

Political Science 525
Strategic Planning and Leadership
Spring 2011

Professor Jon Tompkins
College of Arts and Sciences
University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812

jonathan.tompkins@umontana.edu
(406) 243 - 2683

Course Description

For over a decade a movement has been underway to shift the focus of management from administering programs to achieving results. Strategic planning is an important tool in accomplishing this paradigm shift. Bryson defines it as a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it.

But, despite its importance, strategic planning is only a tool. This course is organized around the theme that strategic planning cannot realize its fullest potential unless it is put into the service of visionary, success-oriented leadership. Although strategic planning can help us align an organization's mission, internal capacities, and environmental realities, it is ultimately leadership, not planning, that makes organizational excellence possible and achievable.

Course Objectives

1. To understand strategic planning as a decision-making process.
2. To understand the theory of organizational success that underlies the process.
3. To develop skill in conducting the forms of analysis that strategic planning requires.
4. To learn how strategic planning can contribute to the success of visionary leadership.

Required Text

John M. Bryson, Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004).

This book can be ordered through the UM Bookstore and mailed to you for an additional \$6. (www.umt.bookstore.com or 406-243-1234)

Other assigned readings on Electronic Reserve.

Course Requirements and Grading

Students are required to read all assigned readings, participate on the Discussion Board, and write a simulated strategic plan for a government or nonprofit agency. This plan will

be submitted in six installments (20 points each), with the final draft being worth 100 points.

A = 205-220 A- = 198-204 B+ = 191-197 B = 183-190 B- = 176-182 etc.

Discussion Board assignments are due on Thursdays at roughly midnight. Writing assignments are typically due the following Monday.

You are required to choose a public or nonprofit agency with which you are familiar and write a strategic plan for it (you won't actually submit it to the agency). You are to pretend that you are a staff person entrusted with facilitating the planning process. You lead your staff through the various steps of the process and write up the results of your group's analyses as follows:

- Introduction
- Agency Mission, Vision, and Values
- Strategic Issues, Goals, and Actions
- Appendix A: Mandate Analysis and Mission Clarification
- Appendix B: Stakeholder Analysis
- Appendix C: SWOT Analysis
- Appendix D: Theory of Success

Weekly Assignments

Lesson 1 (Due Feb. 3) Introduction to Strategic Planning

Read the mini-lecture and Chapter 1 of Michael Allison and Jude Kaye's Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations on **electronic reserve**. **Skim** Bryson Chapters 1 and 2 looking for the Big Picture. Lastly, respond to the Discussion Board questions.

(Note: to access electronic reserve, click on the Library Reserve button on Blackboard's Welcome page. Your password is psci525)

As you read, consider the following:

- 1) What is a strategic plan?
- 2) What is the process by which one is developed?
- 3) What are the reasons for engaging in strategic planning?

Lesson 2 (Due Feb. 10) Underlying Theory of Organizational Success

Read the mini-lecture and Bryson Chapter 3, **skim** the U.S. Forest Service's Strategic Plan at www.fs.fed.us (you will find the link on the left side of the page under "pubs, regs & manuals"), and **skim** the Strategic Plans by former students Jacquie Hoffman, Karen Aguilera, and Brandi Roberts on **electronic reserve**. Lastly, respond to the Discussion Board questions.

The Forest Service Plan will give you an idea of what is required of federal agencies under the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, whereas the student papers will give you an idea of what is required for this course.

Lesson 3 (Due Feb. 17) Strategic Planning in Political Environments

Read the mini-lecture and Barton Wechsler and Robert Backoff's "Policy Making and Administration in State Agencies" on **electronic reserve**, and respond to the Discussion Board questions.

As you read, ask yourself:

- 1) Generally speaking, what political factors may influence an agency's choice of strategy?
- 2) Does the strategy of an organization necessarily aim at achieving a state of excellence?
- 3) What macro-level strategy has your agency adopted?

Look ahead to the mini-lecture for Lesson 5 and begin researching your formal mandates, those things that you are formally charged with doing or prohibited from doing, as required for writing assignment #1 (See also Bryson pp. 97-102).

Lesson 4 (Due Feb. 24) Creating Public Value

Read the mini-lecture, Bryson pp. 94-97 only, Mark Moore's Creating Public Value, Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 13-43), and Nanus and Dobbs' Leaders Who Make a Difference, Chapter 2 ("The Greater Good," pp. 27-45) on **electronic reserve**, and respond to the Discussion Board questions.

As you read, ask yourself:

- 1) How does your agency make the world a better place; what net public value does it exist to create for society?
- 2) What if your agency didn't exist? As Clarence the Angel asked Jimmy Stewart in the movie *It's a Wonderful Life*, would the world be a lesser place if you had never been created?

