5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution’s sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.
5. Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

Argument

Evidence-based planning occurs at CWRU at the institutional level, within the schools, and within major support units (such as the Division of Student Affairs, University Libraries, Information Technology Services, and the Office of Inclusion, Diversity and Equal Opportunity, to name a few). The university recognizes that coordination and alignment of the resulting strategic plans is a key to institutional success.

1. In the Assurance Argument for Criterion 1.A.3, evidence that CWRU's planning and budgeting priorities fully align with the university's mission and priorities was provided. Information on the systems of committees and governance processes which ensure that the university aligns resource allocations with mission priorities was presented in that section. Here, several additional examples of resource expenditures within the past five years, consistent with the established budgeting priorities are described. Overall summaries of the university's expenditures can be seen in the audited financial statement from fiscal years 2013 and 2014.

(a) Strategic Interdisciplinary Alliances: One of the key areas for investment identified by CWRU's Strategic 2008-2013 Plan was interdisciplinary collaborations. CWRU's Quality Improvement (QI) proposal involved investments that stimulated the formation of interdisciplinary alliances that were expected to launch new academic programs and research collaborations. As detailed in CWRU's QI report, requests for proposals were solicited, and interdisciplinary academic alliances in key areas (e.g., energy and environment; human health; culture, creativity, and design; social justice; origins; and ethics) were launched. CWRU's Social Justice Institute and the Institute for the Science of Origins are examples of now firmly established organizations that stemmed from these alliances.

(b) First-Year Experience: One of the subgoals (II.1) within the 2008-13 strategic plan involved improvements in the manner in which CWRU recruits, retains, and develops outstanding students. This included enriching student life through programming in residence halls and other co-curricular activities, and strengthening links between academic programs and student life. To support this goal, CWRU has recently established a formal office for First-Year Experience and Family Programs.

(c) Internationalization: Enhancing the international character of the university was another subgoal (III.4) of the 2008-13 strategic plan. Investments were made to establish CWRU's Center for...
International Affairs. The annual report for the center highlights its early accomplishments.

(d) Campus Infrastructure: The plan also called for improvements to the campus vibrancy. Investments have been made in the Tinkham Veale University Center (opened in 2014), the Maltz Performing Arts Center (construction currently in process), and a new teaching complex for education in the health fields (currently being designed). Renovations and upgrades to existing academic spaces on campus are prioritized and completed as resources allow.

To ensure that CWRU will maintain its ability to align resources to supports its mission and priorities in the future, the university embarked on a major capital campaign in 2007. Priorities for the campaign mirror the university's priorities as identified in the strategic plans. See the updates on campaign progress from 2011, 2013, and 2014. Because the campaign surpassed its original one-billion-dollar target ahead of schedule, the campaign goal has recently been extended by 50%.

2. CWRU makes substantial efforts to ensure that its processes for planning and budgeting are effectively linked, and that these processes are informed by ongoing evaluation and assessment processes. The annual planning process and budgeting cycle show multiple points at which the results of committee reviews or planning retreats are incorporated into the process. The budgeting process is informed by evaluation reports (see sample "Budget Book") prepared by CWRU's Finance office. The current budgeting process was developed as an outcome of an effort dedicated to the establishment of a robust, well-informed, planning practice.

In 2009, a Budget System Review Committee (BSRC) was established to assess the effectiveness of the university’s budget system in its ability to support the goals of optimizing programmatic and overall institutional excellence. The BSRC was charged with making recommendations to modify the current system in order to produce central resources for funding new initiatives identified under the university's strategic plan. In particular, the committee was asked to address ways to reduce barriers to collaborations across schools and the pursuit of initiatives involving multiple schools. As detailed in its report, the BSRC concluded that the university’s existing budgeting system did not sufficiently engage academic units and other constituents in the budgeting and planning process. In addition, annual action agendas (see example for fiscal year 2016) that resulted from the university's strategic plan did not take into consideration the funding resources and commitment necessary to implement the actions. As a result, the university is striving for further integration and efficiency, and is moving toward a more formal integrated financial planning process that includes the development of multi-year (three-year) financial plans with the involvement of deans, school business officers, and the Provost in repeated strategic financial planning activities throughout the year. Financial planning at all levels is expected. New strategic initiatives, particularly those involving central services, the cost for which would be allocated to the schools, are required to be vetted through these various planning processes prior to becoming part of the operating budget. The budget process in use today includes the development of the capital and operating budgets, planning retreats, three-year budget guidelines for schools, and quarterly updates.

