

# Rogers State University: Case Study in Institutional Planning and Change

Joe Wiley, Richard Boyd, and Larry Minks

## Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to outline a comprehensive change and development model that has been used as the basis for major initiatives in successfully transitioning an organization to baccalaureate status from a community college environment. The model utilizes a system-wide approach, allowing a strategic plan to be used as the basic foundation. The model then establishes departmental plans and objectives, links planning and decision making to assessment and analysis, assists in building budget priorities, and integrates the campus academic planning process, program review recommendations, and assessment results.

## Background

Rogers State University was founded in 1909 as the Eastern University Preparatory School. In 1919, it became the Oklahoma Military Academy (OMA) in response to the needs of area residents and the United States Armed Forces. In 1971, in response to the growing educational needs of a rapidly developing technological and industrial economy in northeastern Oklahoma, the Oklahoma legislature replaced the OMA with Claremore Junior College. The mission of the institution was expanded to provide a variety of associate's degree programs for area residents, and Claremore Junior College quickly grew and was renamed Rogers State College in 1982.

In 1996, the Oklahoma legislature approved the merger of Rogers State College and the University Center at Tulsa (UCAT), a consortium of four Oklahoma universities. The new institution was named Rogers University and continued to operate for two years. In spring 1998, the Oklahoma legislature dissolved the merger and renamed the institution Rogers State University (RSU). The institution was then assigned a mission to seek accreditation as a baccalaureate degree-granting university, while maintaining its two-year function, on January 1, 1999. During the spring 1999 legislative session, the governance of the new institution was changed, placing it under the University of Oklahoma Board of Regents. As a result of these legislative and governance changes, Rogers State University had three names, three presidents, and four different governing boards during 1996–1999. Naturally, the campus experienced a great deal of turmoil and uncertainty during this period. A strong need existed for a sustained period of stability, consistency, leadership, and institutional maturation, as well as opportunity for further planning, development, and growth.

## The Basic Institutional Development Plan

In January 1999, a new president was named for the institution. His appointment coincided with the effective date of the change in the mission of the university. Within the initial years of transition, a number of effective changes were made, including a successful visit from The Higher Learning Commission for the addition of four inaugural baccalaureate degree programs; approval from all internal and external governing bodies; complete reorganization of campus functions; establishment of a highly evolved management, planning, and financial system; and development of a positive forward-looking organization positioned for the long term.

The basic institutional development plan centered on strategic, intermediate, and annual planning and incorporated processes designed to support a period of organizational stability, consistency, and maturation. The plan provided for widespread faculty, staff, and student involvement, and budget decisions clearly linked to planning, and established appropriate feedback/evaluation loops (program review and assessment).

An aggressive and inclusive strategic planning process began in spring 1999 with the president's appointment of a strategic planning committee composed of faculty, staff, students, and the community. Members of the institutional Higher Learning Commission steering committee served on the strategic planning committee with the intended purpose and consequence of integrating current and future processes. Intentional overlap with the membership of the mission statement and program proposal ad hoc committee, charged with revision of the mission statement and purposes as well as development of the proposed baccalaureate degree programs, ensured consistency in vision and purpose.



The strategic planning process began with the goal of fulfilling the purposes outlined in the new RSU mission statement. From the beginning, it incorporated required Higher Learning Commission Criteria for Accreditation and General Institutional Requirements as well as issues relevant to a future self-study process and focused visit. The final strategic plan set forth the university's priorities in five major areas: academic innovation and integrity, supportive student services, planning and effective use of resources, effective use of technology, and community outreach.

Annual updates, evaluations, and adaptation of the strategic plan allowed it to serve as the foundation for establishing and changing departmental plans and objectives, linking planning and decision making to assessment data and analysis, building budget priorities, and integrating the campus academic planning process, program review recommendations, and assessment results. Overall, the development plan represents an ongoing cyclical process designed to make the university continually more responsive and effective in implementing its new mission.

## Process Initiatives Set the Foundation for Change

A better understanding of the major components involved in planning and change efforts is necessary in recognizing the value of a developmental model for sustaining the long-term transitional stages at RSU. New mission, leadership, processes, and organizational structures, plus growth in resources and faculty and staff were all necessary to position the institution to move to regional university status.

