

**Strategic Planning in Higher Education:
Lessons Learned from the Leaders at One Canadian Institution**

Karen Oljemark

Department of Integrated Studies in Education

Faculty of Education

McGill University

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of
the degree of Master of Arts in Education.

DATE

© Karen Oljemark 2019

Abstract

Higher education institutions around the world play a critical role in shaping our very way of life, building the intellectual capacity, knowledge utilization, scientific and technological skills that nations need to strive in today's highly competitive and interconnected global economy. Most of these institutions rely on strategic planning as their primary management tool to drive targeted change across their campuses in areas such as policy development, teaching and learning, student success, instructional resources, faculty professional development, and even facility improvements. And yet, many of them continue to report how it remains a major challenge to employ this important planning approach to its full potential.

The purpose of this study was to conduct an in-depth qualitative examination of the views of the strategic planning leaders at one Canadian College for further insight into how these institutions could make better use of the process to help them survive, and even thrive in this context, to the benefit of not only their own constituents, but also the whole of society. This study analyzed the leaders' views in comparison to the existing strategic planning models, the prevalent challenges with strategic planning in higher education, and relevant theoretical frameworks on leadership to explore new insights on this issue.

The study findings led to a series of practical, evidence-based lessons learned on where these institutions should focus their efforts to optimize their use of strategic planning. Key insights include that the institutions should start by ensuring that the entire community is on the same page in terms of not only its strategic vision and targeted priorities, but also its chosen strategic planning model. A structured, yet collaborative approach should be employed, with a focus on inclusive, equitable, transparent and accountable practices to engage everyone, especially the front-line faculty members, in the process. Furthermore, those who lead the

strategic planning process should be highly committed to the strategic vision, well equipped to facilitate the process, and ensure that the process remains highly responsive to the volatile planning environments often encountered by these institutions.

Résumé

Les établissements d'enseignement supérieur du monde entier jouent un rôle essentiel dans la définition de notre mode de vie, en renforçant les capacités intellectuelles, l'utilisation des connaissances et les compétences scientifiques et technologiques que les pays doivent poursuivre dans l'économie mondiale hautement compétitive et interconnectée de notre époque. La plupart de ces institutions utilisent la planification stratégique comme leur outil principal pour conduire un changement ciblé à travers leurs campus dans des domaines tels que l'élaboration de politiques, l'enseignement et l'apprentissage, la réussite des étudiants, les ressources pédagogiques, le perfectionnement professionnel du corps professoral, et même l'amélioration des installations. Et pourtant, beaucoup d'entre eux indiquent qu'il reste toujours un défi majeur pour utiliser cette approche de planification à son maximum.

Le but de cette étude était de faire un examen qualitatif approfondi des points de vue des responsables de la planification stratégique d'un collège canadien afin de mieux comprendre comment ces institutions pourraient mieux utiliser le processus pour les aider à survivre, voire même à prospérer dans ce contexte, au bénéfice non seulement de leurs propres constituants, mais aussi de la société tout entière. Le chercheur a analysé les points de vue des dirigeants par rapport aux modèles de planification stratégique existants, aux principaux problèmes posés par la planification stratégique dans l'enseignement supérieur, ainsi qu'aux cadres théoriques pertinents sur le leadership pour éclairer cette question.

Les résultats de l'étude ont abouti à une série de leçons pratiques, fondées sur des preuves concrètes, sur lesquels ces institutions devraient concentrer leurs efforts pour optimiser leur planification stratégique. Parmi les principales conclusions à retenir, les institutions devraient veiller à ce que leur communauté soit tous sur la même longueur d'onde en ce qui concerne non

seulement sa vision stratégique et ses priorités ciblées, mais également son modèle de planification stratégique. Une approche hautement disciplinée, mais néanmoins collaborative, devrait être utilisée, en mettant l'accent sur des pratiques inclusives, équitables, transparentes et responsables afin de susciter la participation de tous, en particulier les membres de son corps professoral de première ligne, dans le processus. En outre, les responsables du processus devraient être hautement investis à la vision stratégique, bien outillés pour faciliter le processus, et veiller à ce qu'il s'adapte rapidement aux changements brusques souvent rencontrés dans l'environnement de planification de ces institutions.

Acknowledgements

Nothing we see or hear is perfect. But right there in the imperfection is perfect reality.
- Shunryun Suzuki

I would like to take a moment to express my gratitude to the many people who supported me along this research journey.

To Dr. Anila Asghar, my Masters' thesis advisor, for her belief in this project throughout, for her steadfast support and expert guidance along the way, and for bringing out the very best in me. You are a gifted teacher from whom I have learned so very much. My sincere appreciation and gratitude for all you have done.

To Dr. Shaheen Shariff, who provided me with valuable insight into developing a solid conceptual framework for this inquiry, as well as how to write an effective thesis presentation. Thank you so much for sharing your time and suggestions for this work.

To my fellow scholars and friends from McGill University, in particular Ms. Ying Syuan (Elaine) Huang who was so very generous in sharing her valuable insights into the many drafts of this project. I look forward to our next outdoor adventure together!

To Mr. Michael Larivière at the Department of Integrated Studies (DISE) for his guidance and support in managing the administrative tasks of this project. Your patience and kindness were much appreciated.

To my work colleagues, family and friends for their encouragement and support throughout this journey. Thank you in particular to my father Mr. Aarre (Harry) Oljemark for your contribution as a first reader, to my daughters Arielle and Aimee for your patience and kindness when I became absorbed in my studies, and to all my fellow paddlers at my local canoe club for keeping me healthy and happy along the way.

Table of Contents

Abstract	1
Résumé	3
Acknowledgements	5
Table of Contents	6
List of Tables	9
List of Figures	10
Chapter One: Introduction and Context of the Study	11
My Research Journey	12
Purpose of the Study.....	12
Objectives	15
Context of the Study	15
Thesis Overview	28
Chapter Two: Conceptual Framework	29
A Strategic Roadmap for the Study	29
Literature Review	30
Strategic Planning Models Informing this Study	30
Prevalent Challenges with Strategic Planning in Higher Education	34
Theoretical Frameworks of Leadership Informing this Study	38
Chapter Three: Methodology	47
Research Approach	48
Methodology	50
Analytical Approach	54
Research Ethics and Validity	61
Chapter Four: Findings I – The Leaders’ Views on Strategic Planning	66
Directors’ Views on Strategic Planning	66
Deans’ Views on Strategic Planning	69
Chairs/Coordinators’ Views on Strategic Planning	70
Leaders’ Views on Strategic Planning – Cross-Group Analysis	72
Chapter Five: Findings II – The Leaders’ Views on the Prevalent Challenges with Strategic Planning at Their College	76
Directors’ Views on the Prevalent Challenges	76
Deans’ Views on the Prevalent Challenges	77
Chairs/Coordinators’ Views on the Prevalent Challenges	79
The Leaders’ Views on the Prevalent Challenges – Cross-Group Analysis.	82

Chapter Six: Findings III – The Leaders’ Solutions to the Prevalent Challenges with Strategic Planning at Their College	87
Leaders’ Solutions to Challenge #1: Fostering Employee Engagement in the Process	87
Leaders’ Solutions to Challenge #2: Ensuring the Inclusive Representation of Needs	93
Leaders’ Solutions to Challenge #3: Fostering Accountability to the Process	95
Leaders’ Solutions to Challenge #4: Ensuring a Strong Academic Focus	98
Leaders’ Solutions to Challenge #5: Managing Resources to Support the Process	100
Leaders’ Solutions to the Challenges with Strategic Planning-Cross-Group Analysis	101
Chapter Seven: Discussion and Lessons Learned	104
Looking at the Findings Compared to the Strategic Planning Models	104
Looking at the Findings in Light of the Prevalent Challenges from the Literature	109
Looking at the Findings Through the Theoretical Leadership Frameworks	113
Implications: Lessons Learned on Strategic Planning in Higher Education Institutions ..	116
Researcher Reflexivity	117
Study Limitations	118
Directions for Future Research	119
References	120
Appendices	133
Appendix 3A. Research Questions and Focus Group Sub-Questions	133
Appendix 3B. Recruitment of Participants Statement	134
Appendix 3C. Focus Group Interview Guide and Questions	135
Appendix 3D. Participant Consent Form	138
Appendix 3E. Flowchart of the Analytical Approach for the Study	140
Appendix 3F. Sample Matrix: The Leaders’ Views Regarding their Role in Strategic Planning - Main Categories of Salient Concepts	141
Appendix 3G. Sample Matrix: The Leaders’ Views of the Main Challenges with Strategic Planning at Their College – Prevalent Themes	142
Appendix 4A. The Directors’ Views on Strategic Planning – Main Categories of Salient Concepts	143
Appendix 4B. The Deans’ Views on Strategic Planning – Main Categories of Salient Concepts	144
Appendix 4C. The Chairs/Coordinators’ Views on Strategic Planning – Main Categories of Salient Concepts	145
Appendix 4D. The Leaders’ Views on Strategic Planning - Cross-Group Analysis	146
Appendix 4E. The Leaders’ Views on Strategic Planning - Prevalent Themes	147
Appendix 4F. The Leaders’ Views on Strategic Planning at Their College: Cross-Group Analysis	148
Appendix 4G. The Leaders’ Views on Strategic Planning at Their College – Prevalent Themes	149
Appendix 4H. The Leaders’ Views on Their Role in Strategic Planning: Cross-Group Analysis	150
Appendix 4I. Leaders’ Views on Their Role in Strategic Planning: Prevalent Themes	151

Appendix 5A.	The Directors' Views on the Prevalent Challenges with Strategic Planning at Their College – Main Categories of Salient Concepts	152
Appendix 5B.	The Deans' Views on the Prevalent Challenges with Strategic Planning at Their College – Main Categories of Salient Concepts	153
Appendix 5C.	The Chairs/Coordinators' Views on the Prevalent Challenges with Strategic Planning at Their College – Main Categories of Salient Concepts	154
Appendix 5D.	The Leaders' Views on the Prevalent Challenges with Strategic Planning at Their College - Cross-Group Analysis	155
Appendix 6A.	The Leaders' Solutions to Promoting Engagement in Strategic Planning – Prevalent Themes	156
Appendix 6B.	The Leaders' Solutions to Ensuring the Inclusive Representation of Needs – Prevalent Themes	157
Appendix 6C.	The Leaders' Solutions to Fostering Accountability - Prevalent Themes	158
Appendix 6D.	The Leaders' Solutions to Ensuring a Strong Academic Focus – Prevalent Themes	159
Appendix 6E.	The Leaders' Solutions to Managing Resources to Support the Process - Prevalent Themes	160
Appendix 7A.	The Leaders' Solutions to the Prevalent Challenges and the Business Strategic Planning Model	161
Appendix 7B.	The Leaders' Solutions to the Prevalent Challenges and the Political Strategic Planning Model	162
Appendix 7C.	The Leaders' Solutions to the Prevalent Challenges and the Collaborative Strategic Planning Model	163

List of Tables

Table 1. Participant Characteristics	53
Table 2. Phase One – Salient Concepts: The Deans’ Responses to the Focus Group Question ‘What is your understanding of the strategic planning process in general?’	58

List of Figures

Figure 1: Strategic Planning: A ‘Nested’ Element in the Organizational Management Plan ...	17
Figure 2: The Four Iterative Stages of Strategic Planning	18
Figure 3: Conceptual Framework: A Strategic ‘Roadmap’ for the Study	29
Figure 4: Strategic Planning Models Informing the Study	30
Figure 5: Theoretical Leadership Frameworks Informing the Study	39
Figure 6. Transcript of the Deans’ Discussion on the Focus Group Question ‘What does strategic planning mean to you in general?	56
Figure 7: Phase Two: Main Categories of Salient Concepts - The Leaders’ Views on the Focus Group Question ‘What does strategic planning mean to you?’	59
Figure 8. Phase Three: Prevalent Themes - The Leaders’ Views on the Focus Group Question ‘What does strategic planning mean to you?’	60
Figure 9. The Leaders’ Views on Strategic Planning – Prevalent Themes	75
Figure 10. Leaders’ Views on the Challenges with Strategic Planning – Prevalent Themes ...	86
Figure 11. Leaders’ Solutions to the Challenges with Strategic Planning - Prevalent Themes.	103

Chapter One: Introduction and Context of the Study

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) around the world play a critical role in shaping our very way of life, building the intellectual capacity, knowledge utilization, scientific and technological skills that nations need to strive in today's highly competitive and interconnected global economy (World Bank Report, 2002). HEIs encompass all post-secondary educational institutions, both public and private that deliver tertiary education to their communities, including universities, colleges and technical training institutes (World Bank, 2017). The role of HEIs is not limited to educating their students; they also contribute to teacher training, research and development, and community learning (UNESCO, 2015). HEIs are also instrumental in boosting prosperity and reducing poverty: "A highly-skilled workforce, with a solid post-secondary education, is a prerequisite for innovation and growth: well-educated people are more employable, earn higher wages, and cope with economic shocks better" (World Bank, 2017). Most HEIs currently rely on Strategic Planning (SP) as their primary management tool to drive targeted change across their campuses. However, many of them also report how it remains a challenge for them to employ this planning tool to its full potential (Keller, 1983; Luke, 2014; Sanaghan & Hinton, 2013). These institutions find themselves struggling to compete in today's volatile conditions of global market destabilization, weakening production, and diminishing resources as our world population soars past 7 billion (Emmott, 2013; Taylor & Machado, 2010). HEIs use SP to help focus their efforts on achieving their mission, vision, and strategic priorities, which ultimately comes down to facilitating the teaching and learning process in their classrooms (Bryson, 2011; Carron, De Grauwe, Gay & Choudhuri, 2010). The purpose of this qualitative inquiry is to examine the process of Strategic Planning (SP) at one such higher education institution in Canada. The goal is to understand how the leaders at this institution

perceive SP and how it could be used more effectively to help HEIs survive and even thrive in this context, to the benefit of not only their own constituents but also the whole of society.

My Research Journey

As a teacher and academic leader working in two such institutions in Canada over the last thirty years, I became interested in learning more about the extent to which the actions we take to improve how our institutions work actually make a difference, and if not, how we can do better. I have also incurred valuable experience on my topic of study by participating in several strategic planning (SP) initiatives as both faculty member and department chair during that time. It was this experience that piqued my interest in learning more about how HEIs could make better use of these planning initiatives, since in my experience they were not always that effective in reaching their intended goals. Intrigued by this issue, I turned to the literature on the subject and found that SP can indeed be an effective catalyst for strategic change, but making that change happen in complex organizations such as HEIs may not be so easy. As a researcher, I believe in the value of rational inquiry. As a teacher and academic leader, I also believe in taking practical action based on empirical evidence. I have seen my stance evolve from that of a quantitative researcher in exercise science to also appreciating the value of rigorous qualitative research. This has translated into a profound belief in the importance of listening closely to people for their take on how to address a given challenge, then participating in shared action to improve the situation. I am also a strong proponent of the democratic principles of equity, inclusiveness, transparency, delegation, and accountability to build a more effective approach to SP in HEIs. I also believe that my familiarity with the study context will enable me to conduct a more insightful inquiry.

Purpose of the Study

A preliminary review of the literature on Strategic Planning (SP) in Higher Education

Institutions (HEIs) reveals a significant gap between research and practice (Kezar & Eckel, 2000; (Aponte, 2011). The literature is also “very short on analysis of how the nature and practice of strategy can procure what colleges and universities need” (Chafee, 1985, p. 164). This “slow development of theory . . . has [also] hindered advancement” in this field of study (Rudd, Greenley, Beatson, & Lings, 2008, p. 100), leading practitioners to consult the literature in other domains (e.g., organizational change) in search of deeper insights into this issue.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand the strategic planning process from the perspective of participants at one such HEI, to bring their voices to the discourse on this subject. Who better to ask how to make HEI SP work more effectively than those living its realities on a day-to-day basis? I believe that my conversations with the key leaders of SP, the Directors, Deans, and Chairs/Coordinators at this one institution will bring valuable new insights to the significant gap between research and practice in the literature on SP in HEIs.

In a recent review of more than 500 dissertations on HEI SP, Aponte (2011) identified two key issues with this scholarly research, the first being its “overreliance on quantitative studies” (p. 126), and the second its narrow focus on the views of the senior administrators (e.g. Principals, Presidents, Directors) of these institutions. Starting with the first issue, I looked into what quantitative versus qualitative research could bring to my study. Quantitative researchers tend to see the world in terms of variables (Maxwell, 2013). While the strength of quantitative analysis is on “*explanation and prediction*” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 126) of the relationships between different variables to provide evidence of what is going on with a given phenomenon, this approach is limited when it comes to examining the importance of the multiple meanings embodied in complex and multi-dimensional social phenomena (Aponte, 2011, Maxwell, 2013). Qualitative methods with their emphasis on “*understanding* rather than explanation” (Charmaz,

2006, p. 126), can bring valuable insight to what is going on with such complex issues as HEI SP, delving into *how* it could happen more effectively. I therefore chose a qualitative research approach as best suited to the pursuit of my research objectives.

