



Strategic Plan 2016 - 2018

**University Administration
3201 Jermantown Road
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Plan initially approved by the Stratford University Board of Trustees on April 5, 2016 with the annual review conducted and approved on April 12, 2017

Stratford University 2016 - 2018 Strategic Plan

PURPOSE

The Stratford University Strategic Plan communicates the organization's intentions for 2016 – 2018. This plan is intended to coordinate and align our strategy with our planning, budgeting, and executing activities at every level of the organization.

STRATFORD UNIVERSITY CORNERSTONES OF EXCELLENCE STRATEGIC PLAN OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

Stratford University is a private institution of higher learning. The student body ranges from recent high school graduates to those desiring to change their career field to working professionals to military and international students.

The Stratford University Strategic Plan communicates the organization's direction, intentions, and goals for the three-year period 2016 –2018. This strategic roadmap is intended to coordinate and align our statements of mission and vision with our planning, budgeting, assessment and implementation efforts at every level of the organization. The objectives and their supporting programs are derived from the Stratford University Guiding Principles, President/CEO guidance, faculty and staff input, and directives/expectations from our governance agencies such as accrediting bodies and governing boards. While Stratford is justifiably proud of its past accomplishments and contributions, the University is more encouraged by its future prospects and potential.

Stratford University recognizes that the future is crafted in the present. That plans formulated today will guide the actions taken tomorrow. The goals identified within this planning document are specific, realistic and measurable. These goals also reinforce our emphasis on quality, access, affordability and accountability. The integration and prioritization of these objectives have resulted in a plan that is reflective of, and responsive to, the primary interests and concerns of our students and other key stakeholders

Previous strategic plans have been in place since 2007 with publications in 2007, 2010, 2013 and annual reviews each year since 2007. In 2014/2015 a complete review was accomplished incorporating the discussion from of a series of campus level “deep dive” meetings. As part of this process the Master Idea, the Vision, the Mission, and the Motto were reviewed and revised at off-site meetings held on May 12-14, 2014 December 18, 2014, followed by several Executive Leadership Team meetings on January 9th, January 30th and July 17th, 2015. The guiding principles were reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees on October 14th, 2015 including the Master Idea, the Vision, the Mission and the Motto. The plan was reviewed and revised on November 24, 2015 by the Executive Leadership Team. The Strategic Plan Outline document was reviewed and approved by the Stratford University Board of Trustees on December 2nd, 2015 with the entire plan approved by the Board on April 5, 2016.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our Master Idea --Education heals the world.

Stratford is an organization motivated by purpose. Purpose is where our unique talents intersect with the needs of the world. Our purpose, and our value proposition, are reflected in this Master Idea and will be operationalized via this Strategic Plan. This Master Idea is the North Star against which we weigh all future opportunities, objectives and initiatives. We have become a for-benefit institution which uses profits to achieve its purpose.

We believe that many of the world's problems can be addressed with education. Education provides opportunities. These opportunities inspire hope. Hope for financial security, family stability, career progression, community contribution and diminished levels of societal poverty, violence, crime, illiteracy and intolerance.

Our Vision -- Empowering the human spirit—one student, one community at a time.

By understanding each student and his/her community, we can help empower the human spirit through education. Education is the great equalizer and we intend to provide affordable education globally to embrace our Master Idea.

Our Mission – Preparing students for rewarding careers through quality educational programs that meet the changing needs of employers and the community.

By providing career-centric education, based on the competencies demanded by industry, we provide an avenue for a productive career for each of our students. To meet the needs of a diverse community of learners, the University provides education that balances technical, professional, and applied learning components. We deliver relevant curricula based on input from employers, the governing board, advisory boards, academic partners and graduates.

Our Motto -- Changing Lives...One Student at a Time

By treating each student with compassionate support and instructional focus, we help them achieve the professional and personal success which they seek. We focus on student success through a comprehensive support program including testing following acceptance to assure correct placement in courses, financial planning, academic assistance, and other needed resources.

OUR INSTRUCTIONAL PHILOSOPHY

The face and climate of today's business world is changing rapidly. Economic growth and the constantly transforming needs of modern industries can provide exciting and challenging

opportunities for qualified graduates. Stratford University is at the forefront of these changes and is dedicated to assisting graduates find employment in this evolving job market. Our innovative approach to education helps our graduates gain the skills and self-confidence needed to be successful in this increasingly competitive economy.

