

The University of Akron

*An Urban Research University:
Inspired by Our People, Our Promises and Our Place*

Affirming Our Promise – Strategic Planning Process

October 28, 2019

The Board of Trustees has requested that we undertake an intensive, institution-wide planning process to identify a set of strategic priorities to drive the University forward for the next three to five years. The overall goal of the exercise is to bring about financial stability and, most importantly, expanded efforts at education, research and engagement. Recognizing the extensive work the University community expended during the three-year planning process (now in its second iteration), the Board has asked us to use that work as a key input for our planning. Following is a description of the planning process, the major groups involved and a schedule of activities that will meet the goal of presenting a strategic plan to the Board at their June 2020 meeting.

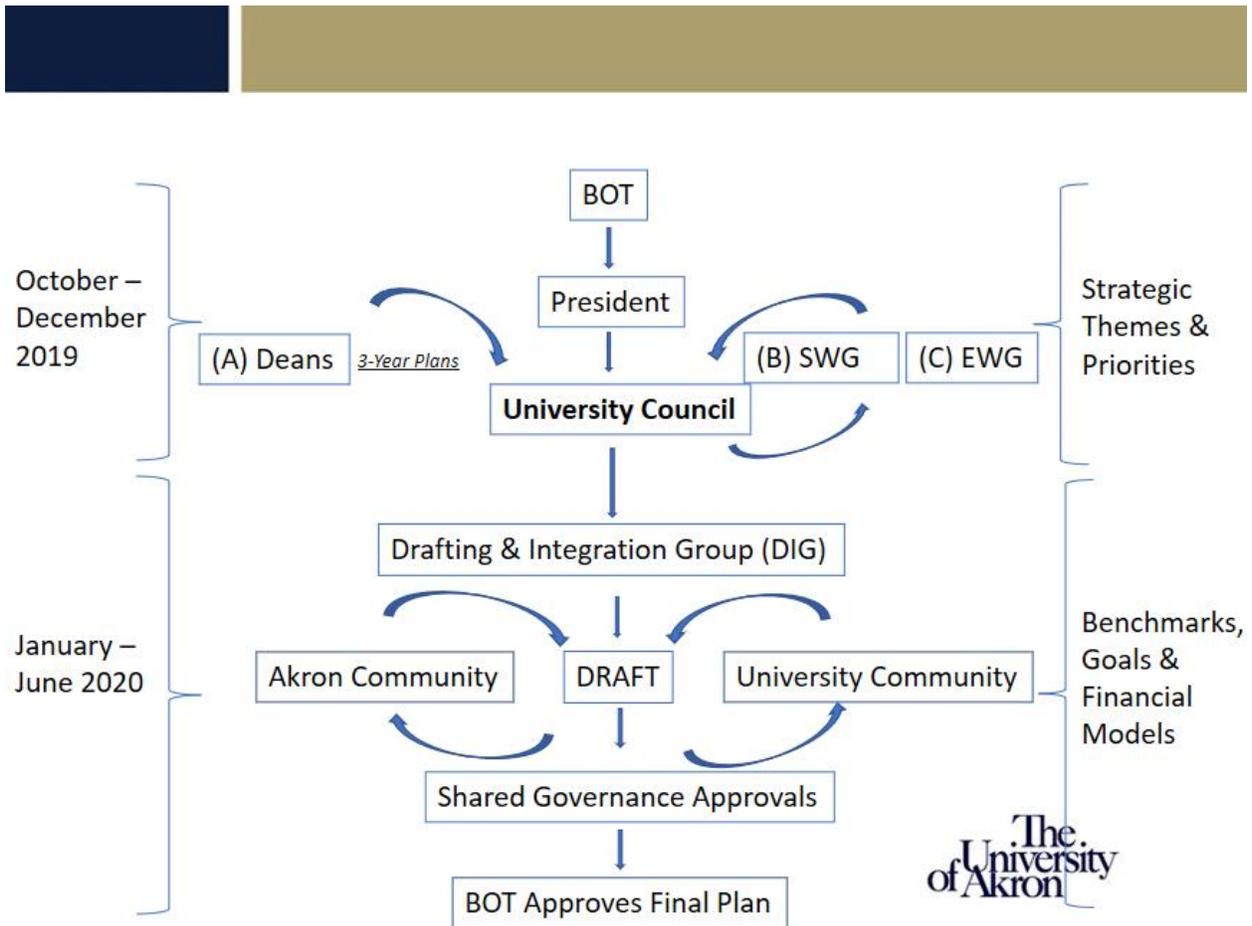
I. Overall Planning Design

The overall planning design is depicted in Figure 1. The planning process is divided into two phases: Phase I (October – December 2019) will involve the discernment of strategic themes and major priorities; Phase II (January – June 2020) will involve an iterative University and community-wide drafting/revising process to shape those themes and priorities into specific goals and models of financial outcomes.

The Board of Trustees Strategic Issues Committee will intersect with the process at various times throughout. At the appropriate time, we will seek review and required approvals from Shared Governance.

A key feature of the planning design is the time allocated for the two phases. Because of the extensive prior strategic work conducted at the University (three-year planning process, Administrative Activities Review; see below) it is expected the determination of major strategic themes and priorities can be made in a relatively short period of time. Phase II, involving initial drafting and iterative cycles of revisions through broad interactions of university and community constituents and the Board of Trustees, is designed to be a formative stage with broad participation. The hope is this allocation of time will focus our attention on making the best (and hardest) decisions in the most collaborative manner possible.

