Carleton Planning Framework

November 21, 2008

Introduction

During the 2007-2008 academic year, the administration, faculty and staff of Carleton University engaged in a planning discussion with the goal of developing a **new strategic plan** as well as an **institution-wide process for ongoing planning** and decision-making. Driving all aspects of planning is the academic mission of the institution.

Taking the lead on the development of the strategic plan are the President, Provost and Vice-President (Academic), Deans, the Vice-President (Research and International) and a significant group of researchers. Taking the lead on the institution-wide process for ongoing planning **(Carleton Planning Framework)** is the Vice-President (Finance and Administration) along with the heads of all administrative support units throughout the institution. **The desired outcome is to create a new strategic plan as well as planning processes that are fully integrated across the University and provide guidance and direction to the institution.**

Guiding Principles

Planning at Carleton University will be characterized by the following guiding principles:

- **The academic and research mission is the primary driver of the strategic plan.** *It is essential that all planning and resulting activities reflect the desired direction of the academic and research enterprise, and contribute to furthering academic excellence and student success.*

- **Faculty and staff engagement is essential and the planning process should engender a high level of commitment from the entire campus community.** *Success requires that everyone understand and support the strategic plan and also understand and respect the relationship between Carleton's strategic plan, the plans of each Faculty and the plans of administrative support units.*

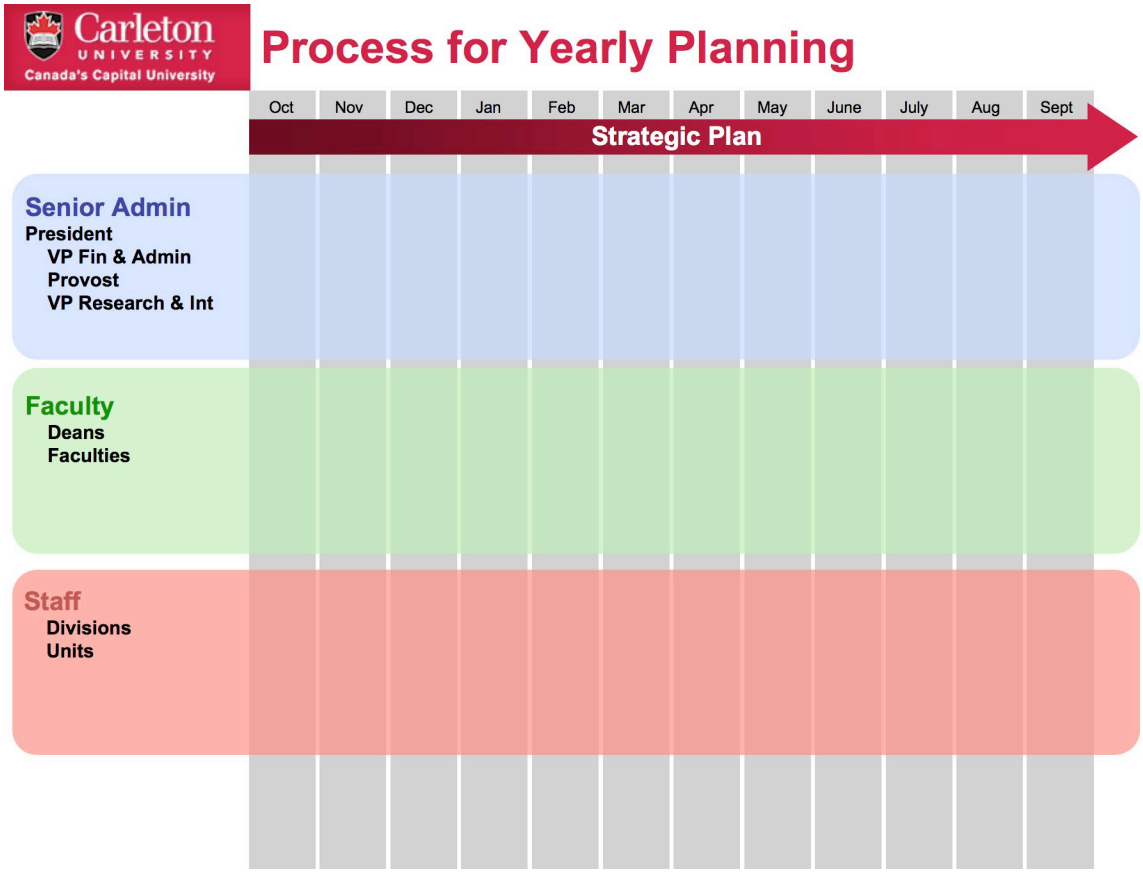
- **Decision-making must be transparent.** *Carleton's annual planning process begins with setting yearly priorities and a clear budget framework for the coming year. That, along with a significant communication at all stages of the process, ensures appropriate opportunities for input and promotes understanding of the rationale for resource-related decisions.*