Stratford University seeks to provide its students with relevant skills and knowledge, leading to satisfying careers and the maximization of their potential. The University is able to achieve these goals through a carefully-planned program of instructional and career counseling, including timely curriculum revisions, hands-on learning experiences, expert faculty, state-of-the-art equipment, individual help, and placement assistance.

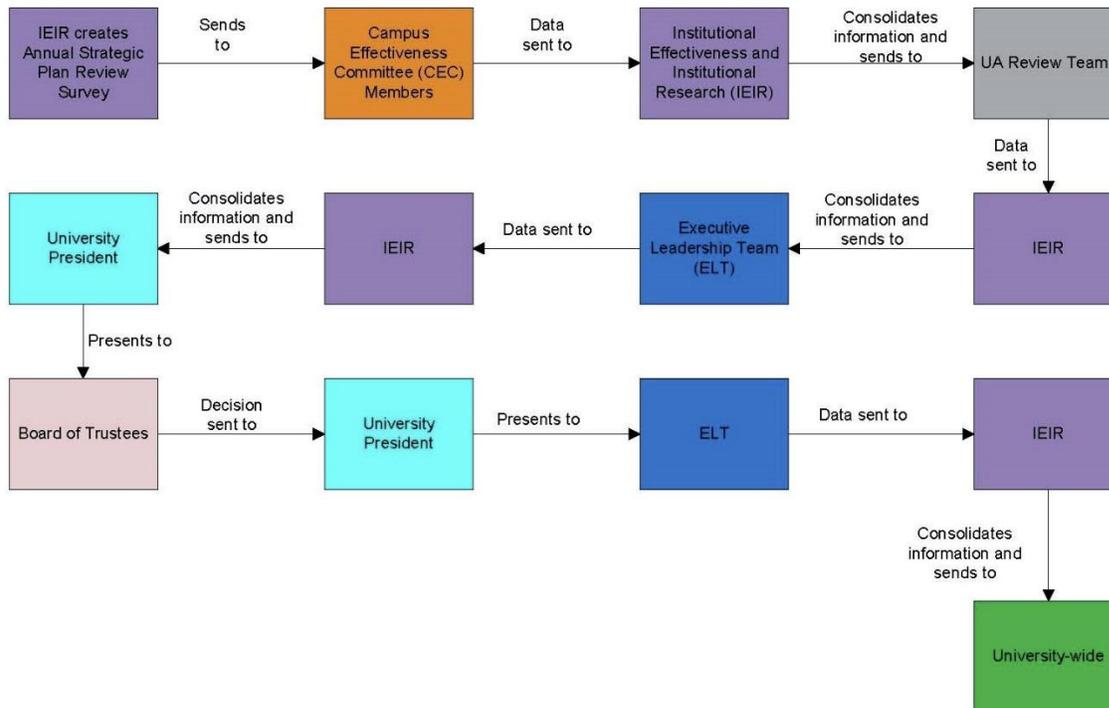
- **Instructional Focus:** All Stratford programs focus on specific instructional goals. This learning is leveraged by retaining small class sizes and thus allows for greater student-faculty interaction and engagement. All curricula, presentations, supportive reference materials, and student-teacher interactions are collectively driven by this strategy.
- **Communication:** Effective use of communication reinforces the instructional message. Creative seating arrangements and small group projects are used to encourage student/student and student/teacher interaction. A team-building and applied learning atmosphere is sought during all phases of the program.
- **Self-Discovery:** Hands-on learning using actual equipment is a key component of the Stratford University instructional methodology. Learning by discovery provides self-fulfillment, empowerment, confidence and commitment. Stratford University recognizes that self-discovery is a key to long-term retention of information. In the final analysis, the University combines sound instructional technology with an insight into the career market to produce a valuable and unique educational service.

The strategic initiatives that are proposed within this plan are unified in their intent to keep student success as Stratford University's highest priority, prepare graduates who will make significant professional and personal contributions to their communities, and furnish economic and cultural benefits to elevate the quality of life in the regions we serve. As with all its strategic efforts, Stratford welcomes the opportunity to partner with others to turn these plans into progress and goals into reality.

