

Criterion Four

Cotley College can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness.

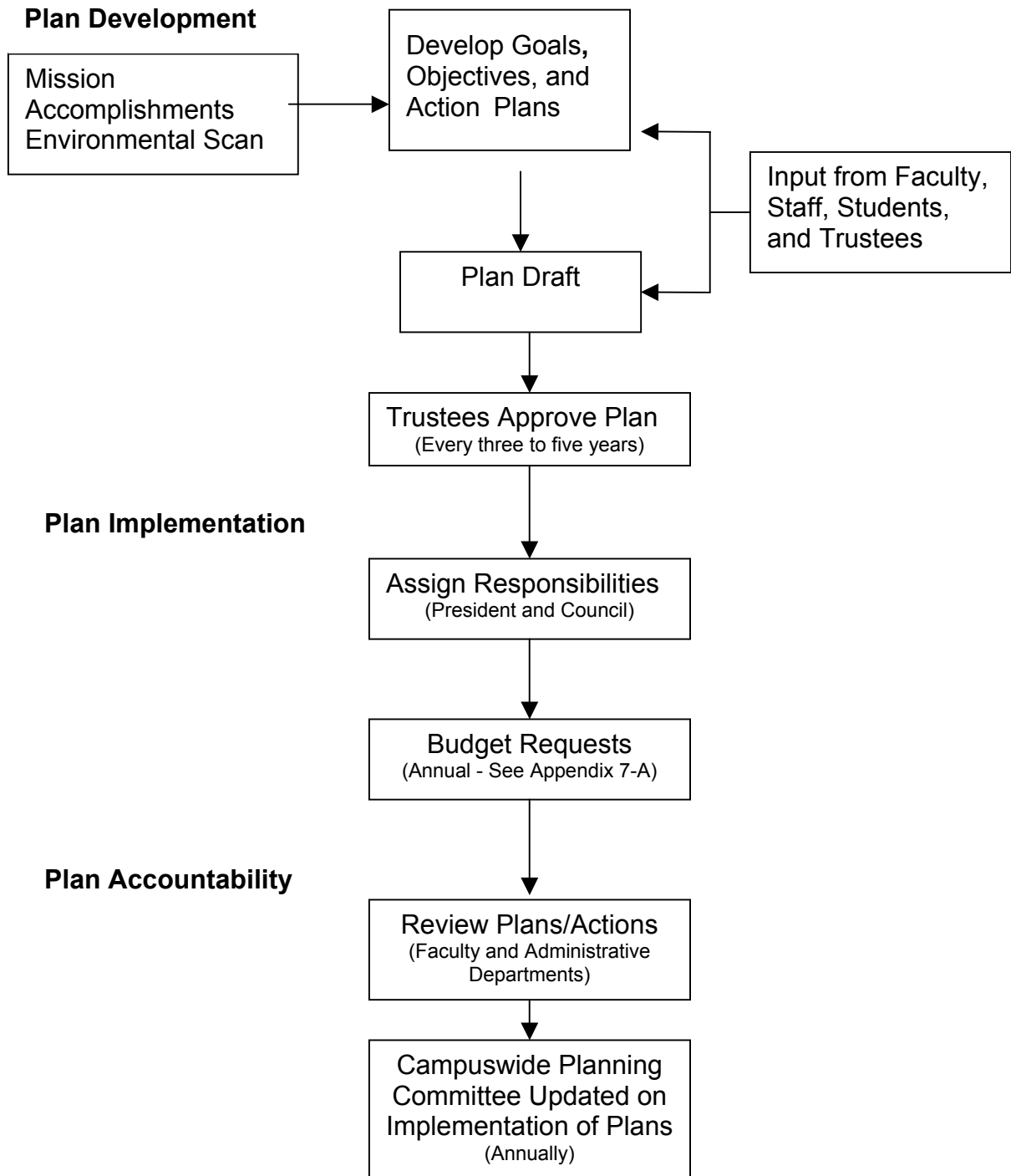
Planning for the Future

This chapter addresses the strategic planning process, as well as financial, technology, and facilities planning. Chapter 15 also addresses enrollment and assessment as issues for the future and presents evidence that the College carries out its plans.