- **Effective communication is essential to success.** *The process emphasizes communication within units, as well as across units, breaking down 'silos' and ensuring that all planning is appropriately linked.*

- **The process includes both multi-year and annual planning.** *The high-level strategic plan serves as a framework for decision making for several years, with a process for "renewal" built in to ensure that the plan evolves as the institution and its environment evolve. At the same time, the annual process of setting yearly priorities and a budget framework allows the institution to take advantage of opportunities that arise over the life of the plan. It makes the plan a living document that truly drives action planning and budgeting.*

- **Accountability and evaluation are built into the process.** *Clearly defined accountability and systems for measuring progress are critical elements of the planning process, essential to ensuring that the plans are implemented and the process stays on track.**

*The administrative support unit planning process includes a shared system for setting measurable and achievable objectives, clearly defined accountability for achieving those objectives, ways for measuring progress, and a realistic time-line. Once each Faculty develops its plan and begins the process of yearly planning and budgeting, they will also determine ways to measure and report progress over time.



The Strategic Plan

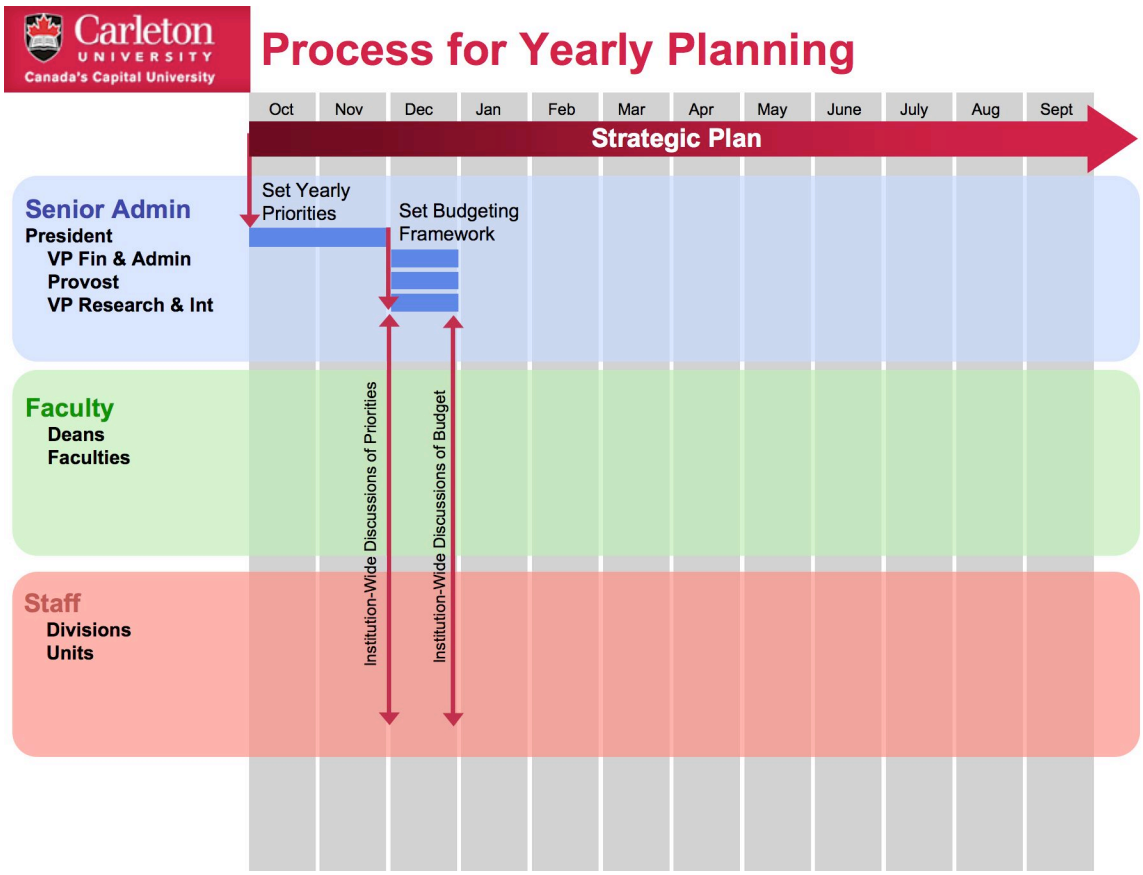
The strategic plan sets the context for all other planning at Carleton. It provides a high-level framework for long-term decision making across the institution and defines a vision and a high-level set of goals, in the form of **strategic directions**, for all faculty, staff, and administration. It also provides the context for "yearly priorities" to be set by the President. These yearly priorities will drive annual planning and budgeting decisions at the Faculty and administrative support unit levels.