Returning to the literature on the second issue, that is, how limited the scope of qualitative research has been in this field, I found that indeed most studies focus almost exclusively on the views of the most senior administrators (e.g. presidents, principals, directors) of such institutions. However, a few studies did delve into the views of other participants of SP (e.g. deans, faculty, staff) to provide further insight into *how* HEIs should go about driving SP across their campuses. These studies have illuminated the following issues and insights into SP in higher education. In 1996, Lovinguth interviewed a wide range of SP participants from the president to faculty leaders and committee chairs at five small, private HEIs in Washington, D.C. to examine the connection between institutional plans and their outcomes. The findings revealed that SP can contribute to focused change at private institutions (e.g. improvements to the academic program, enrollment levels, and student success rates), but not always to the extent desired. In another qualitative study on SP in HEIs, Bacig (2002) conducted interviews with faculty and staff at four private liberal arts institutions in the state of Minnesota to explore the roles of participation and communication in the success of SP in HEIs. The study concluded that the institutional culture (what is done, how it is done, and who is involved in doing it (Bryson, 2011)) of these HEIs is key to how participation and communication should be planned into their SP approach. Wirkkula (2007) also applied qualitative methods to explore how SP is experienced by the mid-level academic deans at a public research university in this same state. Results of this study suggest that these leaders should be involved integrally throughout the process.

Marshall (2008) also employed qualitative methods to interview the mid-level managers at

one medium-sized HEI in New Zealand to determine their role in institutional change. The study findings suggested that meaningful communications to form relationships, inspire trust, and embrace flexibility are essential to leading and managing this change process. Similarly, Ali (2016) conducted a qualitative inquiry to explore the leadership practices of mid-level managers in polytechnic institutes New Zealand. The study concluded that these managers needed a tailor-made leadership training program to enable them to participate fully in the institution's mission.

Objectives

My objectives for this study are to: (1) gain an in-depth knowledge of Strategic Planning (SP) in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), (2) identify the prevalent challenges concerning this process at these institutions, and (3) provide a series of concrete, evidence-based lessons learned on how to make better use of it. To this end, I examine the leaders' views at one College in terms of how SP currently happens at their institution, the challenges they see with the process, and how it could happen more effectively. In this way, I hope to identify key take-aways regarding where HEIs should focus their efforts to optimize their use of this planning tool.

Before conducting this study, I also needed a clear understanding of the context in which it takes place. I therefore examined the literature for a definition of SP, a description of what the process looks like when it happens including its stages, characteristics, limitations and assumptions, as well as how the process has evolved in HEIs up to the present day.

Context of the Study

Strategic Planning - Concept and Process: The act of planning permeates through every sphere of human activity. SP originated on the battlefield; its roots can be traced as far back as people have kept historical records on their activities. SP is a complex construct that has evolved through many iterations from these ancient military roots to modern times. SP became standard

practice in the 1960s for corporations to gain advantage over their competitors, then spread rapidly to other types of organizations in the 1970 and 1980s. Since then, it has remained an important component of how many organizations including HEIs manage themselves. While the definition of SP varies from author to author, its substantive issues remain similar for most. Its main purpose is to enable the organization to be the best it can be at what it does, to focus their efforts to achieve a common strategic vision, and to track and adjust their actions in response to changes in the environment to achieve that end (Carron et al, 2010; Nickols, 2016). It is typically described as “a disciplined and deliberate approach to producing fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization (or other entity) is, what it does, and why ... a ‘way of knowing’ intended to help leaders and managers discern what to do, how and why” (Bryson, 2011, p. 8). It is the senior leaders who are tasked with directing SP. They take a variety of approaches and involve many parties to conduct an analysis of the organization and its environment to establish that plan. The plan itself describes the overall priorities, and how they will be achieved. Implementation should involve everyone in a disciplined approach to determine specific actions, mobilize resources, implement action plans, and track progress toward overall goals (Drucker, 1984; Mintzberg, 1994; Porter, 1979; Rumelt, 2011). Strategic Planning (SP) is not a stand-alone process; it is only one in a series of interrelated or ‘nested’ elements in an overall *organizational management plan* (Nickols, 2016). The first step for the organization to take is to establish its *strategy*, the vision and values that define what it stands for, what it does, and why it does so (Bryson, 2011). *Governance* comes next, determining who has power, how decisions are made, how others can make their voices heard, and how accountability is upheld (Institute on Governance, 2017). *Strategic management* is next, a collection of activities to systematically align resources and actions with that strategy (Rohm,

Wilsey, Perry & Montgomery, 2013). *Strategic thinking* and *strategic planning* are next, two interrelated stages that together carry out the strategy. Strategic thinking is about formulating strategy, assumptions underlying that strategy, and a plan of implementation (Mintzberg & Quinn, 2002). *Strategic planning* is the final implementation stage of that plan. All elements of this plan interact in a highly iterative manner to move strategy forward, as follows:

Figure 1. Strategic Planning: A ‘Nested’ Element in the Organizational Management Plan



The Stages of Strategic Planning: Strategic Planning (SP) is often described as following four distinct stages. While the process is presented in this way here for the sake of simplicity, in reality it does not follow such a simple stage model; rather it is a continuous dynamic occurring along multiple tracks of action (Wirkkula, 2007):

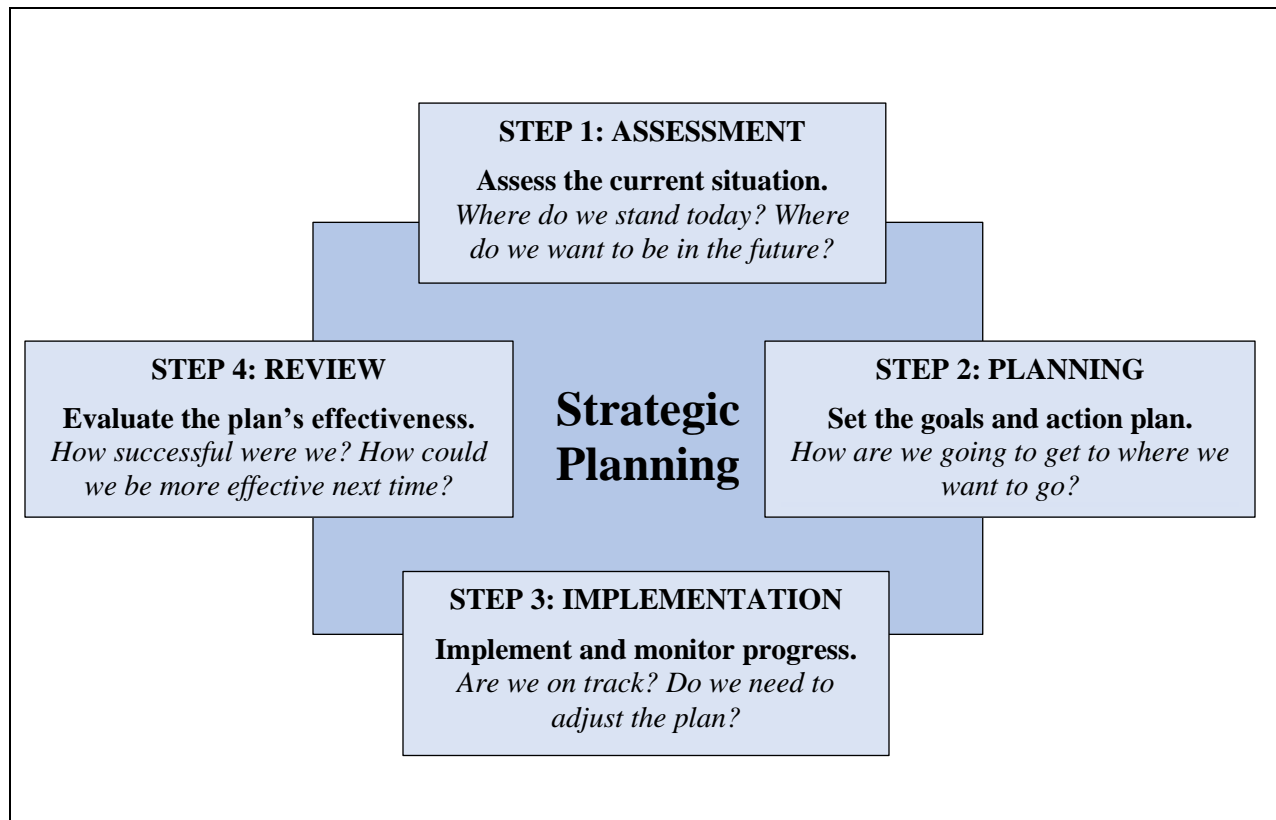
- **Stage One – Assessment:** Activities include a review of past efforts, a scan of strengths and weaknesses, vision clarification, writing a general plan of action, and identifying strategic assumptions underlying that plan. Questions include ‘Where are we now?’ and ‘Where do we want to be?’ (Dewar, 2002; Hollingworth, 2008; Mintzberg, 1994; Nickols, 2016).

- **Stage Two – Planning:** The mission, vision, and priorities are further clarified in a written plan based on the direction set in Stage One. This plan should identify the resources needed, link strategic objectives to shorter-term action plans, and provide a detailed plan of action to achieve those goals. Questions include: ‘What specific actions do we need to take?’ and ‘How will we know if we are on track?’ (Chawla & Berman, 1996; Sanaghan, 2009; Seltzer, 2014).

- **Stage Three – Implementation:** Shorter-term, annual action-planning cycles are linked to longer-term strategic goals, often using SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely) goal-setting (Drucker, 1984). Questions include “What actions do we need to take to get to where we want to go?” and “How will we know we are going in the right direction?”

- **Stage Four – Evaluation:** A thorough performance review should then take place, asking what went well and how it could be better next time (Bryson, 2011; Goldman & Salem, 2015).

Figure 2. The Four Iterative Stages of Strategic Planning



Characteristics, Limitations, and Assumptions of Strategic Planning: What are the key characteristics of SP (what it looks like when it happens), limitations (factors that limit its capabilities) and assumptions (beliefs upon which the process is built). As noted earlier, strategic planning (SP) is “a deliberate, disciplined approach to producing fundamental actions that shape and guide what an organization (or other entity) is, what it does, and why” (Bryson, 2011, p. 8), which in Higher Education typically targets improvements in areas such as policy development, teaching and learning, student success rates, instructional resources, professional development of faculty members, and even campus facilities (Sagenmuller, 2018)..

SP is a cyclical *approach*, a series of actions carried out over a period of generally three to five years. It is iterative rather than linear, with many feedback loops to adjust actions to changing planning environments (Rumelt, 2011; Sanaghan & Hinton, 2013). The process is also *strategic*. It is about looking at the ‘big picture’, setting overall goals with clear intent, & taking definitive steps to achieve them (Mintzberg, 1994). It is a general *guide*, or ‘roadmap’ to provide direction for achieving strategic goals. It should also remain flexible and responsive to change (Carron et al, 2010; Sanaghan & Hinton, 2013). SP is about *planning*, not about strategic thinking, nor strategy development. It is how about implementing a given strategy toward a desired future (Mintzberg, 1994). The process is *deliberate* and *disciplined*, yet at the same time responsive to changes in the environment, ready to take advantage of new opportunities. It is about organizations making *fundamental decisions* about what to do, how to do it, and why (Mintzberg & Quinn, 2002). It is impossible to do everything that needs to be done; SP is a disciplined approach to making those tough calls on which priorities to pursue (Bryson, 2011; Carron et al, 2010; Hinton, 2012).

While SP has many benefits, it also has its limitations. The process is highly context-driven

and culture-bound, and effort needs to be put in to continuously adapt it to the context in which it is being used. By taking too rigid an approach, leaders limit SP's ability to circumvent problems and take advantage of opportunities. HEIs should adopt not only a disciplined approach, but also one that is responsive to changes in the environment (Bryson, 2011; Goldman & Salem, 2015).

Like any other tool, SP is limited to what people can bring to the process. SP is a mobilization tool to focus everyone's efforts to achieve strategic priorities. Participants need ongoing training and professional support to help them learn to think and act strategically (Bryson, 2011, Nickols, 2016). The challenge is to change peoples' mindset, to engage them in concrete action toward targeted outcomes. It needs the key decision-makers to champion the cause, and everyone's engagement to ensure its success (Bryson, 2011; Sanaghan, 2009). Trust is another major limiting factor to SP: "Without a fair amount of institutional trust, every detail becomes a debate; conversations quickly become contentious and things move at a glacial pace. Without trust, a "perfect" plan will be sure to fail" (Sanaghan & Hinton, 2013, p. 1).

The availability of resources is also an important limiting factor to SP. The process is not a quick fix. It takes significant time and effort to do it right. The institution should be prepared to invest the considerable resources needed to produce real, strategic change (Carron, 2010; Luke, 2014). It should be about a way of thinking and doing, not creating more work. While strategic thinking and acting should be an integral part of everyone's job, it is the leaders who should put in the most effort, but no more than 10 percent of their work day (Bryson, 2011).

It is also important to consider the assumptions underlying SP, as they are considered essential building blocks of the process (Nickols, 2016). Strategic assumptions are the common beliefs upon which an organization builds its entire SP approach. Leaders should have a thorough understanding of what these assumptions are, how they contribute to SP, and how they

should be employed as part of the process. These assumptions identify key aspects of the organization's planning environment, including internal and external forces affecting that environment (e.g. upgrading deteriorating facilities, renewing the workforce, adapting to technological advances, and responding to changes in laws and regulations), constituent demands, resource availability, changing market forces, along with the shared beliefs about who and what the organization represents (Evans, 2012; Githens, 2016). The success of SP, indeed the success of the entire organization, depends on strategic assumptions grounded in a sound assessment of the planning environment. Leaders should involve their participants in a thorough examination of those assumptions before they are accepted as representing the realities of that environment (Dewar, 2002; Hollingworth, 2008).

The Evolution of Strategic Planning in Higher Education: The Business Dictionary defines Strategic Planning (SP) as “A systematic process of envisioning a desired future, and translating this vision into broadly defined goals or objectives and a sequence of steps to achieve them” (2019). According to the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP), SP in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) “is a continuous process that aims to achieve a full engagement culture inside the organization that would lead it to excellency (Sagenmuller, 2018).” In SCUP's Practical Guide for Strategic Planning in Higher Education, author Hinton explains the role of SP in these institutions as follows:

A well designed and implemented strategic planning process can provide an institution with a forum for campus-wide conversations about important decisions. The process can also be organized to make the assessment, resource allocation and accreditation easier, and be a source of information about progress and achievement with very real meaning to those associated with the institution (Hinton, 2012, p.5).

As mentioned earlier in this introduction, SP is typically used by HEIs to make improvements in multiple areas such as teaching and learning, student recruitment and enrolment, pedagogical

innovation, quality of learning environments, professional development of faculty and staff, academic success, acquisition and mobilization of resources, budget management, administrative systems, etc. (Bryson, 2011; Carron, De Grauwe, Gay & Choudhuri, 2010, Sagemuller, 2018). And yet, while many of these institutions report that SP can be a powerful tool for visionary change, they also report how it continues to be a struggle to make it work across their own campuses. I now take a closer look at the literature for further insight into why this is so.

SP did not spread as quickly nor as readily across HEIs as it did from its traditional military roots starting in the early 1900s across the corporate world. The 1960s through to the mid-1970s was a boom period for business SP based on the traditional military model as companies looked for ways to gain advantage over their adversaries in an increasingly competitive global market. At that same time however, HEIs were enjoying a period of high public confidence, which had them focusing on expansion rather than competition (Dooris, 2002 - 2003). HEIs thus stayed close to their traditional budget-driven methods to ensure solid fiscal planning in a time of plenty, rather than any longer-term SP approaches (Hinton, 2012).

From the mid-1970s into the 1980s, HEIs across the U.S. began to experience many of the same changes in their planning environments as experienced earlier by the corporate world. New challenges began to accumulate for the academy: spiraling tuition costs, fluctuating enrolments, increased competition, inconsistent funding support, decentralization of state governance, changing government regulations, outdated academic programs, as well as weakening public support (Dooris, 2002 - 2003; Lerner, 1999; Rowley, Lujan & Dolence, 1997). By the mid-1980s, these cumulative changes saw U.S. public and non-profit organizations including HEIs turn to SP from the business world as a possible answer to their problems (Goldman & Salem, 2015; Hinton, 2012). Initial efforts borrowed heavily from corporate models, and so came to

share many of their characteristics, including top-down decision-making and outcome-driven planning approaches (Bryson, 2011; Carron et al., 2010). From the beginning however, HEIs have struggled with the adoption of SP from the corporate world. Initial efforts were mostly limited to clarifying institutional vision but did little to effect strategic change, which often led to discontent from participants (Hinton, 2012; Taylor & Machado, 2010).