Continue researching your formal mandates.

Lesson 5 (Due March 3) Mandate Analysis and Mission Clarification

Read the mini-lecture and Bryson Chapter 4 [leave pages 107-112 for next week], respond to the Discussion Board questions, and submit writing assignment #1 by Monday, March 7.

As you read, ask yourself:

- 1) What am I hoping to accomplish by conducting Mandate Analysis?

- 2) If your agency is a government agency, what have you been charged with doing, authorized to do, and/or prohibited from doing? If your agency is a nonprofit, what were you created to accomplish and are there any organizational or governmental regulations that constrain your pursuit of excellence?
- 3) To what extent do your formal mandates limit your “unconstrained field of action”?
- 4) What is your essential purpose (mission), i.e., your *raison d’etre*?

Lesson 6 (Due March 10) Stakeholder Analysis

Read the mini-lecture, read the section in Bryson Chapter 4 dealing with stakeholder analysis (pp. 107-112), and respond to the Discussion Board questions. Submit writing assignment #2 by Monday, March 14.

As you read, think about who your primary stakeholders are, what they expect from you, and what it will take for them to view you as an excellent agency.

Lesson 7 (Due March 17) SWOT Analysis

Read the mini-lecture and Bryson Chapter 5, respond to the Discussion Board questions, and submit writing assignment #3 by Monday, March 21.

Lesson 8 (Due March 24) Developing a Vision of Excellence

Read the mini-lecture, Bryson Chapter 8, the excerpt from Karl Albrecht’s *The Northbound Train*, Nanus and Dobbs Chapter 4 (“Leader as Visionary”), and the vision statement offered by former student Kristina Swanson on **electronic reserve**. Respond to the Discussion Board questions, and submit writing assignment #4 by Monday, March 28.

Lesson 9 (Due March 31) Developing a Theory of Success

Read the mini-lecture and the excerpt from James Q. Wilson’s *Bureaucracy* Chapters 1 and 2 on **electronic reserve**, respond to the Discussion Board questions, and submit writing assignment #5 by Monday, April 11.

As you read Wilson, ask yourself: 1) What was Principal Hogan’s social and organizational vision of excellence? 2) What did he see as the school’s “critical environmental problem”? 3) What did he see as the school’s “critical task”? 4) What was his implicit “success strategy”?

As regards your own agency, think about what 3-5 things you need to be absolutely successful at in order to bring your vision of excellence into being, i.e., the 3-5 things that will enable your agency to be the very best of its kind in the nation.

****Spring Break****

Lesson 10 (Due April 14) Strategic Issues

Read the mini-lecture, Bryson Chapter 6, Nanus and Dobbs Chapter 5 (pp. 97-117 only), and respond to the Discussion Board questions.

Analyze your previous writing assignments in order to identify your 3-5 most pressing strategic issues.

Lesson 11 (Due April 21) Strategic Goals and Actions

Read the mini-lecture and Bryson Chapter 7, respond to the Discussion Board questions, and submit writing assignment #6 by Monday, April 25.

Lesson 12 (Due April 28) Implementing and Revising Strategic Plans

Read the mini-lecture, **skim** Bryson Chapters 9 and 10, and respond to the Discussion Board questions.

Submit the final draft of your Strategic Plan with Appendices no later than Thursday, May 12.

Writing Assignments

Please note: We will begin with the appendices and write the plan itself last.

Writing Assignment #1. Appendix A: Mandate Analysis and Mission Clarification

Write a summary analysis (perhaps 3-6 pages in length double-spaced) that 1) defines what mandates are and establishes the importance of mandate analysis, 2) identifies your organization's formal mandates (not informal mandates), and 3) clarifies the agency's fundamental mission as your planning team understands it (including the public value it exists to create). Do not offer a formal mission statement and avoid simplistic rhetoric; explain your understanding of your mission in ordinary English. Close with a summary analysis that draws out the implications of your mandate analysis for your "unconstrained field of action".

Advice:

- 1) Take general guidance from the student papers on electronic reserve, but be mindful of the fact that they may not be perfect models .
- 2) Make appropriate distinctions between mission-defining mandates and authority-constraining mandates.

3) If your organization is a nonprofit, you will not have formal statute-based mandates; nonetheless, your “unconstrained field of action” may be restricted by tax codes, articles of incorporation, by-laws, etc.

4) Whenever possible, provide brief quotes that capture your agency's mandated purposes and scope of authority as cited in the law, articles of incorporation, etc.

5) When clarifying your mission, be sure to clarify what public value your organization exists to create. (How might society be diminished if your organization ceased to exist?)

6) Remember that your primary purpose is to determine how much autonomy your agency has to define its mission and its path to organizational excellence (Point B); thus you need to close by drawing out the implications of your mandate analysis for your “unconstrained field of action”.