It is generally expected that well-conceived strategic directions keep their relevance for about three or four years. It is recommended that, approximately every three years, a process be put in place to "renew" the plan. This work will require a multi-constituency planning task force that may include senior administration, Faculty leadership (Deans), and leadership from the Board of Governors and administrative support units, as appropriate.

Typically, a strategic planning renewal process begins with an internal assessment that includes such things as progress on the current plan and the identification of emerging institutional strengths and challenges. That is coupled with an external assessment process that includes information about the competitive environment

as well as trends in a variety of relevant areas, and culminates with the identification of key opportunities. The renewal process also includes a confirmation of the mission, an updated statement of vision, and agreement on a cohesive set of strategic directions and recommended strategies.

This renewal process is designed to ensure that the plan remains fresh and relevant for Carleton, and provides the basis for setting yearly priorities and defining the budget framework.

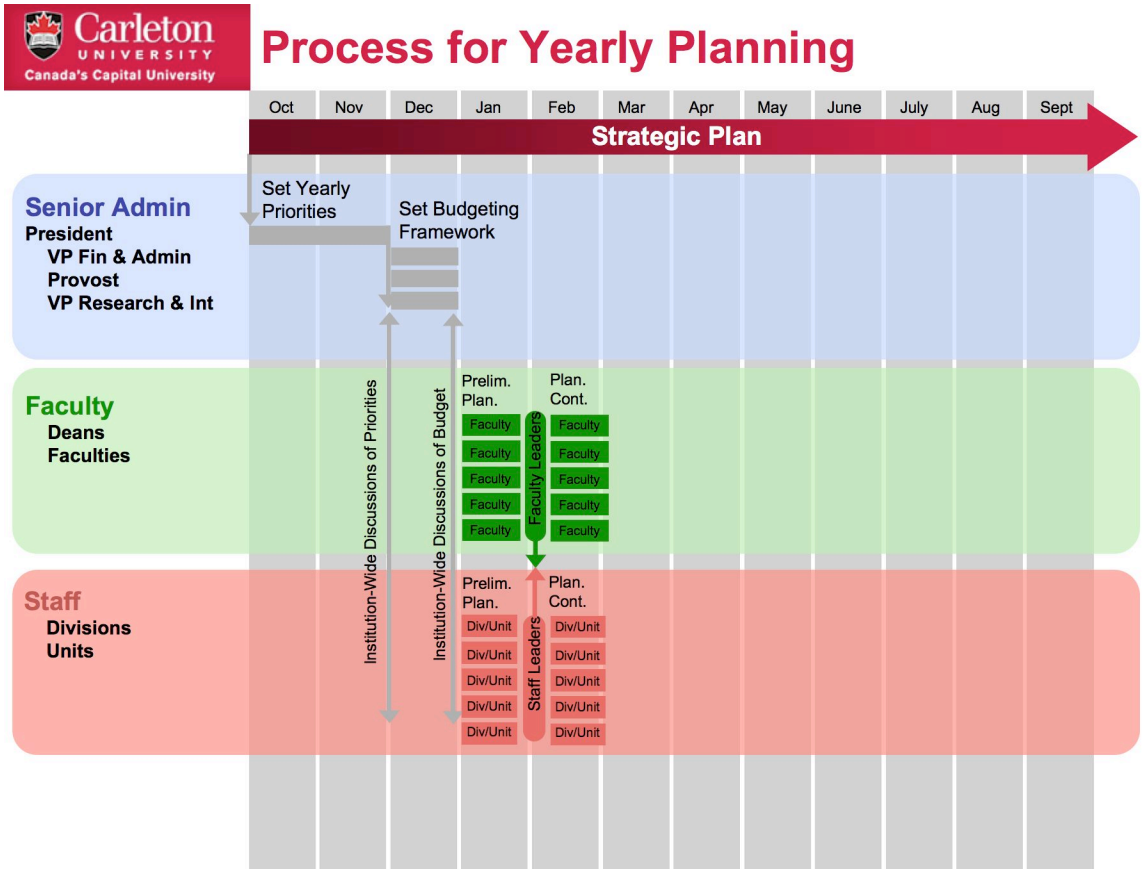


Developing Yearly Priorities *(October-November)*:
Using the strategic plan as context, the President will develop and communicate a manageable number of "yearly priorities." The plan's strategic directions are of necessity broad and far-reaching, and require the co-ordination of resources and activities over time. The setting of annual priorities gives the leadership an opportunity to identify those aspects of the plan that will be emphasized each year. The priorities will then drive that year's budget framework, and the yearly plans and budgets of Faculties and administrative support units throughout the institution.

Setting the Budget Framework (*December*):
Utilizing the strategic plan as the context, and based on the yearly priorities, the Vice-President (Finance and Administration) will develop and communicate the budget framework for the year. This framework translates the priorities into financial terms and outlines the broad parameters for how resources will be allocated. Together, the yearly priorities and the budget framework provide the context in which Faculties and administrative support units will develop their individual plans and budgets.

Communication of the Yearly Priorities and Budget Framework *(Ongoing, October-December*):
Ongoing communication among senior administration, faculty, academic staff, and administrative support units is an important element of these first steps in the planning process. It is essential that a consistent message be communicated throughout the institution so that all units are working from common assumptions as they develop their own plans. It is likely that communication will be both written and face-to-face, with the yearly priorities emanating from the President and the budget framework from the Vice-President (Finance and Administration). In both cases the Provost and Vice-President (Research and International) will consult with the President and Vice-President (Finance and Administration) as they develop the priorities and budget framework, and will play an appropriate role in communication throughout the institution.