Despite these initial struggles, by the late 1980s HEI SP based primarily on the business model continued to spread rapidly across the U.S. This trend spread to institutions around the world as they too began to experience many of the same volatile changes as their American counterparts. No sooner than SP began to gain some acceptance across the U.S., its practice came under attack from both external and internal forces. Externally, governments and other regulatory bodies began to insist on more control in response to demands for accountability because of enrolment and funding instabilities. These measures included the use of assessment standards and accreditation criteria across all programs. As an added incentive, funding agencies tied their financial support to this oversight. HEIs were also called to re-evaluate their leadership capabilities with a view to improving their ability to respond to the increasingly volatile changes in their environments. Consequently, many HEIs returned to their more reactive, problem-solving practices of the past such as short-term financial planning and enrolment forecasting to solve these pressing issues, rather than turning to any longer-term SP approaches (Hinton, 2011).

By the 1990s, external pressures for HEI performance were again on the rise, with government regulators and accrediting bodies alike insisting on the extensive use of assessment tools as well as a functioning SP to meet accreditation requirements. Internally however, support for SP began to falter as the process proved not to be the success they hoped for (Dooris, 2002 – 2003; Lerner, 1999). While the business world continued to report considerable success with SP,

HEIs struggled with adapting its more rigid, hierarchical approach to their looser-knit, more autonomous organizational structures (Goldman & Salem, 2015). HEIs once again found themselves struggling to adopt a process seen as an undesirable one driven by market data, customer needs and profit generation. Campus leaders and participants alike began to question SP altogether as they saw it producing little more than bureaucratic ‘paper mills’ or ‘shelf documents’, contributing little concrete change (Sanaghan & Hinton, 2013). Some began to criticize its top-down approach as too ‘corporate’, too rigid to suit their needs. Others declared that SP even limited strategic thinking, hindering the institution’s ability to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities (Bush, 2011; Carron et al, 2010; Dooris, 2002 - 2003; Hinton, 2012). Only a small number of HEIs were reporting successful results, while most saw their plans falter, or fall apart altogether (Rowley, Lujan & Dolence, 1997). “We tried that, and nothing ever happened’ was a common response to the calls for planning at the campus level” (Hinton, 2012).

Despite this ongoing debate, by the early 20th century SP once again become standard practice across HEIs as regulators continued to insist on a return to the process as synonymous with good management (Carron et al, 2010; Dooris, 2002 - 2003). In their attempts to comply with these multiple planning demands, HEIs often compromised by combining their various forms of institutional planning including academic success, human resources, budget management, and facilities management into what they called their overall SP. While each of these measures can and do stand on their own as useful planning measures, simply combining them into one plan is not considered a truly visionary, integrated approach to SP (Hinton, 2012).

By the early 21th century, the forces of globalization across multiple economic, social, political, environmental, and technical domains began to accelerate at an alarming rate (Carron et al., 2010; Hayward, Ncayiyanga & Johnson, 2003). HEIs returned to the practice of SP in

earnest, this time in search of innovative approaches to this turbulent planning environment:

The traditional, common ways of strategy planning were best suited to organizations facing relative stability in markets, technologies and competition. This is not the world most institutions face today ... Where higher education was once a bastion of stability, the buzzword today is *disruption* (Luke, 2014, p. 2).

Strategic Planning in Higher Education Institutions Today: This accelerated pace of globalization and inter-connectedness across all domains (Johnstone, 2004, Taylor & Machado, 2010; Trowler, 2002) has led to an increasingly unstable planning climate, whereby “changes anywhere typically result in changes elsewhere, making efficacious self-directed behavior problematic at best” (Bryson, 2011, p. 5). HEIs have consequently begun to seek out more responsive SP approaches to allow them to adapt the process more readily to these rapid changes in their planning environments (Lerner, 1999; Luke, 2014).

This increasingly unsettled planning climate has led to a slowdown in productivity which in turn has created a more competitive world market impacting all domains including education (OECD Economic Outlook, 2016). HEIs now find themselves competing on the world stage for dwindling financial and human assets needed for their very survival as our global population soars past 7 billion (Emmott, 2013, Hayward, Ncayiyanga & Johnson, 2003).

The recent revolution in information and communication technologies has also had a major impact on contemporary HEI SP, radically increasing the options available for these institutions to collect data, monitor performance and communicate with their all institutional members on SP. HEIs like other types of organizations find themselves struggling with how to make the best use of these new resources to inform their SP efforts. The explosive growth of online social media has also drastically changed SP. Organizations can no longer rely on simple, top-down directives to disseminate their planning efforts. They now operate in a more complex and fast-paced world where changes happen at the pace of the next e-mail or tweet. An increased use of

online social media such as surveys, forums, and even gaming simulations has revolutionized how HEIs consult with and engage their SP participants (Rowan-Kenyon, Martinez Aleman, Gin, Blakeley, Gismondi, Lewis, McCready, Zepp & Knight, 2016). Expectations are high for HEI leaders to produce increasingly complex, responsive, and engaging SP approaches (Rapp, Rhomberg & White, 2016; Taylor & Machado, 2010; Vitalis & Duhaut, 2004).

The rapid spread of democracy since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 has also impacted on HEI SP along with these trends of globalization, increased competition for resources, and growth of the information age. Since then, more than half of the countries around the world have adopted democratic governance models, based on the decentralization of governance, citizen political participation, constraints on the power of the executive, and a guarantee of civil liberties (Bryson, 2011; Hinton, 2012). SP in all domains including Higher Education have also shifted from the hierarchical practices of the past to ones based on guiding principles of democracy including equity, inclusiveness, transparency, delegation, and accountability (Carron et al, 2010; O'Donovan & Flower, 2013). Despite these challenges, society's expectations for HEIs have never been greater:

Higher education at the beginning of the 21st century has never been in greater demand, both from individual students and their families, for the occupational and social status and greater earnings it is presumed to convey, as well as from governments for the public benefits it is presumed to bring to the social, cultural, political, and economic well-being of countries (Johnstone, 2004, p.12).

HEIs today are not only expected to surpass previous levels of performance, they are also expected to do so while addressing growing needs, adapting to new laws and regulations, responding to increased competition, and doing more with fewer resources. A key factor to their survival is for HEIs to be willing to experiment with innovative SP practices, while also building on sound practices of the past (Bryson, 2011; Hinton, 2012; Taylor & Machado, 2010).

To further complicate matters, the field of HEI SP is currently embroiled in a debate among scholars and leaders alike as to its merit as an organizational management tool. Opponents reject the practice outright as not able to keep up with the turbulent times faced by HEIs today, while supporters insist that the process merits further experimentation (Carron et al, 2010; O'Donovan & Flower, 2013). Opponents purport that SP is of little use if the cost of making it happen outweighs the benefits, while supporters maintain that it continues to be worth the resources invested into it (Bryson, 2011). Some have abandoned SP altogether, declaring their planning environments too unpredictable, yet others counter that every organization has a strategy, explicit or not, and as such SP is still a proven approach that none can afford to give up:

Without making an effort to 'do strategy,' a company runs the risk of its numerous daily choices having no coherence to them, of being contradictory across divisions and levels, and of amounting to very little (Martin, 2013, p. 1).

Despite this ongoing debate, scholarly experts declare that SP is here to stay (Taylor & Machado, 2010). According to Bryson (2011), the success of SP can be attributed to how well it reflects the political nature of decision-making better than any other so far: "So many other management techniques have failed because they ignore, try to circumvent, or even try to counter the political nature of life in private, public, and non-profit organizations" (p. 22).

The literature provides compelling evidence that HEIs today cannot afford to abandon the practice of SP (Bryson, 2011; Carron et al, 2010; Hinton, 2012; Martin, 2013; Taylor & Machado, 2010). Despite its challenges, many of these institutions continue to use the process more often than any other organizational management tool to promote strategic thinking and acting, encourage rational decision-making and resource allocation, and foster accountability toward shared goals. Many also continue to see it as a valuable tool for driving strategic change across their campuses:

It is not easy to do, but those who participate in an effective planning process marvel at the energy and empowerment the process provides to the entire organization. With a functioning strategic plan in place, all types of campus plans work more effectively (Hinton, 2012, p. 39).

The main issue is not whether SP is an effective planning tool, but rather how HEIs should go about making it work for them. Given the critical role HEIs play in shaping our very way of life, it is imperative that these institutions continue to seek out how to get the most out of SP to survive in the volatile planning environments they face today. It is in this context that I decided to pursue such a study, to the benefit of not only these institutions, but also the whole of society.

Thesis Overview

I proceed with the rest of this presentation as follows. In Chapter Two, I describe how I built the conceptual framework by conducting a review of the literature, including the SP models and leadership frameworks most relevant to my research problem. In Chapter Three, I present my research approach, including my philosophical stance, setting, participants, and methods of data collection and analysis, as well as how I addressed the issues of research ethics, validity and researcher bias. In Chapters Four, Five and Six, I explain how I analyzed and interpreted the study participants' views to generate my research findings. In Chapter Seven, I discuss these findings through the lens of my conceptual framework to identify practical, evidence-based lessons learned on how HEIs should proceed to get the most out of the process of SP.

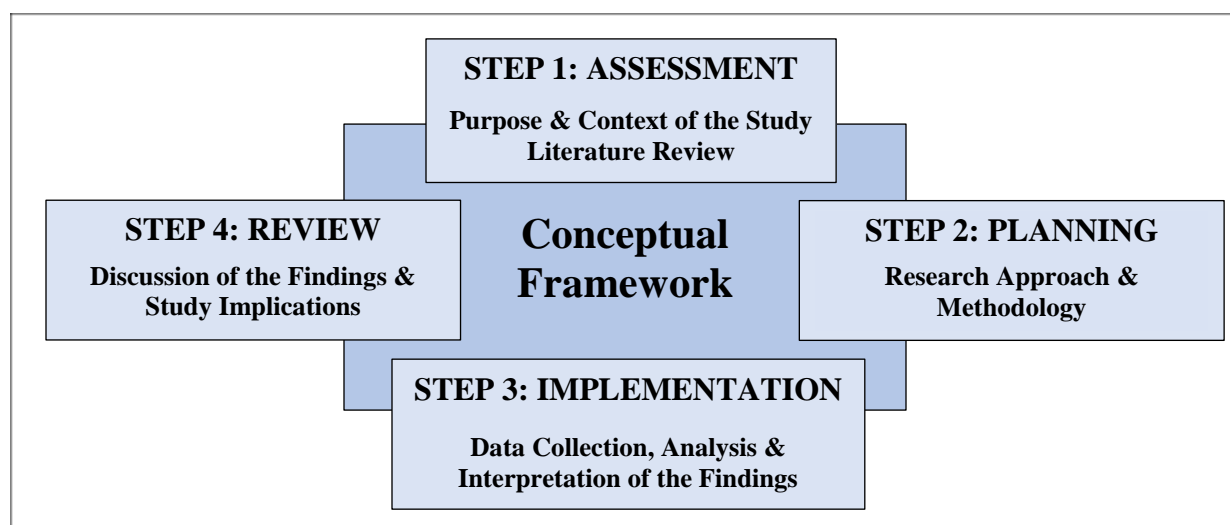
Chapter Two: Conceptual Framework

In this chapter, I present the conceptual framework for this study which provided the analytical tools to organize my thoughts and ideas about how Strategic Planning (SP) could be employed more effectively by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). I constructed this framework by conducting a literature review on the process of SP and leadership in higher education to broaden my perspective on this issue.

A Strategic Roadmap for the Study

I found many similarities between the process of SP and constructing my conceptual framework for this study. The primary function of SP is to provide an organization with a strategic ‘roadmap’ to focus its efforts to achieve its mission, vision, and strategic priorities (Bryson, 2011; Carron et al, 2010; Nickols, 2016). Similar to the four iterative stages of SP (see Figure 2, Chapter One), I saw my conceptual framework as a valuable guide for how I carried out my study, from determining its purpose and methodology through to analyzing and interpreting its findings. Here is a visual representation of how I saw all these elements combine to enable me to conduct a more rigorous and insightful inquiry into my research dilemma.

Figure 3. Conceptual Framework – A Strategic ‘Roadmap’ for the Study



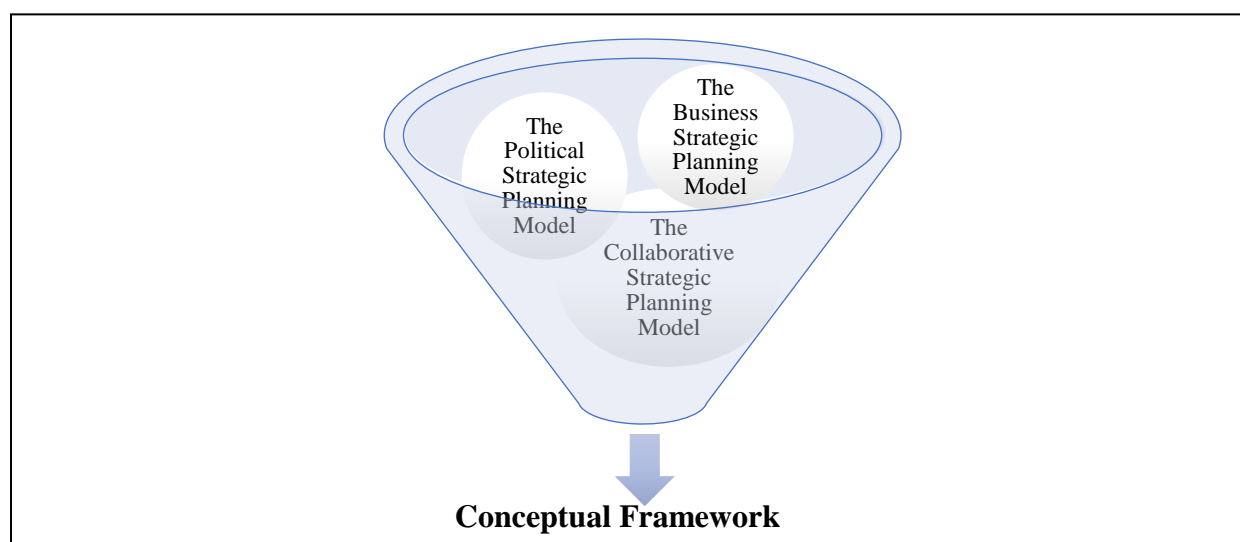
Literature Review

I focused on three main streams from the literature to achieve my study objectives: (1) to enrich my understanding of SP in HEIs, (2) to identify the main challenges with the SP process in these institutions, and (3) to provide concrete, evidence-based take-aways on how SP could be carried out more effectively. I started off by examining the existing SP models, as well as the prevalent challenges with how it currently takes place in HEIs. I also took a look at what insights the relevant theoretical leadership frameworks had to offer. In so doing, I have gained a deeper understanding of where HEIs should focus their efforts to employ SP across their campuses.

Strategic Planning Models Informing This Study

The next step in building my conceptual framework was to review the existing SP models for further insight into how HEIs could make better use of this process. Theoretical models and frameworks fulfil our need to understand how things work, and to explore complex constructs to clarify what we see going on around us (Anderson, 1998; Dooris et al, 2004). I focused on three prevalent approaches, the Business, the Political and the Collaborative SP Models as most relevant to my topic of inquiry (see Figure 4 below).

Figure 4. Strategic Planning Models Informing the Study



Herein, I explain the Business SP model, then compare it to two contemporary adaptations of this model (i.e., the political and the collaborative models) to the needs and culture of HEIs to further inform my thinking. I now describe the origin of each model, what it looks like when it happens, and what each model has to offer on my research problem.

The Business Strategic Planning Model: The origins of Business Strategic Planning (SP) can be traced back to the early 20th century when the corporate world began to experiment with traditional military SP to gain advantage over their competitors (see Chapter 2). The focus was on “predicting the future based on historic trend lines, invested heavily in gathering all available data, and produced a small number of authoritative directives issued from the top for the rest of the organization to execute” (O’Donovan & Flower, 2013). This model remained close to its military roots until well into the second half of the 20th century, continuing to reflect traditional hierarchical values of top-down decision-making, rigid time-bound outcomes, and planning rather than implementation (Wall & Wall, 1995). By the early 1980s however, growing dissatisfaction with its rigidity, lack of responsiveness and top-down management style led organizations of all types including HEIs to seek out alternatives to this model (Bryson, 2011; Carron et al, 2010; Hinton, 2012; Taylor & Machado, 2010).

