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THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ACADEMIC CHAIRS
IN STRATEGIC PLANNING AT ROWAN UNIVERSITY

by
William F. O'Brien

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
5/16/06

Approved by _____
Professor

Date Approved May 17, 2006

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ABSTRACT

William F. O'Brien
THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ACADEMIC CHAIRS
IN STRATEGIC PLANNING AT ROWAN UNIVERSITY

2005/06

Dr. Burton Sisco
Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration

The purpose of this study was to better understand the attitudes of department chairs in strategic planning at Rowan University. The researcher surveyed the department chairs within the six academic colleges. A total of 22 department chairs participated in the survey while 20 of these subjects were also interviewed. Participants were administered a Likert-scale survey that measured the attitudinal factors of role, knowledge-experience, and involvement in strategic planning. The survey also measured the attitudes towards the current strategic planning process at Rowan and their recommendations for improvement. Surveys were statistically analyzed to determine means, standard deviations on the attitudinal factors, and correlations between selected demographics and the factors; interviews were analyzed for common themes.

The study provides insight on the attitudes of department chairs at the university regarding strategic planning. Department chairs at the university have a positive attitude regarding their roles and responsibilities within strategic planning. However, the study revealed department chairs believe strategic planning initiatives at Rowan are delivered from the “top-down” while departmental involvement is limited.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the following individuals for their help in the research:

Rowan University Department Chairs—the research could not have been possible without their commitment and valuable insight.

Dr. Christy Faison—for allowing me the opportunity to gain first-hand experience with Academic Master Planning and the administrative duties of the Provost.

Dr. Burton Sisco—having the time and patience to mold this student into a researcher. It was a pleasure and an honor.

My loving wife, Jodie—for the support and love you have given me throughout my graduate studies. This would not have been written without you.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Strategic planning at colleges and universities has become increasingly common over the past 30 years. Since the 1980s, changes in demographics, economy, and society have pressured institutions to respond with new educational programs while maintaining core values and mission. With the increasing number of colleges and universities responding to the demands for various degree programs and student services, institutions failing to consider these external environmental pressures face declining enrollment. Although strategic planning may offer the ability to target specific areas of strength and growth at an institution, participation of the campus community is necessary for strategies to be implemented.

The objective of a strategic plan is to focus on prospective growth and opportunities at the university, college, and department level. Most higher education institutions have been successful in creating large documents to provide direction for new academic and student facilities, marketing pressures and new course offerings; yet, successful implementation of strategic planning has been minimal (Austin, 2002). Although most planning literature focuses on the institutional level, departmental leadership is necessary to achieve long-term objectives (Cyert, 1983). The demands of academic chairs to maintain departmental governance and address administration, faculty, and student concerns have increased considerably over the past three decades.

With increasing responsibilities, academic deans and central administrators have placed more accountability on department chairs.

Statement of the Problem

The role and responsibilities of academic department chairs have increased considerably over the past few decades. Although this has been in tandem with the increase of strategic planning at colleges and universities, the involvement of department chairs has been minimal. The academic department is the crucial element for the design and implementation of the academic portion of strategic planning. The primary focus on planning has tended to be at the institutional level, neglecting the importance of departmental leadership in implementing a successful strategic plan.

There is a shortage of relevant literature pertaining to strategic planning and the roles and responsibilities of the chairperson. With the increase in responsibility of the chairs to maintain the operational and academic portions of the respective departments, knowledge of strategic planning is necessary. Planning within the academic department directly relates to the ability for the chairperson to develop and support the vision and mission of the faculty and staff. Although relevant literature has focused on a “top-down” institutional plan, less is known about the influence of departmental chairs attitudes, knowledge, and experience related to achieving the universities goals and objectives.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to better understand the attitudes, knowledge, and experience of academic department chairs pertaining to strategic planning. Cyert (1983) stressed the importance of departmental involvement with the institutional strategic plan;

however, academic department chairs have only recently begun to embrace the concepts of planning. Attempting to further understand the attitudes of department chairs and the relationships between prior experience and knowledge, this study measured the attitudes, knowledge and experience, and involvement of department chairs at Rowan University in the strategic planning process. Department chairs among the six academic colleges within the university were used for the study. Particular emphasis was given to the reported attitudes, prior knowledge and experiences, and involvement the department chairs had with strategic planning. This provided insight about the current attitudes of academic chairs regarding strategic planning and created potential feedback to central administration about the impact this will have on future strategic planning initiatives.

Assumptions and Limitations

There are a plethora of external and internal pressures influencing the development of strategic planning at colleges and universities. Although this study touches on the departmental level of the organization, the scope of this study is limited in its ability to predict numerous reasons for strategic planning to be influenced by institutional factors including budget and leadership. The data in this study were analyzed under the assumption that the subjects answered truthfully without bias.

Several limiting factors were also present in the study. The focus on the academic department chairs at Rowan University may not provide a large enough sample size to be utilized nationally. The instrumentation is limited to willing participants who participated in the study. Also, this study does not offer comparison between the academic chairs and the six different academic colleges they represent. The study may

have unintentional researcher bias reflected in the findings since the investigator is a proponent of strategic planning and a flatter organizational model called heterarchy.

Operational Definitions

1. Academic Planning: Defined as the process to conceptualize a strategic plan within the academic departments at colleges and universities.
2. Attitude: Defined as the response and personal assessment of strategic planning as reported by department chairs at Rowan University.
3. Department Chairs: Subjects, overseeing the daily operations of the academic departments among the six academic colleges at Rowan University.
4. Heterarchy: Defined as the proposal to empower individuals within all levels of the organization to assume leadership roles.
5. Hierarchy: Defined as the traditional governance of colleges and universities where executive administrators including the Board of Trustees, president, vice-presidents and college deans relay information, direction, and policy to the administration and staff.
6. Institutional Change: Defined as the ability for reform and transformation throughout the university incorporating all levels of the organization.
7. Leadership: Defined as the ability for individuals, departments and the campus community to motivate and promote community involvement with the strategic plan at Rowan University.
8. Strategic Planning: Defined as academic strategic planning practiced at Rowan University.

9. Strategic Planning Initiatives: Defined as the process to introduce a mission, vision and goals to facilitate future growth and change within an organization.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the attitudes of department chairs at Rowan University regarding the factors of role, knowledge/experience, and involvement with strategic planning?
2. Is there a significant relationship between selected demographics of years as chair, age, gender, education level or college served and the chairs attitude factors?
3. How do department chairs view their experience with strategic planning at Rowan University?
4. How do department chairs view the strategic planning process as currently practiced at Rowan?
5. What recommendations do department chairs make to improve the strategic planning process at Rowan University?

Report Organization

Chapter two reviews the influence of strategic planning in higher education over the past few decades and provides current literature regarding planning at the departmental level.

Chapter three describes where and how the study was conducted. Namely, a description and design of the study population and sample, instrumentation, variables, and quantitative techniques required for data analysis is provided.

Chapter four present the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the observations derived by the instrumentation.

Chapter five presents a brief discussion of the findings, a summary of the study, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Over the past 30 years colleges and universities have recognized the importance of strategic planning to maintain distinctiveness in a continuously changing environment. As demographic, economic, and social demands change, institutions are faced with decisions on how to maintain quality and tradition while meeting students' demands to explore current avenues of study. With the growing number of colleges and universities throughout the country, institutions may be faced with dwindling enrollments if effective planning is lacking. Although strategic planning is a time-consuming process involving the entire institutional community, colleges and universities must analyze the internal and external environments to ensure competitiveness during the next few decades.

The survival of a college or university in an increasingly fluctuating environment is dependent on a successful strategic plan. Many colleges and universities have created numerous committees, as well as hired professional planning groups, to facilitate a productive and successful plan for the future. However, there is a growing disparity between the number of strategic plans created by universities and the success rate of implementation. The ability to move from planning to implementation entails a variety of stakeholders and members of the college community willing to incorporate change. Change in an academic organization, however, does not come as quickly as in commercial and industrial corporations (Rowley & Sherman, 2002).

Strategic Planning in Higher Education

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, strategic planning was found mainly in commercialized organizations. However, as the 1980s approached, demographic, economic and technological changes pressured colleges and universities to re-evaluate the direction of planning (Dooris, 2003). During this time, the primary emphasis was on building new facilities and expanding the physical aspects of campuses. However, as costs dramatically outpaced inflation, strategic planning was redefined to emphasize fundamental decision making to guide the organization into the future. By 1990, the majority of colleges and universities began to allocate considerable amounts of resources to develop effective strategic planning focusing on competitiveness and distinction. As the 21st century approached, academic organizations began to focus on continuous quality improvement, re-evaluation of the business model, and the creative distinctions that may transform institutions (Dooris, 2003).

Cyert (1983) emphasized the necessity to incorporate institutional planning at colleges and universities. Most institutions are able to fulfill the annual operations portion of organizational planning, however, long-term planning goes beyond the minimal process of responding to crises and managing the operational necessities. In order to evolve towards strategic planning, the institution must broaden its scope outside the general levels of budgeting and scheduling, short-range planning, and long-range planning. Strategic planning goes beyond these concepts and develops a fit between the organization and the changing marketplace (Kotler & Murphy, 1981).

Approaching strategic planning in academia as opposed to the private sector is accomplished by understanding the shared governance system of higher education

institutions. Although some of the managerial positions and titles vary among the various public and private organizations, a Board of Trustees (BOT) usually maintains the overall responsibility to implement change. While the BOT holds ultimate power, there is still democratization throughout departments and disciplines which demand a voice in institutional goals. With guidance from the institution's president, a strategic mission and vision will be developed by the community stakeholders. Once a strategic mission has been implemented, there are six appropriate steps introduced by Kotler & Murphy (1981) for strategic planning: Environmental Analysis, Resource Analysis, Goal Formulation, Strategy Formulation, Organization Design, and Systems Design. The first necessary step in strategic planning analyzes the internal and external environments impacting the institution. Questions including, "what are the major trends," "what are the implications of these trends," and "what are the most significant opportunities and threats," are answered to gain background information from the surrounding community. The internal community consists of a multitude of stakeholders that may influence and direct the administration's goals and objectives (1981).

Once the main opportunities to produce growth are established by the institution, the necessary resources are identified to accomplish these goals. This involves a complete resource analysis to understand the amount of staff, money, and facilities necessary to meet short and long-term goals. After the environmental and resource analyses are completed, goal formulations are calculated to develop a plan that typically spans five years. With the aid of strategy formulation and the restructuring of organizational priorities, a strategic plan will be ready for implementation. However, a

well-developed strategic plan must be flexible and able to respond to necessary changes in the environment for success (Kotler & Murphy, 1981).

Heterarchy and Leadership

Academia differs significantly from the corporate world because of the shared governance concept. This is one of the main reasons strategic planning is a time-consuming process in higher education requiring input from a multitude of different stakeholders. Austin (2002) introduces the concept of heterarchy versus the traditional hierarchy framework in colleges and universities to facilitate improvement of strategic planning. Under a classic hierarchy, executive administrators relay information, direction, and policies down to the administration and staff. Although this path of communication is necessary to inform the departments about new policy changes and administrative decisions, it does not allow voices from the “bottom-up” to be heard. For more effective strategic planning efforts, faculty, staff and administration throughout the hierarchy must view the new mission and direction of the university as their own. Austin (2002) proposes the concept of heterarchy as a solution to building consensus, ownership and personal responsibility in the collegiate setting.

