

Effective & Innovative Practices Award Application

Statement of practice and results

Saint Louis University's Strategic Planning and Culture Change Practice:

As a functional division, Facilities Services (FS) confronts numerous roadblocks when directing time and effort toward developing strategic and innovative practices. Typical for many Facilities divisions are the expectations that day-to-day functions are to be carried-out in a cost-effective manner while reserving capacity to react to unanticipated needs. The Facilities' culture at Saint Louis University was one of being proud to be "behind the scenes" and "quietly effective".

In 2010 we recognized that higher education will be addressing major trends requiring our division to be a proactive partner at our University. To this end, we instituted a strategic planning and culture change practice to reposition Facilities Services to be operationally excellent and strategically capable of contributing to the long-term direction of the University.

Our innovative, five-year strategic plan uses yearly cumulating themes of Building Capability, Creating Involvement, Using Measurement, Improving Execution, and Conducting Evaluation. These themes move the Division forward on its strategic initiatives of building operational excellence through best practices, benchmarking, working with key University divisions to contribute to their strategic success, developing our employees' operational and strategic leadership abilities, and pursuing internal and external recognition and feedback.



Institutional benefits

Our Strategic Planning and Culture Change Practice created numerous institutional benefits at the strategic, division, and employee levels:

Strategic Level: As Facilities Services (FS) developed its capability to think and act strategically over the last four years, the work culture shifted dramatically. Our core values (***P.R.I.D.E. in our work** -Passion, Resourceful, Innovative, Dependable, and Expertise*) became drivers of the Division's mission. The Strategic Initiatives (*strategic and operational excellence, stakeholder recognition, environmental resource optimization, excellence in people, and partnering*) became the impetus for pursuing our vision.

Gradually, the work culture shifted from one of reactive responsiveness to proactive competence.

The Division's newly acquired strategic skills, processes, and culture benefitted the University in the following ways:

- FS easily aligned its strategic plan with the University's strategic plan.
- FS Vice President was identified for leadership roles on the University's strategic committees.
- FS' strategic plan was referenced by top administration as a model for other divisions.
- Divisions view FS as a potential partner in achieving their strategic success.
- Certain FS strategic initiatives are contributing to long-term University cost savings.
- FS is developing its overall level of capability to respond to shifting University priorities.

Divisional Level: In addition to the benefits accrued to the University, the Division is committed to becoming operationally excellent. The confidence to pursue this goal rests on having planning, measurement, execution, and personnel development processes in place. **Our Strategic Planning and Culture Change Practice provided the rationale and processes, produced the experiences and tools, and changed the culture.** Benchmarking, best practices, balanced scorecard and continuous improvement are tools used to assist us in meeting our desired outcomes. In addition to building capability to think and act strategically, this innovative practice has yielded the following outcomes:

- Finalized the strategic implementation of our Facilities Asset Management Information System (FAMIS) software for space planning and operationalized it.
- Created a benchmark ranking matrix and 5-year recognition plan to receive outside feedback about the quality of our services and to gain recognition for our accomplishments.
- Displayed mission and core value plaques at FS offices/time clocks to build employee awareness.
- Implemented numerous initiatives and collaborated with internal and external stakeholders to increase our waste diversion rate towards our goal of 30%.

Employee Level: This practice created opportunities for employee development as well as involvement. **Employee feedback guided our actions taken and created motivation to pursue building competencies.**

- Various types of groups/surveys continue to be used to generate input
 - *Oversight meetings, action plan reviews, review & revise sessions, stakeholder response surveys, planning retreats, management audits, focus groups, functional strategic leadership assessment, etc., were incorporated into our strategic planning activities*
 - *Employee development activities included strategic leadership development sessions, employee training sessions, boundary spanning, mentoring, training, coaching, etc.*

Characteristics or qualities that make this program or practice different or innovative

Our Strategic Planning and Culture Change Practice is different and innovative because culture change processes are embedded within a larger strategic planning and management process. The five-year strategic plan was planned and implemented with the intent of changing the culture of Facilities Services. The culture of satisfaction with the status quo of being operationally good needed to change to a work culture where employees assume responsibility for and are capable of contributing to a strategic and operationally excellent division. To do this required a culture shift from a “reactive” to a “proactive” mode of functioning. There are three significant components that were used to intertwine culture change with strategic thinking and action in our plan.

