

Review of 2011 Planning Process Evaluation

Recommendations for Improvement

In 2011, El Camino College conducted a College-wide review of its Planning Process that included an evaluation of the annual planning process, opportunities for participation, and recommendations for improvement. This brief reviews the recommendations for improvement and provides comments on where we are today, 4 years later. Nearly every recommendation has been addressed either fully or mostly (or is not applicable).

Recommendations for Improvement

The following constructive ideas were generated in response to open-ended questions about improving the current planning process (Q28) and understanding the planning process (Q29). A response or current status update is provided for each.

28. What changes or additions should be made to improve the current planning process?

Q28. Recommendation from 2011	2015 Response or Update
<i>It seems as though the planning process has been used to create obstacles to funding rather than vice versa. When funds are requested for anything, one is asked if it is in Planbuilder. If one did not anticipate the need a year ago, one is told you cannot subvert the planning process.</i>	Yes, most funding requests must go through the annual planning process since most of our needs can be anticipated through Program Review. However, the College recognizes that we also need to be nimble and respond to emerging needs. The new PRP system can handle both planned-for and emerging needs.
<i>Actually showing any correlation between the current planning process and what actually gets done and/or supported on campus. Removing the justification process for items/services that have been entered into Plan Builder when funding has been allocated for those items. Why do I need to justify something in Plan Builder when the only reason why the item was entered into Plan Builder is because I need the item?</i>	Providing a rationale or justification for a funding request is standard practice and especially important at a large institution. It also ensures that requests are based on thorough evaluation and evidence, typically conducted in the program review. It also explains the purpose of a request for someone who is far removed from the plan. The practice of justification is continued in the TracDat-based PRP system.
<i>Relying on your division for information could be problematic - I would rather have campus-wide trainings.</i>	Training on TracDat and the PRP system has been unified for Program Review and Planning, so the linkage is clearer. Training is provided at all levels of planning.

Q28. Recommendation from 2011 (cont.)	2015 Response or Update
<i>I believe most faculty in my department are completely removed from the planning process and Plan Builder. There needs to be greater awareness of how the process works.</i>	We have made efforts to increase awareness and understanding of the planning process. This survey will be repeated in 2015 to gauge any improvement in this area.
<i>I think the only change I would recommend is the process of evaluation since many programs are looking to our (Institutional Research Office) for research to include in their program plans. All of the programs submit research request at the same time and this causes a back log with our research department, thereby delaying or extending the turnaround time for a research request to be completed. The department does an excellent job of accommodating request but when "Program Plans" are due this presents a problem.</i>	Institutional Research & Planning (IRP) has developed a Program Review data tool for faculty to access for their program. In addition, success & retention reports are now customizable. This has meant that routine requests can be handled by users, saving IR time to handle special projects. A bottleneck still exists at certain times during the year, but IRP is endeavoring to remedy this through more automation.
<i>Have only one plan - combine program review with plan builder - it is so confusing - allow for updates to be made during the year</i>	Effective in 2014-15, program review is fully integrated with annual planning. Program Reviews in the new system can remain live and current with new developments.
<i>I believe people need training. Too often we are asked for feedback when the deadline is literally tomorrow. This is frustrating and makes everyone feel helpless.</i>	Training on TracDat and the PRP system has been unified for Program Review and Planning, is timed with program review orientation and annual planning cycles.
<i>Better communication and willingness of administration to consider and implement faculty input.</i>	Through the development of the Making Decisions document along with the publication of criteria for the prioritization of funding and planning recommendations, the planning, budgeting and decision-making process is more clear and inclusive.
<i>Send out deadlines earlier. So many things on this campus are done at the last minute.</i>	Planning cycles and deadlines have been fairly consistent in recent years, timed to afford faculty with the greatest opportunity for feedback and more clarity on information needed.
<i>Include more stakeholders.</i>	The Making Decisions document has clarified representation on collegial consultation committees including the Planning & Budgeting Committee-PBC. Planning Summits have had broad campus representation.