Different forms of communication may be used to communicate the priorities and framework. The President, with the support of her senior management team, may hold initial meetings with the Deans and Directors of administrative support units, to inform them and respond to their questions. "Town meeting" forums might be held to ensure that a common message is communicated across the institution, and to provide opportunities for crosscutting conversations between and among units. Deans and Directors may also hold individual meetings with their reports and with relevant units. Although the specific forms that this communication takes may vary based on needs in different parts of the institution, as indicated in the principles communication will be transparent and iterative, and will allow opportunities for discussion, questions, and clarification so that everyone can emerge with a clear understanding of the yearly priorities and budget framework before they begin their preliminary planning.



Preliminary Planning

In the context of the strategic plan and in light of the yearly priorities and budget framework, Faculties and administrative support units will initiate their preliminary planning in January of each year. Each Faculty will set its priorities for the year, linking them to other Faculties and to the strategic plan and yearly priorities. Administrative support units will do the same, connecting their priorities with the strategic plan and yearly priorities, and also with Faculty plans as appropriate. Throughout the preliminary planning phase, faculty and staff leaders will communicate with each other to identify potential areas of synergy. Faculties and administrative support units will be charged with balancing the needs of their own area with the broader needs of the institution, as reflected in the yearly priorities.

Faculty Preliminary Planning (*January-February*):
On an annual basis each Dean, with extensive consultation with members of faculty and academic staff, will consider the strategic plan, the President's yearly priorities, and the budget framework, and decide how to shape their own yearly plan and budget recommendations. Also, through the Deans, each Faculty is committed to working closely with administrative units to ensure appropriate linkages in planning, and therefore more efficient and effective use of resources in the interest of Carleton's academic mission. By focusing on such linkages the intent is to eliminate the miscommunication

that so often causes divisions within these environments. The planning process includes specific time for faculty and staff leaders to communicate as they do their preliminary planning**.** The preliminary planning phase is intended to culminate in one or more meetings of academic and administrative leaders (see "Meeting of Faculty and Administrative Support Unit Leaders" below.)

Research Preliminary Planning *(January-February)*:
The Vice-President (Research and International) will work closely with the researchers throughout the institution, and also with academic and administrative support unit leaders, to develop a research plan and ensure that research is addressed in planning. It is expected that creative approaches to research can be developed, and effective support systems for research can be put in place with such a process.