A number of major initiatives provided the foundation for the change process.

- **New mission statement.** During spring 1999, a faculty-staff committee developed a new mission statement with a supporting statement of institutional purpose. The new mission and purpose statement was officially adopted by the university and approved by its governing board.
- **Organization structure.** Under the new president's leadership, the faculty and staff created a new organizational structure for administrative functions and academic functions. A faculty committee developed and recommended an academic reorganization into three schools, each composed of two academic departments. New standing and ad hoc committees were created and became operational to provide for broad faculty participation and governance. Also, a new administrative organizational structure was created to provide the foundation for baccalaureate program development, as well as enhanced services to continue to support the community college function. These included the Office of Enrollment Management, the Student Success and Retention Center, the Office of Institutional Research and Planning, the Office of Continuing Education and Community College Relations, and coordination of all distance education activities by the Office of Distance Education.
- **Faculty and administrative personnel.** National searches were successfully completed for new faculty with doctoral degrees to support the new mission as a regional university and to reduce the number of classes taught by adjunct faculty. In addition, the number and qualifications of administrative personnel needed to support the proposed changes were identified and filled. This included new and reassigned executive positions.
- **Enhancement of student services.** The Student Affairs Office continually assessed the social needs of students on campus, through the formal process of surveys and questionnaires, as well as informally through student, faculty, and staff input. Student organizations, student government, and student services moved toward a programming model that incorporated a student planning board to more fully meet the needs of students at a regional university.
- **Assessment and program review.** The institution implemented comprehensive assessment and program review processes to improve student academic achievement at all levels. The annual assessment process recognized the state regents' four assessment components: entry-level and placement, midlevel, program outcomes, and student satisfaction. A five-year program review process was also designed around regents' criteria and built upon the results of departments' evaluations, annual assessments of student achievement, and use of budget allocations for previous years. The self-study process, reflected by academic program review, is designed to be multifaceted in that it occurs at the programmatic, department, school, and university levels at regular intervals. A central part of the program review process is the use of external evaluators who review the local self-study process and visit the campus to provide expert advice about the status of university programs and make recommendations for improvements.
- **Campus master planning and technology development.** A prioritized campus master plan was developed; it provided for preventative maintenance, renovation, new construction, landscaping, and equipment. In addition, a master plan to build a university-wide technology infrastructure making current and emerging technology available to all constituencies for educational and administrative functions was developed and implemented.
- **Reorganization of resources.** It was necessary for the institution to reorganize its physical, financial, organizational, technological, and academic resources to meet the new mission. Therefore, the university organized and transitioned in ways more appropriate to a regional university: (1) balance in degree opportunities, (2) traditional and innovative learning, (3) academic and student support services, and (4) educational opportunities for traditional as well as nontraditional students. During early



stages of development, the institution was fortunate to possess an informed and highly active board of regents, qualified and experienced senior administrators, a critical mass of faculty qualified to teach at associate and baccalaureate degree levels, and a core group of professional staff qualified to provide support services.

- **Policies and procedures development.** The transition from a community college to a regional university required the institution to adopt an entirely different scope and perspective. Many new policies and procedures that reflected the new mission had to be developed. These included academic policies and procedures, a student code of responsibilities and conduct, staff personnel policies and procedures, assessment planning and reporting guides, and an academic program review guide.
- **Program development.** The faculty developed four inaugural baccalaureate programs central to the new mission. Utilizing data from community and student surveys, demographic profiles, and career opportunity projections, the faculty developed proposals for each of the new programs. Every effort was made to meet present and future educational and economic needs of the state and region. These needs were both societal and occupational in nature. The programs were developed around the strength of the faculty as well as around the university's desire to create unique programs with potential for significant growth. The new degree programs were also designed to expand education services to one of the most historically underserved regions in Oklahoma in regard to higher education opportunities.

## Clear Linkages Required for Successful Transitions

A critical element of the institutional development model was the recognition of clear linkages to the new mission and of strategic planning as a basis for creating and executing university and departmental plans, goals, and objectives. The strategic planning process began with the goal of fulfilling the purposes established in RSU's new mission. The strategic plan represented the ideas, opinions, and efforts of hundreds of individuals both on campus and in the communities served by the institution. Following intensive efforts over several months, the strategic planning committee proposed five major areas of commitment (academic innovation and integrity, supportive student services, planning and effective use of resources, effective use of technology, and community outreach) and fourteen goals with accompanying action strategies.

