5.C - The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

Assurance Evidence

CSU has a lengthy record of established systematic and integrated planning processes whereby it assesses and sustains strengths, addresses concerns, and advances the quality of learning. CSU’s strategic planning process is best characterized as a multi-faceted, dynamic process that integrates the annual budgeting process, rather than a single, top-down plan. The Strategic Plan (described in Component 5.C.3) tends to focus on incremental adjustments as needed to sustain and improve existing programs and respond to major Presidential initiatives. Presidential planning tends to focus on big, bold initiatives in response to challenging goals that transform the institution through comprehensive initiatives such as SSI and CSU 2020 (in subsection 5.C.4). A well developed planning process for physical development of the campus results in the 10-year physical development plan (in subsection 5.C.3). Often, the benchmark comparisons for these planning processes include Board-approved peer institutions. Opportunistic or translational planning occurs in response to unanticipated challenges arising from external changes such as new technologies, the INTO opportunity to collaborate on international student recruitment, emerging fan support for a new football stadium, fire- and weather-caused destruction of facilities, and others. These plans tend to be based on "best-practices" identified at other institutions or the creativity of CSU personnel. Detailed planning at the programmatic or discipline level is mostly decentralized and tends to be benchmarked in comparison to aspirational and peer programs of other universities.

As drafts of the budget are developed, the various planning processes begin to merge together coherently, resulting in the allocation of resources in alignment with CSU's mission. This process, as described in Component 5.A.5, has become much more open to all constituents in the past ten years, resulting in increased accountability and improved alignment of program assessment, planning priorities, and resource allocation.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.


2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.

As described above, budgeting of resources is closely linked to data-based evaluation and planning. The annual review or refresh of the Strategic Plan by the Strategic Planning Area Review Committees (SPARCs) is based on collecting relevant data as defined by the performance metrics for the pertinent goals, such as student learning and operations. Progress toward accomplishment of the goals in the Strategic Plan is analyzed with subsequent adjustment and/or reprioritization of strategies, and budget needs are carried into the budget development cycle. The SSI is a prime example of the linkage between planning and budget; it started with assessment of student learning (dissatisfaction with NSSE scores) and graduation success, which led to evaluations of existing programs and operations, discovery of best practices, and finally, budget prioritization for implementation of changes. Progress with these initiatives has now led to reassessment and a new cycle of goal-setting and recommended initiatives for the next round of strategic planning. For an example of a major investment decision resulting from this continuously coherent process, see the discussion of Academic Success Coordinators in Component 4.C.

Other examples of linkages of assessments and evaluations with planning and budget allocations include differential tuition, which returns the resources to the programs generating such resources, and the reward of entrepreneurial efforts such as tuition sharing for new graduate programs. If approved, a newly developed graduate program may share in the tuition revenue generated through the enrollment of students who may otherwise not have chosen to attend CSU. The new model of funding for summer session, as described in Component 5.D.2, is another example of planning, performance, and budget linkage.

Planning and budgeting actions are also linked through the multi-faceted input into the budget hearings described in Component 5.A.5. Each SPARC is expected to present budget recommendations in support of priority initiatives within the Strategic Plan. Budget proposals are also presented by divisional leaders (vice presidents and deans). This process ensures that
multiple perspectives and linkages are incorporated in the budget as it is developed.

3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.

The Strategic Plan and the physical development plan are highlighted here as examples of the planning processes at CSU. Other, more narrowly-focused planning processes are included elsewhere in this report, with several being highlighted in Component 5.D.2.

The development of the Strategic Plan is intended to be an articulation of our aspirations for the institution and a roadmap of how we intend to achieve them. Strategic planning is a priority of the Board, and the CSU plan is guided by the Board’s overarching vision and direction. The CSU planning process is comprehensive and inclusive, involving students, faculty and staff across the University through our SPARCs, annual open forums, and implementation teams. It is also dynamic – changing as goals are achieved and new opportunities develop. The Strategic Plan is refreshed on a three-year planning cycle to provide opportunities for periodic updates of the plan to reflect new priorities and ideas. The SPARCs are designed to assure wide-based campus input into institutional budgets and priorities and to support budgeting that is tied to planning efforts in a transparent and coherent way. In each of the intervening years, the plan is reviewed to assess progress toward fulfillment of goals and prioritize budget support for the various initiatives. Therefore, the SPARCs serve as area self-study committees to gather evidence of institutional performance, evaluate progress, and recommend adjustments and new initiatives to ensure continuous improvement in all aspects. The SPARCs’ broad membership includes representation from most campus constituent groups and key administrative leadership. All members of the President’s Cabinet served on one or more SPARC. Each SPARC also includes one or more of the college deans and representatives from the Faculty Council’s Committee on Strategic and Financial Planning, the Administrative Professional Council, and the Classified Personnel Council. The 2012 membership and Strategic Plan goal assignments for each SPARC are listed in the Preface.

The Strategic Plan is organized around five broad objectives, also called planning areas. Consistent with the University’s mission, sections are devoted to teaching and learning, research and discovery, and outreach and engagement. The fourth section addresses financial and other resources, including fundraising and marketing, infrastructure, nurturing human capital, and promoting fiscal stability, critical to supporting and sustaining CSU. Finally, reflecting our commitment to diversity, the fifth section outlines plans to achieve the institution’s diversity goals. In total, there are 37 specific goals related to these objectives and a number of strategies related to achievement of the goals. From this university-level outline, administrative divisions, colleges, departments and specialized units are encouraged to develop more detailed courses of action in unit plans that, collectively, constitute the University’s Strategic Plan.