Administrative Support Unit Preliminary Planning (*January-February*):
The administrative support unit leaders have designed a process to underpin their preliminary planning. Specific steps in the process include: (See Appendix for full model)

- Conduct a **Situational Analysis**, asking such questions as what is our current situation? What does our assessment data tell us? What are we doing well? What can we improve? What external/internal opportunities or threats exist?
- Complete a **Risk Assessment** review.(Identification and Management of Risk)
- **Identify Priorities** by asking the following questions: How might we best support the University's strategic plan given the yearly priorities and budget framework? In what major direction will we focus our efforts to advance the University's strategic plan?
- **Establish Objectives and Initiatives** based on a four-perspective approach, which includes consideration of:
    - Customers: Who are our customers (internal and/or external)? What do they need? How do we create value for them?
    - Stewardship of Resources: How will these initiatives make use of financial and other resources? What possibilities exist for generating new revenues or reducing expenses?
    - The Way We Work: What key internal processes must we excel at to drive value for our customers? Are there ways to restructure how we do our work to be more efficient and effective?
    - Our Employees: How can we take care of our employees in the process of doing our work? What do employees need in the way of training, skills, and knowledge to meet our existing and future challenges?
- **Determine Measures and Targets.** Defining what to measure is key since that often defines what gets done. Utilize both quantitative and qualitative measures.

A Guide to Planning for Administrative Units has been developed to provide guidance to staff as they complete these planning steps. The *Guide* includes detailed explanation of the steps, worksheets and templates. In addition, training will be available to help people transition to the new planning system.

Communication *(Ongoing)*
During preliminary planning, communication is of critical importance at several levels:

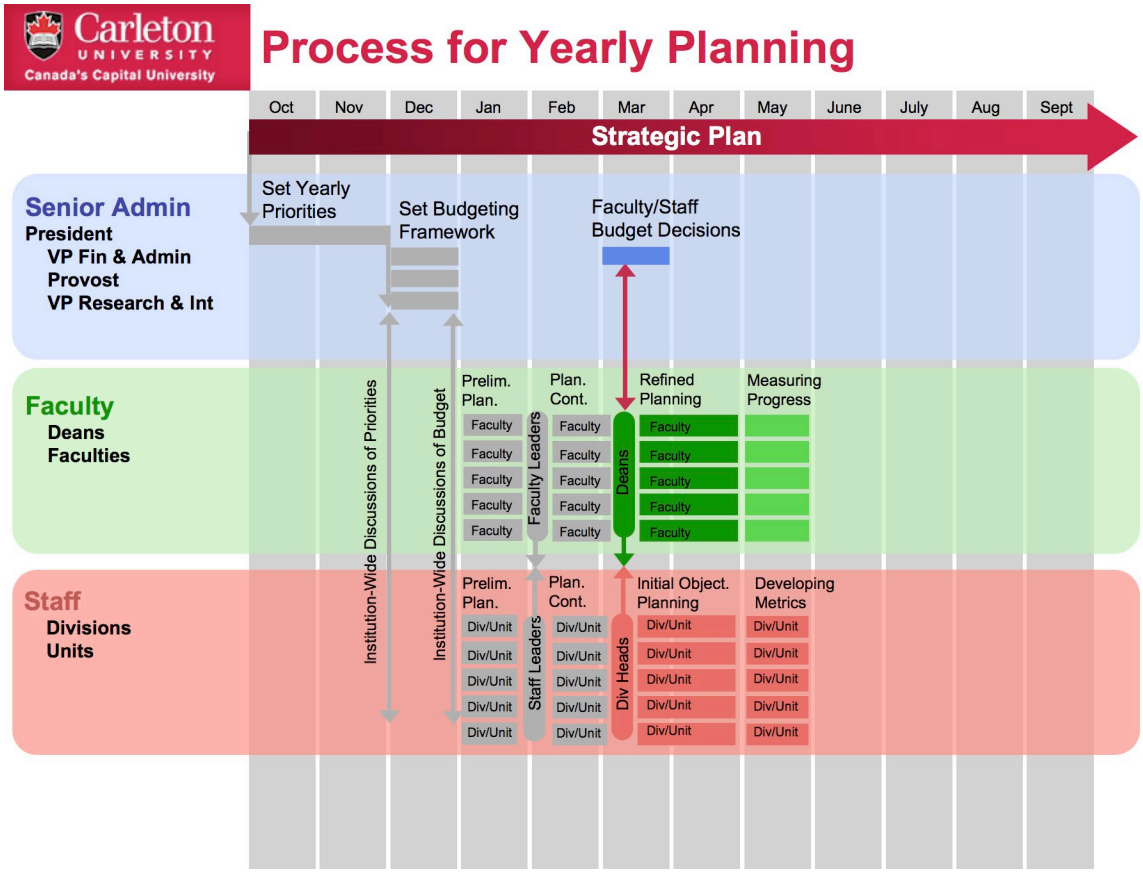
- Communication within units and Faculty groups, so that groups can work together to identify their priorities.
- Communication across units in a division, so that they can together build division priorities and plans.
- Communication across Faculties, so that they can identify crosscutting priorities and synergies between and among their plans.
- Communication among faculty, academic staff, and administrative support units, so that each can understand the needs and priorities of the others, and they can work together to plan for successful outcomes for all involved.