More contemporary variations of Business SP have evolved substantially since then, with leaders borrowing from both private and public management as they sought to adapt this model to their individual planning environments. While most still rely heavily on the more traditional characteristics of traditional SP, these variations have begun to adopt more contemporary practices including analyzing the planning environment using both historical and real time data, employing more democratic approaches to engage employees to take greater ownership of strategic change, adopting more agile measures to respond to volatile global market conditions,

and seeking out more socially responsible and sustainable ways to operate (Akedo, 1991; Kondo, 1998; McGonickle & Starke, 2006; McWilliams, Siegel, & Wright, 2006; Sanaghan, 2009; Bryson, 2011). Above all, Business SP has remained true to the traditional characteristics that have contributed to its long-term success including that it is a highly-structured and disciplined approach, it tracks progress toward desired outcomes, and how to work more efficiently toward targeted outcomes (Copeland, 1958; Drucker, 1984; Mintzberg, 1994; Porter, 1985). Leaders from all domains including Higher Education should keep these proven characteristics of Business SP in mind as they develop their own planning initiatives.

The Political Strategic Planning Model: The Political Strategic Planning (SP) model was introduced by Bryson in the 1990s as an alternative to Business SP, adapting it to the highly politicized climates of public and non-profit organizations such as Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). This model builds on the nature of *political* intelligence-gathering and decision-making: “Politics is the method that we humans use to answer the analytically unresolvable questions of what should be done for collective purposes, how and why” (Bryson, 2011, p. 22). It focuses on how people think and act, driving strategic change by changing people’s mindset on SP: “We can use strategic planning to help us think, act, and learn strategically - to figure out what we should want, why, and how to get it” (Bryson, 2011, p. 32). This model has since been tested across multiple non-profit and public organizations, and even some businesses and continues to evolve since then to offer many strategies, tools and techniques based on this real-world experience.

Best practices of this model include addressing key issues of contention up front, seeking consensus on those topics to build confidence in SP, then tackling more challenging issues from there. It also seeks to retain the characteristics of stability and discipline of the more structured Business SP Model, while at the same time experimenting with collaboration-building measures

to foster engagement. It aims to draw everyone into the process: “The strategic change cycle may be thought of as a process strategy ... in which a leadership group manages the main activities in the process but leaves much of the content of individual strategies to others” (Bryson, 2011, p. 32). Key challenges with this model include getting the decision-makers and stakeholders to agree that SP is needed and desirable, ensuring that all participants are on board and supportive of the process, and that the key decision-makers are at the table and thoroughly committed to making it work from start to finish (Rowley, Lujan & Dolence, 1997; Young, 2003).

The Collaborative Strategic Planning Model: This model was introduced in the early 1980’s in response to mounting evidence that even the most well-intentioned SP efforts were beginning to falter due to the lack of engagement by their participants. Like the Political SP Model, it also evolved from the more traditional outcome-oriented Business SP Model, retaining its proven characteristics of discipline and structure, then moving on from there to focus on building engagement in the process. It involves an intensive process of data gathering and analysis, identification of key issues, vision development, and goals conference, and has shown considerable success across many types of organizations including Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Best practices of this model include the use of an internal task force assisted by external expertise where needed, thorough consultation to ensure that people feel heard and valued every step of the way, breaking down barriers by sharing diverse views, and building collaboration across the campus on SP priorities to maximize resources (Sanaghan, 2009). A key factor to its success is a targeted effort to foster faculty engagement: “Authentic faculty involvement and engagement will make or break the strategic planning process. Without the meaningful engagement of faculty in the strategic planning process, the resulting plan will not get carried out” (Sanaghan & Hinton, 2013, p.3). This model focuses on building that engagement by

connecting everyone to a shared institutional vision, connecting common aspirations to realistic goals, connecting goals to daily operations and connecting the institution to the broader HEI environment. The main weaknesses of this model are the considerable time and energy it takes to change people's mindsets to bring it to fruition, as well as the risk of losing focus while exploring wider strategic priorities (Carron, 2010; Luke, 2014; Sanaghan & Hinton, 2013).

This review of the literature on the Business, Political and Collaborative models of SP shows that the process is currently undergoing a period of accelerated experimentation as HEIs continue to seek ways to employ the process more effectively according to their own specific planning needs (Bryson, 2011; Carron, 2010; Hinton, 2012; Taylor & Machado, 2010).

Prevalent Challenges with Strategic Planning in Higher Education

I now present the most prevalent challenges with HEI SP as reported in the literature, including adapting the process to the culture of higher education institutions, employing it more responsively to keep up with the rapid changes faced by these institutions, fostering a highly democratic approach, promoting employee engagement, building everyone's capacity to work together toward strategic change, and managing resources effectively to support the process.

Adapting Strategic Planning to the Culture of Higher Education: The traditional characteristics of SP continue to resonate strongly across contemporary SP practices, with its tendency to favour rigid, hierarchical decision-making, a greater focus on planning rather than implementation, and a disciplined approach to gaining advantage over competitors (Wall and Wall, 1995). The most prevalent challenge that persists across the literature is that HEIs continue to struggle with how to maintain the strengths of this model, yet at the same time adapt it to their less structured and collegial ways of operating. The culture of HEIs is described as “a loosely-coupled system of units that need to work together for a mutually beneficial future but

understanding that their differences would often create tension ... [as they] simultaneously seek autonomous distinctiveness and interdependence” (Glassman, Rossy & Wingfield, as quoted in Lerner, 1999, p. 11). Many HEIs also function within a strong culture of collegiality in which colleagues see themselves as united in a common purpose while respecting individual abilities (Taylor & Machado, 2010). While the linear, top-down methods of traditional SP do lend themselves more readily in certain instances to smaller profit-oriented private colleges, a different approach appears to be needed to facilitate SP across the more complex networks of larger HEIs (Bryson, 2011; Carron et al, 2010).

Responding to Rapid Changes in the Planning Environment: SP is recognized as a structured and disciplined exercise that offers stability in the face of uncertainty. Increasingly, however, HEIs are reporting that they need an approach that is more responsive and more agile for them to keep up with the volatile changes they are currently experiencing in their planning environments (Goldman & Salem, 2015; Tromp & Ruben, 2010). While the predominant view is that SP is here to stay, some HEIs have even gone as far as to abandon the practice of SP altogether, declaring their planning environments so unpredictable as to render the process not worth the effort (Bryson, 2011; Martin, 2013). This erosion of SP in HEIs will likely continue until more responsive yet structured approaches are developed.

Reflecting Democratic Principles in the Strategic Planning Practices: The next major challenge to emerge from the literature on HEI SP is that these institutions are not doing enough to reflect the current expectations for highly-democratic day-to-day SP practices. Since the late 1980s, organizations of all types including HEIs have increasingly embraced the principles of decentralized governance including citizen participation, constraints on the power of the executive, and a guarantee of civil liberties (Bryson, 2011; Hinton, 2012; Trowler, 2002). SP

practices across all types of organizations including HEIs have followed suit, moving away from the autocratic, hierarchical approaches of the past toward increasingly democratic principles of equity, inclusiveness, transparency, delegation, and accountability (Carron et al., 2010; O'Donovan & Flower, 2013). This tactic has been a good fit to the collegial, free-thinking culture of HEIs, leading to increased consensus and collaboration around strategic initiatives (Hunter, 2013). Many scholars indicate that more still needs to be done however to reflect these principles in their SP practices (Bryson, 2011; Goldman & Salem, 2015; Luke, 2014).

Fostering Employee Engagement in the Process: Another challenge to Strategic Planning (SP) in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) reported widely across the literature is that of how to engage its participants, especially the front-line faculty in the process. The success of any such endeavour requires the commitment of not only its leaders, but also everyone across the campus working together toward strategic change. Getting people to engage in any major process of change is not an easy thing to do however (Sanaghan, 2009; Sanaghan & Hinton, 2013). The literature highlights how HEIs find it particularly challenging to involve faculty in SP. These highly independent groupings of 'organized anarchies' tend to view such efforts with suspicion, as top-down bureaucratic initiatives from the corporate world, thus poorly suited to the needs of academia (Hinton, 2012). And yet, it is these front-line faculty along with their department chairs and coordinators who play a key role in delivering institutional strategic priorities through to the students. Leaders should therefore pay special attention to bringing its academic community on board to foster strategic change through to the front-lines of HEIs (Dooris, 2002 - 2003; Morrison, Bellanca & Abernathy, 2014; Rowley, Lugan & Dolence, 1997).

Building Institutional Capacity for Strategic Change: Another major challenge to the success of HEI SP is the lack of professional training and support provided for both leaders and

participants in this process. HEIs should be doing more to provide ongoing training and support for everyone involved for SP to reach its full potential (Goldman & Salem, 2015; Sanaghan & Hinton, 2013). SP is all about facilitating both individual and institutional capacity “so that strategic thinking, acting and learning are continuously fostered, and the organization is helped to fulfill its mission” (Bryson, 2011, p. 176).

Some scholars argue that the role of the senior leadership cannot be underestimated in SP. Senior leaders need to bring a high degree of commitment, experience, judgement, and creativity to the process (Sanaghan, 2009). Their main role is to build trust in SP in HEIs. “Campus leaders need to know how to build and nurture institutional trust if they are going to carry out their SP. They can do so by creating an inclusive, transparent and participative planning process” (Sanaghan & Hinton, 2013, p. 2). These leaders also need training and support themselves, before going on to facilitate SP across the campus, as a matter of institutional culture, ‘the way things are done’ (Bryson, 2011; Hinton, 2012).

Managing Resources in Support of Strategic Planning: HEIs should also make more specific efforts to manage their resources in support of their SP initiatives. Some scholars argue that these institutions often take on too many strategic priorities, diluting their overall efforts (Goldman and Salem, 2015; Hayward, Ncayiyanga & Johnson, 2003). Not enough resources are often allocated in support of SP. As well, insufficient resources are allocated to each strategic priority to give it a reasonable chance of success (Sahoo & Senapati 2008; World Bank, 2007). HEIs also often overlook the opportunity to employ SP as a powerful integrating tool not only for institutional planning but also to bring together all planning initiatives across the institution into one cumulative, resource-optimizing effort (Sanaghan & Hinton, 2013). As an example, HEIs could employ SP to unify all its financial planning measures around its strategic

priorities, which in turn could lead to new opportunities for optimizing existing resources.

This literature review reveals that much remains to be done before the practice of HEI SP reaches its full potential. Research should continue into how to adapt the process to the highly autonomous and volatile planning environments of these institutions, including employing strong democratic principles in their daily practices, promoting employee engagement especially from its academic community, providing adequate training and support to grow everyone's capacity to think and act strategically, and maximizing resources to achieve strategic priorities.

Theoretical Frameworks of Leadership Informing This Study

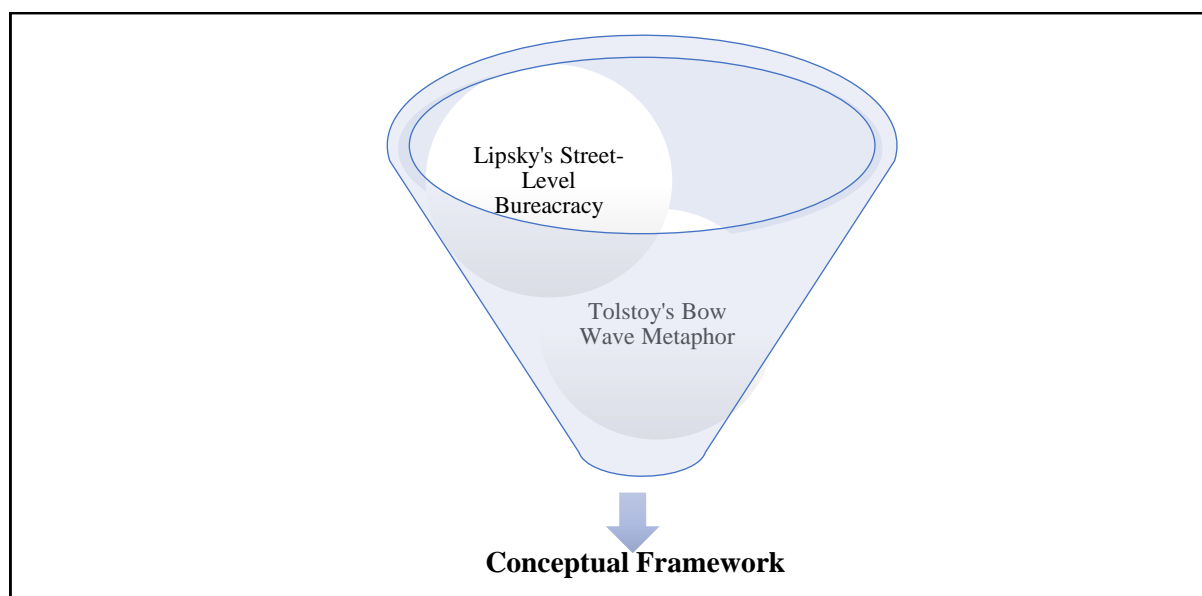
The next step in constructing my conceptual framework was to review the literature on leadership for more insight into the elusive nature of the role of the leader and how they contribute to Strategic Planning (SP) in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Traditional definitions emphasize the individual's ability to lead others (Collins English Dictionary, 1992), while more contemporary descriptions take a broader view of leadership as “those activities tied to the core work of the organization that are designed by organizational members to influence the motivation, knowledge, affect, or practices of other organizational members” (Spillane, 2006, p. 11). According to Bolden (2011), this construct remains elusive because it is so influenced by people's intuitive understanding of what it is, as well as their beliefs on human nature.

The trait approach has dominated the field of leadership for many centuries, from early Sanskrit writings to Plato's *Republic* published around 380 B.C., Machiavelli's *Prince* in 1532, Carlyle's 'Great Man' theory of 1841 through to the present. This approach continues to add to our understanding of leadership by focusing on the integrated patterns of personal characteristics that foster consistent leader effectiveness across a variety of organizational situations (Zaccaro, Kemp & Bader, 2004). A more recent alternative to the trait approach is the study of effects

of...work on it please . . . leadership styles, which considers how leaders behave, their “manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans and motivating people” (Newstrom & Davis, 1993). This approach looks at the *effects* of leadership styles, including the authoritarian, democratic, laissez-faire, spiritual, servant, visionary and charismatic leader, on the functioning of organizations. Educational leadership also emerged in the late 20th century with its focus on the role of the school principal on student achievement and institutional performance (Leithwood, 2005).

While this body of research has revealed much about what leaders do, it says less about *how* they go about doing so. Scholars have since shifted their focus to looking at leadership as a rational, situation-based effort shared by many players, a trend which Grint calls “increasingly rational leadership over time” (2010, p. 44). I selected two theoretical frameworks from this body of research, Lipsky’s ‘Street-Level Bureaucrats’ and Tolstoy’s bow-wave metaphor for leadership, as most relevant to my research topic, in that they focus on the roles of both leaders and followers at different levels within the process of organizational change (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Theoretical Leadership Frameworks Informing This Study



Lipsky's Street-Level Bureaucracy: 'Street-Level Bureaucracy' (SLB) was coined by Lipsky in 1980 to designate his extensive body of research on public service workers which continues to this day in contributing further insight to the field of leadership. This framework emerged at a time when a rapid growth in public policy-making spurred on by the baby boom led to a corresponding growth in the impact of civil servants on U.S. public policy. Described as "'human face' of policy" (Lipsky, 1980, p. 13), these Street-Level Bureaucrats (SLBs) are civil servants such as police officers, border guards, social workers and teachers who, in contrast to senior policy-writers, work face-to-face with the public to implement that policy.

A critical element of SLB is the *discretion* these civil servants exercise in performing their duties. According to Lipsky, the actions of these SLBs contribute significantly to the shaping of public policy as they wield considerable discretion in how they deliver that policy through to their client on a day-to-day basis. Though these front-line workers are expected to operate within established regulations, they often resort to simplified strategies to keep up with their heavy caseloads and inadequate resources. It is in applying these improvised routines, or acts of discretion, that SLBs contribute to the reshaping of public policy. The cumulative effect of these discretionary decisions can affect the intended policy to the point of causing significant differences between policy and practice: "I argue that the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively become the public policies they carry out" (Lipsky, 1980, p. xiii).

An example of SLB discretion often mentioned in the literature is the case of the social worker, many of whom carry such large caseloads that they have limited time to meet with their clients, leading them to make quick policy decisions. As a result, troubling differences can occur in how individual cases are handled (Hill, 2003). Other examples include the police officer who

decides which motorist receives a traffic citation, the triage nurse who determines who is next in line for treatment, and the school principal who decides whether a student is suspended or just sent home for the day (Jorna & Wagenaar, 2007; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Vitalis & Duhaut, 2004). Only one study from the literature focused on SLB in Higher Education, which confirmed that even junior residence supervisors exercised sufficient discretion to significantly alter policy at one university (Mackey, 2008). This SLB framework has since led to a substantial body of research into the impact of these front-line civil servants on such wide-ranging issues as accountability, resource management, information technology, and corruption across large organizations such as HEIs (Hill, 2003; Kelly, 1994; Snellen, 2002).