- 1.) **The FS management team were introduced to a Planning to Plan process** which developed a shared understanding to a number of questions: *What is the justification of investing in culture change and strategy?; What is the planning approach and steps to be used?; What are the assumptions and management principles to be followed?* Most significant was the explicit adoption by leadership of these assumptions:
 - **Passion** for strategy and change starts with leadership and becomes contagious throughout the Division as planning/implementation becomes more inclusive.
 - The **Process** is what matters, not the written plan.
 - **Promotion** keeps stakeholders informed and establishes the Division’s credibility and worthiness in becoming a major contributor to the University’s vision.

These and other decisions gave leadership a solid platform from which to provide direction and resources to the strategy and change practice.

- 2.) **Themes were identified for each year of our strategic plan:** Building Capability (Year 1), Creating Involvement (Year 2), Using Measurement (Year 3), Improving Execution (Year 4), and Conducting Evaluation (Year 5). These themes provided the emphasis for how strategic actions were to be carried out each year and were continued forward into subsequent yearly activities.
- 3.) **Cross-functional action teams were identified and allowed the change process to be pushed down into our Division.** Action teams made progress on achieving our Division’s 5-year strategic initiatives by planning and executing yearly action plans. Because the teams are cross-functional in nature, team members are interacting with employees in different departments, modeling and reinforcing new culture norms, and working with members of other divisions at the University. The goals the teams work on are strategic steps to bring about major outcomes for the Division and the University. For example, one action team has been working for the last four years on environmental resource optimization within the division and has collaborated with various other University divisions and external stakeholders.

To accomplish their goals, team members have adopted a proactive stance to getting things done, developed the ability to think and act strategically, and understand better the potential impact that the Facilities Services division can have in contributing to the University’s strategic plan as well as to the strategic success of other divisions.

How this practice can be used by others

Trends in higher education (reducing the costs of education, competition for fewer students, need for fewer buildings, etc.) point to a **reason for Facilities Services becoming a strategic partner** with other divisions across the University as well as external stakeholders to address these concerns. Today is a critical time for all Facilities departments to focus on their strategic direction and make decisions that will provide the competitive advantage to remain viable and a main contributor to the university.

Our networking and research revealed that many Facilities departments at other universities do not have a strategic plan. **We believe that our practice and structure will provide a foundation for others to begin to implement strategy with confidence and realize the positive impacts that will result from this process.** Our Strategic Planning and Culture Change Practice can successfully be used with 1) support of the top administrative leader of the Facilities division; 2) adoption of our FS Strategic Planning Management Structure (SPMS) as identified in the next section, *Demonstration of Management Involvement and Employee Commitment*; and 3) education, training and involvement of employees regarding strategy.

- **The leader's support identifies the significance, importance and priority given to the implementation.** The leader must remain visible and active as a champion of the efforts throughout the entire process.
- **The SPMS provides a structural foundation for implementing strategy in an ongoing and consistent manner.** It defines who would be involved in the process and provides avenues for how the information will be communicated. The responsibilities of each category are defined and contribute to the accountability of the employees.
 - *The use of an external facilitator, teamed up with a division liaison, have kept our plan on track and provided guidance and coaching that allowed our division to be strategic and timely in our planning and decisions, focused on desired outcomes and responsive and accountable.*
 - *Our annual goals have desired outcomes identified by the oversight team early on, with the support of the team leaders, to assist in defining a direction and timeline for achievement by action plan teams.*
- **Education, training and involvement of Facilities employees** provides opportunities for employees to know the direction that the division is taking, become effective leaders of strategic change and understand their role, responsibilities and contributions towards strategy in their daily activities.
 - *Our training was developed and performed by our own Facilities employees.*
 - *Each action team leader was provided a Strategic Planning binder that defined and identified the components of our plan to increase their knowledge and understanding and for use as a reference.*
 - *The use of themes for each year's activities helped us identify for our employees a consistent focus on our strategic efforts: Building Capability, Creating Involvement, Using Measurement and Improving Execution.*

We anticipate that our next 5-year strategic plan will include as one of its major initiatives the learning and sharing of strategic and culture change practices with other institutions. We believe we could take a leadership role in promoting this outcome.

