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PSC 525.01: Strategic Planning and Leadership

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Political Science 525
Strategic Planning and Leadership
Spring 2009

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Course Description

For over a decade a movement has been underway to shift the focus of management from administering programs to achieving results. Strategic planning is an important tool in accomplishing this paradigm shift. Bryson defines it as a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it.

But, despite its importance, strategic planning is only a tool. This course is organized around the theme that strategic planning cannot realize its fullest potential unless it is put into the service of visionary, success-oriented leadership. Although strategic planning can help us align an organization's mission, internal capacities, and environmental realities, it is ultimately leadership, not planning, that makes organizational excellence possible and achievable.

Course Objectives

1. To understand strategic planning as a decision-making process.
2. To understand the theory of organizational success that underlies the process.
3. To develop skill in conducting the forms of analysis that strategic planning requires.
4. To learn how strategic planning can contribute to the success of visionary leadership.

Required Text

John M. Bryson, Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004).

This book can be ordered through the UM Bookstore and mailed to you for an additional \$6. (www.umt.bookstore.com or 406-243-1234)

Other assigned readings on Electronic Reserve.

Course Requirements and Grading

Students are required to read all assigned readings, participate on the Discussion Board, and write a simulated strategic plan for a government or nonprofit agency. This plan will

be submitted in six installments (20 points each), with the final draft being worth 100 points.

A = 205-220 A- = 198-204 B+ = 191-197 B = 183-190 B- = 176-182 etc.

Discussion Board assignments are due on Thursdays at roughly midnight. Writing assignments are typically due the following Monday.

You are required to choose a government or nonprofit agency with which you are familiar and write a strategic plan for it (you won't actually submit it to the agency). You are to pretend that you are a staff person entrusted with facilitating the planning process. You lead your staff through the various steps of the process and write up the results of your group's analyses as follows:

- Introduction
- Agency Mission, Vision, and Values
- Strategic Issues, Goals, and Actions
- Appendix A: Mandate Analysis and Mission Clarification
- Appendix B: Stakeholder Analysis
- Appendix C: SWOT Analysis
- Appendix D: Success Factors

Weekly Assignments

Lesson 1 (Due Feb. 5)

Introduction to Strategic Planning

Skip Bryson Chapter 1. Instead, read the mini-lecture, Bryson Chapter 2, and Chapter 1 of Michael Allison and Jude Kaye's Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations on **electronic reserve**, and respond to the Discussion Board questions.

(Note: to access electronic reserve, click on the Electronic Reserve button on Blackboard's Announcements page. Your password is psc525)

As you read, consider the following:

- 1) What is a strategic plan?
- 2) What is the process by which one is developed?
- 3) What are the reasons for engaging in strategic planning?

Lesson 2 (Due Feb. 12)

Underlying Theory of Organizational Success

Read the mini-lecture and Bryson Chapter 3, and respond to the Discussion Board questions.

Skim the following to get a sense of what a strategic plan might look like: U.S. Forest Service's Strategic Plan at www.fs.fed.us (you will find it on the left under "pubs, regs &

manuals”). Also, skim the Strategic Plans on **electronic reserve** by former students Jacquie Hoffman, Karen Aguilera, and Brandi Roberts.

Lesson 3 (Due Feb. 19) **Strategic Planning in Political Environments**

Read the mini-lecture and Barton Wechsler and Robert Backoff’s “Policy Making and Administration in State Agencies” on **electronic reserve**, and respond to the Discussion Board questions.

As you read, ask yourself:

- 1) Does the strategy of an organization necessarily aim at achieving a state of excellence?
- 2) What macro-level strategy has your agency adopted?

Begin researching your formal mandates, those things that you are formally charged with doing or prohibited from doing, as required for writing assignment #1 (See Bryson pp. 97-98).

Lesson 4 (Due Feb. 26) **Creating Public Value**

Read the mini-lecture, Bryson pp. 94-97 only, Mark Moore’s Creating Public Value, Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 13-43), and Nanus and Dobbs’ Leaders Who Make a Difference, Chapter 2 (“The Greater Good,” pp. 27-51) on **electronic reserve**, and respond to the Discussion Board questions.

