

DEMYSTIFYING STRATEGIC PLANNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION:  
UNDERSTANDING PERSPECTIVES AT EMORY UNIVERSITY

by

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(Under the Direction of James C. Hearn)

ABSTRACT

Times have changed since the 1980s when strategy and strategic planning emerged in higher education as a method of projecting future goals in response to a changing environment. The use of strategic planning and the impact of strategic leadership have not been evaluated to determine if they have actually created or hindered success, or have created conditions for failure, for that matter. The literature leaves room for further evaluation of actual success of strategic planning from formulation through implementation and evaluation, with an emphasis on the role of the leader or leaders in cascading strategy throughout the organization. To address the need for further examining the acceptance and effectiveness of strategic planning in specific college and university settings, this qualitative, exploratory case study describes a recent strategic planning process at Emory University, an urban, selective, private, research university in the southern United States.

The purpose of this study is to explore variations in stakeholder perspectives of strategic planning in order to understand how planning is perceived, determine to what extent perceptions are consistent across stakeholder groups, and ascertain the extent to which social constructivism influences what stakeholders believe to be true. Over the course of this study, three notable

themes emerged which help to explain the challenges of strategic planning in higher education. The themes that emerged are (a) academia and the threat of corporatization, (b) jargon and the misunderstanding of planning, and (c) communication and the power of cascading. There are some overlaps in these themes, but in essence, they capture the major challenge, which is overcoming preconceived notions related to what a strategic plan is; how it should or could be used to meet multiple needs, even in academia; and the value of alignment within an organization.

**INDEX WORDS:** Universities and colleges – United States – planning; Higher education; Strategic planning; Strategic leadership; Perceptions; Private universities; Research universities

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2013

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## DEDICATION

When I embarked on this journey two years ago, I had no way of knowing what to expect. It has been an adventure. This dissertation is dedicated to my family for their loving support, encouragement, and patience during this journey.

To my husband, Tim, you have been a rock star. Thank you so much for stepping in and managing more than your fair share of the family duties and for understanding when I needed time alone to focus on school. Meredith, my sweetie, I know you will be happy to have your Mom back. You told me going in that you were not sure how you were going to be able to deal with me not having time for you. Well, you were a trooper. I hate that I missed your dance recitals during the past two years. It pained me to be away. I'll make it up to you!

Next, I dedicate this dissertation to my sister, Saron Morgan, who stepped in and took on the not-so-easy role of “dance mom” and was there for Meredith when I couldn't be. You have been a stellar aunt to your favorite puppy nephew, Teddy. When I am away, there's no place he would rather be than with you! Thanks, also, to my dad, Abdul Hasib Matin, for instilling in me the desire to learn and to aspire to achieve great things.

Last but definitely not least, I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Beverly Morgan, for always being there for me and for believing in me, when I doubted myself. I knew I could go back to school and finish because you did it many years ago as a single mother of two. Even though I whine and complain, I want to assure you that your “can do” attitude has rubbed off on me. And, I would be remiss, if I did not give you a special thank you for doing the laundry for me for the past two years, so I could focus on school! I love my Mommy!

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to acknowledge my colleagues at Emory University for making this possible. Many thanks to my mentors: Dr. Earl Lewis, former provost; Mr. Michael Mandl, executive vice president for business and administration; and my supervisor, Mrs. Charlotte Johnson, senior vice provost for administration for encouraging me to pursue this degree. I am grateful for the support that I received from the Office of the Provost during this program. It is obvious that the Office values continuing education and professional development of future leaders in higher education. To my co-workers in the Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness, thank you for bearing with me during this busy time. Your encouraging words and support made a huge difference. Lastly, I would like to thank President James W. Wagner for allowing me to conduct this study on strategic planning at Emory University and all of the interview participants who allowed me to spend time with them discussing my favorite subject.

I wish to acknowledge my major professor, Dr. James Hearn, for his expert guidance and encouragement throughout the process of developing this dissertation, and also the others on my dissertation committee, Drs. Erik Ness and Robert Toutkoushian, for their constructive critiques and advice. Many thanks to Drs. Charles Knapp, Executive Ed.D program director and Elisabeth Hughes, associate program director for making this a memorable experience. And, thank you to my Ed.D. cohort. I appreciate all of you more than you know. It has been wonderful getting to know you all...sharing our ups and downs during the past two years. I'm looking forward to keeping in touch with everyone. To Beverly Cormican, we'll always have Paris! I would like to

extend a special “shout out” to Linda Bachman, Kara Brown Robinson, and Georgia Strange for being my support group during the final stretch! “Frankenthesi” is done!

Finally, I would like to thank my friends for understanding the many directions in which I’ve been pulled during the past two years, for listening to me complain, for being there throughout to encourage me, and for jumping in to offer support. To my dear friends, Audrey Turner and Kerrissa Vaughn, thank you for your assistance with transcribing and editing this document. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

“To have strategy is to put your own intelligence, foresight, and will in charge instead of outside forces and disordered concerns” (Keller, 1983).

In higher education, institutions hungry for solutions embrace strategic planning even though there are few data suggesting that it works (Chafee, 1985). Its usefulness has been in question since as early as 1985 by the business firms that originally espoused it. Little is known about the factors that define and affect successful strategic planning in higher education (Welsh, Nunez, & Petrosko, 2005). And, there is little empirical data to assess the value and results achieved by colleges and universities that have embraced the strategy process. Strategic planning has not been sufficiently evaluated to determine if the use of this practice has actually created or hindered success, or has created conditions for failure, for that matter, nor has it been evaluated to determine the consistency of perceptions of strategic planning from the leadership level throughout the organization.

As a change process, strategic planning depends upon people to develop and implement it to achieve results (Delprino, 2013; Welsh et al., 2005). With stakeholder buy-in and willingness to participate in implementation, a strategic plan can help an institution face an ever-changing educational environment. Delprino (2013) captured this notion:

Similarly, in higher education strategic planning, a sound strategic plan, while important, is just one part of the larger planning process. Faculty, staff, and student perception of, reaction to, and participation in the process will determine the success or failure of any planned strategic change. When it comes to change, either at an individual or organizational level, the development of the strategy or plan may be the easiest part of the change process (pp. 7-8).

University strategic plans are not like the plans of their corporate counterparts. The challenge of strategic planning in the university setting can be attributed in part to the history and organizational complexity of the modern “multiversity” (Kerr, 1994). Morrill (2010) aptly described the distinctive collegial decision-making culture and systems, which tend to impact the ability of universities to be nimble in a rapidly changing environment. Strategic planning is intended to provide opportunities for organizations, and their component parts, to evaluate themselves regularly; question the assumptions that guide their operations; and create an atmosphere throughout the organization that fosters continuous innovation, collaboration, and outward vision (Taylor & Karr, 1999). However, the utility and effectiveness of strategic planning have been debated for decades.

The organizational vision is a key component in strategic planning. It is the long-term goal to which organizations strive to attain by implementing strategies usually developed through a strategic planning process. One of the many roles of a university leader, especially a strategic leader, is to provide a compelling vision and a widely-shared sense of a long-term direction, both of which drive the organization through constant change to desired results. Strategic leadership is a complex process of thinking, acting, and influencing, which can be exercised by individuals and also by teams (Beatty & Quinn, 2010). Although the term “strategic leadership” has appeared frequently in the literature of management, the military, and higher education, there is little consensus on what strategic leadership is and how it should be facilitated (Morrill, 2010; Reimann, 1994). A widely cited model developed in 1995 suggests that strategic leadership has six critical components: determining strategic direction, developing human capital, exploiting and maintaining core competencies, sustaining an effective corporate culture, emphasizing ethical practices, and establishing strategic control (Beatty & Quinn, 2010).

There is a need for further examining the acceptance and effectiveness of strategic planning in specific college and university settings. Currently not much is known about how constituents at a single campus perceive a university-wide strategic planning process and its product, nor is much known about the influence strategic plans have on the work of key stakeholders. I will be addressing this need by investigating a recent strategic planning process at Emory University.

Emory University is an urban, selective, private, research university in the southern United States with approximately 14,500 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students and 3,000 regular full-time faculty. As Emory approaches the end of its 10-year strategic plan, leaders and university strategists have begun to contemplate how they will move forward with developing the university's next strategic plan to begin in 2015. A mid-point evaluation of the plan was conducted to assess (a) progress toward achieving university-wide strategic goals; (b) changes in the internal and external environment, particularly the changes in the economic climate; and (c) the impact the strategic plan has had on Emory's strategic position based on a set of key measures. While the results of the assessment showed progress and produced action items, it was not widely distributed beyond the leadership team. The assessment revealed that Emory was on track or on target to achieve its four strategic plan goals:

1. Emory has a world-class, diverse faculty that establishes and sustains preeminent learning, research, scholarship, and service programs.
2. Emory enrolls the best and the brightest undergraduate and graduate students and provides exemplary support for them to achieve success.
3. Emory's social and physical environments enrich the intellectual work and lives of faculty, students, and staff.

4. Emory is recognized as a place where engaged scholars come together in a strong and vital community to confront the human condition and experience and explore 21st century frontiers in science and technology.

Most recommendations that arose from the assessment were implemented. Among the recommendations were (a) to revise the goals, initiatives, and strategies to be clearer and more concise; (b) to add a university-wide goal related to “financial strength” in light of the changing economic environment; (c) to ensure that the goals cascaded throughout the university from the leadership level to faculty and staff; and (d) to streamline the strategic plan metrics to highlight the most important indicators that need to be addressed during the planning period. The leadership team revised the goals, initiatives, and strategies and added a goal related to “financial strength” immediately after the assessment; however, the latter two recommendations, to cascade the goals throughout the university and streamline the strategic plan metrics to highlight the most important indicators, posed more of a challenge.

The leadership team at Emory is aware of and associates a set of accomplishments that have occurred as a result of the strategic plan, but it is unclear if this knowledge and this understanding have permeated or resonated throughout the institution. The strategic plan leadership support team and evaluators suggested that if the leadership team implemented their recommendations to drive the goals throughout the university and to streamline the strategic plan metrics, highlighting the most important indicators, stakeholders across the university would be more engaged in and knowledgeable about the strategic plan. Without broad engagement and knowledge of ongoing implementation, including the resulting successes and failures, strategic planning may be discarded as another failed management fad (Birnbaum, 2000).

The purpose of this study is to explore variations in stakeholder perspectives of strategic

planning at Emory University in order to understand how planning is perceived, determine to what extent perceptions are consistent across stakeholder groups, and ascertain the extent to which social constructivism influences what stakeholders believe to be true. This study is aimed toward providing practical insights to practitioners and researchers in higher education to assist them in understanding the value of strategic planning and the correlation between the senior leadership team's understanding of strategic planning and that of others within the organization. This work will also help Emory consider how to proceed with planning activities, including plan or strategy formation, communication, and implementation, in the future.

In the next chapter, a review of the relevant literature provides an overview of key concepts related to strategy in higher education and reveals gaps, which led to refinement of the research questions that guided the study. The chapter concludes with a description of the dimensions and conceptual framework used in the analysis. Chapter 3 addresses the research design used in this case study, including the sample selection, data collection, data analysis, validity, and reliability of the study. Chapter 4 presents the detailed results and findings and the study concludes in Chapter 5 with a discussion of the findings, in relation to the research questions, a description of the limitations of the study, and implications for practice and future research.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In higher education, useful insights might be gained from earlier work on strategic planning and strategic leadership. In addition, the broader strategy literature from the fields of management and public administration provides numerous foundational concepts. Based upon a review of several bodies of literature, this chapter is divided into sections to provide a brief overview of strategy, the evolution of strategy in higher education, strategic planning and strategic leadership in higher education, the evaluation and assessment of strategic planning, and gaps in the literature.

### STRATEGY

The word “strategic” may be one of the most overused adjectives in the public and private sector business-related literature, today. Among many other terms, there are “strategic change,” “strategic thinking,” “strategic process,” “strategic planning,” “strategic management,” and “strategic leadership.” The word strategy derives from the Greek verb *stratego*, meaning to plan the defeat of one’s enemies through the effective use of resources (Keller, 1983). In business, the activities that go into creating, producing, selling, and delivering a product or service are the basic units of competitive advantage (Porter, 1996). That advantage can be maintained simply through operational effectiveness: best practices are easily emulated.

Strategy in organizations is the action taken by top-level administrators and policy makers to position the organization to be effective in a changing environment (Chaffee, 1985; Keller, 1983). Porter (1996) proposed that strategy or strategic positioning is the idea of creating

a sustainable competitive advantage or strategic position in a given market. The core of management and leadership is strategy: defining and communicating the company's unique tradeoffs and forging fit among activities (Porter, 1996). Some have argued that the private sector is no longer leading in strategy—the public sector has taken over (Reimann, 1994).

### **EVOLUTION OF STRATEGY IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

The word strategy was primarily used in the military from 1800s through the mid-1900s. Since then, its use has expanded to government, business, and higher education (Chaffee, 1985; Hearn, 1988; Keller, 1983). In the military context, strategy tends to involve an advance plan, resources, and an ability to modify the plan based on expected changes (Chaffee, 1985). According to Chaffee, strategy is multidimensional and situational, which makes the mental model difficult to define. A basic premise of strategy is that an organization and its environment are inseparable. An organization uses strategy to deal with changing environments (Chaffee, 1985; Keller, 1983; Morrison et al., 1984). A common understanding among theorists of the strategy construct has been that it consists of actions taken and processes by which the actions are decided and implemented. They have also agreed that intended, emergent, and realized strategies exist (Chaffee, 1985; Hardy, Langley, Mintzberg, & Rose, 1983). The conventional view of strategy—as a plan, or a set of explicit intentions, preceding and controlling actions—is too narrow to define strategy formation, especially in the university setting (Hardy et al., 1983).

The early works of Chaffee are cited throughout higher education strategy literature. Arguably, Chaffee's most influential and innovative contribution has been her identification and analysis of three distinct models of strategy and how they have been applied in higher education (e.g., see Hearn's 1988 review of her work). Chaffee's models of strategy include linear strategy, adaptive strategy, and interpretive strategy. The major emphasis in higher education is on

adaptive strategy, with some linear strategy, and traces of interpretive strategy (Chaffee, 1985).

Although adaptive strategy, which has the capacity to handle greater complexity and more variables than the linear model, is the type of strategy most often studied and practiced in higher education, the desire to practice interpretive strategy has grown. Interpretive strategy incorporates culture and symbolic management, which has not been mentioned in the traditional strategy literature. When Chaffee wrote about interpretive strategy in 1985, it was newly emerging and there were not many studies in the area. Interpretive strategy differs in that it emphasizes the management of meaning and symbol construction, as well as legitimacy, rather than profit, productivity, or other typical goals of strategy (Chaffee, 1985).

In this type of strategy, motivation is more critical than information. This conceptualization focuses on relationships and the leader's role of conveying meaning intended to motivate stakeholders in a way that favors the organization. Terms associated with interpretive strategy include "strategic norms," "social contract," and "social construction of reality." Higher education readings that relate to this type of strategy include those on topics such as organizational saga, mission, values, and leadership (Chaffee, 1985). Morrill's (2010) interpretation of strategic leadership is a great example of interpretive strategy. The literature suggests that an understanding of the nature of the organization's environment, industry, and situation is needed and that performance measures are highly important in setting strategy.

### **STRATEGIC PLANNING AND STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

There are countless leadership theories and management books about the characteristics of effective leaders that involve a variety of ideas including trait theory; power and influence; and transformational, behavioral, or cultural and symbolic theories (Bensimon, Neumann, & Birnbaum, 2000). With the added complexity of leading different types of systems including the

bureaucratic, collegial, political, symbolic, and cybernetic systems (Birnbaum, 1991), grasping what “strategic planning and strategic leadership” mean in the context of higher education is somewhat confusing and perhaps overwhelming. The purpose of this section is to clarify the distinction between strategic planning and strategic leadership: two specific types of strategy processes.

### **Strategic Planning**

Strategic planning is clearly the standard term to define the work of strategy in higher education. It became popular in the corporate world in the 1960s, became more widespread in the 1980s, and evolved into a collaborative comprehensive process that focused on the implementation of plans through strategic management. Strategic planning is a tool that was created to assist institutions in responding to an uncertain environment. In the lean years of the 1980s and 1990s, strategic planning became more widespread in higher education institutions. The same could be said for the necessity of strategic planning in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially considering global economic challenges impacting colleges and universities.