The strategic plan served as the foundation for university and departmental plans, goals, and objectives. This focused on the functional areas of academic planning, enrollment management, organizational and administrative planning, financial resources, prioritized campus master planning, academically supportive student services, library resources, campus incorporation of technology, and community outreach. An annual academic department plan cycle was established for each fall semester of the year to include mission and purpose alignment by school, department, and program; short-term and long-term goals; program changes; and resources having an impact on the budget. A capital equipment review and approval system was also developed and implemented during the fall period.

The next stage of the model incorporated university and departmental plans, goals, and objectives into budget need preparation. This involved developing and implementing a budget review format and budget hearing process during the early to middle of the spring semester each year by department. This coincided with the build-up of the university's fiscal budget for submission and approval by appropriate governing bodies. Budget requests were required to be supported by relating the request to mission, the strategic plan, and school and department plans consistent with assessment results and program review recommendations. The outcome of this stage of the model was a direct linkage of university and department plans, goals, and objectives to the strategic plan and to assessment and program review results in the preparation of capital equipment and budgeting processes.

The final stage of the model projects into implementation, review, and evaluation phases prior to the next planning cycle. This involves evaluation and revisions of annual plans with special attention to the integration of academic planning processes and institution mission and school and department goals and objectives with assessment results and program review recommendations. Continual monitoring through the linkage of mission, strategic planning, university and department plans, assessment and program review, capital equipment and budget preparation, implementation, and review and evaluation enables the university to use its resources most effectively. The development model becomes an ongoing cyclical process as a means of charting and adjusting alternative courses of future action.

## The Process as a Means of Achieving Desired Performance

Utilization of an institutional development model through implementation allows planning and organizational change during transitions and structure, strategies, planning, and processes to be viewed as a means of enabling an organization to achieve desired performance outcomes. Since 1999, the institution has developed effective organizational capabilities in relating internal strengths with external opportunities in both the immediate and long term. Faculty, staff, and students were an integral part of all aspects of the development process. Overall, desired performance outcomes have been extremely favorable.

- Enrollment has increased more than three times the statewide average, with double-digit percent increases in headcount and FTE. Headcount enrollment totaled 3,578 students in fall 2003, representing the tenth consecutive semester of enrollment



increases. The average ACT composite has risen steadily since 1999, and full-time (compared to part-time) student enrollment has increased from 28 percent to over 50 percent.