Cyert (1983) has argued that a university is a decentralized organization made up of a multitude of colleges, departments, and disciplines which form the different aspects of an institution. Although Cyert recognizes the necessity for central leadership from a president when difficult situations arise, a balance between faculty, staff, and administration is required for successful strategic planning. Austin’s heterarchy model offers a different approach to organizational structure by placing greater influence, responsibility and values throughout the institutional community. Hierarchy has mainly

focused on the leadership positions of central administration where “top-down” direction and management maintains the organizational structure. In contrast, heterarchy re-defines leadership as a tool to empower, react, and manage the college or university by various persons throughout the institution (Austin, 2002).

Hierarchy dramatically differs from heterarchy when attempting to understand the levels of management in the organization. Traditional hierarchy, as represented in Figure 2.1, tends to focus on the chain of command where the board of trustees governs the university with the managerial resources of a president, provost, and the college deans. Heterarchy, however, may be applied to the department and individual members of the staff to strategically implement change. Since leadership in a college or university operates on a shared governance principle, the traditional hierarchical model fails to grasp the multitude of dynamic departments overseeing the daily operations at an institution. Austin (2002) asserts that departments, as well as central administration, should implement important leadership activities. Colleges and universities do not function as a commercialized corporation where the CEO of a company introduces a new concept and expects implementation immediately. At higher education institutions, resistance typically occurs if the central administration does not rely on input from the entire internal community. Also, with the president far removed from the daily operations, strategic planning can be processed with less resistance by allowing the departments to embrace some personal responsibility in designing goals and objectives (Austin, 2002).

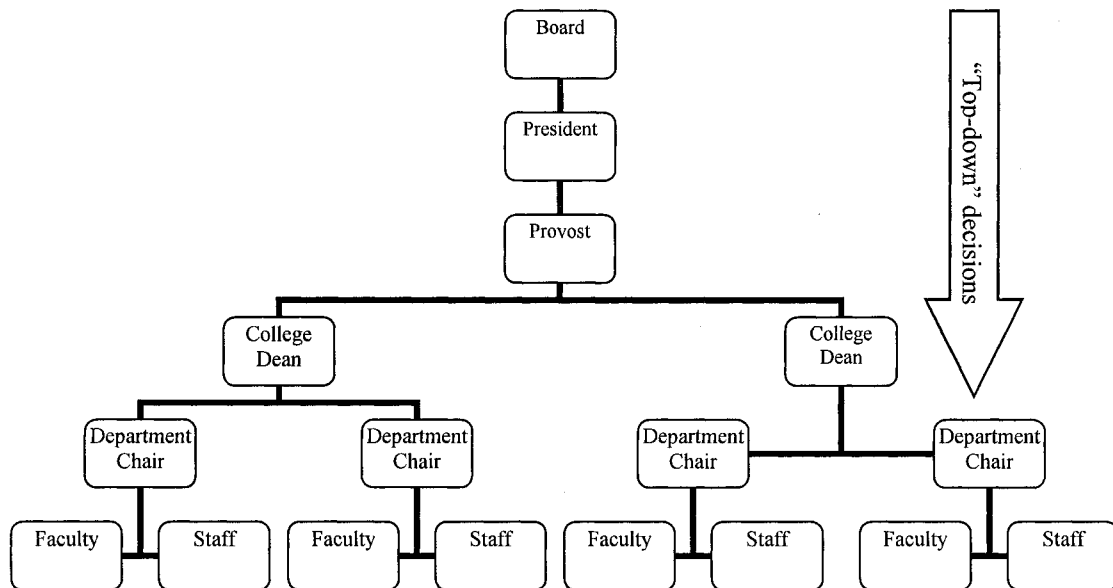


Figure 2.1. Traditional hierarchy model reflecting the organizational structure of an Academic Affairs Division.

An effective strategic plan should be flexible and continuously updated when internal and external pressures force an institution to revise current direction (Austin, 2002). Yet, the hierarchical system operating at colleges and universities may oppose this flexibility despite the concept of shared governance. Heterarchy offers a potential solution by empowering the individual departments and faculty to introduce plans and concepts to meet the institutions vision and goals. Figure 2.2 provides an adaptation of Austin's (2002) heterarchy model depicting various units within the academic affairs division facilitating strategic planning. Essentially, leadership is shared by the emerging teams within the department depending on the task or project initiated. Leaders in varying positions may assume major roles when different qualities or experiences are required to accomplish a goal. Although a hierarchical model maintains the organizational structure, heterarchy allows flexibility on productivity, communication and operations within the departments (Austin, 2002).

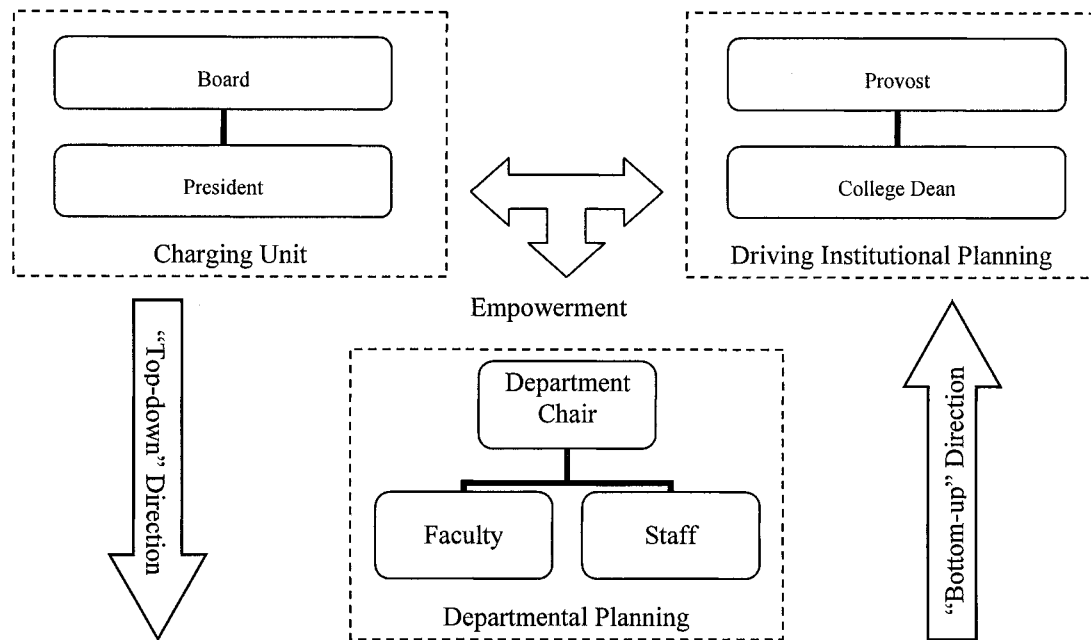


Figure 2.2. An adaptation of Austin's (2002) heterarchy model representing the various levels of management accomplishing institutional strategic goals.

Academic Planning and the Department

Colleges and universities have focused on strategic change throughout the past 30 years for a number of reasons including budgetary constraints, exponential increases in technology and information, competition for virtual classrooms for business training, demands and expectations from parents and students on the quality of services and education, as well as, the pressures and challenges from political and economic influences (Lucas & Associates, 2000). Although strategic planning has begun to infiltrate higher education institutions, the focus on academic planning is less clearly defined within the literature. Rowley and Sherman (2004) propose that academic planning and strategic planning should be simultaneously produced in order to facilitate a successful plan driven by a sound academic mission. Thus, strategic planning may not be effective without firm academic goals and mission from the faculty (2004).

With the increase of strategic planning initiatives at colleges and universities, more accountability is being placed on deans and department chairs. Since central administration is profoundly removed from the specific academic research under each department, academic planning relies on the expert advice from faculty regarding the future trends of each discipline. Seagran, Cresswell and Wheeler (1993) argue that the academic department is one of the most essential components of American colleges and universities since most of the daily activities between faculty, staff, and students occur at that level. Although the strategic plan initiated by central administration presents the mission, goals and values of the institution, the faculty, and department heads are faced with balancing the goals of the institution against the personal goals and values of individual faculty members. Depending on the institutional objectives, faculty may be pressured to maintain high research objectives; however, teaching the latest advances in science, engineering and technology is also required. Students are weighing admission decisions on the ability of a university to offer current trends in the disciplines and fields of study. As strategic objectives begin to focus on the direction and quality of academic disciplines, the department continues to be a critical component in shaping the mission and goals of the academic plan (Rowley & Sherman 2004).

The role of faculty and administration is inevitably changing as strategic planning becomes a necessary process for colleges and universities. As previously stated, in order for the academic plan to effectively coincide with the overall institutional plan, larger accountability inevitably falls on the academic departments. Despite the concept of academic freedom, faculty are expected to balance the demands of the university including the participation in governance, varying degrees of research endeavors, and

mentoring junior faculty members while still providing high quality teaching to students. With strategic planning placing more pressure on the academic departments, the balance between administrative duties and faculty duties becomes a cumbersome task. As more demands are placed to re-conceptualize academic disciplines, the role of the department chair has drastically changed (Rowley & Sherman, 2004). Interestingly, however, few studies have focused on the roles and responsibilities department chairs have in planning initiatives (Murray, 2000).

Planning strategically at a university requires accountability at the college and department levels to ensure a continuous process of institutional development (Burke, 2005). However, Burke (2005) finds a considerable disconnect between the pressure on presidents and vice presidents to address regional needs and the focus on departments implementing these tasks. Institutional departments are viewed as decentralized components delivering knowledge in specific academic areas of study. Burke (2005) argues that decentralization is a reasonable strategy at a university as long as institutional direction is driving the goals and objectives of the department. A study of public university provosts' views on departmental change found that provosts consider change to be necessary at the department level regarding interdisciplinary growth, additional departmental responsibilities, operational efficiency, and strengthening department leadership (Edwards, 1999). Edwards (1999) stresses the importance of strengthening departmental leadership since most faculty assume the role as chair on a rotating basis resulting in a lack of training in administrative laws and policies.

Institutional change has focused on two areas of reform, the individual and institutional level. Reform and transformation at the middle-level (*department*) is lacking

within the research (Edwards, 1999). The individual level of reform focuses on faculty roles, assignments, responsibilities, and research, whereas the institutional level primarily focuses on campus life, undergraduate curricula, and first-year experience. However, with the evident disregard for departmental inclusion within the strategic planning process, institutional change may not be effectively implemented. Bridging the gap between the department level and the institutional and individual level offers continuity for change throughout the university (Edwards, 1999).

Roles of the Department Chair

Colleges and universities have been facing diminishing resources for the last 30 years as economic fluctuations impact state and government support for higher education institutions. With the increasing burdens of operational demands and limited resources among institutions, deans, and other central administrators are delegating more responsibility to the academic department chairs. As such, the academic chairperson is faced with extreme pressure to resolve issues affecting the faculty and administration simultaneously (Tucker, 1992). Segran, Creswell, and Wheeler (1993) describe the academic chair position as the pivotal junction between administration and the faculty while placing considerable amounts of duties and responsibilities to maintain the academic department and meet the needs of the institution.

Tucker (1992) describes the variety of demands and responsibilities of the chairperson within eight main categories: department governance, instruction, faculty affairs, student affairs, external communication, budget and resources, office management, and professional development. This attempt to categorize the role of the chairperson clearly emphasizes the dynamic demands and responsibilities placed on the

academic chairperson. Gmelch and Miskin (1993) further categorize the role of the chairperson into four main functions: faculty developer, manager, leader, and scholar. Although many researchers including Gmelch, Tucker, and Seagren indicate the important demands placed on the academic chair, a clear job description of the department chair tends to be lacking at higher education institutions (Leaming, 1998).

