization as people of different nations, cultures, and religions come to know more about one another. In response to this reality, the university's two most recent strategic plans have included goals related to nurturing and promoting a collaborative and vibrant campus community that reflects the diversity and connectivity of the world:

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- **Strategic Plan 2007–2012**—Goal 1, Objective A called for the university to “[a]ttract, enroll, retain, and graduate a more selective and diverse student body.”
- **Strategic Plan 2012–2017**—Goal 1, Objective 7 continues this focus: “Be a university that attracts a diverse student body, faculty, and staff.”

Another example of how the university anticipates change is in its adoption of hybrid schedules, which allow on-campus students, most of whom are digital natives, to take online courses.