STRATEGIC PLAN RESPONSIBILITIES

The President has the overall responsibility for the Strategic Plan with execution coordinated by the President through the Executive Leadership Team (ELT). The plan is reviewed annually at the campus levels for achievement of objectives and results of the review are used to improve the university accomplish its mission. The process for annual review of the strategic plan is as follows:

Annual Strategic Plan Review Process



Strategic Plan Outline

Strategic Plan Cornerstone#1 - Academic Excellence

- **Student engagement:** Project-centric education based on competencies required by employers.
- **Learning outcomes:** Portfolios, Competency transcripts, PLA
- **Faculty development:** Hiring and On-boarding, Training, Teachers as Coaches
- **Relevant curriculum:** Rethinking programs to anticipate future employer needs, new programs, revised programs, UA-level advisory boards, internationalization
- **Student Services:** Rethinking Student Support and Career Services to integrate with academic delivery
- **Technology in the classroom:** Mobile devices, thin-client, smart boards, Moodle
- **Accreditation:** SACSCOC. IE&R

Strategic Plan Cornerstone #2 – Soulful Excellence

- **Culture and Values:** Deep dive process, working with purpose, behavior matters

- **Building a community:** Stratford Foundation -501(c)3, Certified Benefit Corporation, Outreach, Marketing 2.0
- **Inspiring:** Faculty, Staff, Alumni

Strategic Plan Cornerstone #3- Operational Effectiveness

- **Scalable Talent Development:** Talent pipeline, Organizational Development, hiring and keeping the “right” people, recognition, empowering rather than rule-bound, automated, compliant
- **Scalable IT Systems:** Information systems, connectivity, support
- **Scalable Compliance Systems:** Training, internal auditing
- **Scalable Financial Controls:** budgeting, integrated dashboards
- **Scalable Marketing Systems:** tracking, analytics, social media, content generating systems, branding

Strategic Plan Cornerstone #4- Growth

- **Market expansion (HS, Corporate, Military, International):** Delegated to campus level, driven by UA
- **Domestic Campus Expansion:** Create a structured site selection process, cash management, continued use of LLC, regional clusters
- **Online Program:** global footprint, effective marketing, virtual online campus
- **International Campus Expansion:** Joint Ventures, off-shore holding company

The four cornerstones of the Stratford University strategic plan listed above build upon the strengths of the Stratford University community and needs of the community and employers. The cornerstones serve as a roadmap to meet goals critical to the sustainable future of the university and the employment of its graduates. As noted above, the detail of these objectives stem from a series of highly collaborative and participative “deep dives” and leadership team meetings where faculty members, program administrators, and senior university staff met to examine and develop university-wide goals and objectives that promote excellence in teaching, students learning, student support and other interventions that lead to gainful employment, community involvement and achievement of personal goals consistent with the university mission. Each objective is followed by an elaboration of the specific actions the university will take to meet the objective.

Cornerstone # 1 - Academic Excellence

- ***Objective 1: Student engagement:*** *Project-centric education based on competencies required by employers.* Stratford University recognizes the need for a student-centered learning environment that encourages students to become credentialed through engagement in their education and career development. This includes implementing rigorous individual and team projects that help students become independent learners and team players able to critically think, communicate, expand inquiry and better meet the expectations of employers. Thus, Stratford University will offer programs that include classroom projects coupled with the award of formal certifications as part of the educational program.

- ***Objective 2: Learning outcomes: Portfolios, Competency transcripts, PLA.*** Stratford University recognizes that not all learning occurs in a classroom and that adult learners may have acquired college-level learning through work and life experience. Structured undergraduate and graduate programs at Stratford University will employ institutional strategies as an integral part of the university's academic processes. Existing tools of student portfolios, transcripts that identify learned competencies, and the use of prior learning assessments help the university to focus on student learning while being highly flexible and student centered. Thus, Stratford University will:
 1. Provide direction to student's on portfolio development and its value as an employment seeking tool.
 2. Address principles of experiential learning, including the value of experiential learning for adults.
 3. Recognize the links between experience and learning, and be able to determine college-level learning gained from experience.
 4. Discriminate between college-level and pre-college-level learning.
 5. Apply the principles and be able to articulate to various audiences the value of proper and rigorous prior learning assessment.
 6. Capture competencies acquired by students and post them on official university transcripts.

- ***Objective 3: Faculty development and enhancement: Hiring and On-boarding, Training, Teachers as Coaches.*** Stratford University depends on qualified faculty members to present courses of study to students. Thus, three main tasks will be accomplished. They are: (1) hiring the best and highly qualified faculty; (2) to stress teaching excellence and enhance the faculty's knowledge and skills in teaching strategies, and; (3) to offer support and resources to faculty members to increase involvement in curriculum of all academic programs.