Gmelch and Miskin's four main categories provide a general overview of the major roles the chair position encompasses. Despite the lack of clearly defined job descriptions, the department chair is responsible for faculty hiring and development, overseeing the operational and managerial tasks of the department, providing leadership through vision and guidance, and may also have research responsibilities. The department chairperson has the responsibility to lead and develop the department in providing outstanding education to students. As chair, representation of the department to the university administration, dean of the college, and to the department faculty and students is a demanding task that may be overwhelming. However, the chair position is a key component to implementing the university's mission to educate students (Leaming, 1998).

When attempting to understand the roles and responsibilities of a department chair, an observer notes the multitude of persons a chairperson serves. For example, to the faculty a chair is responsible for encouraging attendance at professional development conferences, guiding personal career goals, as well as, protecting academic rights regarding personal matters. To the students the chair ensures proper curricular and career advisement is being implemented, scholarships and prizes are monitored, as well as coordinating recruitment of undergraduate and graduate students in the department.

Within this scope of student and department faculty, the chair must also ensure that budgetary and instructional resources are available for faculty and student purposes, courses are planned and scheduled to provide curriculum content and standards within the college mission and objectives, as well as, representing the departmental concerns, mission, and voice to central administration (Leaming, 1998).

Over the past few decades, the demands on the department chair have gradually increased while the pressure to strategically plan has largely increased on campuses throughout the nation. By taking the increasingly demanding task of the chairpersons into perspective, considerable leadership skills and qualities are necessary to be effective. With the changing student clientele, advances in technology, and new curricular trends reorganizing the direction of higher education, focus on academic departments and the chair position will likely increase (Gmelch & Miskin, 1993).

Department Planning and the Chairperson

There are a plethora of written works focusing on strategic planning in higher education. As noted earlier, the demands from changing demographics, economics, and technology is forcing colleges and universities to plan further into the future. Although central administration places emphasis on the overall strategic initiatives of the institution, the academic colleges and departments are being held increasingly accountable for planning. Despite the reference of chairpersons' roles in research literature, there is lacking emphasis on the strategic planning efforts intertwined within the position (Hecht, 2003). Departments are not immune to the fluctuating external environment which places considerable pressure on institutions. Thus, with more accountability for planning and development being placed on the chair, a successful

department must rely on the effective leadership role the department head displays (Gmelch & Miskin, 1993).

In a national survey of department chairs, Gmelch and Miskin (1993) found that 60% reported serving as department chair for personal development and 46.8% served because they were drafted by the dean or colleagues. Interestingly, the chairs who reported they assumed the position for the former reason were three times as likely to continue for a second term. These data create a case for the necessary commitment and motivation required for a chair to be effective in leading a department toward change. With demands from central administration for academic departments to implement goals and objectives, the chair role becomes a critical element in this process. Since the chair has the largest interaction with faculty, strong leadership skills will aid the department to begin the developmental process (Jenski & Lees, 2003).

Cyert's (1983) presidency at Carnegie Mellon University provides compelling arguments regarding the necessary roles chairpersons play in creating and implementing the academic plan. Although the need for centralized leadership is necessary to establish the foundation of an institution's mission and goals, deans and department chairs play a crucial role in department strategies. Since the chair represents the faculty within the department, additional responsibilities for planning in the department will fall upon this position. Despite this reality, little training and written documentation has been produced to guide chairs in this endeavor.

Winegar (2003) captures the essence of strategic planning while explaining the importance of the planning process, as well as, the finished product. As department chairs begin to provide an increasing role in departmental planning, institutions will

benefit by having central administration work closely with department chairs to facilitate clear communication of goals and objectives. The department chair position is a demanding task requiring strong leadership candidates to effectively implement the plan. Although current research is beginning to address the necessary involvement of academic chairs, research is lacking on the amount of training and advisement chairs receives about implementing the strategic plan. Further research involving the direct attitude of chairs regarding strategic planning, knowledge of strategic planning and involvement of department chairs in the planning process may benefit the implementation of strategy in higher education.

Strategic Planning Initiatives at Rowan University

Rowan University has been involved with strategic planning since the early 1980s when Dr. Herman James assumed the role as Provost of the institution. Faced with financial constraints and pressure from the state government to broaden the teacher's college to a liberal arts based institution, James approached this dilemma with the introduction of strategic planning. Met with some administrative resistance, his initial efforts focused on problems within the academic affairs division. However, after assuming the presidency in 1984, James initiated three campus-wide strategic planning initiatives during his 14 years as president. Throughout this period, the institution received a large \$100 million dollar donation, changed its name from Glassboro State to Rowan College, and transcended to Rowan University in 1997 (Ziegler, 1998).

Despite two decades of experience with strategic planning acquired at the institution, the approach and style to planning has varied during this time. In the mid-1980s, the primary focus was on general education requirements, gender perspectives,

and the incorporation of multicultural experiences within the curriculum. By the early 1990s the second round of planning primarily focused on reallocating resources to maintain the highest priority programs while reviewing and eliminating others. Once economical conditions improved and the university was endowed with a large sum, James began his third strategic planning initiative in 1995. The primary focus of this plan was on future growth and expansion of the institution (Marcus, 1999).

Each institution-wide strategic plan initiated under James was led by a different provost. Marcus (1999) compared the approach of the two provosts leading the second and third planning process and reported contrasting approaches. Although both provosts formed planning committees to assist in the college-level planning, the second planning process was met with ill ease by faculty and administration. The process during this round focused on the necessity to review, reduce, and eliminate academic programs. Due to the economical strain placed on the institution by the state of New Jersey, this plan was initiated by the president to maintain the campus goals and objectives by reallocating funds. In order to reduce the conflict that such a task would provoke, the Provost interviewed and selected a balanced group of faculty and administration, viewed by employees of the time, as to favor the Provost's mission. Comprised of 17 administrators, faculty, staff, and students, the planning committee was charged with the task to decide on the future of programs based primarily on statistical data analysis (Middle States Steering Committee, n.d.). Data provided by the academic departments, through the deans, were handled with great secrecy; leading to speculation of deceit. Shortly after the fruition of this plan, the Provost left the institution to pursue a presidency. Great criticism

surrounding this process left a long-lasting negative view on strategic planning under James (Marcus, 1999).

After receiving intense out lash by the campus community regarding the second round of planning, James approached the third round of planning significantly different. Before this process began, James discussed the overall mission and vision of the university with numerous campus focus groups. As the initial hostility of planning from the previous round subsided, a new planning committee was formed led by the new provost. Marcus (1999) reported that the campus community viewed this round of planning as providing greater community involvement. Taking a different approach from the last round, the Provost decentralized the process of committee selection and allowed members of the community to participate. Volunteers placed on task forces highly favored the collaboration between many campus constituencies. However, committee members viewed the Provost's emphasis on completion deadlines as a hindrance to the process. Despite the positive response from faculty and administration about this planning round, once again, shortly after the lengthy process of formulating the plan the Provost pursued a presidency at another institution (Marcus, 1999).

In 1998, President Donald Farish was named the sixth president of Rowan University by the Board of Trustees. Since that time, a major focus on facility expansion is underway as a 10-year plan to strengthen the national reputation of the university. Under the guidance of the Rowan University Guiding Principles, Sasaki Associates (an external planning firm), and the campus wide community, the institution has initiated a campus-wide Master Plan supported, in part, by an Academic Master Plan ("Academic Master Plan Draft," 2005). Unlike the Master Plan, focusing primarily on campus

construction and design, the Academic Master Plan, headed by the Interim Provost, addresses the expansion of programs while maintaining quality.

Summary of the Literature Review

Strategic planning in higher education has become a necessity for colleges and universities to survive in the fluctuating external environment. Until recently, most strategic planning on campuses has focused mainly on physical facility expansions. However, demographic, economic, and technological changes have forced institutions to develop strategic planning models to continuously improve the quality of education and provide distinct creative programs to attract future students.

Strategic planning in higher education drastically differs from the private sector because of shared governance. With many stakeholders influencing the daily operations at an institution, the traditional “top-down” leadership approach fails to incorporate departmental and individual involvement in strategic objectives. Heterarchy, in contrast, redefines leadership as a tool to empower, manage, and direct various persons throughout a college or university.

As central administration delegates responsibility for facilitating strategic objectives to the departmental level, increased accountability is being placed on the department chairs. Academic department chairs have the responsibilities to resolve faculty and administrative issues while meeting the needs of the institution. Furthermore, the increasing emphasis on strategic planning will require department chairs to facilitate the goals and objectives in planning. The chair’s role, knowledge, and involvement in the strategic planning process will improve implementation of academic strategies.

Research studies have focused on strategic planning at the institutional level. Understanding the increasing involvement of department chairs to facilitate and implement the strategies and objectives of the plan will contribute to the improvement of strategic planning initiatives at colleges and universities.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Context of the Study

The study was conducted at Rowan University, which is located in Glassboro, New Jersey. Rowan University was established as a normal school in 1923 and has progressed into a regional comprehensive liberal arts institution. Under the new five classifications system: *Undergraduate Instructional Program*, *Graduate Instructional Program*, *Enrollment Profile*, *Undergraduate Profile*, and *Size and Setting*, Rowan is categorized as Bal/SGC, S-Doc/Ed., FT4/S/HTI, and M4/R respectively. The university is currently composed of six academic colleges: Liberal Arts & Sciences, Fine & Performing Arts, Engineering, Communications, Business, and Education consisting of 36 academic departments. Each academic department is managed by a department chair that serves the faculty, staff, administration, and students.

In 2004 Rowan University hired a planning firm, Sasaki Associates Incorporated, to create a master plan that will transform the institution to the next level of growth. Throughout this process, selected members of the campus community have participated in the planning process through various subcommittees. These subcommittees address major areas of concern in order to maintain the unique quality of the institution while utilizing resources to prepare for future growth. Although the campus community has been addressing the operational facilities necessary to efficiently run the institution, the academic planning process has been slow to develop.

The academic departments are a crucial element in maintaining the distinct academic qualities of the disciplines while also implementing new objectives proposed by the administration. The responsibility of the chairperson is to maintain the professional development of students and faculty while implementing new strategies to respond to the demands of the volatile external environment. Strong leadership by the department chairs will be necessary to effectively implement any proposed plan by the institution.

Population and Sample Selection

The population group for this study was academic department chairs at Rowan University. The participants included academic department chairs within the six academic colleges of the university. Data were gathered from participating department chairs during the Spring 2006 semester. Of the 36 department chairs throughout the university, 22 participated in the study.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation consisted of a self-designed survey (Appendix C) and interview questions (Appendix D) originating from strategic planning research by Gmelch and Miskin (1993), Leaming (1998), Austin (2002), Rowley and Sherman (2002, 2004), and Seagren, Creswell, and Wheeler (1993). The attitudes of department chairs regarding strategic planning, knowledge of strategic planning initiatives, and active involvement in facilitating the plan are three factors derived from the research base.

The instrumentation was primarily a survey consisting of background information, a semantic differential scale, 30 questions designed on a 5-point, Likert-type scale and an open-ended question. Information collected in the background section was

posed to determine significant relationships between attitudes and demographic variables of gender, college, years as chair, and age. Semantic differential adjectives were self-designed through Austin's (2002) work. Statements in the Likert scale were drawn from three attitudinal factors including "attitudes toward strategic planning," "knowledge and experience with strategic planning," and "involvement of academic chairs in the planning process" based on strategic planning research from Gmelch and Miskin (1993), Leaming (1998), Austin (2002), Rowley and Sherman (2002, 2004) and Seagren, Creswell, and Wheeler (1993). The open-ended question, "Do you have any recommendations for improving strategic planning at Rowan University?" was developed to gain the participating chair's views on strategic planning at the university unable to be gauged by the forced survey questions.