Strategic Planning

The consultant-evaluation team that visited Cotley in January 1993 indicated that planning for the future was a strength of Cotley College. This remains true. The President and the trustees have continued to make planning a priority, using a thorough and inclusive processes that emphasizes accomplishing the mission and goals. The plans developed from these processes influence budget considerations and guide those responsible for carrying out the plans. The figure on the following page demonstrates the planning process at Cotley.

Figure 15.1 - The Planning Process at Cottey



Campuswide Planning Committee

The standing committee responsible for strategic planning is the Campuswide Planning Committee. Members are appointed by the President from among every sector of the campus community--administrative council members; the four division chairs; the directors of the library, public information, physical plant, and food service; the coordinator of institutional research; the chair of the Faculty Senate; and three student leaders. The role of the committee members is to represent the interests of their constituencies in the process of developing a strategic plan, and, in turn, to communicate the planning efforts to their constituencies. (See Appendix 15-A for membership of this committee.)

This committee meets at least once a year to review the planning document, evaluate progress on the plan of action, and make necessary revisions. In developing plans, the committee considers the mission and goals and aspects of prior plans that have been achieved. Environmental scanning on higher education issues, especially trends in women's colleges, and surveys of students and alumnae also provide input for these efforts.

The documents developed through planning processes have evolved over the years. The current format was created in 1999. The format provides a useful tool to determine progress toward achieving the strategies and goals of the plan. Implementation timelines, funding resources, and persons responsible are assigned to each of the strategies. The 2000 Strategic Plan makes clear the link between planning and budgeting, which makes it easier for members of the administrative council, various committees, departments, plus individual faculty and staff members to rely on this document to monitor progress and modify strategies when necessary. The 2000 Strategic Plan has been distributed to every employee. (Copies of the 2000 Strategic Plan and the 1994-95 Strategic Plan are available in the Resource Room.)

Periodically, the President convenes a more comprehensive planning activity, and two have occurred since the last accreditation visit. One was initiated in April 1993 and completed in October 1994. The second was held in August 1998. These forums included trustees, alumnae, officers of the P.E.O. Sisterhood, faculty, senior administrators, and students. Activities go beyond the formulation of written plans and fundamental issues are discussed, i.e., mission and vision, the single-sex and two-year character of the College, optimal size, enrollment issues, P.E.O.-Cotney College relations, and financial viability. Recommendations from these meetings guided the development of two planning documents in the last ten years. The first was approved by the trustees in 1994 and revised in 1995. The second is the current plan, approved in 2000.

Financial Planning

The trustees play an important role in the strategic planning process at Cotney. They approve the plans that emerge from the Campuswide Planning Committee and identify the College's strategic direction. They take seriously their role in assuring that the College has the resources necessary to carry out the results of the planning efforts. The trustees' winter meeting is primarily devoted to planning activities.

To assist the trustees in considering the long-term effects of their actions related to planning, the chief financial officer generates various financial scenarios using a computer model based on Cotney's benchmarks, such as current and projected levels of enrollment, unrestricted and restricted giving, and tuition and fee levels as provided by the administrative council. This information is useful for determining the balance of various methods for generating revenue streams--fund-raising strategies, tuition and fee increases, altering investment risk tolerance to produce larger average returns, and reviewing the appropriate spending level from Cotney's investment pool.

The trustees have begun discussion of the next fund-raising projects, particularly the need to develop a strategy to expand the College's unrestricted endowment base which eroded due to the investment performance in the past three years.

Enrollment Planning

For a period of time, successful investment performance off-set financial concerns brought forth by low student enrollment. The continued decline in the rate of return on the College's investments creates a concern with regard to funding future needs as identified in the planning documents. The College is currently addressing this concern by using the Lawlor Group to assist with plans and strategies to increase enrollment. The Lawlor Group recommends that Cottey:

- establish and manage a consistent institutional brand identity
- more effectively utilize the relationship with the P.E.O. Sisterhood
- increase awareness for the Cottey brand identity.