*Academic Strategy* by George Keller (1983) and “The Concept of Strategy: From Business to Higher Education” by Ellen Earle Chaffee (1985) provide a classic view as strategic planning emerged in higher education in the 1980s as a result of transformational changes occurring in the higher education landscape. Strategic planning encourages decision makers to acknowledge changes in the organization’s internal and external environments. It encourages decision makers to recognize the need to anticipate competitive action in an effort to attract students, faculty, and donors. Strategic planning encourages an approach that Chaffee coined “anticipatory adaption,” which means that by scanning the environment, an organization can evaluate future possibilities and make changes to better equip itself for both the present and

future marketplace (Chaffee, 1985). This tool was often used because “at its best, strategic planning should provide opportunities for organizations and their component parts, to evaluate themselves regularly, question assumptions that guide their operations, and create an atmosphere throughout the organization that fosters continuous innovation, collaboration and outside vision” (as cited in Taylor & Karr, 1999, p. 226).

There is no consensus about how strategic planning should be practiced because institutions have different needs and internal dynamics that affect the planning process. Although there is no standard template for engaging in a strategic planning process, there is agreement on some of the key elements of strategic planning. These elements include environmental scanning to determine patterns and future challenges both internally and externally; developing a vision of the potential character of the institution; reviewing the organization’s mission and determining future goals and objectives; determining institutional strengths and weaknesses; locating internal constraints to goal realization; formulating specific strategies and plans; linking strategies and plans to program and resource allocation decision making; and evaluating the results of the strategic planning process (Taylor & Karr, 1999; Morrill, 2010). These elements are all mentioned in Morrill’s six components of strategic leadership.

A great deal of persuasion and negotiation are inevitable in establishing an organizational strategy in colleges and universities. Taylor and Karr (1999) argued that the fundamental prerequisite to a successful planning effort is that stakeholders in the institution are aware of and believe in the severity of an impending crisis. In higher education, the challenge lies in the nature of the hierarchy and loosely coupled systems: the president and top administrators have limited direct influence on what occurs throughout the entire institution.

## **Strategic Leadership**

The field of strategic leadership focuses on the way top-level leaders have an impact on organizational performance through their leadership (Phipps & Burbach, 2010). The fundamental premise of strategic leadership theory is that a leader's field of vision and interpretation of information is influenced by that leader's values, cognitions, and personality (Phipps & Burbach, 2010). Activities often associated with strategic leadership include making strategic decisions; creating and communicating a vision of the future; developing key competencies and capabilities; developing organizational structures, processes, and controls; managing multiple constituencies; selecting and developing the next generation of leaders; sustaining an effective organizational culture; and infusing ethical value systems into an organization's culture (Boal & Hooijberg, 2000).

For strategic leadership efforts to have the most impact on an organization, leaders must consistently apply a small number of key concepts, develop strategic thinking and acting skills, take advantage of knowing one's personal style and its impact on others, and understand the nature of strategic management processes (Stumpf & Mullen, 1991). A study by Lewis and Jacobs in 1992 argued that a leader's capacity to construct meaning from the organizational environment was more important than factors such as values or leadership style (as cited in Phipps, 2010). Strategic leaders must ask the following questions: Why are we doing what we are doing (mission)? Where do we want to be in the future (vision)? What do we need to accomplish and by when (goals)? And, how are we going to get there from here (strategies) (Stumpf & Mullen, 1991)?

Beatty and Quinn (2010) provided a thoughtful analysis of applied strategic leadership and posit that strategic leadership has three components: what strategic leadership achieves, how

strategic leadership is accomplished, and who in the organization has the main responsibility of leading strategically. They assert that strategic leaders can influence their organizations by aligning their systems, culture, and organizational structure to ensure consistency with the strategy. For example, the leader can establish a reward system that encourages both individual and company performance.

### **Strategic Planning vs. Strategic Leadership**

Morrill (2010) described the work of strategy along a spectrum of approaches (Figure 1) characterized by different purposes and conceptual models, as well as by various degrees of systematization and comprehensiveness. The approaches span from narrow tactical thinking and tacit strategy to a much more comprehensive and integrated process that he defined as strategic leadership.



**Figure 1: Strategy Spectrum adapted from Morrill, 2010**

Strategic planning involves an episodic or periodic planning process, often triggered by a change in the presidency, an accreditation review, or the preparation for a capital campaign. It can also be practiced as a continuous discipline in which plans are constantly under review or development, and goals are revised periodically and distributed widely across the campus (Morrill, 2010). Conceptually, a gap exists between the formulation and the implementation of goals. Morrill argued that strategic leadership occurs when institutions use strategy consistently

and continuously and it functions as a vehicle of reciprocal leadership—as an interactive direction-setting process, not just as a system of control. Strategic leadership is often relatively centralized and dependent on the commitment of the president and other top officers and the effectiveness of a central committee or council (Morrill, 2010, p. 74). Strategic leadership is a continuous process that drives the institution’s systems of evaluation, decision making, and communication at all levels. I would argue that this is truly strategic planning and that it embodies a discipline of ongoing, regular planning.

Unfortunately many institutions do not use their strategic plan to make specific, operational decisions, even if the strategic plan seems to be supportive of such decisions (Taylor & Karr, 1999). Strategic planning does not have to govern day-to-day administrative decisions, but it should affect the way decision makers approach problem-solving. The true measure of success for a comprehensive planning effort is to move beyond the plan document and get to a point where faculty, administrators, and staff think about their work, the work of the university, the world beyond the campus, and the relationship among the three (Taylor & Karr, 1999).

#### **EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT OF STRATEGIC PLANNING**

Perceptions of strategic planning and its utility or success have not typically been evaluated or assessed in higher education. Lillis (2006) provided an evaluation method and example for reviewing the success of strategic planning efforts. She addressed whether a long-term planning model designed for the private sector was necessary and appropriate in a higher education setting. The study provided a methodological framework for the systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of strategic planning programs in a higher education context. Based on her research findings, Lillis described the drivers for developing a strategic plan to include responding to internal and external factors. She described the program impact theory, which is

developed from the perspective of capturing the program “as-intended.” Lillis made a couple of valid points, including her conclusion that there may be a fundamental mismatch between the higher education environment and the assumption that a university can and should be shaped to meet the goals of its strategic plan. She asked if academia needed a rational strategic planning process to be able to plan strategically or if a more suitable long-term planning model would suffice?

Cordeiro and Vaidya (2002) described the strategic planning process at California State University, Los Angeles, which began planning in the mid-1980s using a strategic planning model based on key performance indicators (KPIs). The authors, both faculty members at the university, discussed the history of the institution’s planning methods, the switch to a new model that stressed developing a framework for setting direction and goals, and the model’s thrust to fit strategy within the organization’s environmental context. They described the process in detail and provided a set of lessons learned which provided guidelines to ensure that strategic planning processes ran smoothly and produced optimal results. They provided an example of a university that considered the strategic planning process and resulting plan to be effective in contributing to the institution’s overall effectiveness and success. This example is refreshing as much of the literature seems to point in the opposite direction, indicating that strategic planning may no longer be or may never have been a useful process in higher education.

Chance and Williams (2009) suggested a tool for assessing the quality, in terms of success and utility, of university-developed strategic plans, as opposed to tools that have typically assessed the planning process alone. A rubric was designed by a team of doctoral students enrolled in an educational planning course at The College of William and Mary. Chance and Williams described the team’s methods for developing and field testing assessment.

Based on their research, the authors have suggested, just as Lillis has (2006), that long-term planning may be more useful than strategic planning in that it allows flexibility to incorporate unforeseen changes. They concluded that strategic planning is a means, but not an end, which facilitates movement from strategic planning to strategic management. However, strategic planning does actually allow for flexibility and adaptability in that it should be evaluated and refreshed regularly based on changes in the internal and external environment.

Some attempts to examine strategic planning perceptions and results and vision salience and its relationship to strategic involvement in business were conducted in the broader strategy and management context several decades ago (See Leontiades & Tezel, 1980; Oswald, Mossholder, & Stanley, 1994). These studies found that there is no association between perceived performance of planning and related performance results and that salience is critical to ensure stakeholder buy-in.

### **GAPS IN THE LITERATURE**

Times have changed since strategy and strategic planning emerged in higher education in the 1980s as a method of projecting future goals in response to a changing environment. The higher education literature is rich with conceptual analyses of strategy from the 1980s and 1990s, but there is little empirical data to assess the value and results achieved by colleges and universities that have embraced the strategy process. The use of strategic planning and the impact of strategic leadership have not been evaluated to determine if the use of these ideas have actually created or hindered success, or have caused failure, for that matter. The literature leaves room for further evaluation of the actual success of strategic planning from formulation through implementation and evaluation, with an emphasis on the role of the leader or leaders in cascading strategy throughout the organization.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is aimed toward providing practical insights to practitioners and researchers in higher education to assist them in understanding the value of strategic planning and the correlation between leadership's understanding and that of others within the organization. My thesis is that there are important opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of institutions of higher education by aligning modified or adjusted mental models. Hence, the core research questions this study will examine are as follows:

1. How do key stakeholders, including senior leaders, administrators, faculty, staff, and trustees, perceive a university-wide strategic plan, strategic planning process, and plan results? And, to what extent do perceptions of strategic planning vary across different stakeholder groups?
2. How does the notion of the "social construction of reality" contribute to our understanding of stakeholder perceptions of strategic planning?

To address the research questions, the study will be framed around four dimensions of stakeholder perceptions: knowledge, understanding, salience, and agreement. The dimensions are defined as the levels of (a) knowledge about strategic planning, the university-wide plan, and the planning process; (b) understanding of the observable, logical links between strategic planning and university operations; (c) salience or personal significance of the university-wide plan; and (d) agreement, in general, with the value of the university-wide plan among Emory stakeholders.

The theoretical framework for the analysis will be based on two elements. First, I will employ social constructivist concepts to help build my understanding of stakeholder perceptions about the effectiveness of strategic planning. Constructivism assumes that there is no objective

reality; rather individuals create or construct their own reality based on their experiences or interactions with the world (Gergen, 1994). Knowledge development is unique to every individual from the constructivist perspective (Held, 1995). The term social construction of reality, which was introduced into the social sciences in the 1960s, is one concept employed in the broader sociology of knowledge (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Holzner, 1968). The central concept builds upon constructivism in that individuals or groups interacting in a social system form concepts or mental models of each other's actions, and these concepts eventually become habituated into reciprocal roles (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Holzner, 1968). In other words, knowledge is generated from the social aspects of knowledge development (Gergen, 1985). In the process of developing knowledge through social interactions, meaning is embedded in the social system (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Holzner, 1968). People's perception and beliefs of what reality is become embedded in the institutional fabric of the organization. Reality is therefore said to be socially constructed. Based on this definition, stakeholders' knowledge and understanding of strategic planning might be socially constructed variables. In this study, I will consider stakeholder perceptions in relation to institutional norms, values, beliefs, definitions, and the organizational structure of power (Santana, 2012).

Second, I will use stratification theory to understand the nature of the differences in perspectives among stakeholder groups. Stratification theory suggests perceptions vary based on differences such as education and knowledge, status, or occupation of members within a social system. Higher education institutions, especially research universities, are highly stratified organizations (Perrow, 2000). The university community includes faculty, staff, students, administrators, and other key constituents with multiple variations within those groups in terms of areas of focus, backgrounds, and exposure to the broader university. While stratification

focuses on hierarchies of status, resources, and prestige within organizations, differentiation refers to the existence of different roles and specializations within organizations, independent of their relative standing in the hierarchies (Blau, 1970). In addition, different positions often have different incentives (Pfeffer, 1991), which may result, for example, in central administration having a predictably different view than faculty who may have more interaction with their smaller set of colleagues. I will explore this further in my findings.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN

This research intends to understand the extent to which a university-wide strategic plan is useful in providing a widely shared sense of long-term direction from the leadership level throughout an organization. Embracing the idea that reality is multiple as seen through many views (Creswell, 2013), I used qualitative research methods to explore stakeholder perspectives of strategic planning in order to understand how planning is perceived, determine to what extent perceptions are consistent across stakeholder groups, and ascertain the extent to which social constructivism influences what stakeholders believe to be true. In this chapter, I will address the study design, site and participant sample selection, data collection, data analysis, validity, and reliability of the study.

This study focuses on the experiences at a single institution in an effort to understand perception profiles by constituent type based on four dimensions: knowledge, understanding, salience, and agreement. It is my hope that this study demystifies or sheds light on strategic planning in higher education by exposing asynchronous perspectives among critical stakeholder groups in a university community. The results may be used to enhance understanding of how best to approach planning with various constituent groups within institutions of higher education to achieve optimal results. This could serve as a platform for rethinking strategic plan development, implementation, and communication in institutions that have been reluctant to adopt a strategy process and those that have experienced challenges in getting buy-in and support for the plan throughout their organization.

## DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Qualitative analysis is the ideal research method to explore a problem or issue such as this (Creswell, 2013) because it allows the researcher to get an in-depth understanding of how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam, 2009). Not much is known about the process and implementation of university-wide strategic plans at private, research universities from multiple stakeholder perspectives. Many characteristics of qualitative research contribute to the richness of this study, including a reliance on the researcher as the primary instrument in data collection; involvement of complex reasoning using both inductive and deductive reasoning; focus on participants' perspectives, their meanings, and their multiple subjective views; and its emergent and evolving design (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; LeCompte, Millroy, & Preissle, 1992; Hatch, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2010).

This study is consistent with an exploratory case study design, which I chose because models and variables were not available for assessing perceptions of strategic planning in higher education. Furthermore, case studies are particularly useful in applied fields such as education and the findings can affect or improve practice. A case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system, which can be bounded by time and place (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2013). Merriam (2009) characterized qualitative case studies as being particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic in that they focus on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon; the end product is a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study. One of the strengths of case studies is that they acknowledge that there are no simple answers (Merriam, 2009). The intent of qualitative research is to illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study. A rich, thick description reveals complexity and nuances that might

otherwise go unnoticed. “The case study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon” (Merriam, 2009, p. 50).

## SAMPLE SELECTION

### Research Site

The first level of sampling involved the selection of the site for this study. I narrowed the focus of my research to one institution of higher education to analyze its university-wide strategic planning process and the perceptions of its constituents. Yin (2009) suggested that using a single-case design instead of a multi-case study is appropriate only in certain instances. In this case, the setting is Emory University, a highly selective, private, research institution in Atlanta, Georgia. The rationale for selecting Emory for a single case is, in Yin’s terminology, revelatory.

Emory’s 2005-2015 strategic plan, *Where Courageous Inquiry Leads*, was the result of the university’s effort to develop a focused, coordinated, university-wide plan to guide the institution as a whole by communicating a renewed vision, suggesting priorities for future program development and investments, and establishing a basis for evaluating its progress. One could argue that Emory is a unique case in that few universities have the level of resources and use planning in the same way as Emory. It could also be argued that Emory is a representative case in that many universities do conduct a strategic planning process. However, I selected this site because as an investigator with unique access, I had an opportunity to observe and analyze perceptions that have previously been inaccessible to others.

During Emory University President James Wagner’s first year in office, he led a campus-wide initiative, involving hundreds of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and trustees, to draft a

university vision statement. Shortly thereafter, he charged a steering committee, chaired by the executive vice president for health affairs and the provost and executive vice president for academic affairs, to develop what he referred to as a roadmap, or strategic plan, to arrive at the vision. The general principles, specific goals, and ambitions in the plan were intended to provide a means to arrive at the University's vision for the future.

Dr. Claire Sterk was appointed provost and executive vice president for academic affairs in January 2013 and has been charged with leading the university's strategic planning efforts. The current plan is approaching its end and Emory's leaders are concerned about moving from a strategic plan that was designed for growth to a new era of strategy formulation that does not rely on an infusion of new financial resources. Conducting a detailed review of how faculty, administrators, and trustees experienced the strategic planning process and its results will inform Emory's next major planning cycle and offer insights and ideas for other universities embarking on a strategic planning process as well.

### **Participants**

The second level of sampling involved the selection of the participants. Purposeful sampling is the primary sampling strategy used in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) stated that in this type of sampling the researcher selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study. I chose a stratified purposeful sample of individuals who had been affiliated with Emory for a minimum of one year between 2003 and 2013 to participate in the study. My goal was to ensure that constituents had experienced Emory long enough to make a meaningful contribution to the study.

I extended 47 invitations to potential participants. Of the 47 invited participants, I

received 35 positive responses. The sample includes trustees (3), one former and seven senior leaders on the President's Cabinet (8), academic deans (7), current and emeriti faculty members (10), and non-academic administrators (7). Each stakeholder group plays a critical role in Emory University's ongoing operations.

1. The ***Board of Trustees*** is an active policy-making body and is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the financial resources of the institution are adequate to provide a sound educational program.
2. The ***President*** is elected by the board and serves at the pleasure of the board as the chief executive and administrative officer of the university.
3. The ***President's Cabinet*** oversees the principal strategic direction and administration of the university. In addition to the president, the cabinet includes the provost and executive vice president for academic affairs, the executive vice president for health affairs, the executive vice president for business and administration, three senior vice presidents (legal, campus life, and development and alumni relations), the vice president for communications and marketing, the university secretary, and the deputy to the president.
4. The ***Academic Deans*** are responsible for the administration of their respective school or college.
5. ***Faculty*** are responsible for the instructional programs for the institution and have a role in general governance through representation in university, school, and departmental committees and councils.
6. ***Non-academic administrators*** are responsible for functional areas such as admissions, financial aid, human resources, transportation, the museum, campus life,

libraries, budget, and finance.

