



AGENDA REPORT TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MEETING DATE: SEPTEMBER 12TH, 2014

Item:	Long-Term Plan: Time to Update
Presenter:	Matt Helfand, President and CEO
Purpose of Report:	For Approval
Item #:	9 a)

Recommendation:

That the Board of Directors recommend to the Council:

- Initiate a process to update the USC Long-Term Plan, with the process to be completed no later than the Annual General Meeting Part I, March 11th, 2015;
- That the primary stakeholders to be engaged in the process are: undergraduate students at large, USC Councillors, USC Executive, USC Administration (staff and management) and Western's Administration.
- That the process managed by a Steering Committee composed of a membership as presented in this report.

Background:

By-Law #1 mandates the USC to maintain an up-to-date long-term plan. We have traditionally written plans on 3-year cycles, and we are due for a re-write this year. The importance of long-term planning in a USC context is attached as an appendix to this report for your information.

Report:

Recommendation #1: Process and Timeline

Council initiates planning process and strikes Steering Committee – September 24th, 2014

- The Council is responsible for initiating strategic planning. They should appoint a small Steering Committee to manage the process, engage stakeholders, and present a plan to Council for approval.

Steering Committee engages stakeholders and writes plan – October, 2014 – January, 2014.

- The Steering Committee will be responsible for developing a project plan to manage the strategic planning process. This must include broad stakeholder engagement, and regular updates to the Council on progress. The Board of Directors will be considered an important stakeholder, and close coordination with the Annual Budget process is a must as the 2015-16 budget will be year 1 of the next plan.

Council considers and approves plan in conjunction with Annual Budget – February/March, 2015.

- The Strategic Plan and Budget will be presented, debated, and approved over the course of three Council meetings (February 25th, presentation; March 4th, debate; March 11, approval.)

Recommendation #2: Stakeholders to be engaged in the Process

There are five primary stakeholders in the long-term planning process that must be engaged: students at large, USC Executive, USC Council, USC Board of Directors, and USC Administration. A good strategic planning process should engage all five stakeholders in a meaningful way to ensure the final plan is feasible and meets stakeholders' expectations.

Students at Large: The USC exists to serve the mission of enhancing the educational experience and quality of life for Western's undergraduate students. Given our student-focused mission it is critical that we engage students at large in a comprehensive and meaningful way when setting long-term direction.

USC Councillors: has the 'on the ground' pulse of undergraduate students, and understands how the USC could better serve students across campus. Council is the highest decision-making authority.

USC Executive: has expertise determining the future direction and needs of their individual portfolios. As a collective they also have a keen understanding of overall student needs and have the democratic legitimacy to advocate for those needs both within and outside of the USC.

USC Board of Directors: should focus on the long-term sustainability of the organization – making sure it remains strong for future generations – and should also be concerned about ensuring good value for dollars invested. When considering initiatives it must take into account financial, legal, and human resources issues like existing contracts and financial obligations, and must also consider staff and labour relations impacts.

USC Administration: every Long-Term planning process the USC has done has included engagement of USC Management and Staff. As long-term staff they are subject matter experts and are left to 'carry the message' from year to year, keeping the long-term plan initiatives on track, and implementing change that impacts service delivery. Administration stays largely behind the scenes, but has a responsibility to communicate feasibility and potential impacts – both positive and negative – of future initiatives. Administration also has a responsibility to make proactive recommendations, while respecting that the student leadership makes final determinations re: the long-term direction of the organization.

Western University Administration: it is in the best interests of undergraduate students' to do our very best to align our services and initiatives with Western's long-term direction. Since the last USC Long-Term planning process the USC and Western have agreed upon a set of *Principles of Cooperation and Collaboration*, which includes a commitment to help advance priorities that matter to students. Western engaged the USC in its latest strategic planning process, so we will believe it is important to reciprocate as we consider our long-term direction.

Recommendation #3: Composition of Strategic Planning Steering Committee

Recommend a committee of six, with equal representation from the Executive, Council and Board of Directors and support from Senior Management.

- From the Executive: President and the President's Chief of Staff
- From the Board of Directors: Chairperson of the Board and the Secretary-Treasurer
- From the Council: Vice-Chairperson of the Council Long-Term Plan and Budget Committee, plus one additional member of the Committee to be selected at the first committee meeting in September.
- Resource support: General Manager and Managing Directors.

All members of the Executive, Board and Council will have ample opportunity to provide feedback; it is the job of the Steering Committee to manage the engagement process, and compile what it learns into a plan that can be debated by the Board and Council.

Time commitment for the Steering Committee will be heavy, most likely weekly meetings with more commitment in November, January, and February.

Legislative History:

- [Last Long-Term Plan Approved, March 20th, 2012.](#)

Staff Resources Dedicated to Project:

- Cathy Clarke, General Manager
- Jeff Armour, Managing Director Facilities and Operations (Project Manager)
- Scott Courtice, Managing Director Government Services
- Carrie Passi, Managing Director Financial Services (as needed to coordinate with Budget Process)

Next Steps:

- Board endorses processes and appoints member(s) to the Steering Committee.
- Council initiates process at September 24th meeting. Motion will first be considered by the Long-Term Plan and Budget Committee.
- Council and Executive appoint their members, and the process gets underway.
- Regular reporting to the Board and Council.