The College is currently establishing priorities to implement the recommendations of the Lawlor Group.

Another initiative addresses both the enrollment concern and the expansion of the endowed scholarship base. The Scholars and Dollars fund-raising campaign is underway to build the pool of accepted students and increase unrestricted scholarship endowments. Introduced in 2001, this campaign encourages P.E.O. chapters to reach one of three levels of support by referring students who are accepted for admission and/or donating \$1,000 or more to the Diamond Anniversary Scholarship Fund. The goal of the campaign is to raise enrollment to capacity and build a new \$5 million unrestricted scholarship endowment by 2005.

Facilities and Maintenance Planning

As facility needs are identified and prioritized through the strategic planning process, a natural outcome is the Campus Master Plan. Cottey has had two such plans during the last decade. (Copies of the two plans are

available in the Resource Room.) These were formulated with the professional assistance of HNTB, an architectural and facilities planning firm. As a direct result of the 1993-94 effort, the \$8.9 million Rubie Burton Academic Center (RBAC) was designed and constructed to enhance Cottey's science program with state-of-the-art laboratories, and to provide technologically "smart" classrooms and more versatile spaces. With this addition, science space more than doubled, and the overall academic space was expanded by 40 percent. In addition, classroom sizes now accommodate from 10 to 58 students with two tiered classrooms, two computer labs, three smart classrooms, and a newly equipped language lab.

In January 2001, a new Campus Master Plan was presented to and approved by the trustees. The plan was created by a steering committee representing faculty, staff, and students. Oversight was provided by HNTB, whose representatives met with ten focus groups comprising members of College community, the surrounding neighborhood, and the city council of Nevada.

As with the earlier study, the current Campus Master Plan will provide the College direction for the next several years regarding facility needs, including new construction, major renovation, and planned maintenance and repairs. The highest priority renovation project, Main Hall, was completed in the fall of 2002.

Concerning future space requirements, a fine arts complex has been specified as the highest priority. Due to low enrollment, facilities planning for this building is at least five years away. The new fine arts building plan includes moving the instructional areas and faculty offices for the dance program from Hinkhouse Center, which will alleviate the space concerns in that facility.

As discussed in Criterion Two, one-third of each P.E.O.'s annual dues is used by Cottey for building and equipment repairs and replacements,

renovations, or new construction. This provides approximately \$500,000 annually to the College and these funds are used primarily for maintenance--replacing the roofs on all three residence halls, replacing theatrical equipment in the Center for the Arts, replacing steam lines, replacing the heating system in the pool, and campuswide painting. Because these funds are available only for building and equipment needs, the College is fortunate not to have to address tremendous deferred maintenance concerns. The availability of these funds allows many major maintenance projects included in the Campus Master Plan to be implemented annually according to priority.

Technology Planning

Cotter's emphasis on planning provided an opportunity to be prepared for addressing rapidly changing technology needs. Until 1996, the College's strategic plan did not give significant focus to the acquisition of technology and its applications in higher education. With the completion of the Rubie Burton Academic Center in 1998, the need for incorporating a plan for future technology needs became clear. In response to information presented at the comprehensive planning meeting in August 1998 by a facilitator with expertise in information technology planning, faculty and administrators were motivated to work together to ensure that technology would be formally incorporated into the academic programs of the College.

The result was a Technology Committee appointed by the President. The first task of the committee was to develop a strategic technology plan. (A copy of the plan is available in the Resource Room.) The committee is charged with developing the plan, evaluating programs, making recommendations for acquisitions, and determining needs for training and development for faculty and staff.

The strategic technology plan created four responsibility centers--academic, academic support, administrative, and student life. A member of the committee chairs each group. Requests for funds for technology are

funneled through the various responsibility centers. Priorities for the use of available funds are established by the committee.

