

Strategy Mapping Report

The Strategy Mapping Session was the second of three sub-phases of the deliberative phase of the AUA 2017 Strategic Plan. The deliberative phase launched with a community meeting on July 7, to which all members of the university community and external stakeholders were invited. An issue outline and fact sheets, process description and guidelines for deliberations were circulated to participants and posted on the university's Strategy2017 web-page as a starting point for informed deliberation.

The strategy mapping session was an issue clarification and consensus building exercise held on Thursday-Friday, July 22-23. The entire community was invited to make suggestions for the mapping session and all important sectors within (students, faculty, staff) and outside the university (gov't, business, employers, alumni, NGOs, international organizations) were represented during this part of the deliberative. Approximately 25 different stakeholders took part in the event, [23] on Friday for individual issue deliberations and 14 on Saturday for the synthesis of the issue deliberations into a consensus outline. Those who could not attend the session were invited to submit comments in writing or confer with stakeholders who would be attending. Quite a few individuals from inside and outside the University took advantage of this opportunity.

By design the AUA Strategic Planning process is an iterative, multichannel process. Colleagues who were not involved in this exercise have an important role to play in reviewing and improving the outline with fresh, but informed eyes. Stakeholders were encouraged to confer with their constituencies before and after the Mapping Session and to check with their colleagues whether we are going in the right direction and suggest revisions to the draft outline. In addition, drafts and deliberation notes were put on line and circulated to stakeholders from within and outside the university, including all faculty and staff, alumni and student representatives by e-mail.

The sessions were held with the assistance of an experienced process technician who introduced various strategy planning concepts and tools at the beginning of each day's session. After the general session, on the first day, we divided into break out groups (4-6) to discuss the 9 issues in twelve 1.5 hour long sessions with some issues (undergraduate, operations) spanning over two sessions. The break-out groups were selected based on individual preferences. The breakout sessions were hosted by the president, provost, undergraduate taskforce chair, and president's adviser. The breakout group hosts helped organize the break-out group deliberations, allowing the group to decide who should facilitate and record the discussion. The process technician and WASC coordinator acted as floating advisers to help breakout groups organize their deliberations and stay on track. The notes from all sessions were written on flipcharts to be transcribed, posted and archived. At the end of each session, the groups were asked to summarize the highlights of their discussion and recommendations of what should be included in the Strategy Map with regard to the issue they discussed. These were to be actionable items, ideally specifying what is to be done, who is to do them, when, and why (cause and expected effect). Not surprisingly at this stage, most of the recommendations were fairly general and only specified what was to be done, and sometimes when and why. In the next iteration, these details will

be addressed. At the end of the day, these were presented in a round-up session at which each group's recommendation highlights were presented, clarified for the group, and sometimes further refined in light of interconnected items discussed in other groups. On the evening of the first day the recommendations were formulated and synthesized into the issue outline, which was the basis for the second day's deliberations. On the second day, after a perception exercise that aimed to show the pros and cons of different kinds of consensus-building and the blindspots in perceptions, we revisited several sub-items that had not been addressed and then moved on to the outline refinement. Each item in the outline was separately discussed by the entire group and edited in real time, often adding detail, making connections with other items, and clarifying issues, especially those requiring further research, data or thought. At 3 pm, we reviewed the two day's work, assured that there were no major gaps and that there was consensus¹ around the draft outline. The next steps were explained. We then briefly evaluated the process and sessions' outcomes, trying to identify what worked well, what could be improved, and what expected outcomes had or had not been fulfilled. These were recorded and will be taken into account for future events.

In addition to producing a draft Strategy Map around which the participants reached consensus, the facilitated discussion was a good opportunity to air concerns, identify issues, build consultative decision-making capacity, teambuilding skills, and learn new deliberation tools. One of the strengths of the process is that we all checked our titles at the door and top level administration, staff and faculty were involved and participated as equals in discussions, permitting free and open discussion and giving all participants, regardless of status or position, an opportunity to be heard.

¹ Consensus was defined not as absolute unanimity on every point, but overall acceptance of the document as well-justified, agreeing to disagree, especially on issues where data was unclear or insufficient.