Eligibility for inclusion or exclusion was determined based on publically available information on websites, employee directories, documents, and contacts at Emory University. Potential volunteers for participation were initially identified by their positions, information found through document analysis, observations, and other methods. Other interviewees also identified participants. Approximately 40 percent of the participants played a key role in university-wide strategic planning activities, including participation on committees, leadership of initiatives, or involvement in the development and implementation of the plan through brainstorming groups, committees, or other means. Stakeholders who were directly involved in the development of the strategic plan or implementation of key components of the plan may have a greater understanding of the institutional planning process. A strategic plan is supposed to have wide-spread penetration and two of the key premises of strategic planning are communication and understanding of shared goals. To gauge how the strategic plan permeated throughout the university, I invited a broad set of potential participants who were not directly involved in the development of the current strategic plan, and of the actual participants, 60 percent fit this category. Some of them did have exposure to the plan through participation in various strategic plan implementation committees, but not through direct planning.

As mentioned previously, the final sample (see Table 1) included 35 participants. The average length of service in their current position for all stakeholders was 17.2 years. Faculty were in their roles (as Emory faculty) the longest with an average of 25.9 years. The faculty members in the sample included endowed chairs, members of the faculty senate, President's Advisory Council members, and strategic initiative leaders. Conversely, deans were in their roles at Emory the shortest time with an average of 8.4 years. The sample included 19 males and

16 females. Six members of the sample are Emory alumni. Of the 35 participants, 23 have an academic background, compared to 12 who did not. The interviews ranged in duration from 15 minutes to 68 minutes with the average being approximately 37 minutes.

**Table 1 - Sample Characteristics**

Stakeholder Group	Total	Average Years in the Role	Average Interview Length	Male	Female	Directly Involved	Academic	Non-Academic	Alumni
Board	3	15.3	33:32	1	2				
President's Cabinet	8	17.6	35:20	5	3				
Deans	7	8.4	39:08	3	4				
Faculty	10	25.9	39:12	8	2				
Non-academic Administrators	7	13.7	39:25	2	5				
	<b>35</b>	<b>17.2</b>	<b>37:42</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>

## DATA COLLECTION

Data collection in qualitative research is typically done through gathering words. I used the three major sources of data in qualitative research for this study: detailed descriptions of activities garnered from various types of documents, direct quotations from people through interviews, and observations in institutional strategic planning meetings (Merriam, 2009).

### Document Review

Documents provided context for the case study and supplemental data to gain a better understanding of the perceptions shared in the interviews. In preparation for Emory's reaffirmation of accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), I collected and reviewed many of the documents for this study to write and provide evidence of compliance with the commission's institutional effectiveness standard (2.5). Documents included the university-wide strategic plan, annual reports, Emory Report strategic plan special editions, annual strategic plan updates, budget documents, meeting minutes, and materials provided by interviewees (some dating back to the

1980s). A complete list of documents is listed below in Table 2.

**Table 2 - Document Inventory**

1. Emory University 2013 SACSCOC Compliance Certification
2. www.emory.edu
3. www.emory.edu/strategicplan
4. Emory University 2005-2015 Strategic Plan
5. Opportunity Committee Report Archives
6. Development of University Themes
7. Summary of Environmental Assessment Final
8. University Brainstorming Committees
9. Town Hall Meeting Flyers
10. Planning Retreat Feb 4 & 5 2005 Agenda
11. Strategic Planning Working Session Notes
12. 2005 Strategic Plan Update Presented to Board of Trustees
13. Futurist Forum Dinner and Invite Letter
14. Strategic Financing Plan Schedule
15. Case for Campaign Emory
16. Campaign Emory Contribution Overviews 1 & 2
17. President's Annual Report Archives
18. Ways and Means Budget Books - Strategic Plan Fund
19. Strategic Implementation Advisory Committee Agendas
20. Initiative Leaders Group Agendas
21. Joint SIAC ILG 2009 Meeting Minutes
22. Strategic Plan Annual Implementation Status Reports
23. Annual Strategic Plan Update 2011-2012
24. 2009 Evaluation of the Strategic Plan and Recommendations
25. President's Cabinet Priorities 1-8-2013
26. Academic Leadership Program Budget Presentation
27. Strategic Plan - Five Year Special Report
28. Various articles and confidential internal letters from faculty to Emory administration

## **Interviews**

The interviews were one-on-one, open-ended and semistructured using a guide that included questions organized around the four perception dimensions: knowledge, understanding, salience, and agreement. In semistructured interviews, the interview guide is used flexibly (See Appendix -A – Interview Protocol). Specific data were required from all participants including years affiliated with Emory, level of involvement during the original planning process (including plan development, implementation, and evaluation), current position, and personal definition of

strategic planning. Some questions were modified based on the emerging themes using a grounded theory approach. Variations of the following questions guided the discussions:

**Table 3 - Sample Interview Questions**

<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Understanding</b>	<b>Saliency</b>	<b>Agreement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you describe the practice and purpose of strategic planning in your own words?</li> <li>• What can you tell me about the process to develop the plan and/or the content of the plan? How do you know?</li> <li>• Is the plan still active?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you rate the effectiveness of past planning efforts at Emory?</li> <li>• Can you describe how, if at all, the university-wide strategic plan links to operations?</li> <li>• Has the plan or aspects of the plan been effective? If so, please describe those aspects?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In what ways has the plan impacted or influenced your work?</li> <li>• To what extent has the strategic plan influenced budget formulation, prioritization, and daily operations at the university-level and in the schools and colleges?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did Emory need a university-wide strategic plan to get to where it is today?</li> <li>• Does Emory need a university-wide strategic plan in the future?</li> </ul>

Email invitations explained the purpose of the research and informed consent (Appendix B). Participants were ensured that their responses would be confidential and anonymous. Five of the thirty-five interviews were conducted by telephone, while the others were face-to-face in the interviewee’s campus office. One interviewee requested the questions in advance and sent detailed responses prior to the telephone interview. Our interview focused on clarifying responses. Each interview was recorded and transcribed. I took field notes throughout the conversations to capture nuances that were not captured in the recordings. In keeping with the grounded theory approach, the research process was emergent and evolved with each individual interview. For example, questions for the trustees focused on their fiduciary responsibilities with the institution and as the interviews progressed, I removed one of the questions from the list because it did not seem relevant. During the interviews, clarification or further explanations were gathered through follow-up questions that were asked as needed.

## **Observation**

“Observation is a research tool when it is systematic, when it addresses a specific research question, and when it is subject to the checks and balances in producing trustworthy results” (Merriam, 2009, p. 118). Observation was a minor source for data collection in this study. During the timeframe for this research, Emory leaders were involved in conversations about the future of strategic planning at Emory and other major projects related to strategy development, such as Emory’s future global strategy and a process and outcome evaluation for the current strategic plan. As a participant in these conversations, I was able to observe these discussions within the framework of my dissertation, testing new insights that were unfolding through the document review and interviews.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

The goal of qualitative data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data, which involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has observed and read (Merriam, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994). In a case study design, analysis consists of making a detailed description of the case and its setting (Creswell, 2013). Stake’s (1995) four forms of data analysis and interpretation were employed in this case study research. The first form is categorical aggregation, in which the researcher seeks a collection of instances from the data. The second is direct interpretation, in which the researcher looks at a single instance and draws meaning from it without looking for multiple instances. Third, the researcher establishes patterns and looks for a correspondence between two or more categories. Lastly, the researcher develops naturalistic generalizations from analyzing the data.

As is common in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009), data analysis began during the

data collection phase. After each interview, I began to write notes to myself about key findings. Keeping my research questions in mind throughout the interviews, I listened for and identified useful quotes, began thinking of themes, and wrote down commonalities among and across constituent groups. The saturation point occurred when the interviews began generating similar information and the emergence of regularities occurred (Merriam, 2009). Once data collection was complete, the analysis process intensified.

A combination of manual and computer management was used for data analysis. To ensure accuracy, I read through and edited each transcript to verify that the transcriptionist captured the interviews appropriately. I analyzed and interpreted the verbatim transcripts using the constant comparison approach, which is a method used in grounded theory and first proposed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 (as cited in Merriam, 2009). Grounded theory seeks to derive meaning from the data, hence the term “grounded” in the data. “A grounded theory consists of categories, properties, and hypotheses that are the conceptual links between and among the categories and the properties” (Merriam, 2009). Although my intention is not to create a grounded theory, this method allowed me to compare segments of data to determine similarities and differences with the constant comparative method.

Using Microsoft Excel, I organized and coded the data by creating individual worksheets for the primary dimensions: knowledge, understanding, salience, and agreement. This allowed me to organize specific participant responses into sub-categories within each dimension using open coding (Creswell, 2013). After coding the data according to the defined dimensions, I mined the data further to identify key themes that emerged throughout the study, following Beamer’s (2002) steps in coding and analyzing interviews:

1. Identify sources of contamination for individual interviews (e.g., respondent motives,

- possibilities for censored responses, interview effects and interruptions).
2. Define keywords and phrases and establish how they reflect a respondent's position relative to the constructions of interest.
  3. Code interviews and measure the frequency of keywords and phrases. Note individual deviations from the general coding and measurement scheme.
  4. Corroborate respondents' information using documents (e.g., annual reports, strategic plan, and campus communications).

Using axial coding and selective coding (Creswell, 2013), I assembled the data in different ways to arrive at an explanatory core category of barriers to effective strategic planning and then collapsed the findings into three themes that emerged as strategic planning barriers in higher education.

### **VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

There are many perspectives on the importance of validation in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). LeCompte and Goetz (1982) contend that qualitative research has garnered much criticism for its failure to adhere to rules of reliability and validity. Ensuring validity and reliability in qualitative research involves conducting the investigation in an ethical manner (Merriam, 2009). The applied nature of this research makes it imperative that readers have confidence in the research investigation and the findings.

As the primary instrument in the data collection and analysis, my participant as observer status may have threatened the validity of the study. I was able to step outside of my official role as member of Emory's strategic planning leadership team and approach the research from a neutral perspective as a graduate student from an outside university. To counter any bias in my interpretation of the data and to ensure validity and reliability, I asked two of my peers, one from

Emory and member of my doctoral cohort to examine and review the data to ensure the objectivity of my interpretations. In addition to peer reviews, member checks were conducted by interview participants to see if my interpretations rang true. Lastly, documents and interview transcripts were compared to ensure data triangulation to validate the study and allow readers the opportunity to draw their own conclusions about the findings.

I was also concerned that interviewees might be reluctant to fully disclose their thoughts and feelings about the plan and the planning process, because several of them know me personally. In most instances, interviewees firmly stated that my role at Emory did not affect their responses. My role seemed to be advantageous in maximizing responses to the interview request. In the handful of cases in which there was some hesitation on behalf of the interviewee, I reassured them that their responses were confidential, their responses would not be taken personally, and that their openness and honesty were critical to the success of this study. That seemed to ease their minds and they proceeded, openly. Individuals were eager to provide anonymous feedback on the strategic plan and the strategic planning process in hopes of helping to shape future planning efforts at Emory.

Reliability refers to the replicability of the findings. The literature suggests that replication of a qualitative study will not yield the same results because the results can be interpreted in different ways (Merriam, 2009). The design, sample selection, interview questions, and data analysis can be used to explore perceptions of strategic planning at other institutions. In addition, taking detailed field notes, collecting and storing documentation electronically, and recording and transcribing interviews typically enhance reliability (Creswell, 2013). I took these actions to ensure that whoever reviews the collected data can see that the findings are grounded in the data. It was a challenge, but I did all I could to ensure validity and reliability in the study.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Documentation, interviews, and observations provided rich data for understanding perspectives of strategic planning at Emory University. In this chapter, I will present the results and findings from the extensive review of key documents (as adapted from Emory's 2013 narrative response to SACSCOC standard 2.5) and 35 semistructured interviews that I conducted with trustees, president's cabinet members, deans, faculty, and nonacademic administrators to understand how they perceive strategic planning, determine to what extent perceptions are consistent across stakeholder groups, and ascertain the extent to which responses were shaped by socially constructed perceptions.

The analysis begins with a brief overview of the institution and a detailed description of the strategic planning process at Emory. I gathered details on the process through the document review to provide context. The description of the planning process is followed by the interview results, which are structured around the domains described in Chapter 2: (a) *knowledge* about strategic planning, the university-wide plan, and the planning process; (b) *understanding* of the observable, logical links between strategic planning and university operations; (c) *salience* or personal significance of the university-wide plan; and (d) *agreement*, in general, with the value of the university-wide plan among Emory stakeholders. The chapter concludes with an overview of barriers to strategic planning that emerged in the findings.

## CONTEXT: EMORY UNIVERSITY AND THE STRATEGIC PLAN

### **Emory University**

Emory University was founded in 1836 by the Methodist Episcopal Church as a small men's college in the town of Oxford, Georgia, which is approximately 35 miles from Atlanta. In 1919, Emory expanded and moved to its current location in Atlanta. The University currently operates as a coeducational, heavily residential research institution, steeped in the liberal arts. It offers undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs in nine schools and colleges.

Emory College of Arts and Sciences and Oxford College, which is on the historic campus, enroll undergraduate students only, while the business and nursing schools enroll both undergraduate and graduate students. The other five schools enroll graduate and professional students exclusively, and include the schools of theology, law, medicine, public health, and the graduate school. Current enrollment exceeds 14,000 students, with approximately 7,600 undergraduate students and 6,500 students in graduate and professional programs.

In 1995, Emory was admitted to the Association of American Universities (AAU). Compared to other private institutions in the AAU, Emory is a relatively young research university, and as such is somewhat behind its AAU peers in key measures, such as level of endowment, annual giving, name recognition, and retention. The overall university currently ranks 20<sup>th</sup> according to *U.S. News and World Report*. Upon appointing a new president in 2003, the board of trustees charged him with creating a new vision and strategic plan for the university.

### **The University-wide Strategic Plan**

*Where Courageous Inquiry Leads*, Emory's strategic plan for 2005-2015, was the result of Emory's effort to develop a focused, coordinated and university-wide plan to guide the institution as a whole by communicating a renewed vision, suggesting priorities for future

program development and investments, and establishing a basis for evaluating its progress. SACSCOC made this suggestion to Emory as a result of its 2003 bid for reaffirmation. During his first year in office, President James Wagner led a campus-wide effort to draft a university vision statement. The vision statement was defined and endorsed by the campus community in 2003-2004. He charged a steering committee, chaired by the executive vice president for health affairs and the provost and executive vice president for academic affairs, with developing what he referred to as a roadmap, or strategic plan, to arrive at the vision. The general principles, specific goals, and ambitions outlined in the plan were intended to provide a means to arrive at the university's vision for the future.