As you read, ask yourself:

- 1) What does it mean to say that agencies exist to create public value?
- 2) What public value does your agency create? How does it make the world a better place? What if it didn’t exist? (Think about the movie *It’s a Wonderful Life*; what would Bedford Falls look like today if Jimmy Stewart had never lived?)

Continue researching your formal mandates.

Lesson 5 (Due March 5) **Mandate Analysis and Mission Clarification**

Read the mini-lecture and Bryson Chapter 4, respond to the Discussion Board questions, and submit writing assignment #1 by Monday, March 9.

As you read, ask yourself:

- 1) What am I hoping to accomplish by conducting Mandate Analysis?
- 2) If your agency is a government agency, what have you been charged with doing, authorized to do, and/or prohibited from doing? If your agency is a nonprofit, what were you created to accomplish and are there any professional or governmental regulations that constrain your pursuit of excellence?
- 3) To what extent do your formal mandates limit your “unconstrained field of action”?
- 4) What is your essential purpose, your *raison d’être*?

Lesson 6 (Due March 12) Stakeholder Analysis

Read the mini-lecture, re-read the section in Bryson Chapter 4 dealing with stakeholder analysis (pp. 107-113), and respond to the Discussion Board questions. Submit writing assignment #2 by Monday, March 16.

As you read, think about who your primary stakeholders are, what they expect from you, and what it will take for them to view you as an excellent agency.

Lesson 7 (Due March 19) SWOT Analysis

Read the mini-lecture and Bryson Chapter 5, respond to the Discussion Board questions, and submit writing assignment #3 by Monday, March 23.

Lesson 8 (Due March 26) Developing a Vision of Excellence

Read the mini-lecture, the excerpt from Karl Albrecht's *The Northbound Train*, Nanus and Dobbs Chapter 4 ("Leader as Visionary"), and the visions articulated in the three student papers on **electronic reserve**, respond to the Discussion Board questions, and submit writing assignment #4 by Monday, April 6.

Lesson 9 (Due April 9) Success Factors: Developing a Theory of Success

Read the mini-lecture and the excerpt from James Q. Wilson's *Bureaucracy* ("Armies, Prisons, and Schools") on **electronic reserve**, respond to the Discussion Board questions, and submit writing assignment #5 by Monday, April 13.

As you read, think about what 3-5 things you need to be absolutely successful at in order to bring your vision of excellence into being.

Lesson 10 (Due April 16) Strategic Issues

Read the mini-lecture and Bryson Chapter 6, and respond to the Discussion Board questions.

Analyze your previous writing assignments in order to identify your 3-5 most pressing strategic issues.

Lesson 11 (Due April 23) Strategic Goals, Objectives, and Actions

Read the mini-lecture and Bryson Chapter 7, respond to the Discussion Board questions, and submit writing assignment #5 by Monday, April 27.

Lesson 12 (Due April 30) Implementing and Revising Strategic Plans

Read the mini-lecture and Bryson Chapters 9 and 10, and respond to the Discussion Board questions.

Submit the final draft of your Strategic Plan with Appendices by Thursday, May 14.

Writing Assignments

Please note: We will begin with the appendices and write the plan itself last.

Writing Assignment #1. Appendix A: Mandate Analysis and Mission Clarification

Write an analysis (perhaps 3-6 pages in length double-spaced) that 1) defines what mandates are and establishes the importance of mandate analysis and 2) identifies your organization's formal mandates (not informal mandates). Close with a summary analysis that 3) draws out the implications for your "unconstrained field of action," and 4) clarifies the organization's fundamental mission as your planning team understands it (e.g., why it exists, what it exists to accomplish). Do not offer a formal mission statement and avoid simplistic rhetoric; explain your understanding of your mission in ordinary English.