The 5-point Likert scale range for the three factors was from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The factors contained statements that were positively and negatively worded. All negative statements were reverse scored before analysis. A mean value of 5 (strongly disagree) among the negatively worded items is high while the positively worded statements had a high mean value of 1 (strongly agree).

The study introduced measurements of attitude among chairs about strategic planning. The first measure was to determine the current attitudes chairs at Rowan University had pertaining to strategic planning at the university. The second measured the relationship between department chairs attitudes and prior experience with strategic planning. The third measured the involvement of academic chair in institutional strategic planning at the university.

Ten semantic differential, bipolar adjectives were rated by the respondents with an “X” mark between the two pairs. The 7 spaces between the two adjectives were scored from “1” to “7” with “4” being the midpoint between the two pairs. To avoid bias among the pairs, “scores” (1-7) were only used during data analysis and were not placed within the survey.

Selected participants were also interviewed to increase validity and reliability of the data. The 7-question interview was given to selected chairs and provided a mixed-method instrumentation to gain personal, reflective knowledge of strategic planning at Rowan University.

Pilot Testing

The instrument was administered to three prior chairs representing three of the six academic colleges. Participants were asked to critique the survey for appropriate content and design by focusing on clarity, appropriateness, and single purposed questions within the instrument. All three individuals were chairs at Rowan in the past and could gauge if the items were appropriate for academic chairs. Although statistical treatment was not practical for this sample size, the stability of responses from the three individuals was similar. To further support the face and content of the instrument, William Austin (2002), a renowned researcher in strategic planning, agreed to critique the self-designed survey. The final instrument included a rephrasing of one question to communicate a single purpose.

Data Collection

Following approval from the Institutional Review Board of Rowan University (Appendix A), department chairs at Rowan University were contacted and appointments

were set-up between the researcher and the participating chair. The subjects were given a survey (Appendix C) attached to a cover letter (Appendix B) upon completion of the interview. Repeated contact via e-mail and phone was attempted by the researcher to the department chairs who did not respond to the initial e-mail. Finally, 12 packets containing a survey (Appendix C) and cover letter (Appendix B) were distributed to the department chairs that did not respond to the interview request. Two completed surveys (Appendix C) were returned to the researcher's campus mailbox. This resulted in the researcher obtaining a survey response rate of 61% and an interview response rate of 55%. Participation in the interview and survey was voluntary and no personal information was collected to assure subject confidentiality. They were informed of the nature and purpose of the study and its use for the researcher's master's degree requirements.

Data Analysis

The background information, semantic differentials, and Likert scale survey responses were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). SPSS descriptive statistics provided means, standard deviations and frequencies for the attitudes of department chairs regarding strategic planning at Rowan University. A Pearson product moment was calculated using SPSS to determine any significant relationships between selected demographics of years as chair, age, gender, education level or college served and the attitudinal factors of role, knowledge-experience, and involvement. In addition, an Independent-Samples *t*Test regarding gender and the chairs' attitudes among the three factors was done. The qualitative data compiled from the interview questions (Appendix D) and the open-ended question within the administered survey (Appendix C) were transcribed and analyzed by looking for common themes. The

corresponding frequencies and percentages of the themes were calculated and presented in table form within the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Profile of the Sample

The participants of this study were 22 academic department chairs at Rowan University. The researcher selected the total population of the academic department chairs throughout the six academic colleges at the university. The 36 department chairs at Rowan were asked to participate in an interview and survey questionnaire. Of the 36 department chairs, 20 participated in the interview and 22 completed the survey with response rates of 55% and 61% respectively. The response rates were based on the availability and participation of the chairs.

Table 4.1 depicts the gender distribution of the subjects within the survey.

Seventeen (77%) were male and five (24%) were female who participated in the survey.

Table 4.1

<i>Gender</i>		
n=22, SD=7.01, M=6.71		
Gender	Frequency	%
Male	17	77
Female	<u>5</u>	<u>23</u>
Total	22	100

Table 4.2 represents the number of years participants have served as a department chair at Rowan University. The average number of years the participants served as chair

was 6.7 (SD 7.01) years. The two highest percentages were 5 years and 7 years (18% respectively).

Table 4.2

*Number of Years Serving as a
Department Chair at Rowan University*

n=21, SD=7.01, M=6.71

Years	Frequency	%
<1	2	9.5
1-5	9	43
6-10	7	33
11-15	2	9.5
>15	<u>1</u>	<u>5</u>
Total	21	100

Table 4.3 describes the age range of academic department chairs at Rowan University. Ninety-five percent of the chairs are over 40 years old with the highest percentage of chairs between 51-60 years old (41%).

Table 4.3

Age Range of Department Chairs

n=22, SD=.853, M=3.82

Range	Frequency	%
31-40	1	4
41-50	7	32
51-60	9	41
61 and above	<u>5</u>	<u>23</u>
Total	22	100

Table 4.4 describes the highest level of education obtained by the department chairs. Eighty-two percent of the chairs received a Doctoral Degree, 14% a Masters degree, and 5% received a Professional Degree (J.D. M.D., etc.).

Table 4.4

<i>Level of Education</i>		
n=22, SD=.426, M=2.91		
Education Level	Frequency	%
Master's Degree	3	14
Doctoral Degree	18	82
Professional Degree (J.D., M.D., etc.)	1	5
Total	22	100

Table 4.5 displays the distribution of participating department chairs within the six academic colleges at Rowan University. The 36 department chairs are separated within the six colleges as such: Liberal Arts and Sciences houses 15 department chairs, Fine and Performing Arts houses 3, Communications houses 5, Engineering houses 4, Education houses 6, and Business houses 3 respectively.

Of the 36 department chairs within the six academic colleges, 9 (60%) from Liberal Arts and Sciences, 3 (100%) from Fine and Performing Arts, 4 (80%) from Communications, 3 (75%) from Engineering, 2 (33%) from Education, and 1 (33%) from Business participated.

Table 4.5

Participating Department Chairs Among the Academic Colleges
n=22, SD=1.59, M=2.50

Academic College	Frequency	%
Liberal Arts & Sciences	9	41
Fine and Performing Arts	3	14
Communications	4	18
Engineering	3	14
Education	2	9
Business	<u>1</u>	<u>4</u>
Total	22	100

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the attitudes of department chairs at Rowan University regarding the factors of role, knowledge/experience, and involvement with strategic planning?

Tables 4.6-4.8 provide information regarding research question 1. Table 4.6 depicts the subject's attitudes toward the role of the department chairs in strategic planning. Among the 10 positively and negatively worded statements measuring the attitudinal factor of role, a mean value close to 1 (strongly agree) among the positively worded statements is high while a mean value close to 5 (strongly disagree) among the negatively worded statement is high. The negatively worded item is indicated with an "*" in table 4.6. The negatively worded statement which placed minimal time on strategic planning had a mean value of 2.41 (SD 1.098) with 68% disagreeing and 14% agreeing.

Among the positively worded statements: *Strategic planning is part of my responsibilities* had a mean value of 2.09 (SD 1.231) with 73% agreeing, 9% neutral, and 18% disagreeing. *The chair unifies the department through planning* had a mean value of 2.05 (SD 0.722) with 82% agreeing, 14% neutral, and 4% disagreeing. *The department chair facilitates consensus among faculty in responding to change* had a mean value of 1.82 (SD 0.664) with 86% agreeing and 14% neutral. *Long-term planning is a priority for department chairs* had a mean value of 2.45 (1.101) with 73% agreeing, 9% neutral, and 18% disagreeing. *The chairperson promotes a common vision for the department* had a mean value of 1.82 (SD 0.588) with 91% agreeing and 9% neutral.

Further, *The chair is responsible for short-term planning* had a mean value of 1.77 (SD 0.922) with 86% agreeing, 4% neutral, and 9% disagreeing. *Strategic planning is a priority for department chairs* had a mean value of 2.36 (SD 1.049) with 73% agreeing, 9% neutral, and 18% disagreeing. *Strategic planning places additional responsibility on department chairs* had a mean value of 2.09 (SD 1.192) with 77% agreeing, 4% neutral, and 18% disagreeing. However, *Responsibility for implementing strategic planning rests with department chairs* had a mean value of 3.45 (SD 1.011) with 54% disagreeing, 23% neutral, and 23% agreeing.

Table 4.7 provides the data for the 11 statements measuring the attitudes toward experience and knowledge of strategic planning. A mean value close to 1 (strongly agree) is high. *A clear mission and vision is required to develop a strategic plan* had a mean value of 1.27 (SD 0.550) with 95.5% agreeing and 4.5% neutral. *Establishing a mission for the department is important for planning* had a mean value of 1.45 (SD 0.510) with 100% agreeing. *Implementing a strategic plan in the department involves*

embracing change had a mean value of 2.09 (SD 1.019) with 63.5% agreeing, 27.5% neutral, and 9% disagreeing. *Knowledge of planning is a necessary skill for a department chair* had a mean value of 1.73 (SD 0.550) with 95.5% agreeing and 4.5% neutral. Further, *Academic departments play a key role in accomplishing institutional strategic goals* had a mean value of 2.09 (SD 0.811) with 82% agreeing, 9% neutral, and 9% disagreeing. *Strategic planning requires campus-wide effort* had a mean value of 1.55 (SD 0.671) with 91% agreeing and 9% neutral. *I can successfully facilitate a strategic plan for the department* had a mean value of 2.36 (SD 1.136) with 64% agreeing, 18% neutral, and 18% disagreeing. *I believe strategic planning at the university is important* had a mean value of 1.64 (SD 0.658) with 91% agreeing and 9% disagreeing.

Conversely, *The best time to do strategic planning is when budgets are less restrictive* had a mean value of 3.27 (SD 1.032) with 54.5% disagreeing, 18% neutral, and 27.5% agreeing and *The university provides training for strategic planning* had a mean value of 4.14 (SD 0.710) with 82% disagreeing and 18% neutral.

Table 4.8 provides the data for the 9 statements measuring attitudes pertaining to the level of involvement with strategic planning. A mean value close to 1 (strongly agree) is high. *I am actively involved with the institutional strategic plan* had a mean value of 3.0 (SD 1.272) with 50% agreeing, 14% neutral, and 36% disagreeing. *I have played an active role in developing the strategic plan* had a mean value of 2.68 (SD 1.460) with 59% agreeing, 9% neutral, and 32% disagreeing. *Departmental goals and objectives are considered during the strategic plan* had a mean value of 2.45 (SD 1.405) with 59% agreeing, 18% neutral, and 23% disagreeing. *Involvement of my department in the strategic planning is minimal* had a mean value of 2.86 (SD 1.356) with 45%

agreeing, 18% neutral, and 37% disagreeing. *Departmental involvement is essential for a successful strategic plan* had a mean value of 1.50 (0.512) with 100% agreeing. Further, *Knowledge of institutional goals and objectives are communicated by my college dean* had a mean value of 2.45 (SD 0.912) with 64% agreeing, 18% neutral, and 18% disagreeing and *Chairpersons influence the direction of the strategic plan* had a mean value of 2.68 (SD 1.129) with 50% agreeing, 23% neutral, and 27% disagreeing.

