

Multi-Year Planning

When a school seeks accreditation with NEASC it is committing itself to engage in an ongoing process of self-assessment, goal setting, and planning. The Self-Study, culminating in Part II: Reflections, Recommendations, and Issues for Further Discussion, is designed to be an example of this approach to school improvement.

Schools may choose not to create formal “plans,” but they need to approach planning in an organized manner. All planning should be based on the mission of the school, together with any purposes, objectives, and goals specific to various components of the school’s programs.

At the time of the Two-Year Interim Evaluation Report, the Commission will ask schools to present evidence of Multi-Year Planning that incorporates all of the major recommendations from the Self-Study and Visiting Committee Reports that have not yet been accomplished.

Some areas for regular planning pursued by many schools include:

1. Enrollment

The school should maintain (and update) enrollment projections for at least the next five years; components of this projection should include: grade level, gender, and where appropriate, separate numbers for students who will qualify for financial aid, children of employees who may receive tuition remission, and students who may be involved in special programs. All enrollment data should be aligned with projected tuition and fee levels over time in order to show projected net income from this area. Desired levels of financial aid should be included in this plan.

If enrollments are expected to change, either by increasing or declining, the school should be able to adjust staffing, facilities, curriculum and other program components; these changes, driven by enrollment fluctuations, should inform other planning.

2. Curriculum

Based on the mission, grade levels, and enrollment of the school, what should the curriculum contain? In order to have students learn what is expected of them, what courses, staffing, facilities, time, technology, and materials are required to meet the needs of all learners?

3. Academic Technology

Teachers and the academic leadership should plan the appropriate integration of technology into the various components of the program; determine the necessary skill levels of students and teachers to reach the desired utilization; and project the hardware, software, infrastructure, maintenance, and management aspects of technology. All the goals and information derived from the academic technology planning should be incorporated in overall technology planning.

4. Library

Depending on the type and scope of the school’s library or media center, it is important to articulate the purposes, objectives, and goals of this resource and plan for the needs for staff, facilities, related technology, print materials and periodicals, and curriculum.

5. Diversity

The school's efforts to support difference and multiculturalism might be facilitated by identifying the specific needs of various students and planning how best to provide: special or augmented programs for certain students or groups; the education of students about issues of equity and justice; the professional development of faculty, including various relevant topics in the general curriculum; and awareness by all constituencies of the complexities of how differing cultural and learning backgrounds affect the school's environment and its ability to meet its mission.

6. Institutional Technology

Given the scale of expense and the pace of change in the area of technology, a school may want to develop a more formal plan for institutional technology that provides for the appropriate services and systems to integrate technology into the curriculum and also supports the coordination of academic, administrative, and institutional functions. At the very least, the school should recognize the need for ongoing planning to address the future development or changes to all network and infrastructure components.

7. Facilities

Given the mission and corresponding program at the school, do the facilities meet the needs of that program? Facilities planning might involve an audit of the current facilities including their history, use, age, condition, and future needs in term of expansion, renovation, or maintenance. Any additional or new facilities might be planned using this background information.

8. Financial

All of the planning described herein will have financial ramifications and this information must be integrated into a financial plan. Financial plans and projected cash flows should be updated periodically so as to avoid surprises when unforeseen enrollment shifts take place. The financial plan also helps determine what the short- and long-term development needs are so that planning can be accomplished in that area as well.

9. Development

As the general needs of the school, especially in financial terms, are developed through careful consideration of program needs and fulfilling the mission of the school, development or fund-raising considerations come into play. Planning is essential to successfully raising funds.