Advice:

- 1) Take general guidance from the student papers on electronic reserve, but be mindful of the fact that they may not be perfect models .
- 2) Make appropriate distinctions between mission-defining mandates and authority-constraining mandates.
- 3) If your organization is a nonprofit, you will not have formal statute-based mandates; nonetheless, your "unconstrained field of action" may be restricted by tax codes, articles of incorporation, by-laws, etc.
- 4) Whenever possible, provide brief quotes that capture your agency's mandated purposes and scope of authority as cited in the law, articles of incorporation, etc.
- 5) When clarifying your mission, be sure to clarify what public value your organization exists to create. (How might society be diminished if your organization ceased to exist?)
- 6) Remember that your primary purpose is to determine how much autonomy your agency has to define its mission and its path to organizational excellence (its "unconstrained field of action"); thus you need to close by drawing out the implications of your mandate and mission analysis for your unconstrained field of action.

Writing Assignment #2. Appendix B: Stakeholder Analysis

Write an analysis (perhaps 4-8 pages) that 1) defines stakeholder and establishes the importance of stakeholder analysis, 2) identifies your organization's 5 or 6 most important stakeholders, and 3) draws out the implications of your stakeholder analysis for your organization's pursuit of excellence.

For each stakeholder, clarify a) what the stakeholder expects from your organization, b) what criteria the stakeholder uses to evaluate your performance (what it will take for them to judge you to be an "excellent organization,") and c) how dependent your organization is on the stakeholder and the extent to which this limits your "unconstrained field of action" in pursuing your vision and strategy for success. Close with a summary analysis.

Writing Assignment #3. Appendix C: SWOT Analysis

Write an analysis that 1) establishes the importance of SWOT analysis, 2) describes each of the most important 6-10 SWOTs facing your organization, and 3) draws out the implications of this analysis for achieving a state of excellence.

Remember that this analysis relates to strategic planning's underlying theory of organizational success, i.e., finding the optimal alignment between the agency's mission and vision of success, its internal capacities, and its external realities. Thus, your summary analysis should capture patterns in your SWOTS that point the way to the desired alignment (e.g., beefing up internal capacities, adjusting to external forces).

Writing Assignment #4. Appendix D: Success Factors

Write an analysis that 1) establishes the causal chain between what you do and the desired outcomes you intend to achieve, and 2) identifies 3-5 factors at which you must be highly successful if you are to attain your desired state of excellence. Emphasize that your success strategy is to concentrate on this causal chain and to allocate your time, attention, and resources to performing well on each of your success factors.

Writing Assignment #5. Strategic Vision and Guiding Values

[You will later incorporate this assignment into the body of your strategic plan (rather than into an appendix)]

Write a summary statement (perhaps 2-3 pages) describing your vision of excellence, both internal (organizational) and external (social). Imagine that it is three to five years from now and you have been asked to describe your organization as having achieved the desired state of excellence. Describe what you see, what you envision. As regards your external vision, you might say: we envision a society in which As regards your internal vision, you might say: we envision competent, hard-working, and highly-motivated staff members who collaborate

Optional: If you wish, you might also identify the values and/or principles that you have chosen to guide your efforts to realize your vision of excellence. Without agreement on these, your northbound train will not stay on the tracks.

Writing Assignment #6. Strategic Issues, Goals, and Actions

Write a “strategic plan” that 1) identifies the most critical 3-4 strategic issues facing your organization as it pursues a state of excellence, and 2) identifies the goals, objectives, and/or actions you have decided upon for addressing each strategic issue.

Remember Bryson's advice: "An adequate strategic issue description 1) phrases the issue as a challenge that the organization can do something about and that has more than one solution, 2) discusses the confluence of factors (mission, mandates, and internal and external environmental aspects, or SWOTs) that make the issue strategic, and 3) articulates the consequences of not addressing the issue."

Finally, see if you can add a brief conclusion to the plan that somehow ties things together -- perhaps by clarifying how resolving your strategic issues will help the organization realize its vision of excellence.

The Final Strategic Plan

Rewrite assignments #1-#6 based on the provided feedback and compile them into a single document as indicated above, with a brief introduction added. Your goal is to ensure continuity throughout the plan and its analyses. Note that assignments #5 and #6 will become the body of the plan, whereas the remaining assignments will comprise Appendices A, B, C, and D. Take general guidance from the student papers on electronic reserve (but note that students in the past didn't have to complete appendix D).