

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP ABSTRACTS

Published by the National Council of Instructional
Administrators (NCIA)

Annual Planning for Academic Leaders



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Have the days of the Academic Master Plan gone by the wayside? It seems like yesterday that we were all excited to craft these guiding documents that had the exciting acronyms of AMP (our future is electrifying!) or MAP (our guide to our destination!). But were they ever used? Somewhere in my file cabinet is a pristine copy of a MAP that was created several years before I arrived. A consultant guided the creation of this document that was hundreds of pages long, and it has done nothing but accumulate dust.

If not a MAP, then what?

I prefer to use an annual work plan (I am still working on a clever name). In the annual plan we identify our tactics for the year, and we also record additional projects we may choose to take on in following years. We identify how each tactic aligns with the strategic plan, and our college wide annual focus goals (a topic for a different article).

The 6 P's of Academic Leadership

Each tactic fits into one of 6 categories.

Pipeline (pathways for students to join our college and programs)

- Examples include, high school partnerships, articulations with non-credit training

Programs

- New programs, improving existing programs, both transfer and workforce

Progress (retention)

- Embedded tutors, HIPs, OER

Post Grad (employment/transfer success)

- Career fairs, transfer fairs, evaluating data on success after they leave

Processes

- Updates to procedures, compensation handbook, hiring

People (culture)

- Professional development, celebrations, equity training

This is not perfect, but it helps me organize and frame our work. It is both a guide for planning, and a structure for reporting. We never write what we will continue to do. This is all about new initiatives and continuous improvement. Almost all of the initiatives are in either programs or process. We rarely have anything in post-grad, but this is what we do, and what we need to be thinking about, so it stays.

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Planning Timeline and Execution

Mid- June

- Executive team retreat. Review strategic plan, identify priorities for next year.

Early-July

- Meet with Instructional Leadership (including senate president) to build current year's work plan. Identify champions for each tactic.

Early-August

- Share work plan with broader instructional team, associate deans, other faculty leadership, etc.

Early-September

- Ensure that each report incorporates relevant tactics in into their annual goals.
- Share the plan with Senate and others across campus.

December

- Work with champions to write a one sentence report for each tactic.

April

- Review the year and write concise annual report.

All year long

- Add new ideas to the column of future possible tactics.

Benefits of an Annual Work Plan

I originally chose this approach because I noticed that many organizations have plans that never get executed. The day-to-day management takes over, and growth strategies are forgotten. This process has helped us keep ourselves accountable.

The value is easy to see for projects like identifying professional development for leadership training, redesigning our program review, and starting The Equity Project. Getting these plans in writing, inserting them into goals, and creating structure for follow up made it easy for us to stay on top of the projects. Bigger wins came in areas like Competency Based Education (CBE). This first made it into the document as “ideas for future years”. The following year we made it a goal to “explore CBE”. We then changed it to “develop a CBE proposal”, and finally “launch CBE construction”. We were in no way ready to commit to a Competency Based program in year 1. This interactive and adaptive process helped us reach a goal that we identified en route.

This process and document are much more dynamic than the academic master plan. Our world changes, fast, and this document is able to respond to that. For example, we look at program data annually, and we have a way to utilize and record our findings. When an opportunity develops to start a program we do not have the luxury of waiting for the next planning cycle. As a community college executive I take tremendous pride in being responsive, and this document facilitates that responsiveness. I hope this provides an opportunity for you to reflect on your planning process and consider more effective ways to respond to emerging opportunities.

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