Meeting of Faculty and Administrative Support Unit Leaders (*February***)**:
Each year, Faculty and administrative support unit leaders will meet part way through the planning process to present and discuss their high-level initiatives and identify potential synergies and areas for cross-functional collaboration. This would likely be an all-day meeting of approximately 20 to 25 leaders. Participants will include:

- Direct reports to the President: Provost and Vice-President (Academic); Vice-President (Research and International); Vice-President (Finance and Administration); Director, University Communications and Community Relations; Chief Advancement Officer; University Secretary
- Direct reports to the Provost and Vice-President (Academic): Deans; Associate Vice-President (Enrolment Management) and University Registrar; Chief Librarian; Associate Vice-President (Academic) and Clerk of Senate; Director, Learning Technologies and Teaching Support
- Direct reports to the Vice-President (Research and International): Chief Project Officer; Director Carleton International
- Direct reports to the Vice-President (Finance and Administration): Director of Human Resources; Chief Information Officer; Assistant Vice-President (Facilities Management and Planning); Assistant Vice-President (University Services); Director, Office of Institutional Research and Planning; Director of Finance; Associate Director, Quality Initiatives

Prior to the meeting, templates and guidelines would be developed to ensure that the meeting is both productive and efficient. Participants would be expected to not only prepare information on their own initiatives, but to review the information from the other units. The meeting would then focus on identifying the connections between and among initiatives, where units need help from others, and how these collaborations might be facilitated.

This meeting will occur during the preliminary planning stage, allowing time for further development of individual plans and budgets based on the synergies identified.



Budget Decisions (*February-March*)

Faculty and Administrative Support Unit Budget Decisions:
Once the academic groups and administrative support units have worked together to develop their individual annual plans, they are then ready to propose their budgets and work with the Vice-President (Finance and Administration) and his colleagues, to agree on a budget for the coming year. At this point there should be no surprises, since the plans and budgets will have been developed in the context of the strategic plan, yearly priorities, and a well communicated budget framework, with multiple opportunities for communication that have allowed different groups to work out differences and build effective, well-linked plans.

