

History of the Strategic Planning Process at Terra Community College (1993 - 2003)

Terra Technical College transitioned to Terra State Community College.

The College Mission, Commitment to Quality, and Goals were developed by a team of Terra employees, who had asked for input through the newspaper concerning the mission and goals of the college. Over 400 college employees and community members participated in 1994.

“The Mission of Terra State Community College is to provide the opportunity for quality learning experiences which are accessible and affordable. Terra is actively committed to technical education, to transfer credit, to excellence, to lifelong learning and to the cultural and economic development of our communities.”

Terra’s Commitment to Quality: “Through empowerment of people, Terra is committed to the continuous improvement of education, processes, services, and people.”

Goals:

1. Provide individuals of our communities with lifelong learning opportunities for both cultural and personal enrichment.
2. Offer technical programs leading to an Associate Degree or Certificate designed to prepare individuals for employment in specific careers.
3. Provide programs that prepare individuals for transfer to other educational institutions.
4. Support the needs of business and industry, and develop applied technical education utilizing state-of-the-art technology.
5. Support local economic development efforts by providing services and facilities to new and existing businesses and industries.
6. Maintain student fees that are economical, and offer financial assistance to make the cost of education affordable.
7. Provide programs, services, and an environment to meet individual educational needs.
8. Promote a highly qualified faculty and staff who are committed to a positive student outcome.

The outcomes to be measured for the Mission and Goals were developed by a team in 1995. These were later dropped due to the Board and President indicating that there were too many measures (approximately 100). A newer version was not adopted and then the academic dean, who was responsible for the outcomes, departed.

Key Informant Surveys were first used in 1995. Teams of two Terra employees interviewed individuals from various business and industries. Questions asked were used to invoke comments on their satisfaction of present Terra training, education, and other services, concerning the potential for becoming a customer of Terra’s services, and present and future issues and trends in their businesses and processes. [See Key Informant Survey Questions] Results from the surveys were used to develop specific

goals for changes and/or improvements in technical programs and in the workforce development area. These were presented to the Board of Trustees in August 1995.

Starting in FY96, the Administrative Council, departments, and teams developed work group and committee outcomes. Outcome statements included milestone date, audit dates, person responsible, and other persons involved. Audits of outcomes included summary statements and/or revisions to outcome statements. For the FY96 Plan, Terra's Administrative Council included ongoing outcomes, accomplished outcomes, and what outcomes had been dropped. [See the 1997 Plan for Growth and Improvement, A Road Map to the Twenty-first Century.]

A Master Planning Guide was also developed at this time. [See Master Planning ~ A Planning Guide FY97-FY 00] As part of the master planning process, the identification of both strategic (planning for the future) and tactical (improvements in college processes and systems) elements was aided by six questions: Who are we? What do we aspire to be? What's going on outside Terra? What's going on inside Terra? On what key issues should we focus? What work processes inside Terra need to be improved?

Focus groups internally and with community groups, including business and industry were held during Fall 1996. The key foci were trends and issues in the community, then presently and in the future. Two major questions were asked:

1. Considering the areas of science, technology, economics, and societal and political trends, what do you feel are the major issues and trends of your community? In Northwest Ohio? In the U.S.? globally?
2. Considering the areas of science, technology, economics, and societal and political trends, what do you feel will be the major issues and trends of your community? In Northwest Ohio? In the U.S.? globally?

Summaries of the focus groups, environmental scan information (environmental pressures, see below), and expenses generated from FY94 to FY96 were given to the employees to review, prior to employee meetings. Three employee meetings were held to discuss strategic planning at the college. Employees were questioned on the following:

1. What trends and issues will most affect Terra's ability to serve its students and customers?
2. What opportunities or threats exist for Terra as a result of these trends and issues?
3. What major gaps exist between what Terra does now and what it needs to do to meet the needs and expectations of future students and customers?

This discussion or SWOT analysis led to six major priority categories to be reviewed by the Administrative Council for the Growth and Improvement Plan (Terra's Strategic Plan). The areas of focus included assessment and maintenance of buildings, assessment of used and new equipment, employee professional development, evaluating and/ or changing instructional programs to meet community needs, needed employee positions, and a focus on improving Terra processes, such as registration, scheduling industrial employees, retention, and marketing.

Environmental pressures, key views from the initial environmental scanning process, were used in the planning process. [See Planning Model Overview and Planning Process Cycle and Guide for Writing Planned Outcomes in the 1997 Plan.] Outcome success was determined by the number of outcomes completed and through the scoring and comments from the O.B.R. Service Expectations Report, which continued from FY95 through FY99. The system of outcomes developed through divisions and departments was continued through 2000 [see the 2000 Plan for Growth and Improvement].

During Fall 1997, the College Plan was supplemented with Distance Learning Master Plan, developed by the Distance Learning Team. This Plan built on a SWOT analysis to determine the Strategic Direction of the College in distance education. [See Distance Education Master Plan PowerPoint slides.]

After reviewing the first Mission Statement as a community college, the President and the Board of Trustees adopted the following mission statement in 1999:

“Terra Community College is committed to energizing our communities through education for life. We are dedicated to accomplishing this through excellence in all that we do.”

By FY 1999, environmental scanning trends were developed by the College’s scanning team, The Futures Team. [See Environmental Scanning Process.] [See Fiscal Year 2000 Environmental Scan to review trends developed by the team.] At that time, the goals for the College were dropped, and the strategic ends and strategic direction statements alone were used to focus the planning.

During August 1999, the Board reviewed the Ends Policies, and then the Mission Statement. [See Ends Policy and Mission Review.] The mission statement was changed to become:

“Terra Community College is committed to our communities, education for life, and excellence in all that we do.”

In April 2001, the Deans Council discussed strategic planning and determined what measures and goals should be reported annually to the Board of Trustees, with each of the six strategic ends being assessed during a different monthly meeting. Measures were used, for the most part, that could be compared to other state community colleges or national benchmarks. [See pages from the 2001 Ohio Award for Excellence for an overview of the planning process at this time.] Goals and measures were developed over the next several months. These were assessed and reported to the Board of Trustees during their meetings using PowerPoint graphical presentations and verbal response by the Deans to indicate overall college goals. Other goals included during these presentations were the President’s goals, goals related to the O.B.R. Performance Expectations, and AQIP goals. [See Category 2:Strategic Planning for narrative of how the Ohio Award for Excellence assessors rated the College on its strategic planning.]

During FY02, the Futures Team held a “Summit”, which included representatives from the manufacturing, service industries and businesses, such as healthcare and education,

and governmental services and economic growth. The Team used the same questions as were posed for the focus groups during 1996. Results were later shared at a meeting between the Board of Trustees and the Sandusky County Economic Development Corporation. [See Future's Summit.] [See Futures Presentation Winter 2002.]

During FY03, the idea to go towards a planning model using the scorecard approach was initiated. This caused the Deans Council to re-evaluate the strategic elements and determine the key priorities and measures, so that only a few (3-5) goals would be measured in each strategic end. Presentation of the goals and measures to the Board of Trustees was delivered through written executive summaries for each strategic end. [See Institutional Vitality as an example of an executive summary.] [See AQIP Criterion 8; Planning Continuous Improvement for an overview of the last planning process.]