College-Level Planning at NOVA

NOVA’s mission and strategic plan *Strategic Vision 2015: Gateway to the American Dream* form the basis of college-wide and individual unit annual planning and evaluation processes. The goals elaborated in the strategic plan are carefully crafted to ensure that NOVA achieves its mission. The Administrative Council, led by the President, functions as the College Planning Committee and oversees the development and implementation of the strategic plan and, along with the NOVA Board, meets to review, assess, and revise the College’s mission and strategic plan once every three years. As part of this process, the NOVA Board formally approves the strategic plan. NOVA’s mission and strategic plan are linked directly to the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) mission and the VCCS strategic plan. NOVA’s strategic plan and mission were most recently revised in October 2010.

The President develops college-level annual goals that are derived directly from NOVA’s strategic plan and the Chancellor’s annual goals for VCCS. The annual goals are then presented to the Administrative Council for input and approval. These college-level annual goals link NOVA’s annual planning process to the College’s strategic plan and goals of the VCCS system. The most recent NOVA goals were finalized in October 2010.

College- to Unit-Level Planning

An initial proposal for a college-wide annual planning committee resulted in the establishment of the Unit Planning and Evaluation Working Group, which provides consistency and rigor in the planning process and ensures that the College’s strategic plan is appropriately integrated into all instructional program and administrative and campus unit and sub-unit plans. The Unit Planning and Evaluation Working Group is chaired by the Vice President for Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment with membership from each of the planning units. In conjunction with the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment (OIRPA), the working group helps coordinate the annual planning and evaluation processes. The working group meets four times each year to review goals and expected outcomes. The Unit Planning and Evaluation Working Group also helps the planning units document actual outcomes and provide evidence of improvement as they prepare their annual planning and evaluation reports. By instituting the Unit Planning and Evaluation Working Group, NOVA is able to ensure that college-level and unit-level planning and evaluation processes are closely linked.
Vice Presidents and Provosts, as heads of their units and members of the Administrative Council, make certain that their respective unit purpose statements are based on the College’s mission. Then based on these unit purpose statements and the President’s annual college-level goals, Vice Presidents and Provosts decide on unit goals and outcomes. From unit-level goals, Associate Vice Presidents, Deans, and Directors select goals and objectives for all campus and administrative service sub-units and educational programs. Unit and sub-unit goals are the starting point for ongoing annual planning and evaluation processes.

All degree-awarding instructional programs and selected certificate programs engage in the same annual planning and evaluation process but place particular emphasis on student learning outcomes (SLOs). Each instructional program establishes SLOs and program goals based on their purpose statements, which are derived from the College mission. At annual cluster meetings preceding each academic year, faculty determine their program goals and SLOs to be evaluated during the coming year. Coordinating Deans and SLO Teams, with broad-based input from faculty, prepare Annual Planning and Evaluation Reports for these programs, in which they detail how assessment results will be used to improve student learning.

The annual planning cycle begins in the summer, when all planning units (campuses led by Provosts and administrative units led by Vice Presidents, including the Executive Vice President) meet individually to begin setting goals and expected outcomes for the upcoming year. All sub-units within these planning units also determine their own corresponding goals and expected outcomes. The units submit this information to OIRPA. In December each planning unit headed by a Provost or Vice President does a mid-year evaluation with the President of their progress in meeting their goals. In the following months, the actual outcomes and assessment results are collected. The Annual Planning and Evaluation Reports are submitted each June for administrative units and campuses, and each September for instructional programs. Copies of the reports are subsequently distributed college-wide and placed on OIRPA’s website.

**Linking Planning and Budget**

Throughout the ongoing annual planning and evaluation cycles, the budget is integrated at several levels within the College in a systematic institutional effectiveness model ensuring a funding allocation process that cultivates continuous improvement. From April through June, in a series of Administrative Council meetings, budget decisions are made based on the evaluation process. Budget factors heavily into the planning process at the college-level, such as in enrollment planning and faculty allocation. For example, faculty allocation for an upcoming year is based on the previous year’s growth and ability to meet enrollment targets at each campus. At the unit-level, units indicate their need for resources in the planning and evaluation process; then at the end of the fiscal year, units detail the activities and assessment results for specific objectives for which funds were allocated. Based on the results of the evaluation process, the Administrative Council then determines the budgetary priorities for the upcoming year. This system fosters the integration of budgeting and planning processes to ensure continuous improvement in the College’s ability to achieve its mission and strategic plan.

The planning and evaluation processes are represented graphically by the figures below. Figure 1 shows that all educational programs, administrative support services, and campus-
based educational support services are planning units headed by members of the Administrative Council who report directly to the President.

Figure 1. Annual Planning and Evaluation Process: Instructional Programs, Administrative Support, and Educational Support Services
Figure 2 shows that planning, evaluation, and budget processes are ongoing and integrated to support systematic and continuous improvement.

**Figure 2. Annual Planning and Evaluation Process**

1. Budget finalized
2. Continuous Improvement Summary discussed at AC

Budget discussions begin (April)

AP&E Reports Submission

July

College-wide Goals/Expected Outcomes

Mid-cycle Evaluation

December

1st part of AP&E Report is submitted to OIRPA (Campus/Unit Goals)

Unit/Campus/ IP Goals/Expected Outcomes

September

President presents College goals to Administrative Council (AC)
Figure 3 shows that instructional program goals and SLOs are derived from NOVA’s mission and Strategic Plan.

**Figure 3. Annual Planning and Evaluation of Instructional Programs**

- NOVA Mission
- Strategic Goals
  - (Strategic Vision 2015)
- Instructional Programs
  - (Program Purpose)
- Student Learning Outcomes
- A.A.
- A.S.
- A.A.A.
- A.A.S.
- Certificates
- 58 Degree Programs
- 6 Certificate Programs
Figure 4 shows that all administrative support services goals are derived from NOVA’s mission and Strategic Plan.

Figure 4. Annual Planning and Evaluation of Administrative Support Services

NOVA Mission

Strategic Goals
(Strategic Vision 2015)

Administrative Support Services
(Unit Purpose)

Annual Goals

Executive Vice President, Academic & Student Services
Vice President, Finance & Administration
Vice President, Institutional Advancement
Vice President, Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment
Vice President, Instructional & Information Technology
Vice President, Workforce Development/Continuing Education

22 Sub-units
Number of sub-units may change slightly from year to year
Figure 5 shows that all campus based educational support services goals are derived from NOVA’s mission and strategic plan.

**Figure 5. Annual Planning and Evaluation of Campuses**

- NOVA Mission
- Strategic Goals
  - (Strategic Vision 2015)
- Campuses
  - (Campuses and Vice Presidents)
- Annual Goals

41 Sub-units
Number of sub-units may change slightly from year to year
Figure 6 shows how the annual planning and evaluation process fosters achievement of NOVA’s college-level and unit goals as well as the strategic goals and mission of the VCCS system.

**Figure 6. Planning Process at NOVA: Mission to Strategic Planning to Annual Planning**

Integrated:

1. VCCS to NOVA
2. Strategic to Annual
3. College-wide to Unit-/Sub-unit-Level
4. Instructional Programs included