Demonstration of management involvement and employee commitment

Early on in the planning stages, we designed a management structure (as shown below) to enable our strategic planning process to have employee involvement in oversight, coordination, action plans with designated outcomes, communication and engagement. **This structure has provided us with a framework to facilitate involvement and decision making and has served us well.**

There is a strong commitment to our strategic plan at various levels in Facilities Services that has been interwoven into our daily operations. Our passion began with the positive support of our Vice President to keep strategy as a high priority with all FS employees and continued as our employee commitment has grown and strengthened throughout these past 4+ years, as demonstrated by the active involvement and accomplishments achieved in our plans.

Our core values have been promoted throughout the years at division-wide training sessions, employee meetings with supervisors and displayed in all FS offices and at all time clocks. They have also been incorporated into our processes including hiring practices, performance management process and recognition awards ceremonies.

We're proud of the fact that Facilities Services has been noted by SLU's Executive Staff for our leadership, commitment and continual progress and contributions in our strategic planning activities.

FACILITIES SERVICES (FS) STRATEGIC PLANNING MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE
OVERSIGHT TEAM Manage and oversee the activities of the division's strategic plan and its ongoing review. Map out proactive choices and big picture strategic thinking to strengthen the division and propel it forward. Identify and document how our strategic plan aligns and contributes to the University's strategic plan. Review and approve action plan team proposals. Participate in the review and revise sessions and provide overviews to the Facilities Services leaders and teams for the new year's goals and outcomes.
FS MANAGEMENT TEAM Keep the mission and core values as a focus in our daily operational activities and use it as a resource to guide our decision making. Work with departmental employees to develop goals and participate on action plan teams that support the strategic initiatives. Discuss and contribute to the overall strategic planning process.
ACTION PLAN TEAM LEADERS Review reports and/or presentations regarding the division's strategic initiatives. Responsible for implementing the action plans, provide a written report and report on their progress during the action plan review sessions. Focus on accountability and desired outcomes. Understand the integration of other action plans, coordinate meetings and collaborate on future activities.
FS DIVISION TEAM Participate in strengthening the division's vision for growth and success. Establish departmental goals based on the division's strategic initiatives. Provide feedback throughout the strategic planning process.
FACILITATOR Provide processes and facilitation to the various structures. Assist in guiding FS to remain strategic. Provide the organization and format for the review and revise session each year, as well as prepare FS for the development of their next 5-year plan.

Documentation of results, analysis, customer feedback, resulting benchmarks

As we approach the end of Year 4 of our strategic plan, we recognize that our approach to strategic planning and culture change is working. **Facilities Services is proud of its new proactive culture. We have become visible and active in University affairs and appropriately aggressive in promoting strategic ideas.**

At our recent December 2013 Facilities Strategic Planning session, we asked our group of 40+ supervisors, managers, directors for feedback regarding: *“What has made strategy work? Give examples from your experiences implementing strategy that have worked to build capability, create involvement, use measurement, and improve execution (this year’s theme)”?* Over 100 “actions that make strategy work” were provided on the spot. A few examples are included here, but do not capture the richness of their personal insights: providing team opportunities, engaging in strategic discussions and activities, emphasis and training regarding researching best practices, measuring outcomes as part of action plans and incorporating measurement as a strategic leadership competency, etc.

These comments suggest that **if a functional division wants to become more proactive and strategic in their thinking and actions, then providing certain opportunities for development and putting specific processes in place may be necessary for success.**

Notable examples of success with our strategic plan are:

- Top administration views Facilities as an important strategic partner.
- Directors, managers and supervisors are actively involved in developing their functional leadership skills.
- Our employees are building trade professional ladders in response to trends for greater technical specialties and professionalism.
- Our core values (P.R.I.D.E. In Our Work) are being translated by supervisors and employees into expected behaviors reflecting these values.
- Large scale resource optimization initiatives are identified and implemented.
- Asset reinvestment portfolios are being finalized.
- Our Balanced Scorecard ties goals to outcome measures across areas of financial, stakeholders, business processes and learning and growing.
- The completion of a stakeholder survey to senior SLU leaders brought insight and feedback results, with the goal for continuation with other stakeholders at the University.
- Year-end accomplishments are documented and reviewed with the division team.

At the end of Year 4 in 2014, our Review and Revise process will be used to review Year 4 accomplishments and establish goals and action teams for Year 5 of our strategic plan.

At the end of Year 5 in 2015, we will develop our next 5-year Strategic Plan. We expect to have the culture and capability in place to tackle significant initiatives that further our mission and vision and that of the University.