Conversely, *The strategic plan has been developed primarily without my input* had a mean value of 3.0 (SD 1.234) with 50% disagreeing, 9% neutral, and 41% agreeing and *Responsibility to accomplish institutional goals at the departmental level is emphasized by the administration* had a mean value of 3.32 (SD 1.086) with 46% disagreeing, 23% neutral, and 22% agreeing.

Table 4.6

Attitudes Pertaining to the Role of the Department Chairs in Strategic Planning

	Level of Agreement									
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Planning is part of my responsibilities n=22, SD=1.231 M=2.09	9	41	7	32	2	9	3	14	1	4
The chair unifies the dept. through planning n=22, SD=0.722 M=2.05	4	18	14	64	3	14	1	4	0	0
Facilitates consensus among faculty in responding to change n=22, SD=0.664 M=1.82	7	32	12	54	3	14	0	0	0	0
Long-term planning is a priority n=22, SD=1.101 M=2.45	2	9	14	64	2	9	2	9	2	9
The chairperson promotes a common vision n=22, SD=0.588 M=1.82	6	27	14	64	2	9	0	0	0	0
Responsibility for implementing strategic planning rests with dept. chairs n=22, SD=1.011 M=3.45	0	0	5	23	5	23	9	41	3	14
Responsible for short-term planning n=22, SD=0.922 M=1.77	10	45.5	9	41	1	4.5	2	9	0	0
*Minimal time should be spent on strategic planning at the university n=22, SD=1.098 M=2.41	2	9	1	4.5	4	18	12	54.5	3	14
Strategic planning is a priority for chairs n=22, SD=1.049 M=2.36	3	14	13	59	2	9	3	14	1	4
Strategic planning places additional responsibility on chairs n=22, SD=1.192 M=2.09	8	36	9	41	1	4.5	3	14	1	4.5

“*”Negatively Worded Item

Table 4.7

Attitudes Pertaining to Experience and Knowledge of Strategic Planning

	Level of Agreement									
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
The best time to do strategic planning is when budgets are less restrictive n=22, SD=1.032 M=3.27	1	4.5	5	23	4	18	11	50	1	4.5
A clear mission and vision is required to develop a strategic plan n=22, SD=0.550 M=1.27	17	77.5	4	18	1	4.5	0	0	0	0
Establishing a mission for the dept. is important for planning n=22, SD=0.510 M=1.45	12	54.5	10	45.5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Implementing a strategic plan involves embracing change n=22, SD=1.019 M=2.09	8	36	6	27.5	6	27.5	2	9	0	0
The university provides training for planning n=22, SD=0.710 M=4.14	0	0	0	0	4	18	11	50	7	32
Knowledge of planning is a necessary skill for chairs n=22, SD=0.550 M=1.73	7	32	14	63.5	1	4.5	0	0	0	0
Academic depts. play a key role in accomplishing strategic goals n=22, SD=0.811 M=2.09	4	18	14	64	2	9	2	9	0	0
Strategic planning requires campus-wide effort n=22, SD=0.671, M=1.55	12	54.5	8	36.5	2	9	0	0	0	0
I can successfully facilitate a strategic plan for the department n=22, SD=1.136 M=2.36	5	23	9	41	4	18	3	14	1	4
Strategies developed within the dept. are successfully implemented n=22, SD=0.802 M=2.50	2	9	9	41	9	41	2	9	0	0
I believe strategic planning at the university is important n=22, SD=0.658 M=1.64	10	45.5	10	45.5	2	9	0	0	0	0

Table 4.8

Attitudes Pertaining to the Level of Involvement in Strategic Planning

	Level of Agreement									
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
I am actively involved with the institutional strategic plan n=22, SD=1.272, M=3.00	1	4.5	10	45.5	3	14	4	18	4	18
I have played an active role in developing the strategic plan n=22, SD=1.460, M=2.68	5	23	8	36	2	9	3	14	4	18
Departmental goals and objectives are considered during the strategic plan n=22, SD=1.405, M=2.45	7	32	6	27	4	18	2	9	3	14
Involvement of my department in strategic planning is minimal n=22, SD=1.356, M=2.86	4	18	6	27	4	18	5	23	3	14
Departmental involvement is essential for a successful strategic plan n=22, SD=0.512, M=1.50	11	50	11	50	0	0	0	0	0	0
The strategic plan has been developed primarily without my input n=22, SD=1.234, M=3.00	3	14	6	27	2	9	10	45.5	1	4.5
Knowledge of institutional goals and objectives are communicated by my college dean n=22, SD=0.912, M=2.45	2	9	12	55	4	18	4	18	0	0
Responsibility to accomplish institutional goals at the departmental level is emphasized by the administration n=22, SD=1.086, M=3.32	1	4	4	18	7	32	7	32	3	14
Chairpersons influence the direction of the strategic plan n=22, SD=1.129, M=2.68	3	14	8	36	5	23	5	23	1	4

Table 4.9 displays the overall mean scores between the three factors of role, knowledge/experience, and level of involvement. A mean value close to 1 is very high and close to 5 is very low. The *Role of the Department Chair in Strategic Planning*, *Attitudes Pertaining to Experience and Knowledge of Strategic Planning*, and *Attitudes Pertaining to the Level of Involvement in Strategic Planning* had overall mean values of 2.23, 2.19, and 2.66 respectively.

Table 4.9

<i>Overall Mean Values Between the Attitudinal Factors</i>	
Attitudinal Factor	Mean
Role of the Department Chair in Strategic Planning	2.23
Attitudes pertaining to Experience and Knowledge of Strategic Planning	2.19
Attitude pertaining to Level of Involvement in Strategic Planning	2.66

Research Question 2: Is there a significant relationship between selected demographics of years as chair, age, gender, education level or college served and the chairs' attitude factors?

Research question 2 was analyzed using the Pearson product moment correlation to determine if there was a significant relationship ($p < .05$) between the selected demographics and the three factors of role, experience/knowledge, and involvement. There were no significances at the $p < .05$ level between the factors and selected demographics. Further analysis by an Independent-Samples *t*Test regarding gender and the chairs' attitudes among the three factors was done. No significance was found between gender and the attitudinal factors.

Research Question 3: How do department chairs view their experience with strategic planning at Rowan University?

“In your opinion, what do you consider the strengths and weaknesses of the Rowan University strategic planning process?”

Table 4.10 contains the results of the department chairs’ views regarding the strengths and weakness of the strategic planning process. Six themes revealed the areas explaining the weaknesses of the present process. Lacking an academic focus, disconnect between the department and the overall plan, “top-down” decision making, episodic planning, and inefficiency in the process emerged as thematic concerns during the interview of the subjects. Having multiple plans circulating throughout the process was also considered a weakness. Although the department chairs were able to clearly articulate the weaknesses of the current planning process, strengths were harder to conceive. Having the plan facilitate open communication throughout the college and allow members to feel included within the process were two main themes that emerged.

“What do you think about strategic planning and the process employed at Rowan University?”

Table 4.11 provides information regarding the department chairs’ *Thoughts* on strategic planning and the current *Process* employed at Rowan University. Strategic planning is *necessary for growth*, and *planning is important at the departmental level* were two strong themes that emerged. Also indicated was that budgets tend to drive planning and program reassessment should be part of the process. While the department chairs’ *Thoughts* about strategic planning indicated strategic planning was necessary, inconsistent leadership, lack of an academic focus, and lack of implementation, and a

“top-down” management emerged from the *Process* themes. Some department chairs, however, viewed the current process as efficient.

Table 4.10

Content Analysis for “The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Strategic Planning Process”

Group	Theme	Frequency	%	Rank Order
Weaknesses	Lacks Academic Focus	8	28	1
	Departmental Disconnect	7	20	2
	“Top-down” Decisions	6	17	3
	Episodic	5	14	4
	Inefficient Process	5	14	4
	Multiple Plans	<u>4</u>	11	5
	Total Frequency	35		
Strengths	Open Communication	7	44	1
	Inclusion	6	37	2
	Focuses Direction	2	12	3
	Facility Improvements	<u>1</u>	.03	4
	Total Frequency	16		

“What are the benefits of using strategic planning at Rowan University?”

Table 4.12 provides the themes that emerged from the views on the benefits of strategic planning at the university. The strongest theme that emerged from the interviews was the view that strategic planning provides the university with direction. Aligning the departmental and university objectives, supports the mission, vision, and goals, and attracts future students to the university were other themes revealed by the

chairs. In addition, the chairs viewed strategic planning beneficial by means of driving change, focusing limited resources, and improving the curriculum,

Table 4.11

Content Analysis for “Thoughts on Strategic Planning and Rowan’s Process”

Group	Theme	Frequency	%	Rank Order
Thoughts	Necessary for Growth	10	36	1
	Important at Department Level	10	36	1
	Budget Drives Plan	5	18	2
	Program Assessment	<u>3</u>	11	3
	Total Frequency	28		
Process	Inconsistent Leadership	6	23	1
	Lack of Academic Focus	6	23	1
	Lack of Implementation	5	19	2
	Good Process	5	19	2
	No Fluidic Process (top-down?)	<u>4</u>	15	3
	Total Frequency	26		

“What challenges do you see in the way strategic planning is employed at Rowan University?”

Table 4.13 provides the challenges of strategic planning experienced by the academic department chairs at the university. Implementing the plan, aligning the departments with the university goals, and facing limited resources were three strong themes that emerged. In addition, the department chairs saw maintaining involvement by the community, addressing the “top-down” leadership style, and the negative response to curriculum review also as important challenges. Further, the continuous change in the

provost position and increasing growth at the university efficiently were challenges expressed by the department chairs.

Table 4.12

<i>Content Analysis for "Benefits of Strategic Planning at Rowan"</i>			
Theme	Frequency	%	Rank Order
Provides Direction	14	29	1
Align Department/University Objectives	6	12	2
Mission/Vision/Goals	6	12	2
Marketing/Attracting Students	5	10	3
Drives Change	4	8	4
Focus Limited Resources	4	8	4
Improve Curriculum	4	8	4
Ownership/Voice	3	6	5
Facility Improvements	<u>2</u>	4	6
Total Frequency	48		

“Do you feel empowered to lead your department in the strategic planning process?”

Table 4.14 provides the data regarding the empowerment of department chair in the strategic planning at the university. Leading the faculty as a facilitator, actively participating in the strategic plan, and guiding the objectives of the department emerged as themes from the chairs who felt empowered to lead their department in planning. In addition, being a liaison to the dean also emerged from the data. Department chairs expressing lack of empowerment to lead their department in planning expressed concern for the lack of departmental focus within the plan. Unengaged faculty and the thought

that the plan should be given down to the department by the upper-level administration also emerged from the data regarding chairs that did not feel empowered.

Table 4.13

Content Analysis for “Challenges in Strategic Planning at Rowan”

Theme	Frequency	%	Rank Order
Implementation	8	15	1
Fluidic Process (align dept./university)	7	13	2
Limited Resources	7	13	2
Ownership/Involvement	6	11	3
“Top-down” Leadership	6	11	3
Curriculum Review	6	11	3
Leadership Stability (Provost Office)	5	9	4
Efficient Growth	5	9	4
Change	4	7	5
Total	54		

“Is strategic planning worth the time and effort?”

Table 4.15 provides the views of the department chairs as to whether strategic planning is worth the time and effort. Of the 13 chairs that felt strategic planning was worth the time and effort, planning being a necessary process was a strong theme that emerged from the data. In addition, some chairs indicated that focusing on common goals through strategic planning was a worthwhile endeavor. The six department chairs expressing that strategic planning was not worth the time and effort felt that it was time consuming and implementation was lacking after past plans were formulated.

