

Strategic Plan 2010

Information about the planning process

Why another plan?

Douglas has devoted considerable energy to various types of planning over the past five years, with the last college-wide *Strategic Plan* prepared in 2006. It would be nice to be able to sit back and concentrate on implementing these plans, but our external environment continues to change dramatically (e.g. new universities, volatile enrolment patterns, demographic shifts and changing economic conditions.)

A new president and changing Board members need current, focused goals to rally and coordinate our energies so that Douglas College can thrive in the coming decade.

How will the new plan relate to recent plans that Douglas College has prepared?

The college-wide *Strategic Plan* is the umbrella document over the complementary *Academic Plan* and the *Students First! Learning Support Services Plan*. Both these other plans are strategic in nature, but they each focus on only portions of Douglas College. They inform the college-wide plan and, in turn, the college-wide plan will set the stage for the next updates of these other plans.

The above documents all identify new directions for Douglas College (recognizing that the bulk of our activities will remain unchanged.) In contrast, the annual *Accountability Plan and Report* that we are required to submit to government each summer is merely a compilation of existing plans and data. Thus the *Accountability Plan* is more of a communication vehicle for our external audiences, whereas our internal strategic plans give guidance to decision-makers within the College.

Who advises and who decides?

The more input and discussion from the entire college community, the better. However, time is limited in that government continues to make decisions about postsecondary education and will not wait for individual institutions to determine their positions on any number of topics.

Once a draft plan is prepared, Education Council has an advisory role and its usual formal advisory process will be followed. Senior Management Team will also have significant input, but in the final analysis, it is the President who presents a document for the College Board to approve.

Scott McAlpine has convened a Strategic Plan Advisory Group to advise about the process – not the content – for developing the plan. Its membership consists of Kathy Denton, Silvia Wilson, Sean Kelly, and Bob Cowin.

What will be the process and timeline?

The planning process began in November with an open-ended, appreciative inquiry survey to identify potential topics and to help in gauging the atmosphere at Douglas College. This was intended to supplement the information Scott McAlpine is gathering in his numerous discussions with internal and external stakeholders since his arrival last August.

The next phase will be to convene discussion on what seem to be key, yet controversial topics, for Douglas College. A preliminary list of these topics, subject to change, is as follows:

- Learner pathways and institutional partnerships
- Research and scholarly activity
- Internationalization
- 2 -3 other topics

The discussions will begin electronically in December to kick start face-to-face discussion sessions in the latter part of January. Written submissions from individuals or groups will also be welcome.

The Board will hold a retreat in January to provide its perspectives.

In February, some sort of a progress report will be issued and some open-ended “town hall” meetings convened to validate the work to date, identify gaps, and generally to ensure that things are on track.

March is set aside to prepare the first draft of plan. If all goes as anticipated, the final draft will come in April and then the formal review processes through Education Council and divisional structures will begin. The hope is that Board approval will come in June or July, and that the new strategic plan will inform substantial revisions to the annual *Accountability Plan and Report* that Douglas College submits to the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development.

How do I stay informed?

Your starting point is the strategic planning page of the President’s web site:

<http://www.douglas.bc.ca/about/presidents-office/strategic-planning.html>

The survey results are already posted there and an environmental scan section is well under way.

Information about the planning process will be posted here and regularly updated, along with any working documents that emerge in the coming months.

How does strategic planning differ from other types of planning?

A strategic plan describes what an organization seeks to do differently to achieve its mission given evolving conditions in the external environment. The more frequently the environment or the organization’s mission change, the more frequently priorities and strategies have to be revised.

Strategic planning is externally focused and value laden. It identifies “what” needs to be done, leaving it to tactical planning (which is more internally focused) to determine “how”.

Strategic planning differs from master planning in that it does not lead to a fixed blueprint. It points only in general directions for the long term, and is intentionally flexible to accommodate unknown and new considerations. The resulting document is a living one, evolving in light of stakeholder feedback and evaluation and as the environment changes.