I now draw on this framework to shed further light on how SP takes place in the context of the Quebec CEGEP network. These Colleges are governed centrally by a series of laws collected in the Quebec CEGEP Act. These laws establish the general organizational and decision-making structures, as well as the broad program offerings delivered across the province by these institutions. Governance is then decentralized to individual institutions, with policies and programs interpreted at that level according to these guidelines. How does policy development including Strategic Planning (SP) happen across these Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)? It is the senior administrators (the Directors) who drive policy development across these institutions. It is then the task of the academic administrators (the Academic Deans) to facilitate the delivery of these policies through to the department chairs. In turn, it is the job of the department chairs to support the faculty in delivering these policies through to their students. It is these department chairs (who are also teaching faculty) and their fellow faculty members, who are the front-line members who in effect act as the ‘Street-Level Bureaucrats’ (SLBs) of these institutions in their role as instructional leaders. These SLBs apply their discretion to the best of their ability to

implement various academic policies, such as those governing accessibility to learning resources, inclusiveness in teaching and learning practices, and equity of student assessment. They are the ones who transform this policy into action for the students, deciding for example who will make up a missed class, who is sent for academic counselling, or who is eligible for a grade review. It is in working at the front lines myself as a department chair and faculty member I have seen first-hand how significant differences can and do occur in how that policy is applied.

The key take-away for me here is that these key front-line workers should be kept well informed and involved in policy-making to foster their buy-in to delivering policy as equitably as possible. By making equitable policy delivery one of its strategic priorities, the institution could also employ SP to rally everyone around improving policy implementation across the campus.

Tolstoy's Bow-Wave Metaphor for Leadership: What is leadership? Why is it important? How should we go about choosing our leaders? How should they be evaluated? Do we even need them? Despite extensive inquiry into these questions and more on this topic, the scholarly debate continues on the nature of leadership. Tolstoy's bow-wave metaphor has since provided much inspiration for rethinking what leadership is all about:

In whatever direction a ship moves the flow of waves it cuts will always be noticeable ahead of it ... When the ship moves in one direction there is one and the same wave ahead of it, when it turns frequently the wave ahead of it also turns frequently. But wherever it may turn there always will be the wave anticipating its movement. Whatever happens it appears that just that event was foreseen and decreed. Wherever the ship may go, the rush of water which neither directs nor increases its movement foams ahead of it, and at a distance seems not merely to move of itself but to govern the ship's movement also (Tolstoy, 1991; 1289).

Grint's exploration of Tolstoy's bow-wave metaphor for leadership (1997, 2000, 2001, 2005) has inspired a new generation of leadership scholars to revisit the nature of leadership. In Grint's interpretation, the leader is the bow wave: "Tolstoy ... likens leaders to bow waves of

moving ships - always in front and theoretically leading, but, in practice, not leading but merely being pushed along by the boat (organization) itself” (Grint, 2001, p. 9). While it may be clear from this metaphor that leaders are in front of their followers, it is not clear to what extent these leaders are influencing what goes on around them, or being influenced by their followers:

One thing is clear: leaders are in front of those they lead – but the enigma surrounds the issue of whether they are pulling or being pushed by those behind them. The distinction is not just concerned with what leaders are doing but also with what followers are doing (Grint, 1997, p. 1).

Grint further employs the metaphor to illustrate that to him leadership is a shared effort across complex organizations, one that is driven by a collective rather than by an individual leader:

[The] leader-focused approach assumes that individuals rather than collectives are responsible for the construction of the future ... Tolstoy believed the opposite – that leaders were merely propelled by their organizations as a bow-wave is propelled by a boat, but it can still be argued that the future is constructed by contemporary leadership even if that leadership has a collective form (Grint, 2005, p. 11).

According to Cronin and Genovese, too much focus on the leader can undermine efforts to understand leadership as a collaborative effort by many:

It is always a two-way loyalty, a two-way communication, and the mutual engagement of leaders and the “led” that are crucial. Leadership scholars rightly insist on putting the “ship”, or the followers back in the equation (Cronin & Genovese, 2012, p. 37).

Those being led do not blindly follow their leaders; leadership remains firmly in the hands of these so-called followers. Effective leaders are those who earn the commitment of those they lead. Grint also describes how leadership should be looked at as a reciprocal arrangement between leaders and followers: “What distinguishes a successful from a failed leader is whether the subordinates can and will save the organization from mistakes of its leader” (2000, p. 419).

Sytsma (2009) further expands on this discourse on leadership by comparing Grint’s take on Tolstoy’s bow-wave metaphor to Reason’s (1994) ship-and-wave analogy for leadership to

offer a different interpretation of the metaphor. As mentioned earlier, Grint took Tolstoy to mean that the ship is the organization, and the bow wave is the leader. The leader is clearly in front, but what is not clear is whether the leaders are pulling the organization along, or being pushed from behind by their followers. Reason uses this ship-and-wave analogy to describe leadership as an ongoing process of self-discovery whereby “steering the ship involves leading in order to learn and learning in order to lead” (1994, p. 31). In contrast to Tolstoy, here the leaders are active participants in the process as they learn to steer the ship of self, at the same time creating that bow wave to make space for them to lead:

In contrast to Tolstoy’s ship being the organization, the ship here is the leader - one immersed in the organization, one whose inner being and energy motivates and creates the leading edge or bow wave ... the edge of possibility, where the mind and body, the inner and outer, govern each other (Sytsma, 1994, p. 186).

Sytsma sees leadership as much more complex than leaders simply taking charge as part of a hierarchical chain of command. Instead, they are immersed in the organization in a dynamic process of lifelong learning to find a better way forward for all. Sytsma further suggests that seeking out those with leadership potential “needs to shift to developing the leadership potential in everyone” (p. 190); leadership should be seen as a holistic practice, one that permeates the entire organization in a dynamic flow of everyone growing together toward a brighter future.

Grint (1997) also takes Tolstoy’s bow-wave metaphor one step further to propose a model of leadership intended to provoke further thought on the nature of leadership. With this model, Grint proposes that leadership can be plotted on this 2 X 2 grid based on four main approaches: *trait*, *contingency*, *situational* and *constitutive*. In the *trait* approach, the ‘essence’ or characteristics of the leader are important, but the context is not; it is all about who the leader is and what that person brings to the job. In the *contingency* approach, both the essence of the leader and the context are definable and critical, therefore a self-aware and analytical leader is

what is best. In the *situational* approach, certain contexts demand certain types of leadership, so the leader needs to have the ability to adapt to the situation. In the *constitutive* approach, the ‘true’ situation and the leader are impossible to know, so what becomes important is what people *constitute* or make of the situation. In this case, it takes a leader with solid rhetorical skills to frame leadership actions and consequences in the best possible light.

One of the most significant contributions from Grint’s interpretation of Tolstoy’s bow-wave metaphor was his take on where we should go from here to learn more about leadership:

[L]eadership should not be reduced to the actions of the leader, nor even to the relations between the leader and the led. Instead, leadership should be concerned with the mobilization of resources of all forms. If the word ‘leader’ means to move in a new direction, then let it end this particular journey through leadership by setting off anew with a different perspective: don’t trace the leader, don’t even trace the follower: trace the mobilization (1997, p. 17).

Grint does not provide any further explanation at this point for what he means by ‘the mobilization of resources in all its forms’. He does so elsewhere however in *The Arts of Leadership* (2001), where he talks about how the leader “mobilizes people to move from one situation to a different one ... to relay to one’s followers the hope of a better future” (p. 13), how the leader needs to “mobilize the whole community” (p. 14), and how “the front-line officers must be mobilized by the top leadership” (p. 15). I also looked to the broader literature, which defines the mobilization of resources as the way an organization uses its human, material and financial resources to achieve its intended goals, to support its ability to deliver goods and services in a responsible and sustainable manner (Chawla & Berman, 1996; Seltzer, 2014). Looking at SP in light of Grint’s view of leadership suggests that the success of any HEI SP endeavour should not be measured solely on the extent to which the institution achieves its strategic priorities, but also on how well it mobilized its resources to reach those goals.

Reflecting on this body of literature has also deepened my understanding of the nature of

leadership in relation to Strategic Planning (SP) in Quebec CEGEPs. The ultimate test is not how well the most senior leader (in this case the Director General of the College) steers the institution through its turbulent planning environment to reach its strategic objectives. Rather, it comes down to how well the entire institution, leaders and followers alike, mobilize all SP-related activities together toward achieving those results. This is not to say that the Director General does not play a critical role in leading that process. It is just that this role should not be a top-down command performance, but one of close collaboration between both leaders and followers to keep everyone's actions on course toward their shared SP priorities. According to Grint, leadership in complex organizations "is too important a matter to be left to leaders alone":

Leadership, then, is not just a theoretical arena but one with critical practical implications for us all and the limits of leadership – what leaders can do and what followers should allow them to do – are foundational aspects of this arena. Leadership, in effect, is too important to be left to leaders (2005, p. 4).

In this chapter, I discussed how I went about constructing my conceptual framework for this study. I conducted a review of the literature on the prevalent challenges with Strategic Planning (SP) in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), as well as responses to those challenges from that literature. I then examined the SP models and leadership frameworks of relevance to my research problem to learn more about what they had to offer on how HEIs could make better use of this planning tool. While this review revealed that significant inroads have been made with SP models such as the Business, Political and Collaborative Models, it also shows that much remains to be done to mobilize leaders and followers alike for SP to reach its full potential. I collected the data, and interpreted my findings to identify key take-aways as to how SP could be carried out more effectively across these institutions.

Chapter Three: Methodology

I now present my research methodology for this study, including my philosophical stance as a researcher, overall research approach, questions, setting, participants, methods of data collection and analysis, as well as how I addressed the issues of research ethics, validity and researcher bias. Researchers should have a clear understanding of their own research paradigm, the belief system that guides the way they see and do things. This paradigm encompasses the researcher's ontological view (their view of the nature of reality), their epistemological stance (how they relate to the knowledge being acquired), as well as their research methodology (how they go about seeking that knowledge) (Guba 1990; Maxwell, 2013).

My ontological stance as a researcher is that of a relativist. Positivists believe that certain or "positive" knowledge is based on natural phenomena and that valid knowledge is only found in empirical evidence, or verified data (positive facts) received from the senses (Anderson, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) and that "science provides the only valid form of knowledge and that facts are the only possible objects of knowledge" (Egan, 1997, p. 115). Instead, relativists operate according to the belief that knowledge is also a social construct, and people's views are relative to differences in perception. There is no universal, objective truth; each point of view is considered to have its own truth. Relativists believe that valuable insight can be acquired through the critical analysis of the many individual interpretations of a situation to arrive closer to what is going on with any given phenomenon (Baghramian, 2004; Kuhn, 1996).

My epistemological stance is that of a social constructivist. Social constructivism is a theory of knowledge according to which knowledge is socially constructed through interaction with others. Social constructivists believe that we each construct our own vision of reality, and thus there exist multiple interpretations of what is real. As social beings we *construct* our

understanding together of how we see reality, building our collective views together of that reality based on our sharing of perceptions, beliefs, and values (Dyson, 2004; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Social constructivists also purport that people are most likely to act according to this shared view of reality that they build together (Freire, 1982; Kegan 1982; Vygotsky, 1978). Called ‘meaning-making’ in the literature (Kegan, 1980), this approach focuses on how people make sense of their experiences as the center of the process of inquiry.

Strategic Planning (SP) in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is a topic well suited for study from a social constructivist perspective. It is a prime example of a human activity in which many individuals and groups interact together in a complex manner to shape the reality of what an organization stands for, what it becomes, and how it affects the world around it. As a social constructivist, I therefore decided to explore people’s meaning-making of SP in HEIs through this research study, to learn more about how to address SP in HEIs by asking the people living it day to day for their take on how it could happen more effectively.

Research Approach

I now describe my research approach to describe how I went about conducting this inquiry. My entire approach is underpinned by my philosophical assumptions as explained above, assumptions that shape how I perceive knowledge and reality. In keeping with these assumptions, I chose a qualitative research approach to study my research problem. This approach is employed by researchers who wish to take an in-depth look at the *whys* and *hows* of what people do, how they organize themselves, as well as how they relate to and interact with the world around them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

I reviewed the practices of experienced qualitative researchers such as Creswell (2007), Denzin & Lincoln (2011), Maxwell (2013), Maykut & Morehouse (1994), and Tobin & Begley

(2004) for insights into how to carry out a rigorous qualitative research inquiry. These experts recommend a series of strategies to take an in-depth look at the perspectives and meanings that people hold about a given issue. Taking an emergent approach to their inquiry, these researchers allow the process to evolve in response to the settings and conditions they encounter in the field. They view themselves as key instruments of the process, often personally interacting with participants in their natural settings, to gather as intimate and authentic data as possible.

Qualitative researchers also use a reflective and thematic approach to systematically analyze the information they collect, seeking to identify patterns and themes as they see them emerge from that data. They incorporate the voices of the participants as well their own reflexivity to provide a rich and holistic explanation of what they perceive as going on with that data to shed light on their topic of study. Reflexivity is a methodological issue in the social sciences, which occurs when the observations or actions of the observers affect the situations they are observing (Archer, 2007; Giddens, 1984; Merton, 1948, Nagel, 1961). In qualitative research, reflexivity is part of the solution, not the problem (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992); the researcher's background and experiences are not only key factors but also assets in knowledge construction (Creswell, 2013). Researchers and participants construct this process of 'meaning-making' together, with the researcher bringing their combined knowledge and experience to bear in the search for what is going on with a given issue (Bradley, 1993; Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Kegan, 1980). carry out my study. I immersed myself in the field, collecting the data personally at my participants' place of work to listen carefully to their voices. I used a thematic approach to identify patterns and themes a I saw them emerge from the data. I incorporated the voices of my participants, as well as my own reflexivity to provide a rich and evidence-based account of what I saw going on with that data.

Methodology

Research Questions: I examined the leaders' views at one Higher Education Institution (HEI) in relation to three main research questions: (1) 'What is your understanding of strategic planning in general, as well as how it currently happens at your College?' (2) 'What are the main challenges you see with how the process currently happens at your College?', and (3) 'What are some concrete suggestions on how it could happen more effectively?' I then developed a series of focus group questions to engage my participants in a discussion around each of these main research questions, a copy of which is provided in Appendix 3A.

Setting: I carried out this study at a large CEGEP (*Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel* - a General and Vocational College) of over 8,000 students located in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. While approximately 70% of the students at this institution pursue pre-university studies, the rest participate in technical programs. The students range primarily from 17-20 years in age, with a growing number of mature students registering at the College. Over 60% claim English as their mother tongue, while the rest identify themselves as a mix of francophone (French mother-tongue) and allophone (other mother-tongue) speakers. I chose this site for my research study because it is representative in size and organizational structure to many such institutions across the province of Quebec. I purposely limited my study to one site to gain in-depth insight into the challenges faced by HEIs in implementing SP. My intent in so doing was not only to generate concrete ideas for this one College, but also to contribute to the broader conversation on how HEIs in general could make more effective use of SP.

The operating structure of CEGEPs is established in a collection of provincial laws, collective agreements, and local by-laws. The CEGEP Act (General and Vocational Colleges Act) provides the framework of the College system, as well as the roles, powers and

responsibilities of the individuals and structures within. A Board of Governors with both external and internal representatives of the College community contributes to the overall direction and vision of the institution. The Executive Committee, consisting of the senior Directors of the College, is responsible for carrying this vision through to its academic policies and program offerings. A council of faculty representatives advises the College on academic matters. Reporting to the Board of Governors, the Director General plays a pivotal role overseeing the management and development of the College. The Director General is also responsible for the College SP, while the Executive Committee acts as its steering committee.

Typically, Quebec CEGEPs are divided into two spheres of action – the academic and the operational. The Academic Dean is the most senior administrator on the academic side of the institution, reporting to the Director General and the Board of Directors, and responsible for the overall delivery of all academic programs and resources. A team of Associate Deans in turn report to the Academic Dean, each of them overseeing different academic sectors of the College (e.g., General Education, Science, Social Science, and Technical Programs, Registration, and Academic Resources to support student success). These Associate Deans work closely with their faculty departments, managers, and support staff to deliver the academic programs and services to students. On the operational side, a team of Directors work with their managers, professionals and support staff to ensure the functioning of the College's support programs and systems such as continuing education, student services, facilities, human resources, and legal affairs. This structure is typical of other CEGEPs across the network.

