Much has been written about strategic planning. However, most of its well-developed and complex literature does not address the specific concerns of department chairs. Led by boards and presidents, strategic planning efforts are generally conceived of and pursued at the institutional level, with departments falling into a support role.

The foundation of planning is, of course, the desire to exert control over the future. It emerges from the realization that the future will come to us willy-nilly and that, unless we purposefully define what kind of a future we want, we will be no more than victims to whatever may spontaneously occur. Departments are not exempt from the need to plan. In fact, the success of a department directly depends on the degree to which the chair is able to rouse and focus the collective energy of the department on envisioning its future and take the action required to transform that vision into reality. Planning components for departments include its curriculum, faculty, students, physical facilities and its fiscal resources.

**CURRICULUM**

A department's curriculum must evolve with the discipline. In the humanities, that requires keeping abreast of the fundamental questions being asked in the field and being aware of the new methodologies that practitioners are applying. In technical fields, the pressure to keep up can be particularly intense because the pace of evolution (for both equipment and technique) is rapid, with changes occurring daily in some fields.

**FACULTY**

Faculty are the department's major resource and its source of a dynamic curriculum. Keeping the curriculum up to date necessitates supporting (and/or pressing) faculty to keep themselves apprised of new developments in their discipline. This, in turn, invites attention to faculty development policies and strategies.
Faculty development strategies will not be effective without acknowledging the differences and similarities between full-time permanent faculty and part-time adjunct faculty, as well as the different needs among individuals and their career stages.

Permanent faculty need to remain stimulated—and stimulating—if the curriculum is to remain "alive" for the students. As new faculty arrive, they must be acculturated to the department's standards in this regard. That process will be much more effective if the department has taken time to articulate to itself what its standards are.

The growing presence of adjunct faculty necessitates that some of the department's strategic planning be directed at integrating these faculty to the department, its curriculum, and its students. Adjunct faculty, particularly those who work for a department on a quasi-permanent basis, also need opportunities for professional development.

(Many of these questions are addressed in the section "The Chair and Faculty.")

STUDENTS

Curricular and faculty development must be carried out in conjunction with an understanding of the characteristics of the student body—including the kinds of students that the program wants to attract. Developing a curriculum designed to funnel students into graduate programs when the department's majors are bound for immediate employment will not help it recruit students. Conversely, an applied curriculum that does not prepare students for graduate programs will jeopardize their learning, forcing students either to abandon plans for graduate study altogether or to choose a program of lesser quality.

PHYSICAL FACILITIES

While it is possible to operate in less than ideal physical space, the quality of a department's physical space and equipment clearly affects what it can do in its curriculum. Indeed, a new consciousness has developed about the linkage between space and curriculum, which means that departments need to be much more involved in thinking about their pedagogical approaches and the connections between pedagogy and space.

(These issues are addressed in the "Resource Management" section of the ACE Department Chair Online Resource Center, under the subsection on "Physical Plant Management.")
FISCAL RESOURCES

Linking all these topics is the need for funding. Whether it is faculty development, curriculum innovation, or space renovation, maintenance, or new construction, the project will eventually require dollars.

(This topic is explored in the "Resource Management" section of the ACE Department Chair Online Resource Center under the subsection on "Fund Raising.")

CONCLUSION

Unless one regards chairing a department as merely a temporary maintenance assignment, limited to routine tasks such as filing reports and attending meetings, punctuated by crises demanding immediate responses, strategic planning should never be far from a chair's mind. As a chair once observed to me, the greatest change that he perceived after taking the job involved his perception of time. Previously, he thought in terms of days and semesters, but becoming chair led him to think from a broader perspective: in years and beyond.

Strategic planning does exactly that: It asks us to think in a time frame that permits us to affect our reality as it emerges, inexorably and minute by minute. Strategic thinking is part and parcel of all the topics covered in this web site and underpins the life of every effective chair.