Classroom Planning

Another example of how Cottey's planning process helps position the College to meet challenges is the Classroom Standards Committee created in the 1996-97 academic year to provide an avenue for faculty input into the design of the Rubie Burton Academic Center. The committee's original charge was to gather information and make recommendations on the instructional space in the Rubie Burton Academic Center.

Rather than disbanding with the opening of Grantham Hall in the fall of 1998, the committee reframed its charge, and now serves to determine the classroom needs and standards that will provide the best possible teaching and learning environment. The increased use of technology in the classroom has occupied much of the committee's attention. It continues to review and revise the classroom technology levels in order to maintain the most appropriate level of technology possible. It also reviews classroom space utilization and remains committed to user-friendly classrooms where media support is intuitive in design, allowing faculty to use it successfully and with the least amount of idiosyncratic knowledge.

The committee has been especially effective when making recommendations regarding new or modified space, particularly in the Rubie Burton Academic Center and the Haidee and Allen Wild Center for the Arts. It has been less effective in Hinkhouse Center when addressing issues related to competing demands for space between the physical education and dance programs and the competitive athletics program.

Assessment and Educational Planning

The 2000 Strategic Plan incorporates assessment activities into its format with strategies, persons responsible, funding resources, and implementation time frames attached to every recommended outcome. Its

close connection to the mission and goals ensures that the outcomes will strengthen the College's ability to educate young women in preparation for transfer to baccalaureate degree-granting institutions.

While the College has gathered and analyzed assessment data, using the results of the assessment program in planning has not become a reality. The planning processes are in place to incorporate learning outcomes information into the feedback loop to influence decision-making and budgeting. Strategic changes to the curriculum emerge from the divisions with the VPAA or division chair bringing the recommendations to the Campuswide Planning Committee for inclusion in the strategic planning process. This has been an effective process for Cottey.

It is now time to integrate assessment more completely into the planning process. The data analysis groups have established a process for analyzing data collected from assessment activities, forwarding the analysis and recommendations to the Assessment Committee and others as appropriate. The next step is to develop guidelines that bring the information forward from the Assessment Committee to the educational planning process.

Carrying Out the Plans

Cottey plans well for future needs, and those plans are an integral force in determining budgetary expenditures. Members of the administrative council work with the faculty or department heads in their respective administrative areas in the early stages of the budget cycle to establish priorities for implementing plans. (See Appendix 7-A for the budget timetable.) Following are examples of budgeted items that originated from the last two strategic planning documents:

1994-95 Strategic Planning Document

- Identified that faculty, staff, and students should attend more conferences and present papers and programs. In the 1997-98 fiscal budget, faculty travel was increased from \$3,375 to \$10,000.
- Promoted hiring a full-time director of academic computing. This position was funded in 1998-99.

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- Recommended an additional admission representative. This position was funded in 1995-96.

2000 Strategic Plan

- Recommended hiring an additional mathematics professor and an English professor. These positions were funded in 2001-02.
- Recommended hiring a chemistry lab assistant. This position was funded quarter-time in 2001-02, and half-time in 2002-03.
- Recommended expanding art studio courses. Reinstated third art position in 2000-01.
- Assessed impact of wireless computer network in residence halls. Wireless network installed in August 2001.

Conclusion for Criterion Four

Cottey is a strong institution and planning is a priority. An established pattern of making plans and carrying them out provides a solid foundation on which to build. As documented in this chapter, planning processes are in place that will enable the College to strengthen its educational effectiveness and meet the challenges of the future. Cottey fulfills the requirements for Criterion Four and has identified the following strengths, concerns, and issues for the future.

Strengths

- Planning processes that are continuous and effective are in place.
- Facilities planning and financial planning are particularly strong.

Concerns

- The impact of low enrollment combined with the current investment market create a financial concern that should be monitored in relation to its impact on future plans.
- There is no systematic process for integrating the results of the assessment of student academic achievement into the planning and budgeting process.

Issues for the Future

- The College should continue to address enrollment in its planning efforts and implement strategies to increase enrollment.
- The Assessment Committee and the Campuswide Planning Committee should work together to develop a systematic plan for integrating assessment results into planning.

