

## **Planning in the Community Colleges** **Essential Characteristics of Excellent Planning Processes**

Matthew C. Lee, Ph.D.  
September 2013

1. Participation
  - a. Active participation and support (not just permission) from the CEO (both district and college, and including authority delegated by the Board), executive staff, academic and classified leadership, and other movers and shakers on campus.
  - b. Broad, effective participation as well as input from all campus constituencies and major functions with a significant stake in the process and its outcomes.
  - c. Sufficient training to make participation effective.
2. Scope: Broad enough to encompass all applicable programs and services, without becoming so diffuse as to be meaningless.
3. Integration: Effective connections among levels, structures, and processes; among major plans; between planning and established institutional mission(s); between planning and resource allocation; and between evaluation and planning for the next cycle, in accord with accreditation requirements.
4. Improvement: Plans guide decision-making and action, and result in demonstrable improvement of institutional effectiveness, in student learning, programs, services, and/or infrastructure, again in accord with accreditation requirements.
5. Communication: Effective flow of information among all entities in the process, and between the process and the college community.
6. Information: Plans and decisions are based on sufficient useful, reliable, available information; evidence is incorporated in products.
7. Measurability: Progress in strategic directions and toward goals and objectives is clearly measurable.
8. Reasonableness: Ambitious yet attainable goals and timelines.
9. Accountability: Clearly assigned responsibilities.
10. Evaluation: Provisions for systematic monitoring, evaluation, and revision.
11. Sustainability: Sustainable, and then actually sustained, over the long term.
12. Efficiency: Minimal waste of participants' time; minimal duplication of effort.
13. Flexibility: Flexible enough for orderly change in response to changing circumstances, but stable enough that people can depend on the process.
14. Frequency: Frequent enough to be relevant to programmatic and budgetary reality, but not so frequent as to drive participants nuts; may involve multiple cycle lengths (e.g., annual and triennial).
15. Simplicity: Simple enough for participants to tackle at the indicated frequency, but not so simple as to be useless.
16. Products: Written outputs of high quality, clarity, and utility.
17. Coordination: Stable, preferably centralized, coordination body to facilitate adherence to the rest of these characteristics.