Participants: My original intent was to include participants from all the main constituent groups of the College, including the Board of Directors, administrators, managers, support staff, faculty and right through even to its students. As my inquiry evolved however, I realized that I

would need to restrict the scope of my inquiry to the views of the leaders facilitating SP across the academic sector of this institution to keep it feasible using resources available to me. This included all of the senior directors and the associate deans, as well as some of the front-line department Chairs/ Coordinators (who in effect are also active teaching faculty) of the College. I recruited my participants by inviting them to join the study via College email. See Appendix 3B for this invitation. I also presented the project at various meetings of these target groups to encourage their participation. I saw myself as an integral participant in the inquiry, as I looked through the lens of my own experience as a faculty member and former department chair at one college to examine the participants' views on HEI SP. I also saw myself as a key instrument of the study in that I facilitated all the focus groups, transcribed what everyone had to say, and analyzed and interpreted the findings.

The Directors' group consisted of two male and five female participants all in the 50- to 59-year age bracket, with an average of 16 years' service. This group shared the widest range of education levels from bachelor's degrees to PhDs. The Deans' group possessed a similar make-up to the Directors' group. The three males and two females making up the group all fell in the 50- to 59-year age bracket, with an average of 14 years of service, and held Masters' degrees or higher. The Chairs/Coordinators' group - who are also faculty members - consisted of one-fifth of these leaders from across all academic sectors of the College. This group fell into the age bracket of 40-49 years, and held an average of 12 years of service at the College. I chose to summarize the leaders' characteristics by group rather than by individual participant (see Table 1 on page 53 below) to protect their confidentiality within the relatively small network of CEGEPS in Quebec:

Table 1: Participants' Characteristics

Variable	Directors	Deans	Chairs/Coordinators
Number of Participants	7	5	12
% of Total Population	$7/8 = 87.5\%$	$5/5 = 100\%$	$12/60 = 20\%$
Male to Female Ratio	2:5	3:2	5:7
Age Range	50-59 years	50-59 years	40-49 years
Average Education	Undergraduate Degree	Master's Degree	Master's Degree
Average Years of Service	16	14	12

Methods of Data Collection: I collected the data for this study by conducting a series of focus groups to engage my study participants in an in-depth discussion on my research problem. I chose the focus group method because it is considered to be a useful approach to data collection that can provide rich and detailed information about a given issue (Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook, 2007; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). I conducted four focus group sessions of approximately 90 minutes in duration. The first group consisted of seven out of eight of the Directors, including the Director General and the Academic Dean of the College. The second group included all five of the Associate Deans. I also conducted two separate focus group sessions of five and seven participants each for the Chairs/Coordinators. I did so to keeping the focus group sessions small enough to give the participants enough time to adequately express their views. I also conducted a few member-check interviews with select participants to seek their clarifications, explanations and elaborations on the data from these sessions.

I also provided a written information statement for the participants to review before participating in the study. This statement included a description of the study, its purpose, the

research questions, time and scope of the commitment required, a request for permission to audio-tape the sessions, a statement about the voluntary nature of their participation, the right to withdraw at any time, the intended use of the results, as well as a description of the various measures used to ensure participant confidentiality. This statement is included in Appendix 3B. I reviewed this statement with all participants, then also had them complete a written consent form before each session (see Appendix 3C for this consent form).

I consulted the literature on how to conduct as effective focus group sessions as possible, including the size and composition of the groups, the location of the sessions, as well as my role as facilitator of these sessions (Berg, 2004; Patton, 1990; Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook, 2007). I therefore kept my focus groups small (5 to 7 leaders) to ensure that participants had enough time to explore their views on each research question (approximately 90 minutes for each session). I located the sessions in the quietest, most discreet meeting places available to ensure the participants' privacy at their place of work. At the beginning of each session, I reminded the participants of my multi-faceted role in the process as both facilitator and researcher in the process. I also pointed out that there were no right or wrong answers, and as such it was important to respect everyone's right to express their own opinions. I also addressed issues of confidentiality up front in this situation where most participants knew each other at their place of work. I reminded them that it was important not to share their conversations with others outside the focus group sessions, and that they were also under no obligation to disclose any information of a personal or sensitive nature during those sessions. While it is recognized that confidentiality cannot be ensured in such focus group inquiries (Patton, 1990), I believe that following these procedures helped to strengthen the participants' trust and confidence in the research process.

I conducted all focus groups myself to provide me with in-depth insight into how the

participants constructed their views together on my topic of research. I moderated the sessions to encourage a balanced use of time for each research question, as well as input from all leaders. I audio-taped all sessions so that I could return as needed to listen again to what my participants had to say as I analyzed and interpreted the data. I also kept detailed field notes throughout the sessions to help me recall the discussions in context when I got to this phase. I also transcribed the audio recordings myself, noting as faithfully as possible what was being said by my participants, which gave me another valuable opportunity to listen closely to their views. All of these measures have enabled me to collect a rich body of data for my study.

Analytical Approach

I now discuss the strategies I used to analyze and interpret my research data. The main approach I employed was the constant comparative method. Originally developed by Glaser and Straus (1976), this approach has since been further refined by others including Charmaz (2001), Lincoln and Guba (1985), Maykut & Morehouse (1994), Scott (2004), and Straus and Corbin (1998). The researcher uses this method to make an in-depth and iterative comparison of the views of the study participants, looking for prevalent themes to emerge from that data to throw light on a given phenomenon. Common questions asked by the researcher throughout include: "What do the participants think about what's going on in terms of my topic of inquiry?", "What is the main issue according to the participants?", "How do they go about building their understanding of this issue together?" and "How do the main themes emerge from their discussions on this issue?" (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The following description resonated with me in terms of my own experience with this approach:

[W]ords are the way that most people come to understand their situations; we create our world with words; we explain ourselves with words; we defend and hide ourselves with words ... the task of the researcher is to find patterns within those words and to present those patterns for others to inspect while at

the same time staying as close to the construction of the world as the participants originally experienced it (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 18).

I followed three distinct phases of analysis to employ this method of data analysis, as typically recommended in the literature (Glaser & Straus, 1976; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In Phase One of the process, I grouped my data (the participants' responses to each of my focus group questions) into the *salient concepts* I saw emerge both from within and across my three leader groups. In Phase Two, I grouped these salient concepts into *main categories of salient concepts*, again both within and across all three leader groups. In Phase 3, I grouped these categories of salient concepts into the *prevalent themes* as I saw them emerge from the data both within and across all three of my focus groups. Researchers employing the constant comparative method should provide a clear accounting of how they analyzed their data, to make it easier for others to trace their analysis, thus strengthening the credibility and validity of their research process (Shenton, 2004; Boieje, 2007). Using an actual segment of my data (see Figure 6 below), I now describe how I used this method to analyze that data through each phase of this analytical approach.

**Figure 6. Transcript of the Deans' Discussion on the Focus Group Question
'What does strategic planning mean to you in general?'**

Arthur: Setting direction 5 years down the road.

Sue: Trying to think of the larger picture. Think of what you want the college to be, what you want it to be known for, what do you want its reputation to be in the future.

David: A macro view that will inform the micro level decisions. The macro level will inform the micro ... those can be essentially broken down into smaller pieces that can refine the focus of the macro perspective.

Rob: I think it is critical. It's a look down the road anywhere from 3 to 5 years. I would agree with David in terms of the macro picture, and it really should guide us. It's critical to have this, but even more critical to take it off the wall and actually use it, so in our micro each year, in our work plans that we put together from that macro, that we really do look at that macro.

Sue: It's not to do with your day to day. It gives you something to look back on and say when you are trying to make decisions. What should we do? How can we do it? You say this is where we are going, and we make the decisions and plans based on that. It will have an implication down the road to inform what you do on a day to day basis; it is looking at the larger scale (macro) then moving along from there.

Phase One - Salient Concepts: The first *salient concept* I noticed from the above data in relation to the Deans' understanding of Strategic Planning (SP) in general coalesced around the idea that SP acts as a guide for the College to translate targeted priorities into concrete action. Sue, one of the Deans, commented: "Trying to think of the larger picture things. Think of what you want the college to be". Another Dean, Rob concurred: "... it really should guide us. I think it's critical to have this." The second salient concept I noticed from the data above focused on the idea that SP sets the macroscopic, big-picture goals to help guide the microscopic, day-to-day operational decisions. David described the process as "... a macro view that will inform the micro level decisions." Rob added: "I would really agree with David in terms of the macro picture . . . so in our micro each year in our work plans that we put together from that macro, we really do look at that macro." Sue also concurred with that idea, stating that: "... it's not to do with your day to day ... it is looking at the big scale (macro) and from that actually moving along." The final salient concept that I identified from the above data was that the process should take place over a period of three to five years. Arthur stated that SP should be "setting directions 5 years down the road", and Sue concurred that it should look to the future, "I'm not talking about next week but not too far down the road so in a few years' time". Rob also agreed that it should be "down the road anywhere from 3 to 5 years." As a final step, I compiled the salient concepts (SP as a guide to strategic action; takes place over 3 to 5 year; sets macroscopic goals to drive decisions) into a matrix to visualize the larger picture of how the data coalesced into these salient concepts (see Table 2 on page 58 below):

Table 2. Phase One - Salient Concepts: The Deans' Responses to the Focus Group Question 'What does strategic planning mean to you in general?'

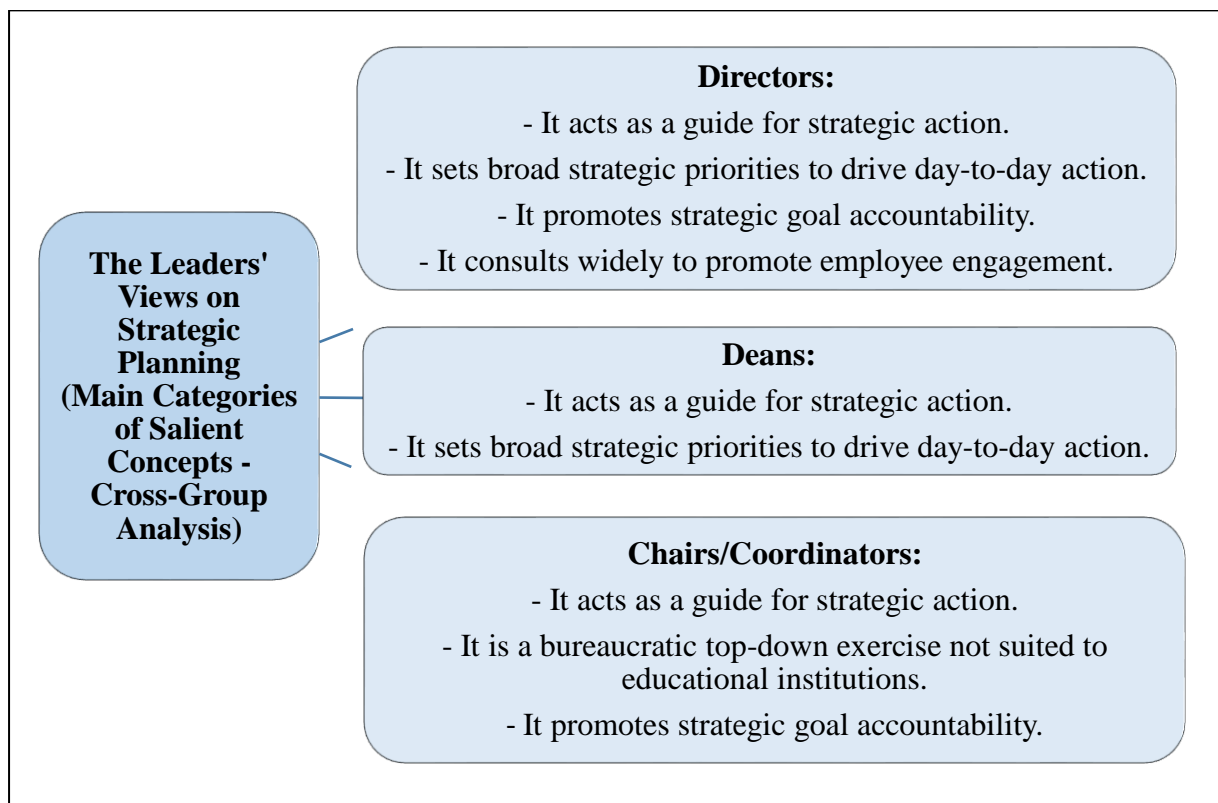
It is a guide to strategic action	It takes place over 3 to 5 years.	It sets macroscopic goals to drive microscopic decisions.
<p>Arthur: Setting directions.</p> <p>Sue: Think of what you want the college to be, what do you want it to be known for ... what vision do you have?</p> <p>David: Look at elements we want to address.</p> <p>Rob: It's critical to have this, but even more critical to take it off the wall and actually use it, so in developing our work plans that we put together each year, we really do look at that macro.</p> <p>Sue: It's not to do with your day to day; it will have an implication down the road to inform what you do on a day to day basis. when you are trying to make decisions.</p>	<p>Arthur: Five years down the road.</p> <p>Sue: Not tomorrow, but say in a few years' time.</p> <p>Rob: Anywhere from 3 to 5 years.</p>	<p>Sue: Trying to think of the larger picture.</p> <p>David: A macro view that will inform the micro level decisions. The macro level will inform the micro ... those can be essentially broken down into smaller pieces that can refine the macro perspective.</p> <p>Rob: I would agree with David in terms of the macro picture: ... so in our micro work plans that we put together every year we really look at that macro.</p>

Phase Two – Categories of Salient Concepts: In the second stage of this analytical approach, I grouped the salient concepts identified from Phase One above into broader *categories*. I then developed similar matrices for the data for the Directors', Deans' and Chairs/Coordinators' responses, then conducted a cross-group analysis of the data, looking for the common, distinct and opposing views across all three groups. All three groups saw SP as a guide for targeted action, so I retained this as one of the categories of salient concepts to emerge from the data at this stage of my analysis. Many of the Directors and Deans shared the common view that strategic goals should drive day-to-day decisions. Many of the Deans and Chairs/Coordinators mentioned that the process should occur within three to five years. I also retained these commonalities as main categories of salient concepts to emerge from the data here.

On the other hand, four of the Chairs/Coordinators held a view strongly opposed to the prevailing view that SP was a viable guide to targeted action. Instead, they expressed that SP was “a large bureaucratic exercise to document the things that you would have done anyway” and “just top-down management and so I don't understand the role of it here”. I therefore included

this view as one of the main discrepant categories of salient concepts.. The following concept map illustrates both the prevalent and divergent views identified across all three leader groups in this second phase of the process:

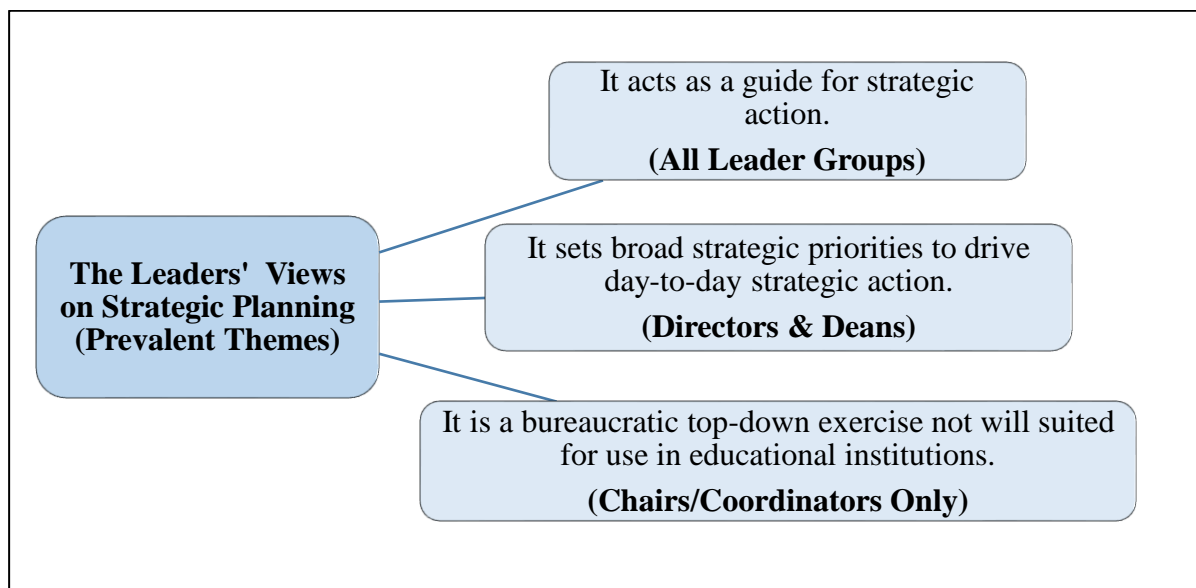
Figure 7. Phase Two: Main Categories of Salient Concepts - The Leaders' Views on the Focus Group Question 'What does strategic planning mean to you?'