The plan was developed through what was described as a phased comprehensive strategic planning process over 18 months in 2004-2005. The following chart (Figure 2) displays the phases of Emory's strategic planning process:

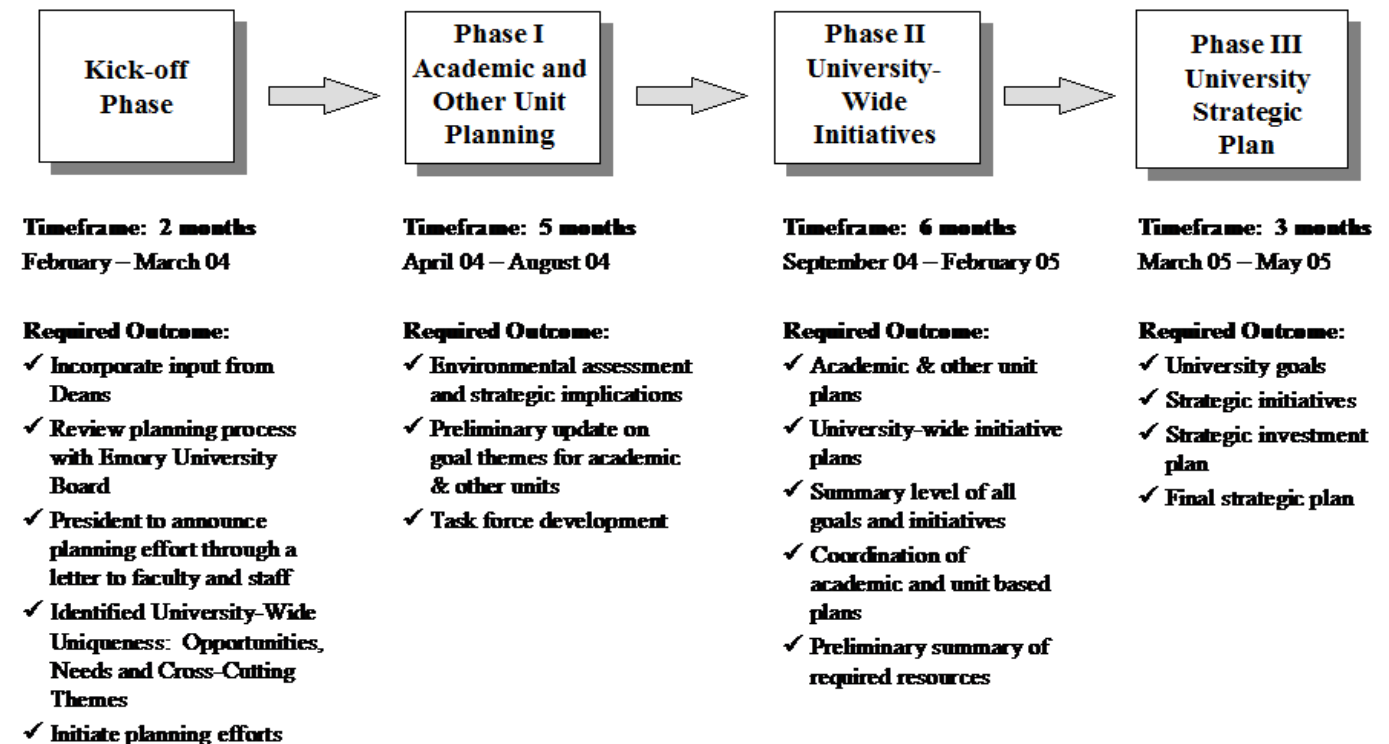


Figure 2 - Phases of Strategic Plan Development

The documentation shows that throughout the planning process, mechanisms to gain broad input were employed. For example, as part of the kick-off phase, the president sought input from the deans, presented the planning process to the board of trustees, announced the effort to the faculty and staff, and identified university-wide opportunity committees. The opportunity committees were set up to gain input from the campus community. Opportunity committee discussions were facilitated from the beginning of the strategic plan development process to discuss Emory's strengths, challenges, and opportunities in order to inform the long-term strategic plan and gain insight on goals and initiatives that might empower Emory to provide an even higher quality of education and service to its community. All 13 opportunity committees were open to all Emory stakeholders and their reports represented the input of over 130 faculty members and staff spanning across multiple schools, departments, and areas of interest.

During Phase I, the strategic planning steering committee, made up of faculty and staff representatives, was established to guide the progression of the planning process. Reports from the opportunity committees provided the steering committee with initial information on perceptions, the campus climate for planning, and unique opportunities for which Emory was poised to pursue. Schools, colleges, and other major units, including Carlos Museum, Campus Life, Yerkes, Emory Healthcare, and Emory Libraries, completed environmental assessments outlining their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and identified the related strategic implications. At the same time, the steering committee began facilitating the development of university-wide signature themes. An environmental assessment was conducted that identified key strategic issues facing Emory in upcoming years.

As the process moved into Phase II, theme teams and brainstorming committees refined the themes to further define areas of exploration to accomplish the vision. Progress was

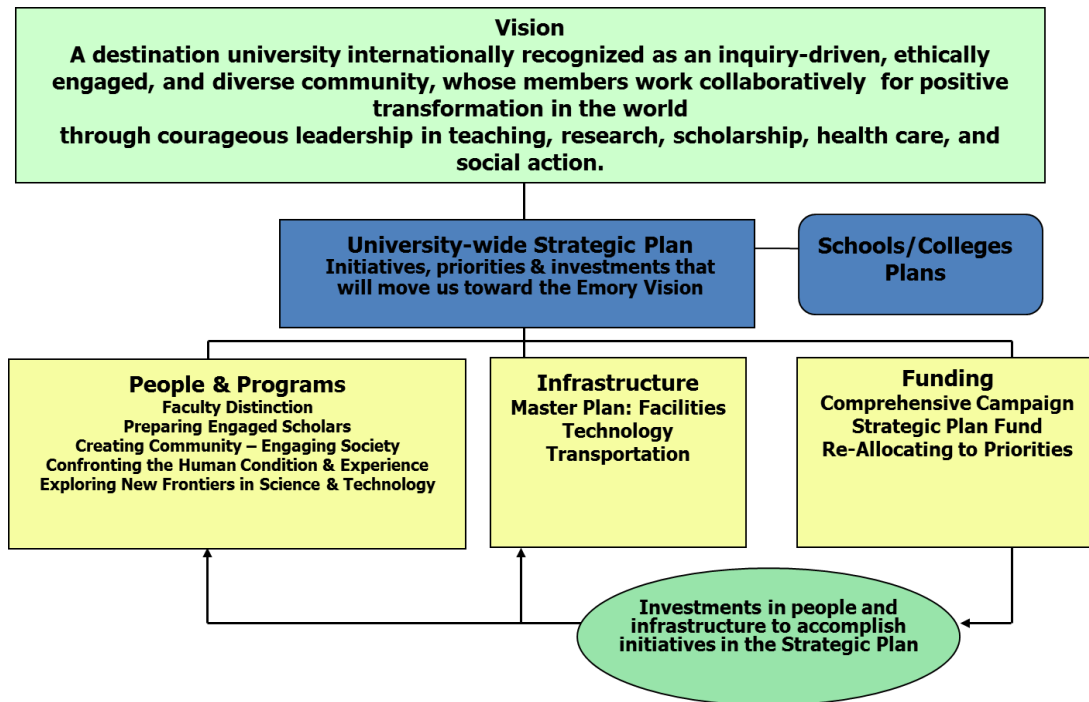
presented and additional feedback was gathered from the campus community in townhall meetings. Academic and other major unit plans, which describe school/unit-based visions, goals, measures, targets and resource allocation plans linked to the overall university vision were being finalized. At the end of Phase II, the president's cabinet, the steering committee, deans, and directors of major units, and faculty leaders of the proposed signature themes came together for a day and a half retreat to develop an initial set of university-wide goals, gain input from the deans and directors on themes, complete the process for theme development, understand the linkages among the school and unit plans, and discuss the remainder of the planning process. The results from the working session were presented to Emory's Board of Trustees and planning for a futurist forum to invite external experts to provide feedback on the feasibility, creativity, and innovation of the themes under consideration at Emory was underway.

In response to the president's call for a roadmap to the vision, the schools and major units developed individual strategic plans and faculty led groups identified signature themes. The school and unit plans and signature themes were vetted by the steering committee and by Phase III had culminated into a set of university-wide goals, initiatives, accountability indicators, implementation strategies, and a high-level strategic financing plan for the university. The plan was presented to the Board of Trustees for their information at the full board meeting in June 2005.

### **Strategic Financing Plan**

As Emory's strategic plan was designed for growth, achieving the vision required a financing plan to support implementation. Figure 3 represents what Emory describes as the components required to achieve the vision, i.e., investments in people, programs, and

infrastructure through funding generated from a comprehensive fundraising campaign, development of a strategic plan fund, and reallocation of resources to priorities.



**Figure 3 - Pillars of the Plan**

Two of the primary funding sources for the university-wide strategic plan are described below:

- 1) Comprehensive Campaign and 2) Strategic Plan Fund.

Campaign Emory

Campaign Emory was launched in fiscal year 2006 with a goal of \$1.6 billion to help support the university’s strategic plan. The Campaign Emory concluded in December 2012 having raised more than \$1.69 billion over a seven-year period. Each year the *President’s Annual Report* is compiled and made publicly available to provide the university community with updates on topics such as university rankings, finances, faculty and administration changes, and strategic planning. The most recent *President’s Annual Report*, published in 2012, discussed the

success of Campaign Emory. This was intended to give faculty, staff, students, parents, alumni, and others in the Emory community the opportunity to understand the strategic plan and discover ways to contribute to Emory's efforts.

### Strategic Plan Fund

The Strategic Plan Fund was designed to provide seed funding, in advance of other revenue streams, to key academic initiatives that emerged from the planning. An original investment of \$296 million was put toward key areas determined by strategic planning to be of particular importance in achieving Emory's mission and vision. The Ways and Means Committee (WAM) oversees the university budget, including fund allocation for strategic planning initiatives across the university. The committee annually reviews and provides updates on the strategic plan fund. In 2009, WAM reduced the Strategic Plan Fund during a 2009 plan review and assessment to in order to balance the fund in the face of a changing economic climate.

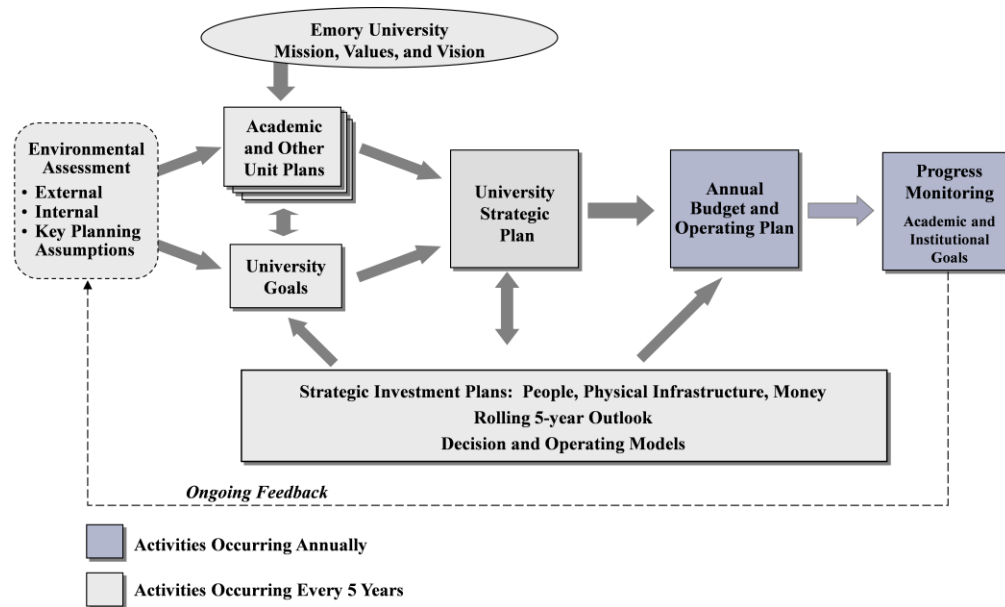
### **Implementation and Monitoring**

Implementation of Emory's strategic plan is guided and monitored by the President's Cabinet and Strategic Plan Executive Committee. From 2005 through 2012, several committees whose membership consisted of stakeholders from all schools and units were also involved in implementation of the plan. The University Dashboard, consisting of 59 indicators, was established as a way of gauging progress toward Emory's vision of a destination university. The measures were developed based on the accountability indicators established in the 2005 University Strategic Plan. The Dashboard, the primary tool for measuring progress toward the vision, reveals achievement targets and trends and provides comparative data for a set of 13 benchmark universities. The Board of Trustees is the primary audience for the Dashboard.

Implementation of the university-wide strategic plan is reviewed annually. Annual report information from schools and units, the University Dashboard, annual reports from strategic plan theme and initiative leaders, financial data, and assessment information provide the basis for the review. The results are presented to the Board of Trustees in November and published in the annual strategic plan update, which includes a detailed description of accomplishments and progress towards university-wide goals, effectiveness of initiatives and strategies, and priorities. The board also assesses changes in the internal and external university environment—and their expected effect is assessed to help identify needed changes to strategy.

### Strategic Plan Evaluation and Ongoing Planning

The following image (Figure 4) represents Emory’s ongoing planning cycle, which includes annual activities and activities that occur every (three to) five years:



**Figure 4 - Emory University Planning Cycle**

The University Strategic Plan is evaluated each year, but undergoes a major evaluation every three to five years. Strategic Plan progress is reported to the Board of Trustees annually at the Full Board meeting in the fall.

In 2009, Emory's strategic plan underwent a midpoint evaluation during its fifth year of implementation in response to the economic downturn and a need to revisit strategies for the remaining five years of the plan. The evaluation involved a systematic review by the president's cabinet, deans, directors, and strategic plan leaders, a review of Emory's mission and vision, and a review of cross-cutting collaborations. The evaluation resulted in a refinement of the goals, major initiatives, and themes of the plan and was used to strategically reallocate resources. The proposed changes to the strategic plan were presented to the Initiative Leader Group and Strategic Implementation Advisory Committee in May of 2009 for their information, but the announcement does not appear to have been widely discussed.

### **STAKEHOLDER POINTS OF VIEW**

The interviews show that stakeholder perspectives of the strategic plan vary widely when measured across the four domains: knowledge, understanding, salience, and agreement. The document review and the interviews clearly suggest that the Board of Trustees and the President's Cabinet have the highest levels of knowledge, understanding, salience, and agreement among the stakeholder groups. The President's Cabinet plays a vital role in guiding, assessing, and driving university-wide planning process at Emory and the cabinet reports frequently to the board. This section describes the various perspectives of stakeholders.

## **Knowledge**

### *Knowledge about strategic planning in general*

The Emory community is very knowledgeable about the purpose of strategic planning, whether they agree with its use or not. Twenty-six out of thirty-four respondents defined strategic planning as a process for reflecting on strengths, opportunities, and in some instances weaknesses and threats, and determining where the institution wants to go. It sets an organization on a path toward a vision by identifying goals to accomplish the vision and identifying methods to measure success. It provides direction. Several respondents described strategic planning as a process for establishing a framework that then informs decisions and a sense of direction for the organization and where the organization should or should not focus. Respondents also said a strategic plan informs organizations about how to best allocate resources, including time, attention, and energy. A nonacademic administrator provided her definition:

To me, strategic planning is a blueprint for how a unit or division will make progress on important goals or important initiatives. I think that strategic planning should be visionary and very intentional, and it should have buy-in from as many stakeholders as possible. Strategic planning should also be a way to inform everything that we do. Whether it's budget, whether it's hiring, any major decisions that occur should be grounded in our belief about strategic planning.

Three participants mentioned that strategic planning should focus on strengths and should guide an institution in identifying key focus thrusts in terms of the organization's content areas, its distinguishing attributes and its efforts "to impact the world in a more positive way." These ideas are more aligned with creating a plan for program growth.

There is a debate about strategic planning's utility in the academic environment. A faculty member who also has a part-time administrative appointment confirmed this point. Several respondents mentioned that a strategic planning process usually precedes a capital

campaign so that the university understands and identifies fundraising purposes. Respondents also stated the process is one way of coming up with a disciplined plan for making the university better and stronger and more competitive in the future. The interviews suggested that donors want to see that an institution has strategic direction that they can clearly articulate. A nonacademic administrator described his experiences with strategic planning in higher education and concluded that he preferred the scenario where planning is not grounded in a fundraising campaign:

I've seen more as it relates to raising money than I have seen it as an exercise in clarity. But I've also watched other institutions that are not as focused on raising funds through their strategic process to facilitate their campaign. And I think I like it better when it's not associated with raising money.

*Knowledge about Emory's planning process*

Approximately 68 percent of the respondents expressed high or medium knowledge of Emory's strategic planning process. Responses indicated that even those who were not present on campus during the planning process had some knowledge about how the plan was developed and what the primary drivers were for initiating the planning process. They had generally heard about the process through word of mouth from colleagues, if they had not been present or directly involved in planning. Some mentioned that they had read about it in strategic plan documents or Emory Report special editions. Obviously, those who were directly involved were most knowledgeable.

**Table 4 - Stakeholder Process Knowledge**

<b>Stakeholder Group</b>	<b>High Process Knowledge</b>	<b>Medium Process Knowledge</b>	<b>Low Process Knowledge</b>
<b>Trustees</b>	1	1	1
<b>President's Cabinet</b>	6	1	1
<b>Academic Deans</b>	1	3	3
<b>Faculty</b>	3	2	5
<b>Non-Academic Administrators</b>	2	4	1
<b>Total (n=35)</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>

As described in the documentation, a trustee concurred that the process was one of inclusion: “it included students, it included staff, it included faculty, it included trustees. It was a very thorough and somewhat lengthy process.” It was clear from the responses that President Wagner’s appointment created an energy on campus and his leadership in developing a university vision statement was pivotal in the strategic planning process. President Wagner discussed how he imagined the process for creating the “roadmap” to the vision:

We thought that the strategic plan would have two large components, one is central and the other is distributed. That is to say we expected that each unit should have strategy. So, it was more important to have permeation of the vision rather than trying to tie the hands of some distant office to a road map of how to get there. We instead wanted to make sure that we held common aspirations and we could actually give the freedom to the units to tell us how they would get there. And so it had two components, the centralized component and the unit level component.