- The faculty profile has changed dramatically. In fall 1999, there were fifty-five faculty members, 11 percent of whom possessed the terminal degree. In fall 2003, this had increased to eight-five faculty members, 62 percent of whom had the terminal degree. The new qualified faculty members have been employed to support expanding enrollments in general education and the new bachelor's degrees as well as to continue to reduce the percentage of classes taught by adjunct faculty. An organized research grant program was established in 2000 to assist faculty members in beginning or renewing the scholarly component of their professional responsibilities. In addition, a comprehensive faculty development and evaluation system was fully implemented during the 2000–2001 academic year.
- Major capital improvements have been accomplished, enhancing the physical and academic environment of the campus. During 2001–2002, over \$11 million of improvements were completed, providing a new state-of-the-art student apartment complex and other major physical improvements. A new \$4 million library facility opened in January 2004; it will more than double the current size of the existing library space. The new facility will include additional classroom space and faculty offices on the ground floor. Also, the university obtained a special appropriation and a federal matching grant in upgrading its television station from analog to digital transmission. The institution also operates its own radio station and has made substantial progress in integrating both radio and television stations with academic programs.
- Programmatically, the university now offers six bachelor's degrees, containing ten major options, in high-demand areas. Academic planning and resource allocation principles have been vigorously applied in deleting, consolidating, or restructuring associate degree programs, resulting in twenty-five quality programs in a wide variety of disciplines to serve the educational needs of area residents. Three comprehensive assessment cycles will be completed this academic year in applying a university assessment committee peer review process of assessment plans and reports for each department. A new institutional assessment plan was developed and submitted to the state regents in spring 2002. All associate's programs have undergone academic program reviews since 2001, with baccalaureate programs scheduled for review during 2003–2004. A new institutional effectiveness planning and reporting system was implemented in 2002 for university support services and departments.
- Fundraising and scholarship development efforts have intensified since 2000. Four endowed faculty chairs have been established, and major gifts have been provided for student scholarships, computer technology, and instructional equipment from numerous foundations, corporations, and individuals throughout Oklahoma. A campaign for endowed chairs has been implemented, with the goal of raising \$5 million for a total of ten endowed chairs. In addition, a campaign for endowed scholarships has been established to increase the number of private scholarships available to students. Current student scholarship and fee waivers continue to be aggressively pursued, with the total amount increasing by \$400,000 for the 2003–2004 academic year.
- The university remains committed to responsible academic and support reorganization in meeting its goals of academic efficiency. A complete renovation of one of its historic facilities enabled the institution to consolidate freshman advising, enrollment, financial aid, counseling, bursar, and other student services into one convenient location. Numerous positions have been redefined and reallocated to fund new initiatives in academic and student support services since 2000–2001. Further reorganizations in academic and student support services functions have allowed for increased focus on new student service initiatives, targeted student scholarship programs, and enhanced faculty support systems through the new Center for Teaching and Learning. Administrative costs as a percent of basic education and general funding have been reduced to 13.8 percent, well below the state regents' ceiling of 16 percent.
- The new Center for Economic and Community Development was introduced in 2002, further reinforcing the strategic commitment devoted to community outreach. The center is designed to foster economic development and address the educational needs of business and industry in northeastern Oklahoma. The center's staff provides assistance to area small businesses and entrepreneurs through a wide variety of services and is a designated business and industry data center. As an affiliate agency with the Oklahoma Department of Commerce State Data Center Program, the center provides economic and demographic data to area businesses, industries, and individuals.

## The Current Situation and Organizational Learning

The basic foundation for transitioning the institution to regional university status was established during 1999–2001 through priorities in state-appropriated funding. This is evidenced by the significant performance outcomes presented in the previous section. As have many states, Oklahoma has experienced reductions in state-appropriated funding for public higher education during the past two years.

The state allocation was 11 percent lower in 2001–2002 and 10 percent lower in 2002–2003. In addition, mandatory fixed costs during this two-year period have increased by over \$600,000. The amount of discretionary state dollars for the support of the institution's general operations has decreased by approximately \$2 million or 16 percent over the two-year period.

Highly conservative budgeting and tight cost controls have enabled the university to adapt to these changing conditions, and despite the two consecutive years of state budget cuts, the university's overall financial condition remains strong. Through a modest increase in tuition



and fees combined with conservative enrollment projection increases, the institution projected approximately \$1.6 million additional revenues on an education and general part I budget of \$19.5 million. Thus, the university has maintained funding levels to support its continuing transition in pursuing critical academic, renovation and construction, organizational, and technology initiatives.

In conclusion, we have presented a comprehensive institutional development model that was used to successfully transition an institution from two-year to four-year status over the long term. Institutions in similar situations are encouraged to use a developmental model in planning change and development initiatives adapted to their circumstances. It is believed from the experiences at Rogers State University that such a model will provide an institution with the following major areas of organizational learning.

- Recognition of the value of a comprehensive planning and development model in sustaining long-term transitional stages that can be anticipated
- Better understanding of the major components involved in planning organizational change efforts
- Understanding how successful institutional transitions are clearly linked to strategic planning, university and department planning and goal setting, building capital and annual budgeting processes, campus academic planning, and assessment and program review
- Better understanding of how institutional development plans during major transitions need to provide for widespread faculty, staff, and student involvement and to establish appropriate feedback/evaluation loops
- Ability to see planning and organizational change during transitions and structure, strategies, planning, and processes as means of enabling an organization to achieve predetermined performance outcomes

## Note

Detailed schematics of the RSU development model will be provided during the presentation.

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*Joe Wiley is President of Rogers State University in Claremore, Oklahoma.*

*Richard Boyd is Vice President for Academic Affairs at Rogers State University in Claremore, Oklahoma.*

*Larry Minks is Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs at Rogers State University in Claremore, Oklahoma.*