Sign-Offs:

Board Chairperson Review:	TBA, Chairperson	
USC General Manager Review:	Cathy Clarke, General Manager	
USC Human Resources Review:	Karla Pacheco, Human Resources Manager	
Financial Review:	Carrie Passi, Managing Director Financial Services	
Legislative Review:	Andrew Lalka, Secretary-Treasurer and Scott Courtice, Managing Director Government Services	



BACKGROUND MEMO - appendix

SEPTEMBER 12, 2014

Item:	Strategic Planning Primer
Purpose of Report:	For Information

The following memo provides some background information about the importance of a strategic plan, basic elements of strategic plan, and next steps to get strategic planning kicked off this year.

For a specific example, here is a great local example of a strategic planning process that engaged stakeholders:

London Public Library: <http://www.londonpubliclibrary.ca/yourplan>

Strategic Planning: Why bother?

There are plenty of resources that you can consult that answer this question, but we've boiled it down to 5 key 'why bother?' points that are particularly relevant to the USC.

- It combats stagnation by challenging the organization to continuously improve our activities to better meet our mission.
- It helps the organization understand what makes us unique within our 'market' and how to use that uniqueness to our advantage.
- It challenges everyone to look beyond the short term.
- It provides a frame, helping the organization move in a common direction while also laying out the shared values that will govern our actions.
- It ensures we measure success based on how well we're meeting our mission, not just how we're performing financially.

What are the elements of a strategic plan?

There are dozens of ways to write a strategic plan. There's really no 'best' model – the trick is finding a model that gels best with the culture and purpose of your organization. The components below are based on experience within the non-profit and municipal context, and also the culture of the USC.

A good strategic plan, quite simply, tells a compelling story of where the organization wants to be in the future and, in broad strokes, how it will get there. The plan starts broad, and then narrows down into greater and greater detail.

Elements of a Strategic Plan:

Ideally, all of the elements below should be part of a good strategic plan.

1. Mission

What we do, why we do it, and for whom. Even more simply, why do we exist? The mission statement should not change very often – it should remain relevant for decades, if not the entire lifespan of an organization.

From a governance perspective, a mission is critically important because it helps an organization make strategic choices – it helps evaluate which initiatives should be pursued based on relevance to meeting the mission.

Sample of mission statements:

Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada: Reach every person in Canada affected by a brain tumour through support, education, information and research.

Free the Children: Free children from poverty. Free children from exploitation. Free children from the idea that they are powerless to change the world.

Meal Exchange: engage, educate, and mobilize youth to work with their communities in order to alleviate hunger locally and achieve food security.

2. Vision

When it comes to non-profit strategic planning there are really two options: develop a vision that articulates the 'better world' you're working to create; develop a vision that articulates where your organization aspires to be in 5-10 years. Some organizations are crafty and do both.

The 'where the organization aspires to be' vision is probably the best option for the USC. Providing a unifying statement that sums up where we want the USC to be in the future is more helpful to our student leaders, particularly for those writing platforms to pursue senior leadership positions within the organization.

Sample of vision statements:

Anheuser-Busch: Be the world's beer company. Through all of our products, services and relationships, we will add to life's enjoyment.

London Health Sciences Centre: To attain a standard of excellence in patient care, research and education that is recognized locally, nationally and internationally, while serving as a catalyst for continuous improvement in our profession.

City of London: We are a caring, responsive city committed to the health and well-being of all Londoners. The actions we take will be socially, environmentally and fiscally responsible so that our quality of life is enhanced and sustained for future generations. Our people, heritage, diverse economy, strategic location, land and resources are our strengths.

3. Values/Principles

This section articulates core beliefs or values of the organization, and helps determine strategic initiatives. For instance, the growing USC student internship program flows from our 'student involvement' value. The 'mission driven student government' value has resulted in a renewed focus on governance and a re-ordering of priorities. Values drive culture. Culture drives implementation.

4. Objectives (Based on Environmental Scan)

Objectives are the 3-4 broad issues an organization must focus its efforts on over the life of the plan. For an organization like the USC, the high level objectives tend to remain fairly static, and are usually focused on student services (broader learning environment things), advocacy (our capacity to convince others to do things that help students), and enhancing our operations (Wave, Spoke, etc.) and administrative services (the bureaucracy that supports organizational and student leaders' efforts).

It is critical to do a thorough environmental scan of how we're doing in each area, drawing on the perspectives of a wide group of stakeholders.

5. Goals (Goals to Address the Objectives)

This section begins addressing the insights gained from the SWOT. Goals are usually 3-5 specific initiatives that appear under each Objective. Some strategic plans identify the 'why' behind each priority, putting into words what the actual outcome of accomplishing the goal will be. Others identify measurable success measures to help the organization monitor important trends towards accomplishing the priority.

6. Strategies and Tactics (How We'll Accomplish the Goals)

Strategies (let's do an e-newsletter to generate more awareness) and Tactics (the detailed steps to producing the newsletter) get more specific regarding how the goals will be accomplished.

In our context, this piece of planning may best be left to an annual tactical plan. It represents the real meat and potatoes of translating strategy into action. This piece of planning is essential, and is also something we haven't done effectively with past plans. This piece has been traditionally done during the budget process – putting narratives to the numbers – but doing more formal tactical planning could improve our capacity to get things done, while also communicating more clearly to Council and students how our annual initiatives get results tangible results for students.

7. Evaluation

This section how/when the board/management will report progress back to Council or the Board of Directors. The section can also detail the metrics that will be used to track success – this depends on what direction we choose to take with respect to performance measurement. This hasn't been a rigorous piece of past plans, but is something we should look at this time out.