Q28. Recommendation from 2011 (cont.)	2015 Response or Update
<i>My manager has not involved our office in the planning process (i.e. program review). Are managers being encouraged to involve staff? Are they being asked to identify who was actually involved in the process?</i>	Managers are encouraged to all staff and faculty to an appropriate degree in the annual planning process. Plan Builder recorded the names of all participants; this can be documented in TracDat also.
<i>More trainings to understand what the plan is for, what should be included in it, and the format that it should be written.</i>	Training on TracDat and the PRP system is timed with program review orientation and annual planning cycles. Trainings and materials are tailored for each level (program, unit, area) and are offered frequently at each campus location.
<i>It is a joke that you want faculty input on planning. The administration makes the decisions and they want the facade of faculty input.</i>	The annual planning process starts with faculty and other program leaders who build annual program plans. It is likely that not all program-level requests can be feasibly incorporated into a unit plan due to financial restrictions and the College's strategic goals.
<i>Make instruction, not administrative convenience, the focus.</i>	The enhanced linkage of planning to program review and strategic initiatives (e.g., A-Student Learning) puts the focus on instructional needs for academic departments.
<i>Would be nice to have all the plans copied over to a public access page where anyone could see plans for any Dept. I believe that part of the problem with communication of Plan Builder and its purpose is that only password access users can see the plans. Therefore, making the "submitted" plans accessible for viewing without the need for password access would improve communication and sharing of plans an expand awareness of Plan Builder and its purpose.</i>	TracDat's PRP system was designed to develop a College Plan following the VP prioritization process. The College Plan level in PRP is currently in development. The 2015-16 Plan will be accessible by all employees by early November 2015. In addition, the College Plan ("VP Priorities") is shared in PBC whose members can freely share it back with their constituencies.
<i>The use of Strategic Initiatives as planning goals this year seemed artificial. Some of my goals fit this model and some did not; I would have liked the opportunity to include goals that don't fit current SIs.</i>	In the old Plan Builder, there was no easy way to consistently link a college's strategic goals with plans without making them "goals" with associated objectives. With TracDat, users are able to name a recommendation "what it is" and link a strategic initiative to it.

Q28. Recommendation from 2011 (cont.)	2015 Response or Update
<i>More information sent to all faculty and staff to better understand outcomes and why those outcomes are being implemented. More transparency</i>	The College Plan will promote transparency. The Plan shows how each funded item links to strategic initiatives and other college-wide goals by expense category (e.g., staffing, etc). In addition, an annual planning newsletter is in the works to inform the college community about funding directions and some of these funded items, in particular.
<i>More trainings to understand what the plan is for, what should be included in it, and the format that it should be written.</i>	Training on TracDat and the PRP system is timed with program review orientation and annual planning cycles. Trainings and materials are tailored for each level (program, unit, area) and are offered frequently at each campus location.
<i>It is a joke that you want faculty input on planning. The administration makes the decisions and they want the facade of faculty input.</i>	The annual planning process starts with faculty and other program leaders who build annual program plans. It is likely that not all program-level requests can be feasibly incorporated into a unit plan due to financial restrictions and the College's strategic goals.

Question 29. What suggestions do you have that would help you understand the planning process?

Q29. Ideas to Improve Understanding	2015 Response or Update
<i>Availability of an on-line brochure or tutorial.</i>	Academic Affairs developed videos demos of each module (e.g., SLOs, PRP) in TracDat to assist users. Also, step-by-step instructions for PRP, with screen-shots, are in development.
<i>When structuring the plan, make it more simple to understand.</i>	We are striving to keep the PRP system as simple as possible while including the information essential for annual planning and record-keeping. We are somewhat limited by the structure of TracDat, which is outside of our control, but we hope that tutorial materials and trainings will facilitate access and understanding.
<i>I feel that all new supervisors/managers should be provided some brief level of training.</i>	As noted above, trainings and materials will be offered that are specific to the Unit level. These resources will be offered annually and as needed.

