

Differentiators/Distinction

◆ Purpose

The Strategic Planning Steering Committee has charged the Working Group on Differentiators/Distinctions with responsibility for (i) proposing strategic priorities and objectives for consideration at the Strategic Planning Workshop to be held on Friday, March 1st (the “Workshop”), and (ii) refining those priorities and objectives into an action plan based on Workshop feedback. See the attached Appendix for more detail.

◆ Task Requirements

To meet its charge, the Working Group will prior to the Workshop:

- Review the Briefing Booklet, which will include materials developed to date through the strategic planning process;
- Request any other preexisting data that the Working Group deems relevant to its task;
- Develop not more than three recommended strategic priorities regarding Differentiators/Distinction;
- For each strategic priority, develop not more than three recommended strategic objectives;
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the School that should be taken into account with respect to the priorities and objectives; and
- Develop a proposed action plan to address the identified strengths and weaknesses.

The deadline for this phase of the Working Group’s assignment will be Friday, February 22nd.

At the Workshop on March 1st, Working Group members will present and receive feedback on their recommended strategic priorities and objectives, as well as on their assessment of relevant strengths and weaknesses and their proposed action plan.

After the Strategic Planning Workshop, Working Group members will use the feedback received to refine their recommended strategic priorities, strategic objectives and action plan. The deadline for completing this phase of the work will be Friday, March 15th.

◆ Membership

The Working Group will consist of five members, including a student and Working Group Leader. Duncan Alford will serve as the Working Group leader, with responsibility for convening the Working Group, keeping the Working Group on task and ensuring that the Working Group is prepared to present the results of its work at the Friday, March 1, 2019 Strategic Planning Workshop.

◆ Duration

The Working Group will become active upon selection of its members and designation of a Working Group Leader. The Working Group will be decommissioned upon delivery of the final version of their recommended strategic priorities, objectives and action plan.

◆ Support

The Strategic Planning Steering Committee will provide support as requested by the Working Group, including but not limited to the advice and counsel of the BRG strategic planning consultants.

APPENDIX

ABOUT THE PROCESS AND THE WORKGROUP

In the latter half of 2018, the School of Law embarked on a strategic planning process. As part of the initiative, the Dean appointed a Strategic Planning Steering Committee comprised of faculty and staff to lead and oversee the work. The School also conducted a competitive process to secure the support of an external consulting firm; the firm selected was the Berkeley Research Group, which has extensive strategic planning experience with institutions of higher education.

Over the course of the fall, in the first phase of the planning process, the Committee, working with the consultants, collected data in preparation for development of the strategic plan. This data collection included surveys of students, faculty, staff and alumni, as well as focus groups and one-on-one interviews with faculty, staff members and students.

Steering Committee members along with the consulting team, reviewed information developed during this data collection phase and identified four themes that they concluded should be the focus – along with statements of the School’s Mission, Vision and Values -- of the strategic plan. Those four themes are:

- Differentiators/Distinction (what makes the School unique and provides a competitive advantage in the universe of law schools);
- Student Success (how the School defines student success and what the School should do to ensure that success is achieved);
- Financial Sustainability (how the School can continue its growth and development with the assurance that its financial resources will be equal to its needs); and
- Culture (how the School treats students, faculty, staff and alumni, and how those groups both individually and collectively work together for the greater good of the School).

Each of these four themes, as well as the fifth theme of Mission, Vision and Values, has been assigned to a Working Group. Each Working Group is charged with proposing recommended strategic priorities and objectives with respect to its assigned theme, as well as developing an action plan for the School to implement if those priorities and objectives are to be achieved. The Working Group will present its proposal at a Strategic Planning Workshop on March 1, 2019, and, based on the feedback received during that Workshop, will prepare a final version of its priorities, objectives and action plan. This work will then be used as the basis for crafting the actual strategic plan, which is scheduled for completion in the late spring of 2019.

DIFFERENTIATORS/DISTINCTION WORKING GROUP: DETAIL

In addressing the theme of Differentiators/Distinction as set out in the Charter, the Working Group should keep in mind the following questions:

- In one brief paragraph, how should the School of Law be described to maximize its attractiveness to students and faculty?
- What are the gaps if any between that description and the School as it presently exists?
- What are the three most critical ways in which the School of Law can be differentiated from other law schools?
- Are those three critical differentiators competitive advantages?

- If they are not competitive advantages, what if anything could be done to make them so?
- If they cannot be made competitive advantages, are there other less obvious differentiators about the School that could be developed into meaningful competitive advantages?
- If so, what are they and how could they be developed into competitive advantages?

In addressing these questions, the Working Group should keep in mind these definitions:

- **Strategic Priority.** A strategic priority is a broadly-stated line of approach to translating the mission, vision and values of the organization into concrete outcomes. It reflects choices made among available options and takes into account the external environment and internal conditions, personnel and other resources. Strategic priorities are generally longer-term in nature; the intended outcomes are usually farther into the future. A university seeking to gain greater recognition in the marketplace might, for example, adopt a strategic priority that called for becoming recognized as offering a preeminent undergraduate experience. Alternatively, the same university might choose to achieve greater recognition by making it a strategic priority to build a preeminent research institution.
- **Strategic Objective.** Strategic objectives, or strategic goals, are the specific lines of action or tactics by which strategic priorities are accomplished. They generally involve specific, measurable goals and time frames shorter than those for strategic priorities. Using the university example, if the strategic priority would be to offer the preeminent undergraduate experience, a strategic objective might be to increase the size of faculty within a designated period of time to improve the student:faculty ratio. If the strategic priority were to achieve greater recognition as a research institution, the strategic objective might be to target two or three departments for which leading academicians would be recruited – again within a designated period.
- **Action Plan.** Action plans are just what their name implies: the specific steps the organization will take to successfully accomplish the strategic objectives that will help make the strategic priorities realities. The timeframes will be significantly shorter than those for either priorities or objectives and quite possibility will include interim milestones by which progress can be measured and periodic assessments of the need for recalibration can be encouraged. Action plans consider a variety of factors – for example, how much time the proposed plan will actually require, whether money will be needed, if current personnel will be sufficient or additional hiring will be required, whether technology can be used to advantage and what information will be needed. As a practical matter, they guide the day-to-day work of the organization.

In addition, the Working Group should draw on the data developed thus far in the strategic planning process, information generated prior to the strategic planning process and their own perspectives and experience. The end goal is to develop a strategy for setting the School apart in the marketplace, making the most of its advantages in the competition with other law schools for recognition, quality students, superior faculty and outstanding staff.