Writing Assignment #2. Appendix B: Stakeholder Analysis

Write a summary analysis (perhaps 4-8 pages) that 1) defines stakeholder and establishes the importance of stakeholder analysis, 2) identifies your organization's 5 or 6 most important stakeholders, and 3) draws out the implications of your stakeholder analysis for your organization's pursuit of excellence.

For each stakeholder, clarify a) what the stakeholder expects from your organization, b) what criteria the stakeholder uses to judge your performance (what it will take for them to judge you to be an “excellent organization,”) and c) how dependent your organization is on the stakeholder. Close with a summary analysis of the extent to which this limits your “unconstrained field of action” in defining and pursuing your vision of excellence.

Writing Assignment #3. Appendix C: SWOT Analysis

Write a summary analysis that 1) establishes the importance of SWOT analysis, 2) describes each of the most important 6-10 SWOTs facing your organization, and 3) draws out the possible implications of this analysis for achieving a state of excellence (even though we haven't yet articulated our vision of excellence and theory of success).

Remember that this analysis relates to strategic planning's underlying theory of organizational success, i.e., finding the optimal alignment between the agency's mission and vision of success, its internal capacities, and its external realities. Thus, your summary analysis should capture patterns in your SWOTS that point the way to the desired alignment (e.g., beefing up internal capacities, adjusting to external forces).

Important Note: The current analysis asks you to look for obvious sorts of SWOTs that may empower or plague your agency without regard to any particular vision of excellence or theory of success (because we haven't done these lessons yet). Therefore, look for obvious patterns or connections among SWOTS, whether or not they relate to

your emerging vision of excellence or theory of success. (Ideally, in the real world you would already have a partially-formed vision and theory, in which case something would be a strength, weakness, opportunity, or threat only in relation to your vision and theory)

Writing Assignment #4. Vision of Excellence

[You will later incorporate this assignment into the body of your strategic plan (rather than into an appendix)]

Write a summary statement (perhaps 1-2 pages) describing your vision of excellence, both internal (organizational) and external (social). Imagine that it is three to five years from now and you have been asked to describe your organization as having achieved the desired state of excellence. Describe what you see, what you envision. As regards your external vision, you might say: we envision a society in which As regards your internal vision, you might say: we envision competent, hard-working, and highly-motivated staff members who collaborate

Optional: If you wish, you might also identify the values and/or principles that you have chosen to guide your efforts to realize your vision of excellence. Without agreement on these, your northbound train will not stay on the tracks.

Writing Assignment #5. Appendix D: Theory of Success

Write a summary analysis that 1) establishes that there must be a causal chain between what you do and the desired outcomes you intend to achieve (i.e., a theory of cause and effect), and 2) identifies 3-5 factors at which you must be highly successful if you are to attain your desired state of excellence. [Note: these “success factors” typically relate to one or more of the following capacities: leadership, organizational culture, human resources, management systems, or physical environment/facilities. They are not simply “weaknesses;” they are more fundamental problems].

Emphasize that your success strategy is to concentrate on this causal chain and to allocate your time, attention, and resources to performing well on each of your success factors. (Note that your success strategy is something you must infer from previous experience and your vision of excellence)

Writing Assignment #6. Strategic Issues, Goals, and Actions

Write a “strategic plan” that 1) identifies the most critical 3-4 strategic issues facing your organization as it pursues a state of excellence, and 2) identifies the goals and strategic actions you have decided upon for addressing each strategic issue. [You can also identify strategic **objectives** if you wish, but these must be expressed in quantitative terms]

Remember Bryson's advice: "An adequate strategic issue description 1) phrases the issue as a challenge that the organization can do something about and that has more than one solution, 2) discusses the confluence of factors (mission, mandates, and internal and external environmental aspects, or SWOTs) that make the issue strategic, and 3) articulates the consequences of not addressing the issue."

Finally, see if you can add a brief conclusion to the plan that somehow ties things together -- perhaps by clarifying how resolving your strategic issues will help the organization realize its vision of excellence.

Note: Although strategic issues typically emerge from SWOT analysis, we are particularly interested in this course with those strategic issues that relate to your Theory of Success. These larger strategic issues may or may not have emerged during your SWOT analysis.

The Final Strategic Plan

Rewrite assignments #1-#6 based on the provided feedback and compile them into a single document as indicated above, with a brief introduction added. Your goal is to ensure continuity throughout the plan and its analyses. Note that assignments #4 and #6 will become the body of the plan, whereas the remaining assignments will comprise Appendices A, B, C, and D. Take general guidance from the student papers on electronic reserve (but note that students in the past didn't have to complete appendix D).