A University Budget Committee (UBC) was also created. The charge states, in part, that “The University Budget Committee (UBC) will serve as an advisory body to the Provost, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and President, and is charged with the review of all budget assumptions and plans for all stages of the process both for administrative and support areas and for all academic units.” The UBC takes a university-wide view rather than school view in all of its deliberations and recommendations. The chair of the UBC (a faculty member) is an ex officio member of the Faculty Senate Finance Committee (FSFC) and reports to the Faculty Senate once a semester.

The BSRC also recommended that traditional budgeting for central university services be replaced...
with a framework that allows for the identification and evaluation of core functions and their related costs. Information Technology Services and the Purchasing and Procurement offices have already undergone such a review.

Assessment of student learning is most directly linked to the planning and budgeting process through strategic planning activities. School-based strategic plans commonly rely on the results of outcome assessment to guide the development of improvements to existing initiatives and the development of new ones. (See, for example the reference to outcome assessment in the strategic plan from College of Arts and Sciences.) References to the important role of outcome assessment also appear in the university's strategic plan, which calls for an evaluation of the SAGES program, for example. Likewise, outcome assessment is mentioned prominently throughout the strategic plan for the Division of Student Affairs. All of these examples are consistent with CWRU's core value of "integrity and transparency" and support the university's mission to provide "learning that is active, creative, and continuous."

3. Planning processes at CWRU regularly utilize input from multiple internal and external constituencies. Major planning activities, such as the institution- and school-level strategic planning processes and the campus master planning process, are prominent examples.

Many faculty members, staff, students, alumni and community members directly participated and provided input on the plan. See the lists of committee and working group members. Feedback was solicited through open forums for the campus community. CWRU's Office of Institutional Research informs the planning process by providing information and analysis through faculty climate, student experience, and salary and gender surveys.

School-level planning mirrors the institutional level process and relies on the participation of students, faculty members, staff, and community to provide input. CWRU's School of Medicine (SOM) provides an example of the process to develop a five-year strategic plan to reflect new goals and objectives. Working groups were developed and feedback was solicited from various committees, councils, and groups of department chairs throughout the SOM. Town Hall meetings were held within the SOM well as within the SOM’s affiliate hospitals.

It is CWRU's practice to seek advice and counsel from visiting committees and advisory boards. Each of the eight constituent schools utilizes some type of external advisory or visiting committee. (See the examples from the Weatherhead School of Management and School of Law.) The Center for International Affairs formed a visiting committee of professionals with expertise in international affairs to advise the Center, and the Inamori International Center for Ethics and Excellence established an advisory board to assist with its planning. Many research centers have also established advisory boards on which external members serve. (See the example for the Great Lakes Energy Institute.) The university's Center for Civic Engagement and Learning (CCEL) also engages an advisory board on which external community members serve.

The master planning process for the university campus, an outgrowth of the 2013 strategic plan and currently underway, involves soliciting input from internal and external campus stakeholders, alumni, University Circle partners and others. The planning process involves discussion of ways that the physical environment of the university can strengthen academic excellence.

Another example of planning practices pertains to the manner in which investments in information technology projects are prioritized. Input from a broad range of internal constituencies is solicited and is used to inform a rigorous planning and allocation process that operates on a yearly cycle.
CWRU's Career Center engages regularly with potential employers, and has considered the needs of that external constituency in the development of its strategic plan. The Center's strategic goals include expanding the geographical range of the organizations recruiting at CWRU (goal 1) as well as a focus on better serving students in specific disciplines (goal 2), both of which are consistent with strategies for recruiting students to CWRU.

4. CWRU's planning processes are informed by data and analyses of the university's capacities (human resources, physical infrastructure and facilities, and finances). Preparation of three-year financial plans by the schools involves solicitation of input from relevant individuals and offices across the institution. This includes reports on topics such as enrollment projections, research trends, the outlook for the endowment, and financial reports (see audited financial statements for fiscal years 2013 and 2014) which contain information on debt and liquidity status, and contingency and investment fund recommendations.