Q29. Ideas to Improve Understanding (cont.)	2015 Response or Update
<p><i>The process should be more flexible. Everything needs to be accessible to faculty on and off campus. Faculty should be able to update their plans at any time. The yearly deadline is unworkable and leads to funding of outmoded plans. When funds become available they should apply to the current plan. If it is continually updated it will always reflect the current needs. Administrators should not be able to pick and choose what gets funded. The departments should prioritize and the funding should follow that prioritization.</i></p>	<p>The PRP module is hosted on the TracDat website, so everyone’s access is now as good as a local internet connection, both on and off campus. While there is a deadline to submit annual plans for annual budget development, program review and annual plans now remain “live” and can be edited as needed. Program reviews and associated plans can be kept current by faculty leads. The prioritization process is published and TracDat facilitates greater transparency. However, the number of annual recommendations always far exceeds the budget to cover costs, so funded items must be determined strategically based on College mission and goals.</p>
<p><i>Communicate the process and allowed to be an active participant</i></p>	<p>Since the 2011 evaluation, the planning process has been codified and publicized to a greater extent; the Institutional Planning Administrative Procedure (AP 3250), updated Strategic Plan (BP 1200, Mission & Strategic Initiatives), and an enhanced Planning Model are published on the College website. In addition, the planning calendar is reviewed and updated by PBC annually. All employees should have the opportunity to participate in the annual planning process, by providing input or developing or reviewing the plan.</p>
<p><i>LISTEN! The campus atmosphere should tell you something about how serious input is taken.</i></p>	<p>We heard you! Through the development of the Making Decisions document and the College’s commitment to follow through on its guidelines for consultation, opportunities for participation, comment and review are now more widely known.</p>
<p><i>I would also recommend that managers are fully trained in the context of program plans because I'm not confident that everyone understands how to interpret the program plans in front of them and that causes concerns in the minds of those creating the plans.</i></p>	<p>For the TracDat system, trainings and supporting materials have been created that are specific to each level of planning (Program, Unit, and Area) to ensure that they address the needs of each level.</p>

Q29. Ideas to Improve Understanding (cont.)	2015 Response or Update
<i>More trainings to understand what the plan is for, what should be included in it, and the format that it should be written.</i>	Annual plans are now fully integrated with program review in TracDat’s PRP module. Templates and embedded help text clearly describe PRP components and formats. In addition, trainings are more comprehensive, incorporating program review, planning, and the “big picture” into each session.
<i>The frequent reminders about what is due and when have been helpful for those of us who think about plan builder only when submission dates are near. We need more of them.</i>	Reminders continue, timed with the planning cycle and targeted to the group in question (program, unit, or area planners). We are exploring the possibility of embedding reminders into TracDat so that planners can receive notifications when information is due or missing.
<i>Relate to instructional, rather than administrative, goals.</i>	Student Learning (A) and Student Success & Support (B) are the first two strategic initiatives of the Strategic Plan and are associated with the vast majority of funded recommendations.
<i>Just seems like there is a lot of re-iteration and overlap in the plan builder, program, review, and other management reports.</i>	Many reported this duplication and we hope that the new PRP system resolves this. We now have one place in which program review and planning are stored and integrated.
<i>I understand the process fairly well. People in other areas are not as lucky as I am to have a manager that constantly informs me and updates me on the planning issues on campus. My input is always requested and valued. Having open communication encourages me to continue to participate in the planning process.</i>	Glad to hear it! This comment describes the ideal process to ensure understanding and participation. The review and evaluation of our planning process has helped us as a College do a better job at this collectively.
<i>Not directly related to the planning process but division/program/unit directions should consult and/or reflect the items in the plan builder when developing or implementing a process change or structural change.</i>	The greater integration of program review and planning facilitated by PRP should assist program and unit leaders in their efforts to plan for and implement change, as needed.