In the 2012 Strategic Plan refresh, revisions were proposed to both the graduate and undergraduate sections. Significantly, those revisions were a logical continuation of the 2010 changes. The Strategic Plan reflects how the pieces come together – the characteristics of incoming students; the programmatic and educational opportunities we provide those students; and finally, the outcomes we aspire to achieve. As a result, it was comparatively easy to see areas that could be developed and improved within the existing overall structure of the Strategic Plan.

Physical Development and Infrastructure Planning

Capital Construction and infrastructure planning follows the process mandated by the State of Colorado for institutions of higher education. The University’s Main Campus Master Plan was approved by the Department of Higher Education in April 2005. CSU is currently working on the next update, called the “2020 plan.” The master plan includes individual campus long-range plans that address campus circulation, transit, building construction and revitalization, landscape and quads, utilities, and land acquisition. Sub-plans include outdoor lighting and safety, signage, drainage, art in public places, ADA Transition Plan, plaza improvements, and plans for outlying campuses. The master plan provides a framework for future growth and is required to be updated at least every 10 years. The Aesthetic Guidelines provides design standards and guidelines for campus development and redevelopment. Simply stated, if the Master Plan is the “Why and What” of campus physical development, the Aesthetic Guidelines
represent the “How.”

Specific construction project requests are initiated by the Deans, by Facilities personnel and by the Auxiliary Divisions within the University. They must have an identified funding source and be in line with the Strategic Plan and master plan in order to move forward. Funding sources for capital construction include:

- legislative capital construction appropriations,
- operating funds,
- research building revolving funds,
- student facility fees,
- donors,
- grants, and
- debt financing (bonds).

Program plans are required for projects over $2 million that will be bonded or will ask for State Capital Construction Funds. They are used to determine the “who, what, when, where, why and how much?” for each project.

The Board reviews and approves all capital construction projects over $2 million as well as the required program plans. Pursuant to Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) requirements, the University annually prepares a Five-Year Capital Construction Request and a Two-Year Cash List for the Board’s approval. After formal review and recommendation, the Board-approved lists are forwarded to the CCHE. CCHE establishes a prioritized five-year Higher Education Capital Improvement Program list of projects requesting funds from the State of Colorado. Two-year cash lists are also reviewed and approved for each institution individually. When funding is available, approved projects may start design.

4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution’s sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.

CSU takes a conservative approach to budgeting to ensure fiscal stability within the current capacity of its resources. Projected increases in enrollment revenue are not included in base budget projections. Revenues from enrollment growth are held in reserve and used as one-time funds until the following year, when currently-enrolled students are forecast to return. There are also “cushions” built into the tuition revenue projections each year through the exclusion of individual student coursework credit hours in excess of 21 credits. In addition, there are established base reserves (available each fiscal year) for certain revenue and expenditure items that impact the University. Such reserves have been established for enrollment, controlled maintenance, financial aid, sustainable energy related projects, and Presidential/Provost programmatic initiatives. In the event the University was to experience a significant unplanned event, whether a shortfall in a particular revenue source or a large expenditure, these reserves could be combined to compensate for such an event.

Current work related to CSU 2020 includes a thorough, multifactorial analysis of institutional capacity and year-by-year modeling of revenue projections, physical capacity (including housing capacity and classroom capacity), support services, faculty and staff hiring, and infrastructure costs to ensure a sound understanding of capacity limitations. These models will provide a framework within which the University is prepared to sustain access and quality given a spectrum of different, potential fiscal scenarios.

5. Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

CSU’s planning process is dynamic: it expects new opportunities, emerging factors, and transformational events in our global environment. The challenge to recognize the unanticipated and take advantage of the opportunities by responding in a timely manner requires constant vigilance and efforts. This institutional readiness is a leadership responsibility and is accomplished through many strategies. Executive leaders are responsible for contacting and listening to both internal and external constituents and for actively participating in professional organizations related to their disciplines and the activities of the University. The list of institutional memberships demonstrates some of the opportunities the University supports to gain external perspectives. Through these professional and academic organizations, best
practices of other institutions can be identified to inform the methods followed by CSU. External reviews are often sought as a means for providing a different perspective and assessment of programs. In some cases, consultants are hired with the expectation that they can provide knowledge of emerging factors and creative ways to address challenges.

Throughout this report, examples have been provided that demonstrate how the institution has recognized emerging factors and taken action consistent with its mission. Under Criterion 1, CSU’s robust approaches to internationalization and international student enrollment were discussed. Demographic trends are assessed by several units, including the Office of Vice President for Student Affairs, the Office of Vice President for Enrollment and Access, the Office of Vice President for Diversity, and Institutional Research. Emerging technologies, and our ability to adapt to them, are described in Components 3.D.6 and 5.A.1. Our institutional ability to recognize and respond to other emerging factors, such as research funding changes, global sustainability, and the increasing presence of students with complex needs are described in Component 5.D.2

Often, emerging factors and opportunities require complex adjustments. For example, the multi-phased discussion of new academic program proposals (described in Component 3.A) is designed to engage a broad range of constituents to ensure adequate buy-in and resources. Similar discussions occurred before implementing the SSI. Presently, the University community is engaged in multi-phased discussion of CSU 2020 as a possible plan to address the loss of state appropriations supporting higher education.

**Sources**

- Aesthetic Guidelines
- Capital Construction Cash Funded Projects FY2012-13 to FY2013-14
- Capital Construction Projects FY2011-12 to FY2015-16
- CSU 2020 BOG Retreat Presentation May 2013
- Institutional Memberships
- Main Campus Master Plan 2004
- Master Plan Update Spring 2012
- Strategic Plan 2012