Phase Three – Prevalent Themes: In this final stage of my analytical process, I conducted a cross-group analysis to construct the overarching themes by comparing the main categories across all leader groups. For example, the first theme to emerge in relation to the first focus group question on the nature of strategic planning was that all three groups shared the common view that the main purpose of SP is to act as a guide to strategic action. The second theme related to this question was that the Directors and Deans saw the process as setting broad strategic priorities to drive day-to-day strategic action. The third and final theme concerning this question

was that the Chairs/Coordinators saw SP as a bureaucratic top-down exercise not well suited to educational institutions. The following concept map illustrates these prevalent themes:

Figure 8. Phase Three: Prevalent Themes - The Leaders' Views on the Focus Group Question 'What does strategic planning mean to you?'



As I started to analyze my research data, I came to realize that the constant comparative method is a highly iterative process involving a continuous assessment and re-assessment of one's interpretation of the data (Charmaz, 2001; Corbin & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this thematic approach, concepts are identified from the data, with seemingly haphazard chunks of that data coalescing into more meaningful, salient concepts. These concepts undergo further changes as they are refined and grouped together into broader categories of concepts, then integrated into overarching themes. This approach allowed me to experience first-hand how qualitative research is indeed a "messy enterprise" (Bell & Roberts, 1984), yet one that was invaluable in giving me that closer look I was looking for into my participants' views on my topic of inquiry. A flowchart of this three-phase analytical approach is available in Appendix 3D.

I also employed other approaches to analyze my research data, as recommended by qualitative scholars including Lincoln & Guba (1985), Maxwell (2013), Miles & Huberman

(1994), and Tobin & Begley (2004). I kept a reflexive journal to guide me through each step of my research journey. I kept detailed field notes during the focus group sessions to recall how the participants built their understanding of SP together during the focus group discussions. I also developed a series of matrices (see samples of these matrices in Appendices 3E and 3F), as well as concept maps built from those matrices (see Appendices 4A to 6E) to clarify my analysis and interpretation of the data. Employing these various measures has enabled me to carry out a more rigorous and in-depth analysis of my research data.

Research Ethics and Validity

I conducted this study in keeping with the established guidelines for ethical research. As per these guidelines, I waited until I received the ethics approval from both McGill University's Research Ethics Board and the Research Ethics Committee of my research site before proceeding to collect my research data. I provided detailed instructions to the participants (see Appendices 3B and 3C) on ethical issues of concern to them including voluntary participation, confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the study. I protected the privacy and confidentiality of both the participants and the institution by the use of pseudonyms, and by removing any details which might reveal either the identity of the participants or the study location. I protected my data by managing, storing, and disposing of it according to the recommended practice.

I also addressed the issue of validity in conducting my study. According to Maxwell, establishing validity is a key issue: "if qualitative studies cannot consistently produce valid results, then policies, programs, or predictions based on these studies cannot be relied upon" (2002, p. 37). The qualitative researcher addresses any potential *validity threats*, asking whether there is a way he/she might be wrong. Could there be alternative explanations for or other interpretations of the data? Validity "consists of your conceptualization of these threats and the

strategies you use to discover if they are plausible in your actual research situation, and to deal with them if they are plausible” (Maxwell, 2013, p.123). It is also known as *trustworthiness*, the need to establish confidence in one’s research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I employed Maxwell’s approach to validity (2002) which proposes three main types of validity - descriptive, interpretive and theoretical validity - to strengthen the researcher’s *understanding* of their data.

Descriptive validity is defined as “the factual accuracy of [the researcher’s] account – that is that they are not making up or distorting the things they saw and heard” (Maxwell, 2002, p. 45). This type of understanding of data is according to Maxwell the foundation upon which all other types of validity are built, and as such should be of primary concern for qualitative researchers. As Maxwell explains, the researcher’s description of what is seen or heard should refer to specific events and situations, rather than generalizations.

Interpretive validity refers to aspects of the researcher’s account of a given phenomenon “for which the terms of the account are not themselves problematic” (Maxwell, 2002, p. 49). This type of understanding comes down to a matter of inference of meaning from the words and actions of the participants being studied. Accounts of these meanings are based largely on the participants’ own accounts, but are also *constructed* by the researcher on the basis of his/her interpretive understanding of the topic of research. The issue then becomes not the appropriateness of the account, but rather its accuracy in reflecting the perspective of the individuals included in that account (Maxwell, 2002).

I employed various approaches to enhance the descriptive validity for this study. I stayed close to the research data at all times, using actual quotes from what my participants had to say to describe what I saw and heard in my focus group sessions. I conducted member checks with selected participants to clarify any unclear responses to my focus group questions. I also audio-

taped all of my focus group sessions so that I could return to the data to review whether I had indeed provided an accurate accounting of what I saw and heard in my focus group sessions. I also applied a process of triangulation, using multiple tools including reflexive journaling, field notes, concept maps, and matrices to clarify my understanding of how the participants built their views together on SP at their College. To address interpretive validity, I conducted debriefings with my research peers, as well as member checks with selected participants to discuss my interpretations of any unclear or potentially controversial pieces of data. I also consulted with my fellow scholar experts, competent peers, and research advisors to check whether my interpretations were reasonably supported by the data, and to bring to light any alternative explanations of the data that I may have overlooked.

Theoretical validity “goes beyond concrete description and interpretation and explicitly addresses the theoretical constructions that the researcher brings to, or develops during, the study” (Maxwell, 2002, p. 50). Theoretical validity goes beyond concrete description and interpretation and explicitly addresses the researcher’s theoretical constructions he/she brings to, or develops to shed light on the phenomenon. This type of understanding “refers to an account’s function as an *explanation*, as well as a description or interpretation, of the phenomenon (Maxwell, 2002, p. 51). Accordingly, I consulted with my fellow scholar experts, competent peers, and research advisors to seek their views and alternative explanations on what I saw in the study findings, and to identify any discrepant data I may have overlooked during this analytical process.

I also drew on the four criteria, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), often used by qualitative researchers to ensure the validity of their research endeavours. Credibility means “to carry out the inquiry in

such a way that the probability that the findings will be found to be credible is enhanced . . .” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 296). I addressed the credibility issue by employing various techniques as recommended in the literature, including prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing and member checking (Boije, 2007; Shenton, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I described my prolonged involvement in HEIs as both department chair and faculty member (see Chapter One), which has given me an in-depth understanding of SP in this context. I also conducted my inquiry at the participants’ place of work, which enabled me to immerse myself in this setting over a period of some months, giving me a more in-depth look into their views. As reported earlier, I also employed peer debriefing and member checking, which also contributed to ensuring that my findings were credibly supported by the data.

Transferability is the potential for other researchers to decide for themselves whether research findings could be transferable to the context of their own inquiry (Maxwell, 2013). As recommended by Lincoln and Guba, I endeavoured to provide a “thick description” (1985, p. 219), a detailed commentary on how I went about analyzing and interpreting my data to allow for researchers to determine the degree to which my findings might be transferable to other similar settings.

Dependability criterion is also an important consideration in qualitative work. According to Lincoln and Guba, dependability means that the researcher “seeks means for taking into account both factors of instability and factors of phenomenal or design-induced change” (1985, p. 299). Reproducing or repeating qualitative studies using similar research design, context, methodology, implementation, and reflective appraisal of the results is considered particularly challenging due to the changing nature of the phenomena being studied (Shenton, 2004). In this chapter, I strove to provide a clear audit trail, a detailed accounting of my research methodology

to other researchers wishing to carry out a similar study.

Confirmability is “the extent to which the characteristics of the data, as posited by the researcher, can be confirmed by others who read or review the research results” (Bradley, 1993, p. 437). This detailed explanation of my research methodology is also intended to provide readers with the opportunity to judge the integrity of this study for themselves.

Researcher’s bias is also another important validity consideration. There is a close interaction between the choice of questions asked, who is asking them, and the answers received. Research reflects the values, beliefs, and perspectives of the researcher. The key is for researchers to consciously recognize and declare their assumptions and how they will address them in their research (Anderson, 1998; Maxwell, 2013). I strove to recognize and declare throughout this report as authentically as possible any personal predilections I may have brought to my analysis and interpretation of the data. Constructing my conceptual framework also led me to re-examine my own assumptions, as well as biases in the existing research that might adversely affect the study. For example, I found in so doing that indeed I had been favouring the contemporary process-oriented SP models over the more traditional, outcome-driven approaches of business SP. I therefore returned to include both approaches in my conceptual framework.

In this chapter, I have presented my research methodology including my philosophical stance as a researcher, overall research approach, research questions, setting, participants, and data collection methods. I also described how I analyzed and interpreted my data, as well as how I addressed the issues of research ethics, validity and researcher bias in conducting this inquiry. In the following chapter, I explain my study findings as generated by this research methodology.

Chapter Four: Findings I - The Leaders' Views on Strategic Planning

The purpose of this study was to carry out an in-depth examination of the leaders' views at one Canadian Higher Education Institution (HEI) on Strategic Planning (SP) at their College. I now present my analysis and interpretation of the findings, providing a reflective commentary, a "thick description" (Guba, 1985) of how I saw these three leader groups, the Directors, Deans and Chairs/Coordinators construct their views together on this issue. I analyzed the patterns to emerge both from within and across these leader groups, providing salient excerpts from the data as evidence of my findings. By comparing these leader groups' views in this manner, I hope to gain a better understanding of SP in HEIs as well as practical solutions to the challenges faced by these institutions in implementing SP. I have organized the findings in the next three chapters as follows to describe how I saw the leaders construct their views together on this issue. In Chapter Four, I discuss their views on SP in general, how it currently takes place at their College, and the role they play in the process. In Chapter Five, I focus on the main challenges they saw with SP at their College, and in Chapter Six, I present their solutions to those challenges.

The Directors' Views on Strategic Planning

I now describe how I analyzed and interpreted my research data, starting with the Directors' views on SP in general, how it currently takes place at their College, and their role in the process. The Directors' group consisted of 7 out of 8 of the senior administrators in charge of the overall operations of the College including the Director General, the Academic Dean (who is also a Director) and five other Directors (see Chapter 2). There was much consensus across this group of leaders as they built their views together during their discussions on how they saw SP in general as well as at their own College. When asked about SP in general, all of them described it as a way to achieve a common vision: "It's about how we implement a vision ... it's a tool to

build a team to work around what we want to do”, “It’s a road map ... it helps us focus and stay on course”, and “It brings everyone together and makes a plan for the entire group.” One of the Directors, Suzanne elaborated further about how SP should be about the ‘big picture’:

If you don’t take the time to think of what you want to achieve, if you don’t have goals and you don’t write them down in the short term you end up in the everyday. And at the end of the year, have we done anything ... in the scheme of bigger plans, the bigger picture?

Director General Frankie, the most senior leader responsible for SP at the College, stated a key factor to ensuring goal feasibility was to check in first with those responsible for achieving them:

For SP not to be left on a shelf, it has to go down to the operational level and address the question ... ‘Can we improve? Is it feasible?’ ... if you don’t ask that question to the people who actually do the job, in the end your SP is going to remain on the shelf and will not be used.

Academic Dean Steve, who is also a Director and the most senior leader of SP across the College’s academic sector, added that another key factor to its success was to consult as widely as possible to promote engagement in the process:

The other part of SP which is always of value for me is the actual process you go through to develop it because the consultation dialogue, the type of discussions it generates which results in the final plan is extremely healthy. So, you do end up with the plan and you have more buy-in, and you have a certain degree of mobilization based on these discussions prior to it being a done deal.

There was also broad consensus across this group that accountability to the plan was also key to its success. Another Director, Justin summarized for the group on this point as follows: “This is our accountability towards the strategic goals. We actually put them down on paper to look back and see have we achieved them, or the steps we need to do to improve along the way.”

The Directors also collaborated closely during their focus group discussion to build their views together on how they saw SP currently happening at their College. They described how the process was a cyclical one, moving through its various stages of needs assessment, goal-setting,

action-planning, implementation, and evaluation. Jane, also a Director, summarized for the group: “Soon we are going to start a new SP, so we will look back at what we did and try to improve on that.” There was also strong consensus that the current practice of linking everyone’s annual work plans to the broader strategic goals of the College was one that should be maintained. As evidence of this view, Director General Frankie expressed that “There has to be a link with how you implement SP year after year ... it’s very important that it’s grounded in something that’s not a one-time effort, but that it builds up year after year.” Jane added that the process should set concrete goals but be ready to adapt those objectives in response to changes in the planning environment: “This may involve modifications to the plan each year, where some parts take on greater importance and some less.”

The Directors also worked in close collaboration with each other to construct how they saw their role in SP. Director General Frankie emphasized that their main job was to establish the overall process, then guide it through to its completion: “That is the Directors’ role first and foremost. And then they remain the steering committee throughout.” Steve added that their role also involved helping their work teams make the link between their day-to-day work and the College’s broader strategic priorities: “Are we following the SP with our annual work plans, or are we going in new directions?” Another Director, Martha contributed that their role involved ‘selling’ their colleagues on the plan: “People look at it as somewhat corporate ... that it should not come into an educational setting. We need to support that SP is still important in an educational institution.” Steve commented how it was also their role to keep their expectations of the plan realistic: “Even though this SP is tighter than the previous one, it’s still very ambitious, so you have to help keep people positive.” He also added how it was their role to ensure that its achievements were celebrated: “As we come to the end of each cycle, it is our responsibility to

celebrate those accomplishments ... since they are quite impressive at the end of the day.” A concept map of these main categories of salient concepts from my analysis of the Directors’ views on SP is provided in Appendix 4A.

The Deans’ Views on Strategic Planning

The Deans, whose role it is to oversee the functioning of the academic sector of the College (see Chapter Two), shared many views similar to those of the Directors. They also saw the main purpose of SP as rallying their colleagues around a common vision: “Thinking of what you want the College to be known for ... What vision do you have?” and “What is important, where we are going, and making decisions and plans based on that.” They also all shared the common view that SP was something that should be maintained at their College, as follows:

Rob: I think it’s essential to have it. We speak to the SP in everything we do.

David: You can see connections beyond our regular job descriptions. It speaks to the mission of the college and allows us to grow.

The Deans also all saw SP as setting the big-picture priorities for the College, with one of them, David stating “It should start with a macro view that then informs the micro decisions”, and another Dean, Susan adding: “It is looking at that bigger scale, then moving along from there.”

While the Directors kept to the subject at hand when discussing the nature of SP in general, the Deans started right into discussing the many challenges they saw with SP and how it took place at their College. One of the Deans, Arthur expressed the group’s view on the topic as follows: “I don’t think that it is a particularly effective tool at this College right now. Does it inform my day-to-day reality? Humph, no.” I elaborate further on these challenges as seen by the Deans later on in Chapter Five, which focuses on the challenges of implementing HEI SP.

These challenges also wove themselves into how the Deans described their role in SP. Another Dean, Susan described how their role first and foremost was to promote engagement in

the process: “Our number one role is to disseminate the ideas ... it needs to be owned by everybody”, but then continued on to say how much of a challenge it was to do so: “The Chairs are easier but getting it out to all the other faculty and then to the technicians, it’s not so easy to operationalize that.” This group as a whole also expressed how they wanted to do a better job next time around at representing the academic needs of the College’s within its overall strategic priorities. Arthur summarized their viewpoint here as follows: “We attempted to be all things to all people. The academic administration should have had a stronger role. We brainstormed it ourselves, but then we didn’t do enough prioritizing.” A concept map of these main categories of salient concepts from my analysis of the Deans’ views on SP is available in Appendix 4B.

The Chairs/Coordinators’ Views on Strategic Planning

The Chairs/Coordinators also held many views similar to those of the Directors and Deans on SP. Most of them (8/12 participants) expressed how it could be a viable tool for achieving strategic goals: “Setting a vision or goals that help to generate certain types of activities around the college”, and “It’s good for both faculty and administration ... something around which discussions can be organized, imperfectly maybe but it is better having it than not having it.”

Some of them (4/12 participants) held a distinctly opposing view however to the one expressed above, questioning whether SP was even suitable for use in institutions like theirs, calling it “a large bureaucratic exercise to document what we would have done anyway”, “driven by top-down management”, “all over the place”, and “one that people should just stay away from.” As I present my take on the views of the Chairs/Coordinators here and throughout the rest of this work, it is important to note that these leaders not only coordinate their faculty teams in delivering the academic programs and courses of the College, but most also continue to teach as part of their duties (see Chapter Two). Their responses should therefore be considered to reflect

not only their views as Chairs/Coordinators, but also as teaching faculty. This may explain the contrasting view about the suitability of SP in HEIs, whereby they may be reflecting the sentiments of faculty members who find themselves farthest removed from the SP process as they teach in the classrooms at the front lines of the College.