Table 4.14

Content Analysis for "Empowered to Lead the Strategic Planning Process"

Group	Theme	Frequency	%	Rank Order
Yes n=12	Facilitator	8	33	1
	Actively Involved	7	29	2
	Guide Objectives	6	25	3
	Liaison to Dean	<u>3</u>	12	4
	Total	24		
No n=8	Lack of Department Level Focus	6	43	1
	Unengaged Faculty	4	28	2
	Should be delivered by "top-down"	<u>4</u>	28	2
	Total	14		

Table 4.15

Content Analysis for "Is Strategic Planning Worth the Time and Effort?"

Group	Theme	Frequency	%	Rank Order
Yes n=13	Necessary	8	66	1
	Common Goals	4	33	2
	Total	12		
No n=7	Time Consuming	4	50	1
	Lacking Implementation	<u>4</u>	50	1
	Total	8		

“Do you have anything else to add?”

Table 4.16 depicts any additional thoughts about strategic planning at the university the department chairs were willing to share. Disconnect between upper-level administration and the department level was a strong theme that emerged in the data. However, other department chairs expressed a strong communication level between the department and the dean. Also, leadership instability due to the inconsistency of the provost position was found as a theme within these data.

Table 4.16

<i>Content Analysis for “Additional Thoughts on Strategic Planning at Rowan”</i>			
Theme	Frequency	%	Rank Order
Disconnect between Admin. and Departments	7	47	1
Strong Communication with Dean	6	40	2
Leadership Instability (Provost Office)	<u>2</u>	13	3
Total	15		

Research Question 4: How do department chairs view the strategic planning process as currently practiced at Rowan?

Table 4.17 and Table 4.18 provide information regarding research question 4. Table 4.17 indicates the 10 semantic differential pairs scored “1” through “7” with “4” being the midpoint between the two adjectives. To clearly represent the data in Table 4.18, each bipolar pair was given a “Pair Name” in Table 4.17. A mean value close to 1 and 2 or close to 6 and 7 indicates a very strong lean towards one of the adjectives with 4 being the midpoint. EMPOW, CLEAR, and SYSTEM had mean values of 4.50 (SD 1.626), 4.14 (SD 1.670), and 3.95 (SD 1.731) respectively. These mean scores indicated

the chairs' views on strategic planning at the university to be more bureaucratic than empowering, more ambiguous than clear, and at the midpoint between systematic and haphazard. REAL had a mean value of 3.82 (SD 1.790), ORG had a mean value of 3.68 (SD 1.673), INVOL had a mean value of 3.68 (SD 1.862) and FLEX had a mean value of 3.57 (SD 1.287). Further, INFOR had a mean value of 3.41 (SD 1.764), CONT had a mean value of 3.23 (SD 1.824), and LENG had a mean value of 3.05 (SD 1.564). No pairs scored between the mean values of 1 to 2 and 6 to 7 with more clusters within the mean value of 3 to 5.

Table 4.17

<i>Semantic Differential Dataset Scored 1 through 7</i>		
Scored "1"	Scored "7"	Pair Name
Organized	Chaotic	ORG
Clear	Ambiguous	CLEAR
Continuous	Terminable	CONT
Realistic	Abstract	REAL
Lengthy	Short	LENG
Involved	Disconnected	INVOL
Informed	Unfamiliar	INFOR
Empowered	Bureaucratic	EMPOW
Systematic	Haphazard	SYSTEM
Flexible	Rigid	FLEX

Table 4.18

Department Chairs' Experience with Strategic Planning at Rowan

Pair Name	Mean	Standard Deviation
ORG (n=22)	3.68	1.673
CLEAR (n=22)	4.14	1.670
CONT (n=22)	3.23	1.824
REAL (n=22)	3.82	1.790
LENG (n=21)	3.05	1.564
INVOL (n=22)	3.68	1.862
INFOR (n=22)	3.41	1.764
EMPOW (n=22)	4.50	1.626
SYSTEM (n=22)	3.95	1.731
FLEX (n=21)	3.57	1.287

Research Question 5: What recommendations do department chairs make to improve the strategic planning process at Rowan University?

Table 4.19 contains information regarding the department chairs' suggestions for improving the strategic planning process. Focusing planning at the college level and create stability in the provost position are two strong themes that emerged within the data. These themes can be seen reoccurring in the interview data. In addition, increased campus involvement with the plan, as well as, provide periodic updates regarding the status of the plan were suggested themes by the department chairs.

Table 4.19

Content Analysis for “Additional Suggestions for Improving the Strategic Planning Process”

Theme	Frequency		Rank Order
	n=14	%	
College Level Planning	6	35	1
Provost Leadership	4	23	2
Increase Involvement	3	18	3
Periodic Communication	<u>2</u>	12	4
Total	17		

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Study

Strategic planning at colleges and universities has dramatically increased over the past 30 years and continues to be implemented to address changes in regional demographics, the economy, and technology. Rowley and Sherman (2004) suggest that as the strategic planning increases at institutions, more accountability at the college and departmental level is occurring. Although the role of the chairperson to facilitate administrative duties within the department has been researched extensively, research focusing on the roles and responsibilities chairs provide within strategic planning is minimal (Murray, 2000). In this study, department chairs at Rowan University were interviewed and surveyed to determine their attitudes regarding strategic planning at the university.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to better understand the attitudes, knowledge and experience, and involvement of academic department chairs pertaining to strategic planning. Cyert (1983) has stressed the importance of departmental involvement with the institutional strategic plan; however, academic department chairs have only recently begun to embrace the concepts of planning. Attempting to further understand the attitudes of department chairs and the relationships between prior experience and knowledge, this study measured the attitudes, knowledge, and experience of selected

department chairs at Rowan University. Academic department chairs among the six colleges within the university were used for the study. Particular emphasis was given to the reported attitudes, prior knowledge and experiences, and involvement the department chairs had with strategic planning. This provided insights into the current attitudes of strategic planning by the academic chairs and created feedback to administrators about the impact this will have on future strategic planning initiatives.

Methodology

The researcher surveyed the academic department chairs within the six academic colleges at Rowan University. A total of 22 department chairs participated in the survey while 20 of these subjects were also interviewed. To ensure the rights and privacy of each subject, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was submitted on November 30th, 2005 (Appendix A). The application included a subject survey (Appendix C), cover letter (Appendix B) and interview questions (Appendix D). The application was approved on December, 14, 2005. Subjects were administered the survey with the cover letter attached.

Upon receiving final approval from the IRB, the academic department chairs were contacted via e-mail to agree to be interviewed and participate in the survey. Appointments were set-up between the researcher and the 20 department chairs that responded to the e-mail. Upon arrival at each subject's office, the researcher briefly explained the focus of the research study followed by a seven question interview. Once the interview was complete, the researcher then asked the department chair to complete a survey titled Attitudes of Department Chairs Regarding Strategic Planning. The subjects were asked to complete a four section survey. The first section obtained background

information of each subject including years as chair, gender, age, level of education, and college served. The second section of the survey was based on a semantic differential regarding the department chairs' experience with strategic planning at Rowan University. The second section was organized as 7-point semantic differential pairs where a mean value close to 1 and 2 or close to 6 and 7 indicates a very strong lean towards one of the adjectives with 4 being the midpoint. The subjects were asked to place a mark along the continuum to best represent the subject's reaction to the differential pairs. The third section of the survey was based on a 5-point Likert scale. The scale was arranged according to 1-Strongly Agree, 2-Agree, 3-Neutral, 4-Disagree, and 5-Strongly Disagree. The subjects were asked to respond according to the level of agreement the subject had regarding each statement. Finally, the fourth section asked an open-ended question.

The subjects were given a survey (Appendix C) attached to a cover letter (Appendix B) upon completion of the interview. Repeated contact via e-mail and phone was attempted by the researcher to the department chairs who did not respond to the initial e-mail. Finally, 12 packets containing a survey (Appendix C) and cover letter (Appendix B) were distributed to the department chairs that did not respond to the interview request. Two completed surveys (Appendix C) were returned to the researcher's campus mailbox. This resulted in the researcher obtaining a survey response rate of 61% and an interview response rate of 55%

Data Analysis

The background information, semantic differential, and Likert scale survey responses were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). SPSS descriptive statistics provided means, standard deviations, frequencies, and

percentages for the attitudes of department chairs regarding strategic planning at Rowan University. A Pearson product moment was calculated using SPSS to determine any significant relationships between selected demographics of years as chair, age, gender, education level or college served and the attitudinal factors of role, knowledge-experience, and involvement. In addition, an Independent-Samples *t*Test regarding gender and the chairs' attitudes among the three factors was done resulting in no significances at the $p < .05$ level. The qualitative data compiled from the interview questions (Appendix D) and the open-ended question within the administered survey (Appendix C) were both analyzed looking for common themes. The corresponding frequencies and percentages of the themes were calculated and presented in table form within the study.

Discussion of the Findings

Research Question 1: What are the attitudes of department chairs at Rowan University regarding the factors of role, knowledge/experience, and involvement with strategic planning?

Role

Over 70% of the department chairs participating in the study strongly agreed or agreed that strategic planning is part of their responsibility as chair. Furthermore, 73% strongly agreed or agreed that strategic planning is a priority. The findings suggest that department chairs at Rowan University believe chairs play a formidable role in strategic planning initiatives.

The findings support the previous research by Cyert (1983) who argued that chairpersons play a necessary role in facilitating the process and progress of the academic

plan. This is further supported by the 82% of the subjects who strongly agreed or agreed that the chair unifies the department through planning. Furthermore, the findings rebut previous research from Hecht (2003) who argued there is a lack of emphasis on strategic planning efforts within the department chair position.

Tucker (1992), Gmelch and Miskin (1993), and Segran, Creswell, and Wheeler (1993) describe the myriad of responsibilities placed on the chairperson in the academic department. These responsibilities include the four main functions identified by Gmelch and Miskin (1993): faculty developer, manager, leader and scholar. With 77% of the subjects who strongly agreed or agreed that strategic planning places additional responsibilities on chairs, the finding suggests that department chairs view strategic planning as an additional part of their duties. In addition, the findings suggest that the participating department chairs strongly support promoting a common vision, facilitating consensus among faculty with change, and engaging in long and short-term planning as important roles for department chairs.

Although the findings appear to suggest that department chairs at Rowan believe chairpersons play a role in planning, 54% of the subjects strongly disagreed or disagreed that the responsibility for implementing strategic planning rests with the department chair.

Knowledge-Experience

Rowley and Sherman (2004) argue that the academic department focuses the direction and quality of the academic disciplines by shaping the mission and goals of the academic strategic plan. Eighty-two percent of the subjects strongly agreed or agreed that academic departments play a key role in accomplishing strategic goals. Furthermore,

100% of the subjects strongly agreed or agreed that establishing a mission for the department is important for planning. The findings suggest that the department chairs expressed knowledge of strategic planning initiatives necessary at the department level.

Kotler and Murphy (1981) and Austin (2002) have both argued that planning should be flexible to respond to necessary fluctuations in economic conditions, goals, mission, and environment at an institution. Furthermore, Gmelch and Miskin (1995) emphasize the increasing demands for planning and development at the department level will require chairs to be knowledgeable in aspects influencing planning. The findings show that 95% strongly agreed or agreed that knowledge of planning is a necessary skill for a chair. Furthermore, the concepts of having a clear mission and vision for planning and planning under all economic conditions are supported by the findings with 95% having strongly agreed or agreed that a clear vision or mission is required for planning and 54% having strongly disagreed or disagreed that strategic planning is best done when budgets are less restrictive.