One of the deans shared his account of how the process unfolded, which was aligned with the comments from those who were highly aware of the process and described the development of a network of plans:

Part of the process was getting the faculty and administrators and people throughout the university to kind of jointly understand each other better and to assess the future. Then there was a charge – a university-wide committee chaired by the provost and the vice president for health affairs, which had a separate community in which [this committee] melded this together. And then in a somewhat independent process the president and provost and vice president pulled together the deans and units to say, “How does this feel to you since you’re going to be the ones who are actually going to get this done?” and so the process had a lot of moving parts.

Nine interviewees mentioned the value of the process itself. Although one person described the process as one that generates a lot of effort that could be considered “busy work,” most agreed that the process is valuable. In fact, some described it as more important than the product because it offered the new president an opportunity to gain credibility and gain knowledge about the strategic strengths and weaknesses and opportunities and threats at Emory.

The process challenged the community to imagine how it could succeed together as opposed to how each individual was going to succeed. Two comments echoed that sentiment:

Nonacademic administrator – I think the process for this particular plan...I know that it was incredibly time consuming and rigorous...but given our history or lack of history around systematic planning...I think it was a beneficial exercise for the leadership and for the institution.

President's Cabinet member – As an organization exercise for a university that had never gone through such an effort before, I think was tremendously important. It signaled to the broader community, internally and externally, that there were priorities and the university was prepared to invest in those priorities.

### Knowledge about the university-wide strategic plan

Nineteen interviewees were asked to comment on their knowledge of the vision statement. Many described the vision statement as the first part of the strategic planning process. It was President Wagner's first attempt to bring the community together and begin the process of planning. The vision resonated with many respondents:

I think what also emerged out of the strategic planning process was a vision, a vision statement. I think that of all the things that are impressive about the strategic plan, that's probably the most that resonates with people, is this vision statement that's always repeated at every level. People may know the vision statement, but they don't know the strategic plan.

Most participants were able to recite words and phrases from the vision statement, such as “a destination university,” “ethically engaged,” and “internationally recognized.” A few others criticized the vision for being too generic or being “lofty.”

Of the 34 participants I asked about the content of the university-wide strategic plan, about half were familiar with the university-wide plan contents and recognized that it included components such as goals, themes, and school plans, in addition to the six cross-cutting programmatic initiatives. The faculty distinction component was mentioned most often. Those who were closely involved in plan development and implementation were most familiar with the

content of the plan. A cabinet member provided the most complete description of the central plan:

And the content was ... high-level goals...developing the goals of the excellent faculty, excellent students, excellent community and physical environment, and then advancing key academic themes. Those two key academic categories, five major themes, then setting specific goals in each of those areas about student quality, faculty quality, signifiers of the kind of community we wanted to create...breaking further down areas in the two academic realms into sub areas of investment like Global Health and Predictive Health, and Neuroscience and Religions and the Human Spirit and Race and Difference. You know those set of themes ... that's the content.

Thirteen participants focused exclusively on the faculty driven programmatic initiatives, such as global health and race and difference. A dean's comments reflected what the respondents conveyed:

There was a ground up faculty driven set of initiatives that were priorities, which included global health, race and difference, the arts, and a variety of issues, which had a lot of energy on campus that to some extent brought people together between units.

The main criticisms of the plan were that it was too inclusive, it included some obvious goals and initiatives that were not very strategic, and the leadership did not make hard choices. The responses showed that deciding "what is in and what is out" was not necessarily done very well at Emory. The components that were really not strategic or things that would have been done anyway mostly included initiatives related to faculty distinction:

I mean, now some of these are no-brainers, there's always going to be an initiative for faculty development. But, then you sort of figure out faculty development where? What kind of faculty? What are you looking for and so forth? I think things like faculty distinction ... that I think was going to be there. It gets put into plan but it's in everybody's head.

The results suggest the campus community at Emory University has a high degree of knowledge about the general purpose of strategic planning, is somewhat aware of the process to develop Emory's strategic plan, and is familiar with aspects of the plan, especially the vision statement, "faculty distinction" theme, and the Global Health Initiative, but in some cases does

not see the utility of planning in higher education. Understanding stakeholder knowledge of what strategic planning is and what the plan is at Emory provides a foundation to understanding how they perceived the uses of strategic planning in higher education. The next section will address stakeholders' level of understanding about the logical links of strategic planning with university operations.

## **Understanding**

### *Understanding linkage to operations*

The interviews revealed that many people do not immediately think about if or how the university-wide strategic plan links to operations or guides assumptions that guide operations. When asked the question, "how does the plan link to operations," most interviewees paused and seemed unclear about what I was asking and could not fully articulate observable, logical links between strategic planning and university operations. I defined operations as the day-to-day management and decision making in the organization.

The majority of President's Cabinet and trustee respondents recognized connections between strategic planning and operations. Cabinet members noted alignment between operations and "where the university wants to go with the plan" to be an area of progress. They observed clear, logical links to operations of the university, including budgeting, resource allocation, enrollment services, campus master planning, information technology, development, and fundraising. The strategic planning process involves the three executive vice presidents who also sit on Ways and Means; they've made financial decisions that have had a direct impact or a secondary impact on advancing the plan. The plan has helped Ways and Means focus on resource deployment:

Be it through even the way in which Ways and Means approaches things and resources are allocated in sort of subtle, but also very concrete ways at the same time just by

aligning the university strategic plan with that of the schools and administrative units. We've sort of built in the process of triangulation and validation that did not exist before in terms of our operations. I think there were times where we have asked questions and said well this operationally makes a lot of sense, but it doesn't fit with where we want to go with our plan or we have said we really need to invest here because it really supports what we want to do with the plan.

Many respondents did not think of strategic plans linking to or driving operations of the university, but more as a program that has a life of its own. One faculty member's statement captured the essence of the responses from the deans, faculty, and nonacademic administrators:

I think the current strategic plan, that's the only one I know, is... looks more like a special program than something intrinsic to the whole university. Maybe it's because there were funds set aside and everybody said, "Okay. Those are strategic plan funds." Whereas what they should have done is they should have been the sort of common thread that runs through the whole culture of the institution. That didn't happen.

Faculty, in general, did not know if the strategic plan had influenced operations. This sentiment was reflected in another faculty member's comments. From his perspective, he was unsure and said that he thought from talking with a number of his other colleagues, that they would probably feel the same way. A faculty member who was more involved in the strategic plan said the following:

I'm guessing that the strategic plan maybe forced more of a conversation about funds flow and unit-based versus non-unit-based funding...so my assumption is it's impacted conversations. I don't know if changes ...I haven't seen big changes but it's brought a greater awareness of how funds flow can impact the functions of the institution and the way decisions are made about efforts that cut across unit based interests.

The same faculty member also said that the strategic plan may have guided decision making at the highest levels of the institution, but it did not permeate throughout the institution:

My opinion has been for quite a while now that there is lip service as you come down the hierarchy but there's not always action. The president, the provost, the EVP's in general spoke strongly about the strategic plan and the vision. I don't think it filtered down strongly into decision making at the unit level and if I were to say one of the perceived weaknesses, my perception of a weakness of the plan as it...functioned was we had really good vision but decision making, making certain decision aligned with the plan vertically

the hierarchy were not strong because I don't think there was any...if the units, if the deans didn't fully align with the plan there was no consequence, that's my impression.

The deans noted that a complication of the plan was that it did not work through them or the units, so the process to get the strategic initiatives to be alive and sustainable needed another layer or "set of engagements" to get the deans to buy-in. Instead of simplifying endeavors in a way would lead people to work together more easily, this created more work. Another dean reiterated the sentiment that a major problem was that the strategic plan was not tied to the implementation of the units of the university. Yet another dean said, "I think the dean's level is where the rubber meets the road." The same dean also mentioned that when he has had his annual budget meetings, no one's said, "Tell me how this budget is going to further the university's priorities in these areas?" There is not a constant referencing.

Nonacademic administrators have had differing perceptions of how the strategic plan links to operations depending on their role in the institution. Those who are more directly linked to President's Cabinet members were able to articulate their thoughts about how much the strategic plan links to operations, regardless of whether the links were positive or negative. Some nonacademic administrators said they clearly see linkages. The interviews suggested that the central framework for developing the annual operating plan is the university-wide strategic plan. Administrators involved in developing the university operating plan cite that the strategic plan has really helped the university focus resource deployment. The Unrestricted Operating Budget is the financial plan under which the academic and service units of the university operate in fulfilling their instruction, research, and public service missions. However, the linkages to the budget process are not apparent to many administrators. One interviewee said, "I'd say that I'm not informed about the ways that plan has influenced the budget." And another interviewee did not think the plan influenced the budget at all:

I think it doesn't. I think it doesn't. I think that ... it's unclear as to how decisions are made about the budget and its relation to the strategic plan. What I know is that the budget office ... had a strategic-, you can apply for funding for strategic initiatives at the time. And this was, what, maybe five years ago, six years ago ... you can get short-term funding for strategic initiatives and then your budget had to absorb that. That was the only clear link to budget or anything from the university perspective.

If you think about how moneys are allocated, how positions are assigned or recruited, no one is saying, "How does this fit within the divisional strategic plan?" or not the divisional but the university strategic plan. Even from a ... we're in the business of just replacing people who leave. We don't think, even from a university leadership piece, "How does this position fit within our strategic plan?" It doesn't seem like anyone's having those conversations.

Nonacademic administrators and deans have said they want to believe that the senior administration is making all the right decisions, but the decision-making process for budgets is not transparent. Several interviewees mentioned that Emory does a better job of planning and operationalizing plans on the health care side, but overall the institution does not have a culture of planning or assessment. Both a nonacademic administrator and a cabinet member critiqued that Emory sometimes measures the "easy things" and not necessarily measures that really make a difference." The nonacademic administrator stated:

...it's sometimes too much of "check the box" rather than...spend the upfront time that's necessary to...I think we fall into the trap of measuring what's easy to measure rather than saying, "What are the things we truly want to incent in terms of behaviors in the plans?" and okay, it's not easy to figure out how to assess that, so let's spend the time necessary to do it rather than, "Oh, here are three things we can measure and this will be some proxy for some really complex...something."

### Understanding success

When asked if the plan or aspects of the plan have been successful, the majority of interviewees immediately began describing the achievements of the cross-cutting programmatic initiatives, such as Global Health, Race and Difference, Religions and the Human Spirit, Computational and Life Sciences, and Predictive Health. They did not speak of the other aspects of the plan. As mentioned previously in this chapter, the perception of many on campus is that

the strategic plan consists only of those six programmatic initiatives. To gather feedback on the plan in its entirety, I prompted interviewees during in-person interviews with the Strategic Plan Framework (Appendix C), which includes the mission, vision, strategic priorities, and the full lists of themes, initiatives, framing principles and goals.

Most interviewees were able to scan the strategic plan framework document and describe achievements in the areas listed. Success perceptions varied among the group based on their direct involvement and exposure to data and information related to the strategic plan in their roles on campus. Irrespective of participant involvement or exposure, the Global Health Initiative was the most frequently mentioned success, followed by Strengthening Faculty Distinction.

The Global Health Initiative's success was attributed to having a strong leader with experience leading a large operation. The Initiative Leader and his staff produced a substantial return on investment in terms of grants/philanthropy and then products from that, such as faculty recruited, periodicals and publications, and student impact. The Global Health Initiative also received the largest sum of strategic plan seed funds of the cross-cutting programmatic initiatives. Each initiative had its own starting point, purpose, set of goals, and funding level at the beginning of the plan, but those criteria were not widely shared. Very often individuals rated initiative success based on their own personal definitions, which usually did not align with actual metrics or the original intent of the plan. This led one faculty member to question the definition of success:

Well I define success in different ways, right. If you define success by say visibility then sure, certain initiatives were more successful. If you define success in terms of impact on sort of nonacademic things, yes. Again I would be really specific. Global health is very successful in China or that's what the perception is. Predictive health is very successful in that one center which they have or had in Crawford Long. CLS (computational and life sciences) similarly is very successful but in a very inward looking way in terms of what

the universities do: teaching and research. I think all of them were successful but in different ways.

One major accomplishment of the planning process was that it built a common language around the university vision. While stakeholders may not know the detail of the strategic plan, most are familiar with the vision statement that Emory seeks to be a destination university and ethically engaged. And Emory leadership, faculty and staff use those words as a basis or as a rationale for their goals. Faculty members and nonacademic administrators shared that the plan brought people from different parts of the institution “into a struggle for some common endeavors.” Attempts at collaboration were not always successful but they fostered communication, discussions, and interactions that likely would not have occurred in the absence of the plan. As was mentioned by one of the deans, a lot of effort has been devoted to understanding and breaking down the silos, understanding and planning for infrastructure needs, and improving business processes. Several constituents discussed how the university-wide strategic plan really helped to provide direction and lay the foundation for a comprehensive campaign. One interviewee spoke specifically to this:

It gave us clear priorities around which to ask for support and gave us the energy to go out and do that and so that the raising of \$1.7 billion as a result or as a complement to the strategic plan I think was real important to help us continue what we’re doing.

In addition to successes, participants shared perceived shortcomings of the current plan. Participants had strong opinions about the allocation of resources, communication, monitoring, and lack of administrative oversight of strategic initiatives. Some suggested that the distribution of substantial resources to faculty members to carry out the cross-cutting programmatic initiatives was not effective. They said the initiatives should have been operationalized through the units. Emory also could have done a better job of strengthening the infrastructure to support

multidisciplinary work and should be happier with being Emory. Several comments are provided below to illustrate the variety of responses related to shortcomings of the plan.

Dean #1 – There needed to be more periodic assessment and more integration of the initiatives into the rest of the university plans. That’s the major problem...the initiatives had so much money that they had a life of their own but see, they were viewed by most of us as being separate from us and so we’d interact with them...

Dean #2 – If you don’t know where you are... Do we have the dashboards to really monitor success? Are our faculty stronger? Are we getting more national visibility? Are we experiencing great recruitment or are we experiencing a brain drain? I can’t speak on that one beyond my own unit, but I haven’t heard a lot of dialogue around this.

Nonacademic administrator #1– I think we have good ideas about planning. I think we do not do such a good job of measuring the effectiveness of our planning.

Nonacademic administrator #2 – if no one owns the cross-cutting initiatives, how can you advance them? And if they’re actually meant to be facilitated by the university, why wouldn’t the president or the provost have their own development effort to facilitate the cross-cutting effort if, again, the assumption is that someone sent you...or even if you were to just assign it to a dean or another vice president...there had to be somebody who was really fully responsible for it and it felt as though they just kind of blew out there in the wind.

Faculty member #1 – I think one of the problems was that there was a greater need for administrative oversight to prevent a faction approach, so quite often what happens is because there was competing interest, there was a fragmentation within the initiative against many of them. So much time was spent on trying to build bridges that less was accomplished.

Faculty member #2 – ... and less looking at things like *US News and World Report* rankings for comparing themselves to Yale or other benchmarks. I would like us to be happy being the best in the region and looking at it from a national level and really looking what Emory’s strengths are and further developing those.

Stakeholders have not always agreed with what is in the plan. This has led people to believe that some outcomes that have occurred since the plan was developed were not actually a part of the plan even though they might have been described as desired outcomes or strategies in the plan document. For example, creating a Center for Faculty Excellence, improving tenure and promotion practices, and creating a strategic enrollment management plan were written in the

plan, but stakeholders did not view those things as part of the plan or did not perceive the activities leading up to developing those things as related to the strategic plan. Three examples as they are written in the 2005-2015 Emory University Strategic Plan follow.

**Example #1** – Regarding a center for faculty excellence, 1.a. Strategic Theme 1, Strengthening Faculty Distinction, Faculty Development Activities on page 93 states, “A Center for Faculty Excellence will be established at Emory to advance faculty careers as excellent teachers and scholars engaged in cutting-edge intellectual inquiry.” Interviewee responses follow:

Cabinet member – You think about the Center for Faculty Development and Excellence...that would have happened with or without a strategic plan, but it is easier to create it and to move it forward because we could say well this is something in support of –Strengthening Faculty Distinction... And so part of what our conversation shows is that what at different times is included as CFDE varies depending on where the person sits and I think that’s perfectly alright and it’s okay, but it does show some of the ambiguity.

Faculty member – And so I think CFDE, I think it would have and should have happened even in the absence of a strategic plan. In other words I don’t think there is anything strategic about having a center for faculty development. Every university should have one. It should be like accounts payable.

**Example #2** – Regarding tenure and promotion, 1.b. Strategic Theme 1, Strengthening Faculty Distinction, Tenure and Promotion on page 94 states, “Emory will maintain and enhance promotion and tenure practices that included faculty mentoring designed for each career stage and that recognize expectations for excellence by discipline.”

Dean – I hear President Wagner speak and to his mind, there has been a dramatic shift in tenure and promotion from our faculty thinking of tenure as a...expectation and you know, is the default, “Well, they’ll probably get tenure unless they screw up”...or is the default, “You don’t get tenure unless you really excel.”