- ***Objective 4: Relevant curriculum: Rethinking programs to anticipate future employer needs, new programs, revised programs, UA-level advisory boards, internationalization.*** A relevant curriculum is one that is demanding and challenging to students and allows them to develop and apply the concepts and skills employers want. The content needs to come from stakeholders to include employers, faculty members, an examination of societal needs and workplace relevance. From the results of this needs analysis new programs and updating of existing programs will be developed, refined, and expanded in accordance with the documented needs of our students and our collective sensing of the trends and developments within our markets. This program development and adjustment will be achieved in rapid fashion to ensure that we are proactive to student need and that we remain ahead of our major competitors. The faculty, business needs and our students will drive all program development.

- ***Objective 5: Student Services: Rethinking Student Support and Career Services to integrate with academic delivery.*** Student support and career services provide instructional related supportive services that will enable all students (regardless of degree choice and ability) to persist and to graduate from Stratford University. The primary goal of this activity is the maximization of academic potential and educational opportunities by enhancing students' proficiency in a variety of core skills that leads to gainful employment. This will include advisement as to which groups to join, what publications to read, what types of articles to write, clubs/organizations to

join, what short courses outside the university to complete (CORSERA, EDX, others) etc. These new practices will help to retain students, keep costs down, increase student bonding to the university and result in enhanced career success.

- **Objective 6: Technology in the classroom:** *Mobile devices, thin-client, smart boards, Moodle Improvement.* The integration of technology into the classroom curriculum is a critical element to the future success and employment of students. Technology devices and training, when properly used, can improve student learning and achievement, help structure and focus the academic environment, and prepare our graduates for future employment and lifelong learning. The University will design and redesign, develop, and implement innovative instructional materials, approaches (e.g. enhances hybrid, blended, online, residential), and systems that meet student needs, that are cost effective, durable, and easily maintained. This will include faculty member development and acquisition of equipment. The overarching purpose of this objective is to increase academic quality, student enrollment, retention rates, and graduation and placement rates as well as increase the effectiveness of faculty members to incorporate different instructional methods to improve student learning.
- **Objective 7: Accreditation:** *SACSCOC and programmatic accreditation.* Stratford University will seek regional and additional programmatic accreditations. Regional accreditation helps to ensure that Stratford’s academic programs meets acceptable levels of quality. It also will help employers to decide whether to fund employee expenses, facilitate transfer credit, and open doors to students who desire to pursue admission to initial or further graduate study. Programmatic accreditation focuses on a narrower set of standards particular to a field of study and can increase the value and quality of the student experience.

Cornerstone # 2 Soulful Excellence

- **Objective 1: Culture and Values:** *Deep dive process, working with purpose, behavior matters.* Competition and a changing educational landscape are creating a need for Stratford University to innovate, be mindful of purpose, and recognize individual and institutional behavior matters. Thus, Stratford University to step up its pursuit of ethical new revenue streams and invest in new programs and opportunities that meet the needs of faculty members, staff, and students that enhance employment opportunities, personal growth, and lifelong learning. Stratford University will also further develop its own student-as-customer and business-as-customer and staff-as-customer value package that can be displayed and managed from initial student contact through alumni status, from business contact to student employment and staff development. This process is intended to be the sum total of everything the university provides, both tangible and intangible, to its students, staff and faculty. This described “cycle of value”, is the series of student/faculty touch-points—moments of truth--which the student/faculty goes through while being a student or faculty member at the university.
- **Objective 2: Building a community:** *Stratford Foundation -501(c) 3, Certified Benefit Corporation, Outreach, and Marketing 2.0.* As Stratford University continues to grow, its managers will face organizational challenges of controlling ever more diversified, complex,

competitive, conflict-prone organization. Thus the university will create a new organizational structure for the benefit of society, for the long-term well-being of the University and its students. This structure will be continually reinforced and new talent pipelines will be established to organize and transition the corporate structure to manage growth, diversification, and expansion in today's changing environment.

- ***Objective 3: Inspiring: Faculty, Staff, and Alumni.*** Policies will exist to guide, support, empower, and train employees. New policies and procedures will be developed (and existing policies reviewed) which are fair and equitable, consistent, logical, reflect the values and principles of the institution and simple to use. They will foster the university “for benefit” corporate culture and provide consistent guidelines for employee behavior.