The findings further showed that 91% of the subjects strongly agreed or agreed that strategic planning is important at the university. The findings support Rowley and Sherman (2002) who argued that strategic planning is necessary for colleges and universities to survive in a fluctuating environment. However, in addition, the findings showed 63.5% having strongly agreed or agreed to successfully implementing a departmental strategic plan. Further, 82% strongly agreed or agreed that the university did not provide any training to the chairs regarding strategic planning. Cyert (1983) has argued that additional responsibilities for planning will fall on the chairperson position,

however, minimal documentation and training has been found focusing on the departmental level.

Involvement

Austin (2002) asserts that departments should be empowered to implement leadership activities including strategic planning. Austin (2002) further argues that a heterarchy framework where individual members or the departments as a whole have input in the ideas and process of the strategic plan minimizes the resistance from the community. The findings suggest that the chairs operate under a hierarchical framework still employed at Rowan University where the academic planning process maintains a “top-down” management style. The findings appear to support this claim whereas 46% strongly agreed or agreed that involvement of the department in strategic planning is minimal and 64% strongly agreed or agreed that knowledge of institutional goals are communicated by my college dean. Furthermore, 50% believe the chair influences the direction of the strategic plan and 59% strongly agreed or agreed that department goals are considered during the strategic planning.

The findings also reported that 100% strongly agreed or agreed that departmental involvement is essential for a successful strategic plan. However, 45% indicated that responsibility to accomplish institutional goals at the department level is emphasized. The findings further support that involvement at the department level in strategic planning is lacking.

The overall mean scores between the three factors were reported in the findings. The findings suggest that the chairs strongly believe that department chairs have a formidable role in strategic planning at the university. Furthermore, the findings suggest

that department chairs support the importance of department chairs knowledge and experience in strategic planning initiatives. However, the findings also suggest that department chairs' attitudes pertaining to the level of involvement in strategic planning at the university is lower.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant relationship between selected demographics of years as chair, age, gender, education level or college served and the chairs' attitude factors?

The findings showed no significance between the selected demographics and the attitudinal factors of role, knowledge/experience, and involvement. Pearson product moment correlations revealed no significance was at the $p < .05$ level. Furthermore, an Independent-Samples *t* Test between gender and the three factors showed no significant differences between gender and the attitudinal factors.

Research Question 3: How do department chairs view their experience with strategic planning at Rowan University?

The findings showed that department chairs at Rowan University view the current planning process as lacking an academic focus, failing to integrate the department within the overall plan, and driven by upper-level administrative decisions. Furthermore, the chairs believe that another weakness in the process is the episodic nature of planning present at the university. The findings support the previous results from Marcus (1999) who reported that planning has been done periodically under different provosts. Over the past 18 years, Rowan University has undergone numerous strategic planning processes, led by different provosts who left the university to pursue presidencies (1999). In addition, the subjects viewed the multiple plans and planning processes around campus to

be another weakness in the process. In some instances, clarification had to be made as to which planning process (the Academic Master Plan or the Campus Master Plan) the chair was relating to during the interview.

As mentioned earlier, the department chairs found it harder to conceive strengths within the planning process at Rowan. The findings showed that chairs believed open communication within the campus community and inclusion within the strategic plan was major strengths of the process currently employed at the university.

Overall, 10 or 50% of the participating department chairs believed that strategic planning is necessary for growth and is an important endeavor at the departmental level. The finding supports Burke (2005) who argued that accountability at the departmental level is necessary to ensure a continuous process of institutional development. Further, Edwards (1999) argued that effective change throughout the university can only be achieved by transforming the department level to effectively implement the strategic planning process. In addition, the department chairs believe that strategic planning is driven by budgetary restraints that hinder the progress of the planning process. Thus, although Dooris' (2003) argument of planning initiatives at colleges and universities stem from economic changes that must be addressed, some chairs believe that budgetary restraints hinder the necessary changes required to accommodate the reducing budget in the long run.

Following the department chairs thoughts on strategic planning; the subjects reported that the process employed at Rowan University fails to have consistent leadership in the provost position and focuses more on infrastructure than the academic programs. In addition to these recurring themes, the department chairs believe that the

current process is a “top-down” effort with upper-level administration directing the plan. Furthermore, the chairs emphasize the lack of implementation of the plan that has been occurring at the university for years. Although the academic master plan is presently in the draft stage, the findings suggest that department chairs are predicting current outcomes to be similar to past planning process reported by Marcus (1999).

Benefits of Strategic Planning

The findings showed that 70% of the department chairs believe that a major benefit for strategic planning at Rowan is that it provides the institution with a direction for the future. Furthermore, chairs believe that planning aligns the departments with the university objectives, facilitates the mission, vision and goals of the university and increases the marketability of the institution to prospective students. The department chairs’ views supports Kotler and Muphy’s (1981) argument that a well developed strategic plan incorporates the environmental influences, resource analysis, and goals of the university to respond to the necessary changes in the future. As demographic, economic, and technological changes continue to place pressure on academic institutions, a flexible plan to direct the institution for the future endeavors is necessary (Dooris, 2003).

Challenges of Strategic Planning

The findings showed that department chairs believe the strongest challenge Rowan University faces with strategic planning is the inability to implement the plan once the process has been completed. Coinciding with the findings is the theme of the instability in the provost position also reported by the chairs. The department chairs expressed frustration with the plans initiated throughout the years later to be “placed on a

shelf” until the next provost comes and starts a new plan all over again. Furthermore, the chairs indicated that aligning the direction of the department with the university is another challenge. The findings reported that the chairs believe the process to be lacking fluidity between the department’s expertise in academic disciplines and the direction of the overall university plan.

Rowley and Sherman (2004) have argued that the academic portion of the plan should coincide with the overall institutional plan to effectively facilitate a successful outcome. The findings reported by the department chairs that the provost position has been a revolving door may suggest a reason behind the lack of implementation and success of the previous plans at Rowan. Furthermore, the findings report that department chairs believe another challenge of planning is maintaining involvement by the community with the planning process. Austin (2002) introduces the concept of heterarchy to bring individual ownership at all levels of the organization to successfully produce and implement a strategic plan. The findings suggest that the chairs believe individual ownership and continuous involvement with the departmental faculty is difficult. In addition, the subjects reported that top-down leadership is a challenging factor influencing the direction of the plan. Although this may easily be interpreted that department chairs believe top-down leadership is not necessary, this was not indicated in the data. The findings do suggest, however, that upper-level administration is driving the planning initiatives and disregarding the departmental expectations of the academic disciplines.

The findings showed that department chairs believe additional challenges of strategic planning at the university is limited resources and facilitating a curriculum

review process. Marcus (1999) reported that the first strategic planning process at the university during the James' years focused primarily on reviewing, reducing, and eliminating programs because of economic strain placed on the institution by the state. Although some years have passed, the findings suggest that some department chairs are still influenced by the past feelings regarding curriculum review and budgetary restraints. Department chairs indicated that they believe a curriculum review needs to be initiated at the university, however, many felt it very challenging to initiate because of the political fear and ramification that previously resulted with such an endeavor (1999). Although the findings did not indicate suggestions on how to implement a curriculum review, some chairs suggested that the approach should not be to eliminate programs, but to stimulate improvements within a department as to what programs need to be re-organized or improved.

Edwards (1999) argued that institutional planning will not be effectively implemented with evident disregard for departmental inclusion with the strategic planning process. The findings showed that department chairs believe change and growth are two challenges faced during planning. Since resources are limited and strategic planning is focusing on competitiveness and distinction, growth at the institution requires growth to be organized and focused (Dooris, 2003). The department chairs reported that they believe growth needs to be scrutinized better at Rowan. During the interview process, some department chairs emphasized that growth needs to be reasonable and that "we should not grow just to grow."

Empowerment

The findings showed that 12 or 60% of the participating department chairs feel empowered to lead their department in strategic planning. Of these 12 chairs, 8 believe they lead the department by facilitating the needs of the faculty and staff. Furthermore, the department chairs believe their empowerment is directly related to the involvement of the strategic planning process, the ability to guide the objectives of the university, and by the administrative responsibility to be a liaison to the dean. As previously mentioned, Austin (2002) asserts that departments have the ability to implement change when the institution embraces a heterarchical model to redefine leadership as a tool to empower and manage planning at all levels of the organization. The findings suggest that a number of department chairs believe they are empowered to facilitate the strategic planning objectives. However, the findings also showed 8 or 40% of the participating chairs in the interview believe they are not empowered to lead the department in strategic planning. Of these chairs, the findings suggest that the lack of empowerment is believed to be related to the lack of an academic focus of planning at Rowan University. Furthermore, the findings showed that some participating chairs believed unengaged faculty and the notion that the plan should be delivered from the “top-down” directly related to the department chairs empowerment.

As tempting as it may be to suggest that involvement at the department chair level is strong, caution must be taken in formulating such a conclusion. The findings do not reveal whether the empowerment of the 12 chairs in the strategic planning is related to their role as chair in the academic plan or their individual involvement in the campus master plan.

Worth the Time and Effort?

The findings showed that 13 or 65% of the participating chairs believed strategic planning was worth the time and effort. Among the 13 chairs, the findings revealed that these department chairs believe strategic planning is necessary and promotes common goals throughout the campus community. In addition, 7 department chairs believe strategic planning is not worth the time and effort. They believe strategic planning is time consuming and fails to become implemented after the process is completed. The findings further support the previous findings that results of strategic planning are lacking after the lengthy process is completed.

Additional Thoughts

The department chairs were asked to provide any additional thoughts regarding strategic planning at Rowan University. The findings showed that department chairs believe there is some disconnect between administration and the department regarding the future strategic planning initiatives at the university. However, the findings also showed the department chairs believe there is strong communication with the deans regarding strategic planning. Although the findings reveal disparity, the data do not indicate whether the communication between the deans and chairs was by means of delivering strategic planning initiatives from the “top-down” or the “bottom-up”. Furthermore, the instability of the provost position was a recurring theme within the findings.

Research Question 4: How do department chairs view the strategic planning process as currently practiced at Rowan?

The findings showed that department chairs believe the current strategic planning process at Rowan University is more bureaucratic than empowering, more ambiguous than clear, and at the midpoint between systematic and haphazard. Furthermore, the findings showed that department chairs did not feel too strongly one way or another regarding whether the process was continuous, realistic, lengthy, informative, flexible or organized indicated by the mean scores closer to the midpoint than the two extremes. Although the data are inconclusive, the findings may suggest that since the process is still in the initial stages, formative opinions regarding the strategic planning process has not occurred.

Research Question 5: What recommendations do department chairs make to improve the strategic planning process at Rowan University?

Overall, 70% of the participating department chairs in the survey suggested recommendations to improve the strategic planning process at Rowan University. The findings showed that department chairs believe strategic planning should be formulated more at the college level rather than at the institutional level. The findings support Burke's (2005) argument that planning strategically at the university requires accountability at the college and department levels to ensure a continuous process of institutional development. Furthermore, findings showed that leadership in the Provost Office needs to be more stable to effectively facilitate and implement a formidable plan at the university. The department chairs believe that stability in the academic leadership division will improve the success of the strategic planning process lacking in previous attempts (Marcus, 1999).

In addition, few of the department chairs believe that involvement in the process needs to be increased throughout the campus community. Although not directly linked in the findings, this may be directly related to the mutual belief that the academic plan is driven by a “top-down” model. Furthermore, some department chairs suggested that periodic updates regarding the status of the strategic planning initiatives would increase involvement. Despite the sporadic e-mails updating the community with a new draft of the academic master plan, the department chairs believe a “hard-copy” or “quarterly report” would improve communication between the administration and the academic departments.