Figure 1. Overall planning design.



II. Relationship of the Strategic Planning Process to the 3-Year Plans and the Administrative Activities Review (AAR)

Previous institution-wide planning work created two important sets of information that will inform the *Affirming Our Promise* initiative.

1. The Administrative Activities Review (AAR) is an analysis of the administrative staffing and financial circumstances of all university academic (dean level and above) and non-academic administrative offices. The [AAR report](#) contains recommendations that may be considered as part of the *Affirming Our Promise* process.
2. The second set of important information is encompassed in the revised (second revision) of the unit [three-year plans](#) which are due for submission to the administration on Nov. 11. The original purpose of the three-year planning process was to generate (1) strategic directions and (2) identify possible areas of reduction for all academic and non-academic units on campus. This work will be an extremely valuable resource for the institution-wide priority setting process and will be input into the process as explained below.

Because the *Affirming Our Promise* strategic plan will be the University plan for the coming years and because that plan will be deeply informed by the previous work of the three-year planning process (see below), once revised three-year plans are submitted on Nov. 11 that process will come to a close.

III. Phase I: Developing Institutional Strategic Themes and Priorities (October – December 2019).

The nexus of the planning effort will be the University Council (UC) which is the principal strategic planning group in our shared governance organization. To get the widest possible input and to distribute the planning work, the UC will interact with a number of planning groups composed of faculty, staff and students. Administrative support for the effort will be provided by several Support Teams. The University Council may organize its work in any way they deem appropriate.

In Phase I, the University Council will undertake the following activities related to three separate planning activities (A, B and C in Figure 1).

A. Process Revised Three-Year Plans

The University Council will receive the revised three-year plans submitted to the administration. Working collaboratively with the deans, the major strategic themes and priorities of the units, as portrayed in the three-year plan along with major areas of possible unit reductions will be determined. The objective of this work is to create a unit-by-unit accounting of priorities and areas of reduction. See Section IV (drafting & integration) for explanation of possible uses of this list.

Once the University Council completes its evaluation of the three-year plans, the three-year planning process will be closed.

B. Strategic Working Group (SWG)

The Strategic Working Group (SWG) will be appointed by the President and include faculty, staff and students. The BOT may appoint a liaison to this working group. The role of this group will be to develop a selected set of potential institutional themes and priorities based on all available information, extensive conversations with University constituents, input from institutional financial models and enrollment projections. See Section IV (drafting & integration) for explanation of how this work will be used.

Because the *Affirming Our Promises* plan must drive a financial recovery of the University, it is expected the themes and priorities put forth by the SWG will include a very small subset of the potential priorities of the University. Emphasis will be given to academic areas of high potential growth, enrollment innovations, non-degree revenue opportunities and strategic expenditure reductions.

C. Enrollment Working Group (EWG)

The University must develop a holistic enrollment model having the following characteristics: (1) institution-wide accountability for meeting enrollment targets; (2) driven by college enrollment targets; (3) accommodating of all types of learners working in a wide variety of delivery models; (4) attuned to the student development obligations of an urban university; and, (5) enjoy high levels of faculty involvement from recruitment through graduation. The Enrollment Working Group will be tasked with developing a holistic enrollment model for The University of Akron. See Section IV (drafting & integration) for explanation of how the new model will inform the *Affirming Our Promises* plan.

The University Council will receive the work of the SWG and the EWG and, through a collaborative process with those two groups, compare their work with the University Council's findings from their analysis of the three-year plans. The groups, working together, will provide a summary of their findings and conclusions to the Drafting & Integration group who will use that work to create an initial draft plan.

IV. Phase II: Drafting and Revising Plan.

A Drafting and Integration Group (DIG) will be established by the President from individuals on the University Council, the SWG, the EWG and others deemed appropriate. The job of the DIG is to use the information compiled by the University Council along with the Council's recommendations and additions to develop an initial draft strategic plan and to subsequently manage a rich, iterative community conversation and revision process. This process will culminate in a final strategic plan for campus approvals and submission to the Board of Trustees.

Following is a summary of the various working groups and support groups to be deployed in the process.

Principal Working Groups and Description of Roles

1. Board of Trustees Strategic Issues Committee.
 - a. Overall strategic guidance and approval.
2. University Council (or some subset of Council members).
 - a. Planning nexus – working group results converge here for consideration and integration.
 - b. Three-year plan review group – mine the three-year plans for strategic themes and priorities.
 - c. Manage campus review of draft plan.
3. Strategic Working Group (SWG) – Faculty, staff, student group separate from UC.
 - a. Develop strategic themes based on broad input, historical context and future imperatives.
 - b. Shape themes into priorities and goals.
 - c. Project financial outcomes
4. Enrollment Working Group (EWG) – Admissions professionals, faculty, staff and students.
 - a. Develop a total enrollment plan.

- b. Identify and prioritize strategic actions and investments to support the plan.
5. Deans
 - a. Revise three-year action plan.
 - b. Identify strategic themes and priorities for input to the UC and the SWG.
 - c. Review plan
6. Drafting and Integration Group – Faculty, staff, student group selected from UC, SWG, EWG and joined by other members of the university community.
 - a. Integrate work of UC, SWG, EWG
 - b. Prepare an initial draft of the plan.
 - c. Revise the plan through multiple iterations of constituent input.
 - d. Submit plan to President before deadline.

Support Groups

1. Various administrative offices as needed.
2. Data and analytics support group.
3. Financial support group.