Exercise 4: SWOT Analysis

This exercise uses a traditional tool of strategic planning to engage participants in considering SUNY Fredonia’s position as we form the next strategic plan together. Either format would be useful in encouraging the ideas from that group to be included as the Steering Committee drafts the plan.

Materials needed:
- Flipchart paper and markers (or white/blackboard or computer with projector)
- Index cards and pens/pencils
- Green and red signal dots (if doing gallery walk)
- Exercise 4 Response Template (available on CD or on the Power of Fredonia website, www.fredonia.edu/president/strategicplan2011)
- Printed exercise sheets (or overhead transparency and projector)

Recommended group size and composition:
- Any size group
- Faculty, staff, students, others

Time required:
- 15-30 minutes: Format 1 (independent exercise, without discussion)
- 90-120 minutes: Format 2 (independent exercise, with discussion)
- 60-90 minutes: Format 3 (gallery walk, with discussion)

Instructions for the facilitator:
First choose the appropriate format for the group, based on the group size and interests of participants.

FORMAT 1: Independent Exercise (without discussion):
1. Introduce the exercise by discussing the goals of this exercise: to consider internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external forces that could influence our planning.
2. Distribute the SWOT table and open-ended questions (next pages) or use a computer, Elmo, or white/blackboard to display the open-ended statements.
3. Allow participants about 5 minutes to complete the statements, summarize their responses on a document template, and send to strategicplan2011@fredonia.edu.
**FORMAT 2: Independent Exercise (with discussion):**

4. Introduce the exercise by discussing the goals of this exercise: to consider internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external forces that could influence our planning.

1. Distribute the SWOT table and open-ended questions (next pages) or use a computer, Elmo, or white/blackboard to display the open-ended statements.

2. Allow participants about 5 minutes to complete the statements independently.

3. Engage the group in discussing their responses, trying to find areas of overlap as Fredonia considers its position as we work together on the next strategic plan.

4. Summarize these responses—as well as the individual responses—on the document template, and send to strategicplan2011@fredonia.edu.

**FORMAT 3: Gallery Walk Exercise:**

1. Set up four stations in the room with either computers or flipcharts, with one question at each station: What are the strengths of SUNY Fredonia? What are the weaknesses of SUNY Fredonia? What opportunities does SUNY Fredonia have right now? What are the threats to SUNY Fredonia right now?

2. Introduce the exercise by discussing the goals of this exercise: to consider internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external forces that could influence our planning.

3. Divide the group into four sub-groups.

4. Have each group spend 5 minutes writing their thoughts about that question, then moving to the next station. They write directly on the poster/flipchart, so that all can see the comments.

5. If time permits, ask groups to move about the gallery again, making comments on others’ ideas or adding green signal dots to indicate agreement with ideas and red signal dots to indicate disagreement with ideas.

6. Engage the large group in discussion about what they wrote and observed.

7. Summarize the responses for each question as well as the group comments on the document template, and send to strategicplan2011@fredonia.edu.
Exercise 4: SWOT Analysis

SWOT analyses are often used to focus discussion on strengths and weaknesses within an organization, as well as external opportunities and threats which should be considered in planning. In each of the four boxes in the table below, brainstorm ideas in response to the question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What characteristics of SUNY Fredonia put it at an advantage over other institutions?</td>
<td>What characteristics of SUNY Fredonia put it at a disadvantage relative to other institutions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMISSIONS</td>
<td>OPPORTUNITIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are some external changes to put SUNY Fredonia in a better position?</td>
<td>What are some external elements that could be problematic for SUNY Fredonia?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List your ideas in response to each of these questions. If you’ve brainstormed your ideas in the chart, use this space to elaborate on 2-3 of your most important ideas.

- What are the strengths of SUNY Fredonia?

- What are the weaknesses of SUNY Fredonia?

- What opportunities does SUNY Fredonia have right now?

- What are the threats to SUNY Fredonia right now?