Conclusions

The findings suggest that Rowan University department chairs believe strategic planning is part of their responsibility as the department head. Furthermore, findings indicate that the department chairs believe they unify the department goals and objectives through planning. However, the findings also indicate that department chairs believe the responsibility to implement the strategic plan does not fall under their position.

In addition, the findings suggest that the department chairs express knowledge of strategic planning initiatives necessary at the department level. The department chairs believe knowledge of strategic planning is required for department chairs to successfully respond to the university goals and objectives while still maintaining flexibility when fluctuating economical conditions occur. Furthermore, the findings indicate that department chairs believe that strategic planning places additional responsibilities on the department chair. However, the findings also indicated that the university does not provide any initial training regarding strategic planning to the academic department

chairs. The findings also suggest that the current department chairs believe that strategic planning initiatives are delivered from the “top-down” and the involvement of the department in the strategic planning process is limited.

Moreover, the findings showed no correlation between the demographics of years as chair, age, gender, education level or college served and the attitudinal factors of role, knowledge-experience, and involvement. Although the findings suggest there is no correlation between these factors and demographics, caution is warranted to conclude this finding due to the small sample size of department chairs. Historical impressions of previous strategic plan, although not revealed as statistically significant is apparent within the findings.

Also, the findings reveal that the department chairs view of their experience with strategic planning at the university is one lacking an academic focus. The findings suggest that department chairs believe that the process is driven by a “top-down” leadership atmosphere that results in episodic planning due to the instability of the provost position at Rowan University. Furthermore, the findings suggest that department chairs believe that the university strongly emphasizes the process of planning, however, fails to implement the plan once the process is complete.

In addition, the findings reveal that department chairs view the current strategic planning process at the university to be more bureaucratic than empowering, ambiguous than clear, and at the midpoint between systematic and haphazard. The findings further reveal that the department chairs scored within the middle clusters as opposed to a very strong lean towards one side of the adjectives describing the current process.

Finally, Rowan University department chairs recommended that the strategic planning initiatives be more focused at the college levels in order to successfully incorporate the academic departments within the strategic plan. Although the department chairs believe the overall institutional plan should guide the goals and objectives of the university, the broad scope of the institutional plan, according to the department chairs, does not successfully integrate the academic disciplines within the academic departments.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations are made for further research:

1. A larger study involving additional higher education institutions undergoing strategic planning initiatives should be done. The researcher only examined the department chairs at Rowan University. Further studies would allow comparisons between institutions regarding the role and responsibilities department chairs play in strategic planning.
2. It is recommended that a larger study at Rowan University be initiated to survey all levels of administration within the Academic Division.

Comparisons between upper-level administration, deans, department chairs, faculty, and staff may reveal further aspects of the current strategic planning process employed.
3. A follow-up study regarding department chairs and their involvement in the Rowan University Master Plan at the university is recommended. This may reveal different levels of involvement between the overall campus master plan and the academic master plan at the university.

4. A future time should be selected for subjects to be interviewed and again complete the survey instrument. As the progress of the academic master plan continues, the views of the department chair regarding role, experience, and knowledge may be influenced.

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APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board Disposition Form

Rowan University
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN RESEARCH REVIEW APPLICATION

RECEIVED NOV 30 2005

INSTRUCTIONS: Check all appropriate boxes, answer all questions completely, include attachments, and obtain appropriate signatures. Submit an **original and two copies** of the completed application to the Office of the Associate Provost.

NOTE: Applications must be typed.
Be sure to make a copy for your files.

FOR IRB USE ONLY:

Protocol Number: IRB- 2005-230

Received: _____ Reviewed: _____

Exemption: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Category(ies): _____

Approved [Signature] (date) 12/14/05

Step 1: Is the proposed research subject to IRB review?

All research involving human participants conducted by Rowan University faculty and staff is subject to IRB review. Some, but not all, student-conducted studies that involve human participants are considered research and are subject to IRB review. Check the accompanying instructions for more information. Then check with your class instructor for guidance as to whether you must submit your research protocol for IRB review. If you determine that your research meets the above criteria and is not subject to IRB review, **STOP**. You do not need to apply. If you or your instructor have any doubts, apply for an IRB review.

Step 2: If you have determined that the proposed research is subject to IRB review, complete the identifying information below.

Project Title:

A study of the attitudes of selected department chairs regarding strategic planning at Rowan University.
William O'Brien

Researcher: William O'Brien

Department: _____ Location: _____

Mailing Address: Box 1349, Rowan University, 200 Mullica Hill Rd. (Street)
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E-Mail: obrien33@students.rowan.edu

Telephone: 856-256-6533

Co-Investigator/s:

Faculty Sponsor (if student)* Dr. Burton Sisco

Department Dept. of Ed. Leadership Location: Education Hall

E-Mail: sisco@rowan.edu Telephone: 856-256-3717

APPENDIX B

Survey Cover Letter

(Date)

Dear Department Chair:

I am currently a full-time graduate student at Rowan University completing my Master's Degree in Higher Education Administration. As part of my thesis project, I am conducting a survey to explore the attitudes of department chairs regarding strategic planning at Rowan University. I am asking for your assistance in collecting the data for my study.

During the past few years, the university has facilitated a comprehensive strategic plan to guide and shape the institution into the next decade of growth. Although every division of the university will be impacted by these changes, the academic departments and their selected chairs may play a key role in implementing new programs to attract prospective students.

Your assistance with my research is critical to ensure validity of the data. I know your time is precious and the survey will only take approximately 10 minutes to complete. This participation is voluntary, however, and no identifying information will be collected.

If you have any questions regarding this research, please feel free to contact my research advisor, Dr. Burton Sisco (856-256-4500, ext. 3717), or me directly at (856-256-4275). I truly appreciate your time and effort to assist me in completing the research project. It is my hope that future planning at higher education institutions may utilize this information to understand the involvement of department chairs in facilitating and implementing the institutional strategic plan.

Sincerely,

William O'Brien

APPENDIX C

Chair Survey on Strategic Planning

This survey is being administered as part of graduate course research project at Rowan University. While your participation is voluntary and you are not required to answer any of the questions herein, your cooperation and participation are important to the success of the project and are greatly appreciated. If you choose to participate, please understand that all responses are strictly confidential and no personally identifiable information is being requested. Moreover, whether you agree to participate or not, your decision will have no effect on your grades, your standing in class, or any other status.

ATTITUDES OF DEPARTMENT CHAIRS REGARDING STRATEGIC PLANNING

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Please check or write your response in this section.

How many years have you been a chair at Rowan University? _____

Gender: _____ Male _____ Female

Age:

_____ 21 to 30 _____ 31 to 40 _____ 41 to 50 _____ 51 to 60 _____ 61 and above

Highest Degree Obtained:

_____ Bachelor's Degree
_____ Master's Degree
_____ Doctoral Degree
_____ Professional Degree (J.D., M.D., etc.)

Which college do you serve as a chair?

_____ Liberal Arts & Sciences	_____ Fine and Performing Arts
_____ Communications	_____ Engineering
_____ Education	_____ Business

SECTION II: THOUGHTS ON STRATEGIC PLANNING AT ROWAN

Instructions: Listed below are several pairs of adjectives each separated by seven spaces. Please mark an "X" in the space that best represents your reaction to the objects. The closer the "X" is to one adjective, the stronger you feel for that object. If you are sort of undecided, place an "X" in the middle space between the two words.

My experience with strategic planning at Rowan University has been

Organized :_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_: Chaotic

Clear :_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_: Ambiguous

Continuous :_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_: Terminable

Realistic :_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_: Abstract

Lengthy :_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_: Short

Involved :_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_:~_: Disconnected

Informed :__:__:__:__:__:__:__:__:__: Unfamiliar

Empowered :__ :__ :__ :__ :__ :__ :__ : Bureaucratic

Systematic :__:__:__:__:__:__:__: Haphazard

Flexible :__ :__ :__ :__ :__ :__ :__ : Rigid

SECTION III: ATTITUDES OF STRATEGIC PLANNING AT ROWAN

Listed below are statements which reflect attitudes of department chairs toward strategic planning at Rowan University. For each statement, circle whether you Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), or Strongly Disagree (SD).

- | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|---|---|----|
| 1. Strategic planning is part of my responsibilities as a chair. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 2. The best time to do strategic planning is when budgets are less restrictive. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 3. I am actively involved with the institutional strategic plan. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 4. A clear mission and vision is required to develop a strategic plan. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 5. Establishing a mission for the department is important for planning. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 6. I have played an active role in developing the strategic plan. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 7. The chair unifies the department through planning. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 8. Departmental goals and objectives are considered during the strategic plan. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 9. Implementing a strategic plan in the department involves embracing change. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 10. The department chair facilitates consensus among faculty in responding to change. | SA | A | N | D | SD |

11. The university provides training for strategic planning.	SA	A	N	D	SD
12. Involvement of my department in strategic planning is minimal.	SA	A	N	D	SD
13. Long-term planning is a priority for department chairs.	SA	A	N	D	SD
14. Knowledge of planning is a necessary skill for a department chair.	SA	A	N	D	SD
15. Departmental involvement is essential for a successful strategic plan.	SA	A	N	D	SD
16. The chairperson promotes a common vision for the department.	SA	A	N	D	SD
17. The strategic plan has been developed primarily without my input.	SA	A	N	D	SD
18. Knowledge of institutional goals and objectives are communicated by my college dean.	SA	A	N	D	SD
19. Responsibility for implementing strategic planning rests with department chairs.	SA	A	N	D	SD
20. Academic departments play a key role in accomplishing institutional strategic goals.	SA	A	N	D	SD
21. The chair is responsible for short-term planning.	SA	A	N	D	SD
22. Responsibility to accomplish institutional goals at the departmental level is emphasized by the administration.	SA	A	N	D	SD
23. Strategic planning requires campus-wide effort.	SA	A	N	D	SD
24. Minimal time should be spent on strategic planning at the university.	SA	A	N	D	SD
25. I can successfully facilitate a strategic plan for the department.	SA	A	N	D	SD

26. Chairpersons influence the direction of the strategic plan.	SA	A	N	D	SD
27. Strategies and goals developed within the department are successfully implemented.	SA	A	N	D	SD
28. Strategic planning is a priority for department chairs.	SA	A	N	D	SD
29. I believe strategic planning at the university is important.	SA	A	N	D	SD
30. Strategic planning places additional responsibility on department chairs.	SA	A	N	D	SD

SECTION IV. ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Do you have any recommendations for improving strategic planning at Rowan University? *(Please feel free to use the back of the page for additional space)*

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions

Read to the Interviewee:

This survey is being administered as part of graduate course research project at Rowan University. While your participation is voluntary and you are not required to answer any of the questions herein, your cooperation and participation are important to the success of the project and are greatly appreciated. If you choose to participate, please understand that all responses are strictly confidential and no personally identifiable information is being requested. Moreover, whether you agree to participate or not, your decision will have no effect on your grades, your standing in class, or any other status.

1. In your opinion, what do you consider the strengths and weaknesses of the Rowan University strategic planning process?
2. What do you think about strategic planning and the process employed at Rowan University?
3. What are the benefits of using strategic planning at Rowan University?
4. What challenges do you see in the way strategic planning is employed at Rowan University?
5. Do you feel empowered to lead your department in the strategic planning process?
6. Is strategic planning worth the time and effort?
7. Do you have anything else to add?