Faculty member – Nonetheless that was a success in terms of tenure and promotion. I think there has been a substantial refinement of the processes. But I don’t think that is necessarily related to strategic planning, I think whoever the provost was that’s their job to do and the past two provosts and SVP who is currently the provost, they took that on. I think they would have done that anyway. So the tenure and promotion recruitment or retention I don’t see those two points as strengthening faculty distinction as part of the

strategic plan. That is something that any university should and would do. And we should and would have done anyway even in the absence of the plan.

**Example #3** – Regarding the Undergraduate Strategic Enrollment Management Plan, 2.a.

Strategic Theme 2, Preparing Engaged Scholars, Students on page 98 says, “Additionally, Emory will implement an enrollment management strategy consistent with the goals and targets.

Included in this strategy is the development of one of the best strategic admissions offices in the nation.” Comments about the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan and changes in the admissions office are below:

Dean – There was nothing at the university level that has helped us do that. Well sort of it has, but it didn't have to do with strategic planning. So, the way that we've done this is by eventually reworking our relationship to the (inaudible) admissions program so that we are now working together there rather than against each other... There was certainly work being done there, but I would not have said any of it followed from the strategic plan.

Faculty member – Well, you know I think within the college so much of that was recruiting John Latting in Admissions and he clearly came in with a different vision of what admissions should... What I would say is it probably was not in response to the strategic plan and all – that was something people realized should be done and resources would be arranged to do that no matter what because it was felt to be needed and not because the strategic plan said we wanted engaged scholars or something.

These comments revealed the disassociation between strategic activities that occurred on campus with what was written in the strategic plan. This implies that linkages were not communicated widely, that implementation of elements described in the plan were not established immediately after the plan was written, and perhaps people were not held accountable for implementing what was written in the plan.

#### Understanding current activity

Although the strategic plan is a 10-year plan scheduled for completion in 2015, based on the interviews, the strategic plan is “winding down,” “has run its course,” or has “lost steam.” Most respondents, including trustees, deans, faculty, non-academic administrators, and cabinet

members, believe that parts or the whole of the plan are inactive. Several respondents said they think the plan might be active, but recognized that it is not widely used at this point. Most attribute the diminished activity to the economic downturn in 2008. Three interviewees captured the thoughts of the group:

Faculty #1 – I think it's lost a lot of its momentum because of several reasons. Finances, money is probably the biggest but I think that priorities probably have changed as well.

Faculty #2 – I think with the unfortunately..., in some ways, with the disappearance of the funding engine, the engine that drove some of the enthusiasm ...people have lost interest in putting energy into aspects of the plan.

Cabinet member – When you look at some of our priorities that were articulated in an era of tremendous institutional change... And, then the recession hit. And the recession forced a redial in some ways of what was going on.

The interviewees that said the plan is still active were mostly reflecting their personal involvement in implementing aspects of the plan. This included individuals in all stakeholder groups. Most cabinet members said they believe that the strategic plan is active, in particular the elements such as the goals and areas of distinction, which have become imbedded as part of the institution. Parts of the plan that are thought to have become part of the “fabric of the university,” include strengthening faculty distinction and the vision statement:

Cabinet member #1 – Parts of the plan are still active independent of the plan. So, an example there would be faculty distinction. I think that strengthening faculty has become, through the strategic plan, more a common trait of the institution where we are more strategic and systematic about it than we used to be about it before.

Cabinet member #2 –So, I would say that the vision as the driver for the strategic plan...is still very much germane. But the strategic plan has sort of run its course it seems to me and it's time to renew that... I think the institution has a greater appreciation for the need to think and act strategically. I think the economic downturn focused people significantly on that reality.

The lack of current activity and attention to the plan was concerning to some people who believe there is great value in having a strategic plan:

...I think it is struggling in this transitory period and I'm hopeful that the assessment that will be done this next year and with some continued thinking on the part of the executive vice presidents that we'll be able to breathe new life into the energy because I really think the planning process brought the institution together in a way that helped us feel more united.

In contrast, one faculty member hoped the plan was no longer active, because "it is terribly inefficient." When asked to provide more detail, he focused mostly on a few aspects of the plan. He later admitted his perspective might be limited. After I shared with him my observation that what he knows about the plan seems like it might be somewhat narrow because of what he has been exposed to he said, "Yeah, yeah. I think you're absolutely right."

Based on these findings, it is apparent that the use of the strategic plan to drive operations is not understood much beyond the senior leadership level. Others in the institution have said they are curious, hope that the plan is being used, and would like to see clear linkages. The next section will address the level of salience or influence the strategic plan has on stakeholders' work.

### **Salience**

The next set of questions focused on salience. Salience is critical to ensure stakeholder buy-in and a measure of success needed for a comprehensive planning effort to get to a point where faculty, administrators, and staff think about the relationship of their work, the work of the university, and the world beyond the campus (Taylor & Karr, 1999; Leontiades & Tezel, 1980, Oswald et al., 1994). Therefore, I asked 34 of the 35 interviewees in what ways has the university-wide plan impacted or influenced their work and to what extent the university-wide plan influenced budget formulation, prioritization, and daily operations at the unit level. There are varying degrees of salience depending on direct involvement in initiatives and decision-making responsibilities (See Table 5). Of the participants, 21 indicated that the strategic plan

had a significant influence on their work whether they were directly involved in the plan or not.

The nonacademic administrators, trustees, and president’s cabinet members reported the strategic plan as having a significant influence on their work.

**Table 5 - Stakeholder Saliency**

<b>Stakeholder Group</b>	<b>Significant Influence</b>	<b>Some Influence</b>	<b>No Influence</b>
<b>Trustees</b>	2	1	0
<b>President’s Cabinet</b>	6	1	0
<b>Academic Deans</b>	4	1	2
<b>Faculty</b>	2	1	7
<b>Non-Academic Administrators</b>	7	0	0
<b>Total (n=34)</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>

*Influence on trustees*

Two out of the three trustees said the work of the board has been influenced by the strategic plan and is “far more effective” as a result. The board periodically pulls up different aspects of the plan and talks about different initiatives that the university is working on. They said they believe the president is good about “lifting up” different aspects of the plan and “using the Dashboard and different things” to show progress in achieving parts of the plan and strategic initiatives. The strategic plan allows the board to ask tough questions to ensure that the university is on track. The other trustee, who joined the board after the strategic plan had begun, had a different perspective. Her comment implies that she does not see the strategic plan as having a strong influence on her work as a board member: “Eight years later and you’re asking me does this thing actually affect what happens in the university and I can’t even answer the question.”

### *Influence on cabinet members*

The university-wide plan, especially the vision, has had a positive effect on the President's Cabinet and leadership conversations. President Wagner said:

It has been a discipline for me. In the early days...I don't need it anymore...but I had a little sheet of paper next to my printer and it said I was only doing three things and I'll put them in reverse order because I want the third one to be the one we talk about. One was enabling others for their success; it was in that category that I knew I had to be committed to fundraising and that sort of stuff. That was number three. Actually, number two is maintaining a leadership team; actually, initially it was building the leadership and maintaining the leadership team. And number one on that list was to advocate and ensure adherence as much as possible to the vision, mission, and strategy.

Several cabinet members participated as strategic plan theme, initiative, and implementation strategy leaders and in those roles fostered interdisciplinary work, developed new programs, managed strategic plan funds, and established criteria and procedures for distributing strategic plan funds. The strategic plan helped the cabinet to understand where the university is going and to be able to articulate that to external publics, including not only donors but also alumni, helping to them gain a sense of Emory's culture and direction. The plan also provided the framework for the activity of the administration and business functions. One cabinet member referred to one of the strategic plan goals, "Emory stewards its financial and other resources to drive activities that are essential, has been a driving force for the implementation of best in class or best practices in many of the administrative and financial functions."

### *Influence on academic deans*

Deans, in general, said they were influenced by the university-wide strategic plan. Several deans mentioned the strengthening faculty distinction initiatives as having influenced their work. Specifically, issues around faculty development, promotion and tenure, and recruitment and retention were mentioned, especially among those who were allocated strategic plan funds. One dean described the annual reporting process. She said she has had to report her

school's accomplishments using the university's categories and that it has not been difficult because there were "some really simpatico pieces." Some schools worked with the programmatic initiatives, such as Religion and Health, which resulted in collaboration on programs, faculty appointments, and research. Other deans and administrators said they found the strategic plan useful in terms of drawing from it to clarify their direction. The strategic plan also positively influenced the decision of a couple of deans to work at Emory.

#### *Influence on non-academic administrators*

All seven of the nonacademic administrators reported that the university-wide strategic plan significantly influenced their work. The basic guiding principles, such as engaging faculty and fostering interdisciplinary work, made it easier for nonacademic administrators to collaborate with faculty and other units. The annual operating plan was modified to hold schools and units accountable for meeting strategic goals. The Ways and Means Committee was responsible for allocating and managing the strategic plan fund. This was a change in normal practice. The plan helped constituents understand what was expected in enrollment from an institutional perspective, like shaping the class, identifying priorities, looking at the financial aid budget and sustainability, and managing the Emory Advantage program. Several nonacademic administrators also mentioned that the strategic plan influenced their decision to work at Emory.

One example follows:

Actually, when I interviewed in 2006, I pulled up the strategic plan because I think, again, strategic plans tell you where an institution is headed, and so I actually pulled it up, and I had questions about the university strategic plan in my interview process and where [the unit] fit in that process.

Since making the decision to join the staff at Emory, she's followed all of the initiatives and said she makes a point to go back and look at the strategic plan before the school year starts to make

sure she knows, because to her, it is important to be in sync with the university, and “you can’t do that if you don’t know what’s going on.”

Nonacademic administrators expressed a need to understand what is in the plan and how they can contribute to achieving the institutional goals. Most of them said there is value in everyone knowing how they can contribute to the plan or how they can achieve the institution’s vision. As an example, a nonacademic unit administrator explained how he used the strategic plan to help the staff in his unit understand their place within the institution:

Every year we’re going to put together a set of operating objectives that fall into those categories that tie back to the strategic plan and every employee is going to have a set of smart goals, personal objectives that link into those departmental objectives that tie back to the themes, that tie back to the strategic plan so that there is a dot all the way from, “Here’s what we’re to do as an institution” down to any front line employee so that they could say, “Why am I here?” ...It’s to improve the experience at Emory...it’s to discover new knowledge, it’s to advance computational life sciences and so that’s what we’d historically done for about six years.

The last two nonacademic administrators are involved directly in managing two of the programmatic strategic initiatives, so their work was clearly influenced by the plan. One of them stated the following:

We are very focused on identifying where we want to go and how we’re going to get there and how we’re going to measure ourselves. And I can say that in the absence of a university strategic plan we wouldn’t be able to do ours. So you know when we’re writing our plan even now as we’re thinking about redoing our strategic plan, the first thing we did was print out the university’s plan and say this is what the university is trying to do, then how do we help make that happen? And if we operate in isolation from that then we are not really part of the university. And I can’t justify our existence to the university. So without that I don’t know why we’re here.

Although the results show that school and unit based plans are used more for operational decision making, the university-wide plan helps schools, units, and initiative leaders contextualize what they are doing and derive their priorities.

### Influence on faculty

In contrast, aside from two faculty members who were directly involved as theme or initiative leaders, the faculty, including one who was also an initiative leader, reported that the strategic plan had had little or no influence on their work. Most faculty equated strategic plan salience with overlap or intersection with their research interests. One faculty member mentioned that he was still unhappy that a proposal he submitted during the planning process was rejected and said more faculty from his school would have probably been involved if the proposal had been accepted.

Another faculty member mentioned that he was familiar with the strengthening of faculty distinction theme and was involved in the recruitment of people for some of the slots. In his opinion, they hired some very talented people through that initiative. However, another faculty member referred to Emory College of Arts and Sciences' plan for hiring 100 new faculty by 2015 and indicated that was a failure from his perspective:

I think Bobby Paul (former dean of Emory College) was able to claim that something like 70 were hired in the sciences. We barely kept up with our numbers, so I might be up one or two and one could argue that some of that was because of this but I would say that for the most part, the hires were those that had to be made just to maintain the department. Certainly, you know in our department, if you were to ask do we feel like we're substantially better off than five or ten years ago, none of us would say yes because we're struggling with our mission and I don't think we have substantially more faculty in the department. So, the students are somewhat better. I'm not sure any of us would ascribe that to the strategic plan. So, there's certainly probably been some trickle down effects but...

The findings suggested that university-wide strategic plans potentially have the most influence on those who are responsible for driving operations of the institution. This included cabinet members, deans, nonacademic administrators and potentially trustees. In the way Emory University's strategic plan was presented, it was not necessarily applicable to individual faculty whose research interests were outside of those areas emphasized in the strategic plan.

Understanding the influence of the strategic plan on the work of stakeholders begs the question, “who is the university-wide strategic plan really for?” The next section will address the level of agreement stakeholders have about the need for a university-wide strategic plan.

### **Agreement**

I asked interviewees if they thought Emory needed a strategic plan to get to where it is today, and if they thought it needed a strategic plan to advance in the future, probing them further to consider how a future plan might be different, if in fact Emory needed one. All of the long-term stakeholders recognized the 2005-2015 strategic plan to be the first of its kind at Emory University. A faculty member described it as the most structured, coherent, and explicit planning activity that has occurred at Emory. In the past, he and two others only said they only remembered two reports that might be referred to as strategic. He said the following:

The only things that came close are two of them, Choices and Responsibility that Billy Fry authored. And Research at Emory which Claire Sterk authored, right. So, those were two efforts with the goal of articulating what we were about and what we should be doing and so on and so forth. But you know they were not strategic plans they were two books, right. But that’s the closest in some sense they were kind of analogous to this effort...the conscious stopping and thinking what we are about and what we want to do. But other than that there has been no strategic planning, things just happened.

### *Need for the current plan*

Trustees, deans, nonacademic administrators and cabinet members recognize the plan as having some influence on Emory’s current state, but perceptions about whether the current plan was needed to get Emory where it is today varied. One trustee mentioned that because of the strategic plan, the president has been able to lead his team more effectively. A dean said he thought the process was useful because it combined strategic planning, initiative funding, and campaign funding, and pulled those things together to advance internal and external branding of the university around priorities. Another dean said he believes that Emory is a better university

than it would have been without the strategic plan, because it was a positive exercise. But he was not convinced that Emory is stronger because it listed “five areas” of focus. A faculty member captured what some of the other participants expressed in the following statement:

You know, without the plan we would be somewhere different...I mean, that's a tough...without the plan, we would have moved forward, we would have fought over funds in a different way using some different process and yeah...maybe we would not be where we are today. We would not be...at as good a place, I think, as we are today without the plan. The plan was far, far from perfect but we are much more thoughtful and probably much more ready to handle bigger ideas, bigger issues because we went through that first process. And it really forced us to think very carefully about where we're putting resources...what's the value of unit-based resourcing, of cross-cutting resourcing...we have much more experience about at least thinking about these things. I don't think we have a great way yet to implement cross-cutting initiatives, maybe no place does but...yeah, we're better off.

#### *Need for future planning*

Though participants' statements on whether the current strategic plan was necessary differed, the majority of interviewees said they strongly believe that Emory needs some form of plan or set of guiding principles to ensure the institution has a sense of purpose and direction in the future. The interviews suggested that every organization needs a plan. One interviewee commented that strategic planning is “a wonderful thing if you do it right.” A strategic plan is needed because it is in the best interest of the organization, not because external people are mandating that it should be done.

From the trustees' perspective, a strategic plan is needed to know where the institution is going in terms of research, teaching, and service, and to make sure the institution is moving in the right direction. They all agreed that Emory needs to plan, but one trustee suggested that there may be more nimble ways to plan than the traditional strategic planning process:

Emory needs to have plans for what its priorities are over the next five to ten years. I'll just say it that way. That does not mean to me that it needs to go through this kind of strategic planning process again.

Seven out of the ten faculty members agreed that Emory needs a strategic plan in the future. Their comments suggested that strategic planning is good because it “gets people talking,” “sharing the same language,” and developing “shared goals.” Furthermore it is not enough to have a plan, “you have to have a good plan.” In this time of reduced resources, one faculty member said that he thinks Emory probably needs a strategic plan now more than before. By scanning the environment, an organization can evaluate future possibilities and make changes to better equip itself for both the present and future marketplace (Chaffee, 1985). And, this time Emory needs to “take a hard look at what we’re doing now” and ask, “what of what we’re doing now do we not need to support or not need to support as much,” according to interviewees. Another faculty member, who formerly held a part-time administrative appointment, summed up many of the comments:

Some days I feel that strategic planning is the work of the devil. And it’s the thing that was kind of the least favorite thing to do as an associate dean. It’s like an exercise that feels like an exercise. On the other hand, I don’t think an institution as large as a school or certainly a university can be driven by centrifugal force. It has to have some commitment. It has to make some broader commitments, other than the broad commitment to being good in education and research and may public citizenship.