Cornerstone #3- Operational Effectiveness

- ***Objective 1: Scalable Talent Development: Talent pipeline, Organizational Development, hiring and keeping the “right” people, recognition, empowering rather than rule-bound, automated, compliant systems that meet the needs of staff, faculty members and students.*** Stratford University recognizes little is more vital to its long-term sustainability than the choice and cultivation of employees who can grasp the general competencies required by their current and future potential positions. Thus, the university will develop increased talent “bench strength” and close skills gaps in existing and future employees that could “hold back” the university from its full potential.
- ***Objective 2: Scalable IT Systems: Implement information connectivity, and support systems that meet the growing need for data collection, analysis, reporting and process improvement.*** As Stratford University continues to achieve growth in admissions, registrations and revenue, as well as required to meet various administrative reporting requirements it will ensure that data systems, projected course and program requirements, processing capability, and other support systems and processes are implemented that are capable of delivering student/faculty value in a collaborative, high quality, cost effective technology infrastructure for teaching, learning, and active student information systems.
- ***Objective 3: Scalable Compliance Systems: Provide training and implement internal auditing that strengthens the effectiveness and efficiency of compliance to meet regulatory changes, accreditation and licensure requirements.*** The element of Stratford's appearance to outside review is critical given the increased scrutiny on proprietary institutions and with the growing demands of accrediting bodies and students. A compliance department that can “keep up” with the complexity and growth of regulation will be fully supported as Stratford goes through the SACSCOC process, programmatic accreditations, various government oversight reviews and other dutiful administrative activities.
- ***Objective 4: Scalable Financial Controls: Implement budgeting and integrated dashboard analytics that support internal auditing functions.*** The Stratford University management accounting system will be a carefully constructed conceptual architecture with reportable metrics

that supports the structural, interpersonal, external, and internal relationships governing Stratford University operations. The Stratford University management system will be structured to align the various parts of the university to ensure the university financial viability and the student financial experience meets expectations.

- ***Objective 5: Scalable Marketing Systems:*** *Implement tracking, analytics, social media, content generating systems and branding approaches that improve the marketing of the university.* As the name of this objective implies, an integrated approach to communications and marketing the university will be designed to support continued health, vitality and growth of the institution.

Cornerstone #4- Growth

- ***Objective 1: Market expansion (HS, Corporate, Military, and International):*** *Delegated to campus level, driven by UA.* Stratford University will develop constructive relationships and partnerships with appropriate key business individuals and organizations to meet its strategic objectives. These relationships will include association with key business, financial, legal, education, training, elements that will provide Stratford University with the strategic position and resources to achieve its objectives and accomplish its purpose. The university will communicate to the broader community that Stratford University can assist business organizations and that Stratford University can help them meet their education and training needs by placement of highly qualified students. The university will continue to apply, challenge, promote, and engage with geographically local high schools; corporate businesses; military organizations (Veterans Administration; military bases, camps, posts, stations); as well as international organizations, government officials, international agents/representatives, and others to ensure that Stratford University is known and regarded as a legitimate provider.
- ***Objective 2: Domestic Campus Expansion:*** *Create a structured site selection process, cash management, continued use of LLC, regional clusters:* Since Stratford University is in a growth mode, it will continue to expand its operations in a sensible and structured manner to ensure its financial management, employer needs, and locations serve as magnets for students and offer convenient locations to serve student and employer needs.
- ***Objective 3: Online Program:*** *Global footprint, effective marketing, and virtual online campus.* As interest in online education continues to grow Stratford University will expand its online programs to meet the needs of its students who are unable to attend residential classes or who prefer the online delivery method.
- ***Objective 4: International Campus Expansion:*** *Joint Ventures, off-shore holding company.* Stratford University will achieve appropriate levels of academic acceptance within the international education community and the primary markets they serve. Stratford University will apply, challenge, promote, and engage with international organizations, international government officials, international agents/representatives, and others to ensure that Stratford University is known and regarded as a legitimate provider.

Revision History

Date	Summary of Revision	Approved By
April 12, 2017	The annual review of the strategic plan resulted in: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="444 373 1062 443">1. Minor editing of some objectives to improve grammar and clarity<li data-bbox="444 449 1138 480">2. Addition of the Annual Review Process flow chart<li data-bbox="444 487 1084 554">3. Elaboration on the Role of the President in the annual review process.	Board of Trustees