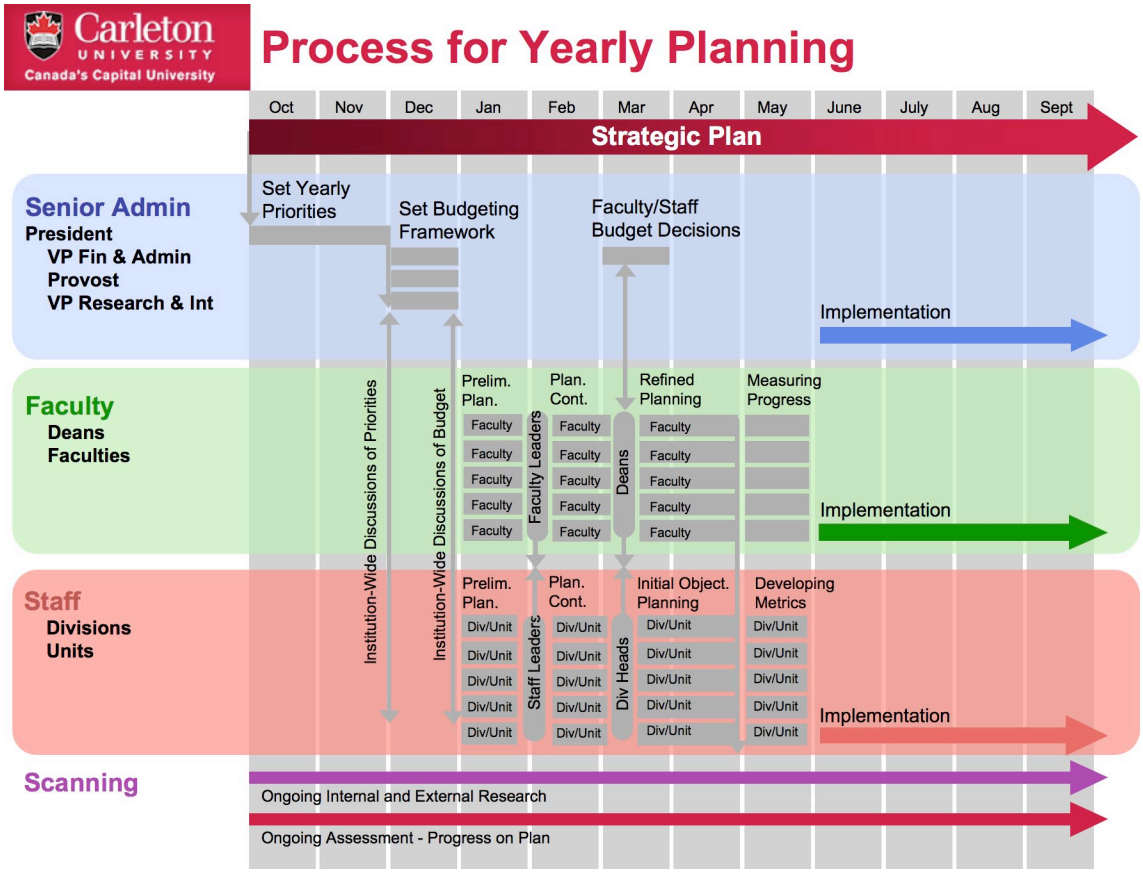
Refined Planning (*March-April*):

Once the budgets are approved, there will be a need to refine the preliminary plans to take into account any changes necessitated by the budget decisions. Once again this should include ongoing communication between and among units to ensure coordination and cooperation. In the process of refining the plan, a great deal of work is done on defining ways to measure progress.

Measuring Progress – Faculty
It is expected that Faculties will articulate appropriate milestones and develop ways of measuring success over time. There may be one system, or there may be different approaches to measuring progress that are tailored to each Faculty's culture and needs.

Measuring Progress – Administrative Support Units
Evaluation of administrative staff unit progress will include ongoing use of the four perspectives. During the implementation of this planning and measurement system, training and support will be available for all staff so that they are able to transition to the new system and use it to measure progress in ways that are meaningful and effective.

Sharing the Plan *(May)***:**
When all plans are finalized, Faculty and administrative support unit leaders will meet again to share their yearly plans. This meeting will provide an opportunity to communicate the direction and initiatives for each area.