On the contrary, a faculty member that was involved in the strategic planning process as an initiative leader said she does not see a need for additional strategic planning and she thinks the vision and mission serve as appropriate guide posts. She expressed wariness of creating the structure where the different potential initiatives are competing for money in the same way they did for the current plan.

As mentioned previously, nonacademic administrators looked to the university-wide plan to provide a framework with a vision and goals that they can connect with to guide their work:

I would just again want to make sure that we’re all on the board with the guiding principles...that, to me, is the most important thing because those general...the mission, the vision, the guiding principles...and obviously, we need to know Emory’s

goals...because a lot of this detail, we will figure out how to do this in our own way. But as long as we focus on “We have the vision in mind, we know what the goals are,” we, in our type of work...will try to hit those goals keeping in mind engaging faculty and whatever else is in here ....so it’s the basic framework but the details are what we determine for who we are and the type of work that we do.

Clearly, the strategic planning process has some value and although the resource environment is different now, it presents an opportunity to set direction and make hard choices, so the institution can thrive. A cabinet member concluded by stating the following:

I think institutional planning is always an evolution. And I think the overall institutional planning that took place in the strategic plan in 2005 was extraordinarily effective vis a vis what its history was... where we were on a continuum away further advanced than we were a decade ago but we’re nowhere near where we should be at the end of the day.

#### Future process

Apparently, the Emory community believes there should be another university-wide plan in the future, but the process and outcome should be different in light of the current economic climate. As one participant indicated, in higher education strategic plans tend to be linked to the institutional leader. He went on to say, President Wagner is in his 11<sup>th</sup> year at Emory and he probably will not be president of Emory for another 10 years. A new president may want to come in and put his or her own mark on the institution. Therefore, in addition to evaluating and determining the process and type of plan, the timeframe for the next planning cycle should also be considered.

### **STRATEGIC PLANNING BARRIERS**

Over the course of this study, three notable themes that help explain the challenges of strategic planning in higher education emerged. In some ways, these themes align with those found in the literature, which focused on the strategic planning process, the nature of academia, and organizational theories of power and structure. The themes that emerged throughout the interviews are (a) academia and the threat of corporatization, (b) jargon and the

misunderstanding of planning, and (c) communication and the power of cascading. There are some overlaps in these themes, but in essence, they capture the major challenge, which is overcoming preconceived notions related to what a strategic plan is; how a strategic plan should or could be used to meet multiple needs, even in academia; and the value of alignment within an organization.

### **Academia and the threat of corporatization**

Institutional culture plays a major role in the successful implementation of change processes. Academia has a certain culture of its own with variations depending on the institution type. This common thought was eloquently captured by a president's cabinet member:

Academia exists because as a coalescence of the unbridleable curiosity of the individual... finding...inventing a place where that curiosity could drive their life's passion. And, over the last 3,000 years, whenever you want to say that there were scholars who coalesced and did this, what was happening in the middle ages to Renaissance and all these things, it was that the scholar, the thought leader, the inventor, the discoverer, the teacher...it all came together to form what we call "academia," right? That's not a corporate design. In fact, it is the antithesis of it.

The findings in this study suggest the use of strategic planning is considered to be a corporate tool that, by seeking to aggregate and direct the efforts of faculty, empowers the administration and creates a threat for faculty. One faculty member felt strongly that the university might be moving toward contingent (faculty) labor. With the movement toward corporatization, he questioned, "Why do you need tenure? Why do you need people who invested a career? You can just recycle. You can run this place real cheap." Conversely, another faculty member related strategic planning to everyday activities of the faculty and said, "but in a university I think every day curriculum innovations and everyday new research directions that's strategic planning to some extent maybe subconscious."

Universities are so dynamic that there is a plethora of ideas that come up every day and with no focus, they can go in many directions. Strategic planning seeks to unite a community of constituents with different points of view to come together and really think about the future and be specific about what they intend to achieve and how they intend to go about accomplishing that. Another interviewee suggested that strategic planning may “get in the way of the richness of the tapestry and the diversity of the university and the programs and the people.” There are challenges with capturing tangible goals, which results in a tension between the “life and energy and efforts of a university” and the effort to quantify those kinds of efforts, because “some of the best things have a more intangible or a nonlinear pathway.” And while many interviewees grappled with the concept of academia, several nonacademic administrators, trustees, deans, cabinet members, and a few faculty members suggested that a university is an organization, a business organization, and that organizations need to plan.

### **Jargon and the misunderstanding of planning**

Words sometimes get in the way of the true meaning of the planning discipline. The findings suggested universities appreciate and realize the need for the activities of strategic planning; they just don't want to call it that. The term “strategic planning” does not resonate well with many individuals in academia usually based on their previous experiences with institutional planning and their knowledge of what it entails. The term “strategy” is acceptable and “planning” is as well, but once combined, the words at times generate an unpleasant reaction. Strategic planning is viewed as something that is imposed from outside organizations, such as accrediting bodies. Strategic planning is a process that is viewed as inflexible, that produces a document that does not drive operations, but rather is a separate program that only

affects certain constituents, and successful involvement and implementation is highly dependent upon the availability of incremental resources.

At Emory, the term strategic planning almost seems to be “a dirty word,” especially among faculty who were not involved in the plan, those who experienced the strategic plan as a failure due to the economic downturn, or those who simply did not know what the university accomplished as a result of the plan. A nonacademic administrator captured this sentiment when he said the term strategic planning “strikes people as being kind of a knee jerk reaction around being kind of corporate,” so people discount it because it does not feel like an organic value of Emory. In contrast, a president’s cabinet member said he thinks the term strategic planning at Emory evokes a feeling of winning the lottery because of the notion that strategic planning is linked only to incremental resources or fundraising.

I think that by linking the strategic plan either to—which happened in the minds, I believe, of quite a few people—to the upcoming comprehensive campaign as well as initiating or launching the plan often linked with comments about the financial resources that came out of a variety of ways but particularly the patent that Emory had sold that it started off with a perception that strategic planning became equivalent to how do you distribute money and it is so much more than that.

Many interviewees concurred with this assessment. One dean added the following, “Sometimes when people hear strategic plan they think and certainly at Emory they have a reasonable basis for thinking that it means oh there’s going to be a bunch more money.” As described by one respondent, strategic planning relates to the day-to-day work of the institution:

This is strategic planning. This is your day-to-day work. No one is going to give us money to go out and get [what we need], but you need a plan to figure out, “Can you stop this trend?” What can be purposeful—and I really do believe this is what your leading universities do—they will take something like this [trend] that we just mirror what’s happening nationally-and you have a leading academic institution that says...we can intervene here and we can change this trend.

## **Communication and the power of cascading**

At Emory, strategy is understood at the highest levels of the organization because it is discussed regularly, used in presentations with the board and external constituent groups and it directly applies to the job of leading the institution. A faculty member shared his impression that the plan did not permeate throughout the institution:

Rhetorically, yes, at the highest levels...my opinion has been for quite a while now that there is lip service as you come down the hierarchy but there's not always action. The president, the provost, the EVPs in general spoke strongly about the strategic plan and the vision. I don't think it filtered down strongly into decision making at the unit level and if I were to say one of the perceived weaknesses, my perception of a weakness of the plan as it functioned was we had really good vision but decision making, making certain decisions aligned with the plan vertically the hierarchy were not strong because I don't think there was any...if the units, if the deans didn't fully align with the plan there was no consequence, that's my impression.

Others in the institution desired to know where the institution is going and how they can contribute to achieving the vision. Nonacademic administrators and others responsible for the operation of major units within in the university expressed the greatest need to be able to make meaningful connections. Having a vision statement alone is not enough. One interviewee provided the following perspective:

I think this is what I would do differently and this was in fact true with our plan which was just not communicated effectively, which is that the goals should evolve from what you were planning to do already, right. It should not seem and it should not be as if it was just superimposed from outside, right? That's the key point. I think you have to relate everything back to the strategic plan. Partly because if you asked people to invest all of this time and energy in the creative and strategic plan, then you make decisions or create initiatives that don't have anything to do with them. Then people say, "Why didn't we have a strategic plan in the first place?"

Another participant stated that unless there was a meeting specifically about the strategic plan he did not hear people really referencing it. He went on to say that when he came to Emory, after the plan began implementation, there was no orientation towards it. No one said, "You need to

understand it.” So, from his perspective he knew there was a plan, but it did not change day-to-day conversations.

The need for communication and connections extends to faculty as well. One faculty member offered advice as to how to avoid disillusionment and cynicism among faculty:

Faculty have to believe that they're not wasting their time essentially, that there are results that will come out of it, that they are listened to. If those results aren't what they want, that is clearly explained to them. The difference, disagreement is explained as carefully and clearly as all the rhetoric that was. I think it's very important.

Faculty members expressed a need to know the overall institutional plan. They also said it would be helpful to get support, such as infrastructure for collaboration, from the university to achieve success.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A critical component of strategic planning is ensuring clarity about the mission, vision, and goals and having a shared understanding about how the organization will accomplish those goals (Taylor & Karr, 1999; Morrill, 2010; Delprino, 2013). Many colleges and universities have well-written, detailed strategic plans. Sanaghan (2009) noted that those plans often “fall far short of their intended aspirations and outcomes” (p. 1). There are many reasons why strategic plans fail including missteps in meaningfully involving constituents in the development process; a lack of deliberateness in establishing appropriate frameworks for implementation and communication; and the misunderstanding of the planning discipline which requires engaging in an ongoing strategy process. This study addresses the strategic planning process and its influence on stakeholders, specifically trustees, president’s cabinet members, deans, faculty, and nonacademic administrators at Emory University. In this chapter, I will summarize the results of the study in relation to the research questions introduced in Chapter 2 and conclude following a discussion of the limitations of the study, implications for practice, and suggestions for future research.

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings in this study are congruent with the challenge that Kerr (1994) described as the history and organizational complexity of the modern “multiversity.” In Emory’s attempt to create a plan that would bridge silos to move from being a “multiversity” to a “university,” it encountered many challenges, including the nature of academia, which is based on the “primacy

of the individual.” Many institutions tend not to use strategic planning in the way that Taylor and Karr (1999) proposed: that strategic planning is intended to provide opportunities for organizations to evaluate themselves regularly, question the assumptions that guide their operations, and create an atmosphere throughout the organization that fosters continuous innovation, collaboration, and outward vision.

This exploratory case study involved an in-depth document review, semistructured interviews with 35 participants at Emory University, and observations to provide insight and understanding of the effective use of strategic planning in higher education. As noted previously, the research questions that guided this study and shaped these implications are as follows:

- 1) How do key stakeholders, including senior leaders, administrators, faculty, staff, and trustees, perceive a university-wide strategic plan, strategic planning process, and plan results? And, to what extent do perceptions of strategic planning vary across different stakeholder groups?
- 2) How does the notion of the “social construction of reality” contribute to our understanding of stakeholder perceptions of strategic planning?

In Chapter 4, I presented my analysis of the data structured around the domains of knowledge, understanding, salience, and agreement and discussed the themes that emerged as strategic planning barriers. In the following section, I will synthesize the results to directly address the research questions.

### **Overall perceptions of planning and variability across stakeholder groups**

Strategic planning is a tool created to assist institutions in responding to an uncertain environment (Chaffee, 1985; Keller, 1983; Morrison et al., 1984). Chaffee (1985) described this

as “anticipatory adaption,” meaning that by scanning the environment, an organization can evaluate future possibilities and make changes to better equip itself for both the present and future marketplace. Morrill (2010) said he views strategic planning as an episodic or periodic planning process, often triggered by a change in the presidency, an accreditation review, or the preparation for a capital campaign. His definition of strategic leadership is more aligned with my understanding of strategic planning and the planning discipline. Regardless of the specific definition of strategic planning, the view of strategy—as a plan, or a set of explicit intentions, preceding and controlling actions—is too narrow to define strategy formation, especially in the university setting (Hardy, Langley, Mintzberg, & Rose, 1983).

This study supports that stakeholders in general are knowledgeable about the purpose of strategic planning and the process of planning at Emory and that they are less familiar with the actual content of the plan and its uses beyond investing money in specific programmatic initiatives. Overall perceptions show that Emory’s strategic plan and planning process had shortcomings that need to be addressed if institutional planning activities are to be pursued in the future. This includes recognizing the challenges described as (a) academia and the threat of corporatization, (b) jargon and the misunderstanding of planning, and (c) communication and the power of cascading.

In academia, stakeholders understand the purpose of strategic planning and those who are interested and engaged typically find it to be valuable. Planning jargon appears to be a hurdle because the terminology is not appealing, has a corporate tone, and/or implies, in Emory’s case, that the institution is poised to begin a fundraising campaign or has incremental dollars to spend. People in general, especially those who are not directly involved with strategic planning, seem to want to be but are not aware of ongoing progress.

Constituents at Emory have varying perceptions of strategic planning. Those at the leadership level, whether they were involved in the planning process or not, are more knowledgeable about the strategic plan and how it is used to guide operations and decision making. More often than not, the perceptions of those at the leadership level were not directly aligned with others in the institution. Some notable parallels exist between the president’s cabinet and the board of trustees as a result of the cabinet’s use of strategy language in communicating with trustees, but the Cabinet is by far the most informed about the university-wide strategic plan.

**Table 6 - Strategic Planning Perception Levels by Stakeholder Group**

<b>Stakeholder Group</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Understanding</b>	<b>Salience</b>	<b>Agreement*</b>
<b>Trustees</b>	- Moderate	- Moderate	- Moderate	- High
<b>President’s Cabinet</b>	- High	- High	- High	- High
<b>Academic Deans</b>	- Moderate	- Moderate	- Moderate	- High
<b>Faculty</b>	- Low	- Low	- Low	- High
<b>Non-academic Admins.</b>	- Moderate	- Low	- High	- High

*\*Participants agreed that Emory needs a plan or a clear set of guiding principles in the future.*

Many participants, particularly those with academic backgrounds, said they view a strategic plan as a corporate tool used to decide how to spend incremental resources or identify academic priorities for fundraising; while those with more administrative backgrounds view strategic planning as a tool to provide direction and common purpose to guide decision making. Those stakeholders with academic backgrounds, including faculty and administrators, were less certain that strategic planning, per se, was the best approach for achieving common goals. They chose less “corporate” terminology to describe the type of planning in which Emory should engage.

## **Social Constructivism**

As described in Chapter 2, one of the goals of this study was to assess how the notion of social constructivism contributes to our understanding of how stakeholders perceive strategic planning in higher education. Although it is difficult to interpret or fully understand the causality of self-reported stakeholder perceptions, the findings suggest that stakeholder perspectives may be influenced by social constructivism and stratification, but may mostly be influenced by differentiation. Some interview responses seemed to be distorted, narrow, and singled framed (Werhane et al., 2011) based on the interviewees' experiences with strategic planning at Emory or in other organizations. One faculty member, for example, voiced strong opinions about the threats of a top down administration at Emory dating back to the 1980s. When asked to discuss how things may have changed, he still focused on the issues from the past and would not separate the past from the current state at Emory. It was difficult to get him to discuss the situation in more current terms.

Where individuals sit in the organization influences what they understand to be true about the university-wide strategic plan, including what is actually in the plan, how the plan is linked to operations or used in decision making, and thoughts about what has or has not been successful related to the plan. Pfeffer (1992) has described this situation as, "where you stand depends on where you sit" (p. 42), which points to the power of perspective. Pfeffer's description suggested that the level of influence seems to be affected by where individuals fit within the hierarchy of the institution; however this study's findings suggest that regardless of where one sits in the hierarchy, involvement in strategic planning activities appeared to be the primary differentiator. This idea is compatible with the concept of structural effects (Pfeffer, 1991), stratification theory (Perrow, 2000; Pfeffer, 1992), and differentiation theory (Blau, 1970).

Most constituents communicated similar recollections of the reality of the strategic plan in describing both the impetus for Emory's current strategic plan and a knowledge of what was involved in developing the plan. Similarly, the stakeholder's frame of reference of what was included in the strategic plan was generally based on his or her involvement in the planning sphere at Emory. Those who were involved, whether they were trustees, administrators, faculty, or deans, knew much more than those who were not. Based on their backgrounds and interest, they may have made more of an effort to understand and align with the strategic plan. The most obvious differences were in the areas of understanding how the plan is used now and the influence it has had on their work, which implies that those who were not directly involved in the strategic planning process, plan implementation, or leadership of the organization have had a different vantage point. It so happened that the cabinet as a whole was more involved in the planning process than any other group. This seemed to be more aligned with structural theory or stratification theory in that variations in knowledge align with hierarchy, occupation type, and/or exposure to the broader university.

#### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This case study presents an analysis of a single institution's experience with developing and implementing a university-wide strategic plan and may not reflect the planning environment of other institutions. The primary limitation of the study is its use of the case study methodology. This particular methodology is often criticized for not being generalizable because of the focus on how a phenomenon unfolds within a bounded system, which likely does not represent the population of similar systems (Merriam, 2009). The institution in this case is an urban, private, selective, research university with a strong liberal arts foundation located in the southern United States. So, readers should use caution in attempting to construe these

findings for other institutional types. I used narrative description and direct quotations to provide a vivid portrait of what occurred at Emory University, so the reader can draw insights from the case that can be transferred in similar situations.

Another limitation was with the participant sample. The stakeholders in this study were invited to participate by an administrator of the institution and may have felt obligated to participate. Also, the number and types of faculty that I interviewed as compared to the full faculty of the university is also a limitation. I interviewed ten faculty participants who were mostly full professors with an average of twenty-six years of service at Emory. At some point during their careers, two previously held administrative appointments, two were involved in faculty governance, three held significant roles in strategic plan initiative implementation, and most of them were or are currently department chairs, so their knowledge and exposure to high-level university operations are likely disproportionate to general university faculty.

A third limitation was my participant as observer status, which I mentioned as a possible threat to validity in Chapter 3. To counter any bias in my interpretation of the data and to ensure validity and reliability, I took precautions to ensure the objectivity of my interpretations, such as peer debriefing. However, it is difficult to say whether these precautions completely eliminated the influence of my status on the responses or my interpretation of some of the study results. It was also a challenge to discern causality between stratification, differentiation, and constructivism as factors in interviewee perceptions.

Finally, the data for this study was limited to current Emory University affiliates, with the exception of one interviewee who played a critical role in the development and implementation of the plan. In fact, at least 50 percent of people who were present for the planning process and involved in implementation of the plan are no longer at Emory. Their perspectives are not

captured in this study. In spite of these limitations, I believe practitioners and researchers of higher education and strategic planning will find helpful suggestions and affirmations in the findings of this study.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

Although several aspects of this study may limit its generalizability to other college and universities, in this section, I will discuss implications for practice followed by opportunities for future research that may be applied in various settings.

### **Implications for Practice**

Administrators considering embarking on or improving the strategic planning process at their own institution in the future may find these findings most useful. This study provides practical implications for administrators and others interested in facilitating campus-wide strategic planning processes and implementing effective strategic plans at private, research universities. These ideas suggest implications that transcend institution types. Most notably, it is important to recognize that structure and interaction effect perceptions. For a strategic plan to be perceived as effective and to be embraced, constituents need to understand its purpose, desired outcomes, and how it applies to them. The practical implications of the findings of this study follow.

#### *Recognize the role of culture in implementing a strategy process*

A foundational tradition in academia is the concept that faculty are individuals focused on their own discipline and scholarship who are rewarded for pursuing their own passions to achieve individual success (Whitney, 2010). Many faculty members spend much of their careers at one institution because of tenure and are strongly invested in the institution (Delprino, 2013). They sometimes view strategic planning as an attempt “from above” to solve all of the problems

of the university, which some interpret as the administration taking over. Lillis' (2006) proposition that there may be a fundamental mismatch between the higher education environment and the assumption that a university can and should be shaped to meet the goals of its strategic plan might be addressed by first understanding and embracing the culture and history of the institution.

The findings suggest that institutional leaders can work to minimize the fear of corporatization by approaching planning in a non-threatening way. Many faculty considered the university-wide plan to be the central administration's plan, so an organization may be more inclusive by involving faculty in leadership roles related to developing and implementing a strategic plan. A number of faculty leaders were involved in leading initiatives at Emory, but there were no faculty representatives on the Strategic Implementation Advisory Committee or the Executive Committee. A university could perhaps include a senior faculty member on the leadership team with responsibility and accountability to be a co-leader of the plan, rather than having senior administrators own it alone. Other members of the university community should be involved in the process of planning and implementation as well.

Making planning less threatening can also include changing the language of planning to be more appealing. For example, rather than using the term "strategic planning," universities can choose to call the process "charting a course for the future," "planning," or "strategy process."

*Create a common planning language and educate constituents*

Emory as well as other institutions must consider the economic realities of the current environment and how that affects its position in higher education. The perceptions that people have attached as fundamental to strategic planning do not necessarily match reality, especially the new reality of scarce resources. In order to be successful, a new and more accurate meaning

must be aligned with strategic planning and the planning discipline. For institutions to benefit from strategic planning, they must actively scan their environments, respond to those changes, and position themselves to manage those changes.

People's preconceived notions about what planning terms mean can become a distraction or deterrent. Institutions may benefit from establishing a common planning language. The language used to describe strategic planning and the elements of planning should be clear and nonthreatening. The planning language should define key planning terms as well as the elements of the process and how it should be implemented. At Emory, the notion that strategic planning is closely linked to incremental resources or fundraising must be transformed and the focus should be on the planning discipline. The planning discipline is a systematic, ongoing process that should link closely with budgeting and assessment. Strategic planning can be a dynamic and flexible process that guides decision making and aligns resources with priority needs. Creating a common understanding of what planning is and what the planning discipline entails could go a long way in creating buy-in and fostering desired plan outcomes.

*Ensure broad community involvement and awareness*

Strategic plan goals and accomplishments should permeate throughout an institution in recognizable ways. The planning discipline suggests that for planning to be successful in institutions, constituents should be aware of the plan and how it relates to their day-to-day jobs (Delprino, 2013). This can be achieved through communication and cascading. Communication in this context refers to multiple modes of regular communication and a campus-wide sharing of key messages about goals, accomplishments, and priorities attributed to and aligned with the plan or institutional priorities.

Direct and clear communication about the purpose, process, desired outcomes, and linkages to day-to-day activities may result in more effective university-wide strategic planning. Institutional leaders should consider communicating regularly in the context of the plan, as the role of communication is essential for improving buy-in and removing barriers for strategic plan success. Planning can be integrated into communications in digestible chunks to ensure understanding and enhance salience among constituent groups. Celebrate successes regularly and broadly.

In order for a strategic plan to be a living document, for the planning discipline to be embedded in an institution, and for shared goals to become optimal achievements, connections must be clear between the work of the institution and the work of the individual. A faculty member shared his opinion that, “if you really want to plan, people need to be aligned at all levels.” The plan should be cascaded throughout the institution. In the planning discipline, “cascading” refers to the process of adopting goals at different levels within an organization to ensure alignment between the organization's objectives and employees' activities and goals. For example, a person in the Information Technology department should understand that his/her job is not simply to write code or respond to help requests, but it is to improve the experience at Emory, to discover new knowledge, to advance computational life sciences. They should refer to those connections when setting their personal goals.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

While this study adds to the existing literature related to strategic planning in higher education by providing stakeholder perspectives at one particular institution, opportunities exist for further exploration and development of this topic. A needed expansion of this research would include the perspectives of junior faculty members and senior lecturers with no

administrative experience at Emory. Including administrators from University Communications and Human Resources would aid in a future understanding one of the study's emerging themes: communicating and cascading the strategic plan throughout the organization. Also, expanding the research to include more trustees with varying backgrounds would be interesting.

The themes that emerged from this study could be tested quantitatively among a larger sample of stakeholders at Emory University as well as other similar institutions. Future research could include a comparative study exploring perspectives of strategic planning at similar universities to see if these findings apply. It would also be telling to understand what other institutions are doing related to strategic planning. Do they evaluate their success and how do they go about doing so?

Finally, a large part of this study focused on perceptions of strategic planning and the alignment or lack thereof of these perceptions among stakeholder groups. A new study could involve evaluating the strategic planning process using actual measurable outcomes. This study could compare the outcomes of an institution that uses a strategy process and one that does not to see how outcomes compare.

## **CONCLUSION**

Strategic planning is a tool designed to help organizations identify a purpose, make hard choices, and guide decisions. In an ideal world, it helps decision makers say "no" with confidence and prevents the institution from wandering since individuals know their daily work relates to or is affected by the plan. This dissertation established, through the voices of trustees, administrators, and faculty, the nature of the factors that affect the implementation of university-wide strategic plans in higher education. It is imperative, especially in situations where constrained resources are a reality, that institutions espouse a strategy process that meets the

needs of academic and nonacademic stakeholders and drives decision making in such a way that it is transparent throughout the organization. The notion of strategic planning does not often fit well in the academic context, but stakeholders yearn for direction, support, and understanding. Universities should continue to explore opportunities and apply practices to overcome barriers. Clearly, there is more to learn.

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## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

#### **Opening:**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview concerning strategic planning in higher education.

As is states in the letter of invitation, strategic planning has been used in higher education since the 80s even though there are few data suggesting that it works. It is intended to provide opportunities for organizations to evaluate themselves regularly, question the assumptions that guide their operations, and create an atmosphere throughout the organization that fosters continuous innovation, collaboration, and outward vision.

Although the practice is used widely in higher education, there is little empirical evidence to assess the value and results achieved in colleges and universities that have embraced a strategy process. There is also little evidence that common perceptions of strategic planning permeate from the leadership level throughout the institution despite efforts to embrace and work toward a unified vision, which could hinder progress.

I am interested in learning about your perceptions of strategic planning in higher education and at Emory University, specifically, based on your experiences. I think this study will provide practical insights to researchers and practitioners in higher education to assist them in understanding the value of strategic planning and the correlation between leadership's understanding and that of others within the organization.

I anticipate the interview will take no more than 60 minutes of your time.

To help me ensure that your comments are accurately reflected, I would like to record the interview. Of course, I will not do so if that is not acceptable to you. I will keep all recordings secure and will destroy them after they have been transcribed. Is it alright for me to record this interview? I'll probably be taking some notes as we talk, as well.

I can assure you that in any publically available material your comments will not be attributed to you by name or presented in any other way that would provide readers information about your identity.

I am providing you with my business card today, for you to use should you have any follow-up comments or questions.

Do you have any questions before we begin? Okay, let's get started.

---

## **Questions:**

### ***Background information***

1. How long have you been affiliated with Emory University and in what capacity?
2. What is your current position?
3. How long have you been in that role?

### ***Knowledge (about strategic planning, the University-wide plan, and the planning process)***

4. How would you describe the practice and purpose of strategic planning in your own words?
5. Emory developed a university-wide strategic plan that began implementation in 2005. What can you tell me about the process to develop the plan and/or the content of the plan? How do you know?
6. Is the plan still active?

### ***Understanding (of the observable, logical links between strategic planning and university operations)***

7. How would you rate the effectiveness of past planning efforts at Emory?
8. Can you describe how, if at all, the University-wide strategic plan links to operations?
9. Has the plan or aspect of the plan been effective? If so, please describe those aspects. How do you know?

### ***Salience (personal significance of the University-wide plan)***

10. In what ways has the University-wide plan impacted or influenced your work?
11. To what extent has the University-wide plan influenced budget formulation, prioritization, and daily operations at the university-wide level and in the schools and colleges?

### ***Agreement (in general, with the value of the University-wide plan)***

12. Did Emory need a university-wide strategic plan to get to where it is today?
13. Does Emory need a university-wide strategic plan in the future?

### ***Final Thoughts***

14. What advice or recommendations do you have to guide Emory's operations and foster an atmosphere that supports continuous improvement, innovation, collaboration, and the vision?
15. Is there anything that you would like to add that perhaps I did not ask you about, but you think is relevant?

## **Closing:**

Thank you for participating in this interview. I will be happy to share the results of my analysis with you, if you wish. Regardless, I am sure your comments will be very useful as I continue my analysis. Again, please contact me, if you have any further questions or comments.

## APPENDIX B

### LETTER OF INVITATION

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am a doctoral graduate student in the Institute of Higher Education at the University of Georgia under the direction of Professor Jim Hearn. I am writing to request your participation in my dissertation research, “Demystifying Strategic Planning in Higher Education: Understanding Perspectives at Emory University”.

Strategic planning has been used in higher education since the 80s even though there are few data suggesting that it works. The purpose of the study is to explore variations in stakeholder perspectives of strategic planning at Emory University in order to understand how planning is perceived, determine to what extent perceptions are consistent across stakeholder groups, and ascertain the extent to which social constructivism impacts what stakeholders believe to be true. This study will provide practical insights to researchers and practitioners in higher education to assist them in understanding the value of strategic planning and the correlation between the senior leadership team’s understanding of strategic planning and that of others within the organization. This work will also help Emory consider how to proceed with planning activities, including plan/strategy formation, communication, and implementation, in the future.

As an experienced health care and higher education strategic planner, I am most interested in learning about your perceptions of strategic planning in higher education and at Emory University, specifically, based on your experiences. If you are willing to participate and your schedule permits, I would like to interview you during the month of August 2013. The interview will not take more than 60 minutes and you can choose the interview location.

If you choose to participate, reasonable efforts will be made to keep the personal individually-identifiable information in your research record private and confidential. Unless you would prefer to be mentioned by name, your confidentiality will be maintained by using a pseudonym (such as Emory University senior administrator) both in the study and in the research records. With your permission, an audio record of the conversation will be saved to help me remember what was said at the interview. The audio files will be destroyed once they have been fully transcribed. While conducting the study, only my faculty advisor and I will have access to the audio files and transcripts. All information will be stored in a locked file or password-protected computer in my home office.

Also, I would be happy to provide you with a preliminary draft of the report for your approval and with future publications related to this study. Of course, you understand that your participation is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If

you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information. No foreseeable risks or discomforts are expected. There may also be no potential benefits for you personally from this study. However, the potential benefits to science and humankind may include a better understanding of the success factors and pitfalls of strategic planning in higher education.

If you would be willing to participate, I would be truly grateful since your perspective will add value to this study. If you already know you would like to participate and want to schedule a formal appointment or if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [mmorga3@uga.edu](mailto:mmorga3@uga.edu) or by phone at (404) 727-9594. Otherwise, I will reach out to your assistant to check on your interest in participating and will look to schedule an appointment and answer any questions you may have at that time.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 629 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; Email Address [IRB@uga.edu](mailto:IRB@uga.edu). You may also contact my dissertation advisor, Dr. James Hearn by email at [jhearn@uga.edu](mailto:jhearn@uga.edu) or by phone at (706) 542-8729. Again, thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Makeba Morgan Hill  
Ed.D Candidate

## APPENDIX C

### EMORY UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK

# Where Courageous Inquiry Leads

EMORY UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN 2010–2015

MISSION	STRATEGIC THEMES	INITIATIVES
<p style="font-size: 1.2em; margin: 0;"><b>To create, preserve, teach, and apply knowledge in the service of humanity</b></p>	Strengthening Faculty Distinction	Faculty development Tenure and promotion Recruitment and retention
<p style="font-size: 1.2em; margin: 0;"><b>STRATEGIC PRIORITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality</li> <li>• Distinction</li> <li>• Financial Strength and Resource Stewardship</li> </ul>	Ensuring Highest Student Quality and Enhancing the Student Experience	Recruitment and financial aid Engaged scholars Curriculum and pedagogy
<p style="font-size: 1.2em; margin: 0;"><b>VISION</b></p> <p style="margin: 0;">Emory is a destination university, internationally recognized as an inquiry-driven, ethically engaged and diverse community, whose members work collaboratively for positive transformation in the world through courageous leadership in teaching, research, scholarship, health care and social action.</p>	Creating Community — Engaging Society	Culture Sustainability Professional and leadership development
<p style="font-size: 1.2em; margin: 0;"><b>GOALS</b></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 18%; padding: 5px;"> <p style="margin: 0;">Goal 1: Emory has a world-class, diverse faculty that establishes and sustains preeminent learning, research, scholarship, health care and service programs.</p> </div> <div style="width: 18%; padding: 5px;"> <p style="margin: 0;">Goal 2: Emory enrolls the best and the brightest undergraduate, graduate, and professional students and provides exemplary support for them to achieve success.</p> </div> <div style="width: 18%; padding: 5px;"> <p style="margin: 0;">Goal 3: Emory's culture and physical environment enrich the lives and intellectual work of faculty, students and staff.</p> </div> <div style="width: 18%; padding: 5px;"> <p style="margin: 0;">Goal 4: Emory is recognized as a place where scholars work collaboratively as a strong and vital community to confront the human condition and experience and explore twenty-first century frontiers in science and technology.</p> </div> <div style="width: 18%; padding: 5px;"> <p style="margin: 0;">Goal 5: Emory stewards its financial and other resources to drive activities that are essential and those through which Emory can demonstrate excellence and provide leadership.</p> </div> </div>	Confronting the Human Condition and Human Experience	Religions and the human spirit Race and difference Global health
	Exploring New Frontiers in Science and Technology	Neuroscience, human nature and society Predictive health and society Computational and life sciences
<b>FRAMING PRINCIPLES</b>		
Societal Impact • Internationalization Creativity: Art and Innovation • Strategic Collaborations		

[WWW.EMORY.EDU/STRATEGICPLAN](http://www.emory.edu/strategicplan)

Updated August 2009

EMORY  
UNIVERSITY