The university’s strategy for managing its endowment investments has been to balance risk with caution due to the instability of the markets since 2008. This approach provides for a more consistent, less variable return which allows for more predictable planning.

Anticipated fluctuations in revenue resulting from factors such as a change in enrollment or the economy are incorporated into these. Enrollment projections are typically conservative so as to minimize the impact of a possible reduction in tuition revenue.

The university receives little state support for the academic programs and so its operations are insensitive to fluctuations in state allocations. (The only school that receives state support is CWRU's School of Medicine, and that amount represents less than 1% of the school's total budget.)

CWRU also periodically undertakes longer range planning. For example, as part of the 2013 strategic planning process, two of the major working groups were charged to consider issues related to societal trends and fluctuations that affect higher education in making recommendations. One was the 2026 planning group (2026 will be CWRU's bicentennial year), whose goal was to create a vision for the university’s future identity, positioning and operations that responds to the systematic changes, challenges and opportunities facing higher education. Another was the academic excellence working group, whose goal was to ensure our academic program would prepare students to be successful leaders and global citizens, agile and able to reinvent themselves to adapt to change.

Planning processes within the schools also are strongly attuned to the potential impact of external factors. For instance, as a matter of strategy, the School of Dental Medicine has intentionally kept its class size constant to assure the ability to recruit a quality class, regardless of cycles in the size and quality of the applicant pool and/or fluctuations in the economy. In addition, the Weatherhead School of Management has navigated the recent difficult downturn in the economy by proactively managing the demand for some of its degree programs through attrition and some reorganization. Also, after recognizing the reduced nationwide demand from students for law degrees, the School of Law recently embarked on an enhanced marketing and recruitment campaign that resulted in a larger number of applicants from which it was able to build its entering class.

5. CWRU's planning processes routinely consider various emerging factors that may impact the quality of its academic programs and operations.

For example, CWRU's Information Technology Services (ITS) division began work in 2011 on a three-year strategic plan to establish its future direction. The planning process involved six cross-university committees of faculty and staff members. The major themes that emerged from this process
support the university’s goals and priorities by anticipating technological innovation and its impact on teaching, learning and research at CWRU. The goals articulated in the plan include delivering computing services to enable data-driven research; adopting innovation learning technologies to provide face-to-face, hybrid and on-line courses; harnessing technology to deliver knowledge to local and global communities; improving internal customer satisfaction with services and enhanced resources; and delivering systems for monitoring outcomes and supporting transparency.

Another example comes from the university’s 2008 strategic plan. One objective was to enhance the international character of the university by creating programs that address global challenges, providing students with opportunities to experience international experiences, and promoting enrollment of students from other countries, including developing nations. As mentioned previously, the Center for International Affairs was established as a result of this priority and programming has expanded rapidly into the areas mentioned. Undergraduate participation in international experiences has increased by nearly a third and international enrollment has quadrupled (see the 2013 strategic plan). The Weatherhead School of Management added three new international degree programs and the School of Law expanded partnerships with law schools abroad. The university’s international engagement will expand over the next few years including developing new research partnerships around the world. The Center for International Affairs completed its first strategic plan in 2012, and in its most recent strategic plan, CWRU reinforced its commitment to executing the priorities expressed in the internationalization plan.

CWRU also monitors trends in applications and student quality for its undergraduate programs as well as its graduate and professional programs. These data inform the university about potential shifts in student demand for academic programs.

Demographic shifts (and projected changes) in the undergraduate applicant pool are routinely monitored by the Enrollment Management division. To inform CWRU’s recruitment strategy, resources such as those provided by the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE) and information gleaned at national conferences (e.g., events organized by the College Board or the National Association for College Admissions Counseling) are used.

A recent example of the shift in recruitment strategies is that CWRU has significantly increased resources in states like California and Texas in recent years as a response to projected demographic shifts. These efforts have resulted in significant increases in undergraduate matriculants from those states, as is shown in summary reports of the geographic diversity of CWRU students. CWRU has also very deliberately reduced our dependence on Ohio as a result of these projections.

**Sources**

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