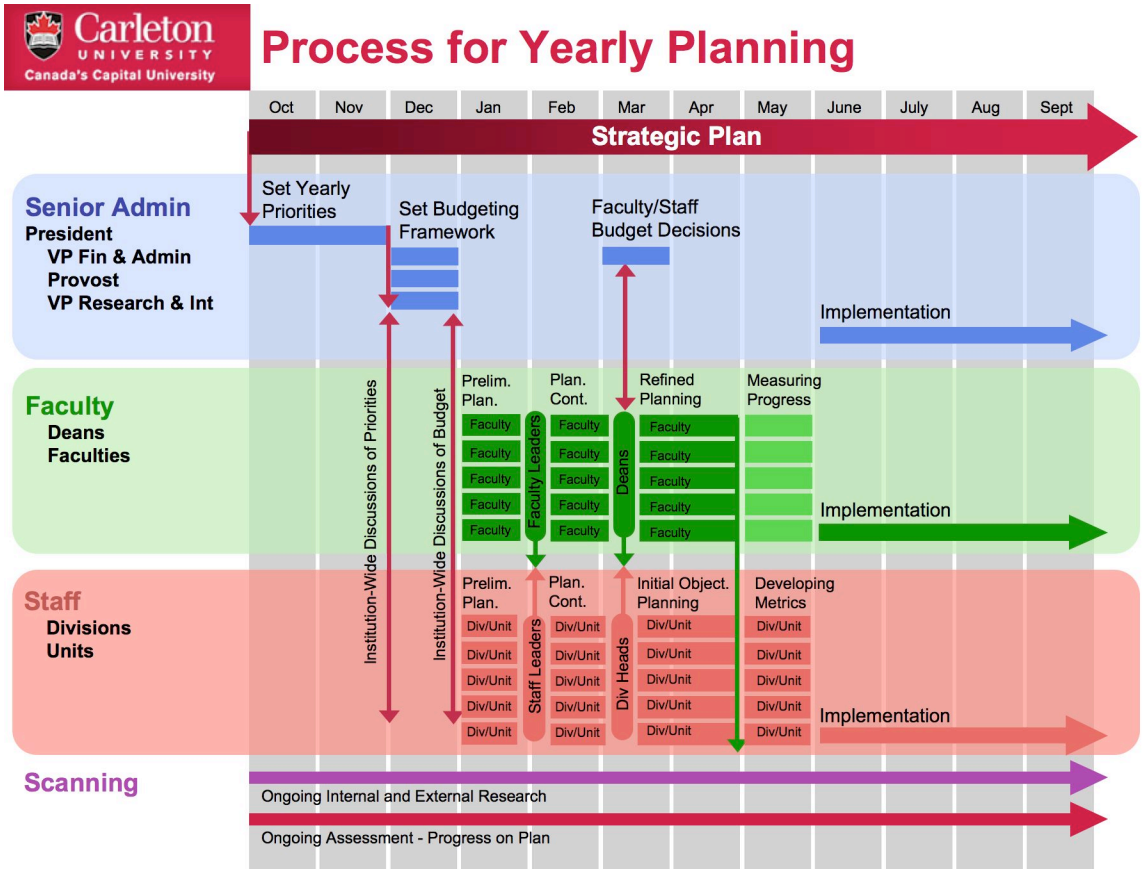


Implementation (*May-ongoing*):

Once the plans and budgets have been approved, implementation begins. Throughout the year there will be periodic self-monitoring of results, with adjustments made as needed to reflect changes in the environment or new information.

Ongoing Scanning:
While there are specific times when research (internal and external) is used in planning, it is in the best interest of the institution that such scanning be an ongoing activity. Carleton will benefit from ongoing scanning, and the ability to bring forward important information when opportunities arise or when threats to success become apparent.

Ongoing Measurement:
Measuring progress is an essential component of planning. While there are specific times when developing metrics is important, and specific times that measurement must be brought to bear in order to make informed decisions about priorities and resources, measuring progress on the plan should be an ongoing activity and core competency of the institution.


Carleton UNIVERSITY
Canada's Capital University
Process for Yearly Planning
Oct
Nov
Dec
Jan
Feb
Mar
Apr
May
June
July
Aug
Sept
Strategic Plan
Senior Admin
President
VP Fin & Admin
Provost
VP Research & Int
Set Yearly Priorities
Set Budgeting Framework
Faculty/Staff Budget Decisions
Implementation
Faculty
Deans
Faculties
Institution-Wide Discussions of Priorities
Institution-Wide Discussions of Budget
Prelim. Plan.
Plan. Cont.
Refined Planning
Measuring Progress
Faculty
Faculty Leaders
Deans
Implementation
Staff
Divisions
Units
Prelim. Plan.
Plan. Cont.
Initial Object. Planning
Developing Metrics
Div/Unit
Staff Leaders
Div Heads
Implementation
Scanning
Ongoing Internal and External Research
Ongoing Assessment - Progress on Plan

Monthly
Quarterly

Established by:
Conducted by Unit
Senior Management,
President and V.P.'s
to meet with their
Management Team

Strategic Planning Model
For Administrative Support Units

University-wide Strategic Plan

Set Yearly Priorities
Set Budget Framework

Preliminary Planning

Situational Analysis

- Where are we now?
- What are our stakeholders telling us/their needs?
- What does our assessment data tell us?
- What are we doing well? Our strengths?
- What can we improve? Our weaknesses?
- What are the external/Internal opportunities/threats?
- What is happening in the external environment? Trends?

Risk Assessment

Identify major risks facing university and department and what controls are in place. (Identification and Management of Risk).

Identify Priorities

- How do we support the University's Strategic Plan?
- In what major direction will we focus our efforts to advance the University's strategic plan?

Establish Objectives and Initiatives

- What objectives/initiatives will we establish within the four perspectives: Customer; Stewardship of Resources; The Way We Work; Our Employees
- Who do we look to accomplish these objectives?

Determine Measures and Targets

- How will we know we have improved?

One-Year Action Plan
Budgeting

Refinement of Plan

Implementation

Monitoring of Results