



University of Illinois Department of Computer Science

Vision and strategic planning

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Is Your Vision 20/20?

- Know (learn) what you want – what is your vision?
 - If you have no opinion on what your department should be, then you picked the wrong job!
 - If you have an unshakable certainty about what your department should be, then you picked the wrong job!
- What is CS?
 - Remember that there multiple correct answers
- What is your model of a good CS department?
 - Remember that one size does not fit all
- What is the research and education scope you want for your department?
What do you want to cover and what do you want to leave to other units?
 - Core research vs. interdisciplinary research
 - Professional education vs. core scientific education
 - CS vs. CE, cs. SE, vs. IS. Vs. MIS, vs. bioinfo vs. x-info...

What do You Need to Know

- Understand the facts about your department
 - Where do your students pick jobs? Why do your alumni appreciate the education they got? What is the image of your department in the College/Campus/industry...? Where are you strong/weak, and where are you perceived strong/weak?
- Understand the missions of your college/university
 - Research/Education/Service/Economic Development
- Understand the budget process
- Understand the explicit/implicit values of the people that will need to buy into your vision
 - faculty and executives
- Broaden your horizons – learn (on higher education, on IT employment and industry, on research outside your area)
 - CRA web site, Chronicle of Higher Education, AAAS...

Process to Create a Strategy (1)

- Externally: be involved in college/campus strategy making, at the right level
 - It is much easier to get support for your department strategy if it is implied by the college/campus strategy...
- Position yourself, if possible, as “strategist” for Computing and Information on campus, not as a representative of narrow CS interests.
 - This may require working directly with campus level administrators.

Process to Create a Strategy (2)

- Internally: A succession of retreats
 - Start with fact finding: outcome metrics in research and education, benchmarking to other depts. on campus and peer depts. elsewhere.
 - motivate need for change
 - Develop consensus on scope (us vs. them)
 - Develop consensus on main goals and sub-goals
 - Develop specific initiatives (research, education, administration, outreach...)

Advice

- Retreats are not about developing a vision and strategic plan; they are mainly about building support for such a plan
- You can have a huge impact on the outcome by your selection of the agenda and the work groups
- Don't neglect mechanisms:
 - administration: does it support your goals?
 - incentives (financial and non-financial): are they aligned to goals?

A Plan is Just the Beginning

- Selling the Plan
 - to dept – done as part of strategic process
 - to dean/provost
 - speak to what (really) matters to them – occupy both high ground and low ground
 - to peer departments
 - ibid
- Prioritizing implementation
- Tracking progress
- Continuously updating the plan