Like the Deans, most of the Chairs/Coordinators (9/12 participants) wanted to delve right away into the many challenges they saw with SP as it currently took place at their College. One of the Chairs/Coordinators, Bram summarized the group's view here as follows: "You have to question this whole SP thing. Is it this business school thing used in corporations that has been grafted onto educational institutions?" Once again, I will be presenting these challenges as seen by the Chairs/Coordinators in more detail later on in Chapter Five.

The Chairs/Coordinators saw their role in the process of SP at their College as somewhat vague and ill-defined, as evidenced by the following excerpt from their discussion on the topic:

Bram: I don't know that the departments have much say in what goes in the SP.

Bob: I think largely we operate independently of the strategic plan a lot of the time. We see things we think need to be done. We do them. Life goes on.

Sam: What's my role in terms of the SP in the grand scheme of things ... I have no clue. I don't know if I have any real involvement whatsoever.

Most of them (7/12 participants) saw their primary function as coordinating the writing and implementation of their Department's or Program's annual work plans in alignment with the College's strategic priorities, but they also had reservations about how effectively that happened:

Bob: In theory, it guides our annual plan, but ...

Bram: I think what we are supposed to do is coordinate the writing of the plan with our faculty members ... I suspect that in most departments what is actually going on is the chair is just filing something.

Richard: I can assure you that is the way I did it.

John: Me too. Because the exercise isn't particularly interesting to most faculty.

Some of the Chairs/Coordinators (5/12 participants) also saw SP as an opportunity to make a case for needed change. One of the Coordinators, Julie declared: "I use it whenever I can to our benefit. I try to find little bits in it to say, "This is what was said in the SP, so this is what we

want to see change, so what do you say to that!?” A concept map of these main categories of salient concepts of the Chairs/Coordinators’ views on SP is available in Appendix 4C.

The Leaders’ Views on Strategic Planning - Cross-Group Analysis

I now conduct a cross-group analysis to identify the prevalent themes that emerged from the data across all three of my focus groups, the Directors, Deans and Chairs/Coordinators. This phase of the analysis has been invaluable in bringing to light not only the common ideas shared by these three leader groups, but also the more nuanced differences between the views of each group on SP in general, how it currently happened at their College, and their role in the process.

Most of the leaders (20/24 participants) saw SP in and of itself as an effective guide for strategic action. The Directors explained how it helped them “remember our priorities”, the Deans described how it enabled them to “look at the elements that we want to address” and the Chairs/ Coordinators expressed how it clarified “where we want to go, what’s our pathway?”

The next main theme to emerge was in direct opposition to this prevailing view. A smaller group of Chairs/Coordinators (4/12 participants) spoke against the process altogether, even going as far as questioning its suitability for educational institutions like theirs. One of the Chairs, Ryan summed up this idea as follows: “It means not realizing this is a diverse community and planning goals are very individual, so I don’t understand the role of it here ...” The concept maps for this phase of my cross-group analysis are provided in Appendices 4D and 4E.

Next, I compared how each leader group saw SP happening at their College. This revealed a marked contrast between the Directors’ generally more neutral responses about how they saw the process as compared to the Deans’ and Chairs/ Coordinators’ less than enthusiastic responses on the topic. For the most part, the Directors focused on a general description of the purpose and stages of SP. Director General Frankie called it one that “builds up year after year after year to

carry out the strategic direction”. The entire group expressed a general satisfaction with the process overall at their College, as evidenced by Academic Dean and Director Steve’s comment summarizing their discussion on this topic: “This SP is the best so far because the preceding plans were too voluminous. We put it together, also pulling into it our main objective of student success.” In contrast, most of the Deans and Chairs/Coordinators observed that the current SP did not have much to do with their “day-to-day reality.” As one of the Chairs, Bram stated: “We didn’t follow any of the stuff in there; who actually does anything about it?” The concept maps for this phase of my cross-group analysis are presented in Appendices 4F and 4G.

I also compared the three leader groups’ views on how they saw their role in the process of SP at their College. Two common and three distinct themes emerged from the data on this subject. The most prevalent theme shared by many of these leaders (14/24 participants) was that their number one role was to promote employee awareness, understanding and engagement in the process. Most of the Directors (4/7 participants) described their main role as explaining the purpose and function of SP in educational institutions such as theirs. One of the Directors, Martha summarized their viewpoint here as follows: “We also have a role in saying *why* the SP is important in an institution like ours and how it can be implemented and used in our type of organization.” All of the Deans (5/5 participants) expressed how it was their job to go out and ‘sell’ the plan. One of their members, David declared: “You do have to sell it because there are always going to be some individuals in there who will for whatever reason not want to undertake it.” Some of the Chairs/Coordinators (5/12 participants) described how it was a challenge to engage their faculty even when it came to prepare their own Departments’ annual work plans:

John: It’s like pulling teeth to get people to comment.

Bram: It’s certainly not a priority. There’s a groan when you mention it.

Janet: Well, I presented the work plan, and nobody wanted to add anything.

Yet this is where the faculty live. And they were not interested. So how

do we get them involved in SP for the whole College, I'd like to know?

A significant number (10/24 participants) from across all three leader groups also saw their role in the process as facilitating the process of linking everyone's annual work plans to the strategic priorities of the College. Some Directors (3/7 participants) expressed how this was an important part of their role. One of their members, Justin declared: "Our role is to take them [their colleagues] out of the day-to-day from time to time and ask are you linking or not linking to the SP. And how can we make that connection." Some of the Deans (3/5 participants) shared how the current approach was too detailed, too complex. Instead, they asked for a clearer, simpler plan that would be easier for them to communicate, as evidenced by one of the Deans', Sandra's comment on the topic: "People can't buy in to what they don't understand. If we can't articulate the SP in less than a hundred words, then how are they supposed to get it, and buy into it, and live it?" Some of the Chairs/Coordinators (5/12 participants) asked for more clarification on their role in linking their departmental plans to the strategic priorities, as well as their role in the entire process. One of the Coordinators, Sam summarized his group's viewpoint here as follows:

"What is my role? How do I get us to that level of annual planning?"

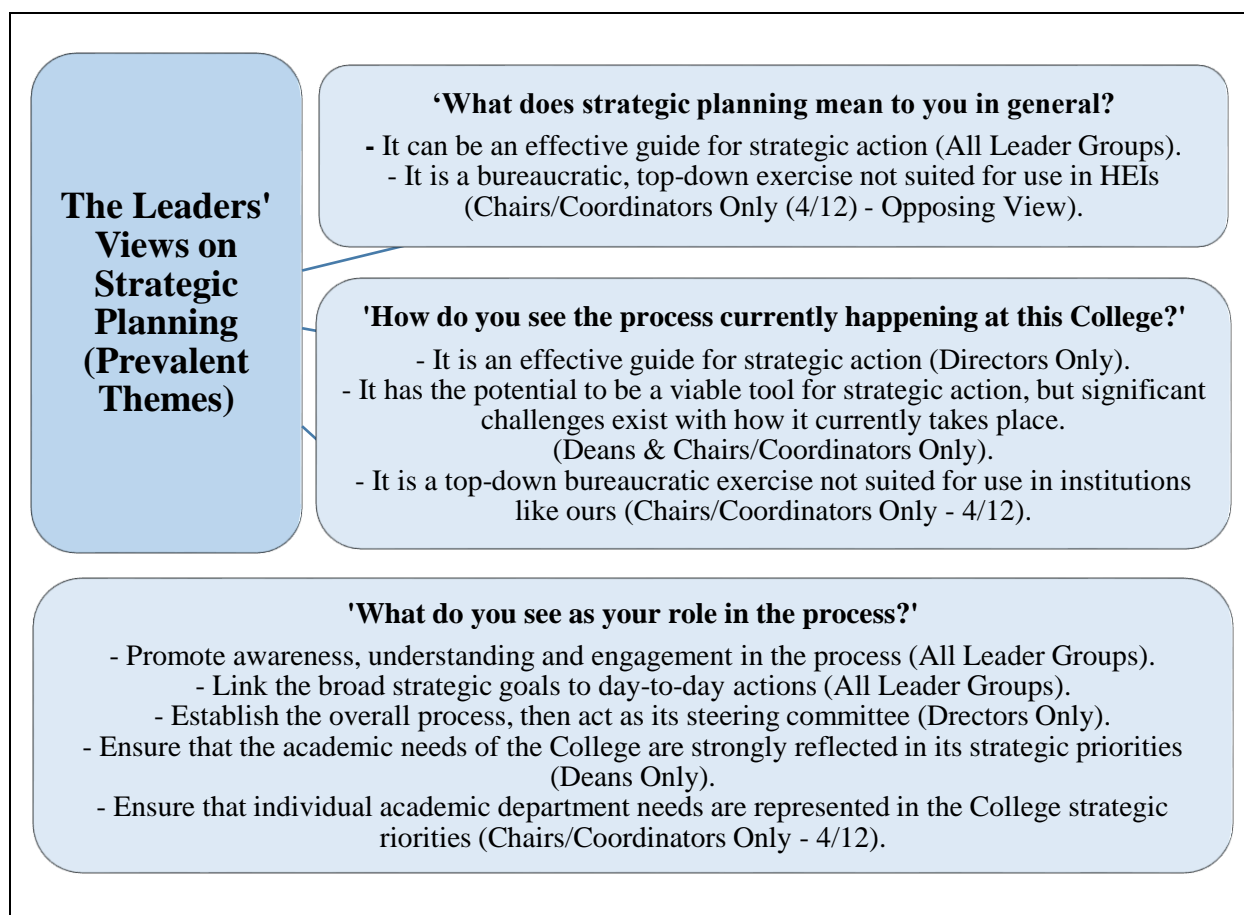
Each leader group also maintained its own distinct view on their role in SP. Many of the Directors (4/7 participants) insisted that it was their purview alone to establish the overall process then act as its steering committee throughout. According to Director General Frankie: "It's the Directors' role to do that." All of the Deans expressed how they wanted to be more proactive next time in representing the needs of their academic departments in the strategic priorities of the College. One of the Deans, Sue summarized their discussion here as follows:

"Making sure we are getting information from the various areas ... then making sure the plan is what we think it should be and it's something that is doable." Some of the Chairs/Coordinators

(5/12 participants) declared how they too wanted to see their academic departments' needs expressed more clearly in the SP priorities of the College. According to one of the Chairs, Harry: "One role is making sure our individual departmental concerns are expressed in the plan in some way." The concept maps for this cross-group analysis are available in Appendices 4F and 4G.

While most of the leaders (20/24 leaders) saw SP in and of itself as an effective guide to strategic action, the most striking finding for me so far was the marked difference I could see even at this early stage of my analysis in terms of the degree of satisfaction with which each leader group saw SP currently being employed across their campus. The following concept map provides an overview of how they saw SP, how the process currently took place at their College, and their role within it.

Figure 9. The Leaders' Views on Strategic Planning – Prevalent Themes



Chapter Five: Findings II – The Leaders’ Views on the Prevalent Challenges with Strategic Planning at Their College

In this chapter, I explain how I analyzed and interpreted the leaders’ views on the prevalent challenges with Strategic Planning (SP) at their institution in response to the research question: ‘What are the main challenges you see with how SP is currently happening at your College?’

The Directors’ Views on the Prevalent Challenges

The most prevalent challenge for the entire Directors’ group was how to manage the competing priorities of the many, and sometimes conflicting, interests across the campus. Getting their colleagues to accept that not all of their needs could be met was not an easy thing to do. As an illustration of this viewpoint, one of the Directors, Martha stated: “Departments say, ‘That’s our number one priority.’ And we say “Okay, if we do that, what are we *not* going to do instead? Where do all these competing priorities fit?” The next main challenge for all of the Directors was how to engage their colleagues in the process. According to another Director, Jane: “It’s always a challenge ... mobilizing people to feel heard, that they have something to say, and they are a part of all that ... because in the end you want everybody to buy in.”

All of the Directors concurred that another major challenge for them was consulting as many participants as possible but within the time and resources available. As Director General Frankie observed: “If we don’t consult broadly enough, we are bound to forget important things ... but sometimes in doing all this you just land up with a *‘phht’* [a mess].” Academic Dean and Director, Steve added how it was a challenge to develop SP priorities that everyone could relate to in one way or another, especially when it came to the faculty members of the College:

Faculty are a challenge because their thinking is a little different. Some of them need to be reminded that their role is not done in solitude. There are all these pieces that affect learning from cleanliness ... to the wider scope of things.

Some of the Directors (3/7 participants) also called for greater accountability to the SP process.

According to one of them, Jane: “When we did our current SP and then we looked at the previous one, we felt there wasn’t enough accountability in terms of exactly where we wanted to end up.”

Some of the Directors (3/7 participants) also identified that managing SP through the many unexpected changes to their external environment was another major challenge to the process. Some of the specific changes mentioned by the Directors included unexpected government budgetary cuts, as well as changes in provincial laws related to language and access to education, all of which they saw as having a major impact on the current SP. As expressed by Director General Frankie: “We’re really making things happen, it’s going well and all of a sudden, these things come up ... it is so disturbing, disturbing even to the social fabric in the setting here in the College.” The concept map of the challenges seen by the Directors is available in Appendix 5A.

The Deans’ Views on the Prevalent Challenges

There was also a strong consensus across the Deans’ group that the current SP as well as the decision-making practices at the College needed to do a better job at adequately reflecting academics as its central focus. The Deans discussed at some length how the process should not be driven from the top down by the Directors, but rather from stronger academic leadership throughout the College. One of the Deans, Sue summarized their view on this topic as follows:

One of the weaknesses we’ve talked about is it [the SP] is done by *directorship*. We’re not just one piece and so is facilities and so is human resources and so on ... the academic vision has to somehow drive it all and then the other parts fit into it rather than we each have our own little piece.

Instead, they suggested that the College be restructured so that academics be more strongly represented at the hub of decision-making, as evidenced by this excerpt from their discussion:

- Rob: What you’re missing is your Venn diagram in terms of how these things fit together.
- Sue: We are a school. We are the academic sector and we have to somehow stand out and this is certainly not the case in this plan.
- Sandra: Yes, perfect and then ... all of these pieces come in and work together.

Another key challenge the Deans saw with SP at their College was their colleagues' lack of engagement in the process. As summarized by another Dean, Sandra:

If we are speaking about our group, we certainly know what the SP is, and we base our work plans around it. But my sense is that it's not a college-wide thing. If you'd ask different groups of employees, they would not necessarily feel connected to it. I just don't think everyone is connected, that's my feeling.

All of the Deans also shared how it was not easy to build that connection:

Arthur: I'm not sure it was the best idea to have 500 people sit in a room together and put things up on flip charts.

Susan: I'm not sure people understood where things went from there.

David: It may have diluted the process, created too many small bits as opposed to these broader strokes that would have been more effective.

The Deans also all concurred that they should have done more to consult the individual academic departments and their faculty members when the strategic priorities of the College were established, to make it easier for them to see their needs expressed in those goals. One of their members, Rob summarized: "We brainstormed it ourselves ... but now we have to go out and sell it, rather than take some of the ideas from them and move forward."

Another significant challenge the Deans saw with the current SP was that it was too detailed, too focused on day-to-day operational details. According to Susan: "It should be thinking of the larger picture. Instead, it's a struggle to fit things in because it's too detailed." Some of them (3/5 participants) also stated how it was a challenge to express goals in a way that was measurable yet still meaningful to their colleagues, as evidenced by this excerpt from their discussion on the topic:

Rob: Let's assume we had a strategic plan that had the broader strokes, for example 'Inspire extraordinary teaching and learning.

Arthur: Even a goal like that is not measurable. The plan should state something like 'We are going to increase enrolment, increase focus on languages and international study, add three new programs and we will have a new building.' That is visible, that's specific, and doable.

Some of the Deans (3/5 participants) also expressed how it was a challenge for them to

manage the competing priorities of the academic departments and their faculty members within the overall SP priorities. Susan summarized their discussion here as follows:

Trying to get the faculty to look not just at what they can do to improve their own department, but how things fit into the big picture ... so they're looking at what's best, which might mean they don't get everything they want, but they can still see it as a win because it's better for the students and overall.

Some of these leaders (3/5 participants) also identified how the current lack of resources in academic administration was hindering them from providing adequate support to the process:

Rob: The importance of having the Deans teach. Where can we find the time? Yet, it's important to bring us back to the reality of teaching.
Arthur: Part of the reason we don't have time is because we are doing some tasks now that are not a good use of a Dean's time.

A concept map of challenges with SP as seen by the Deans is available in Appendix 5B.

The Chairs/Coordinators' Views on the Prevalent Challenges

Like the Deans, the Chairs/Coordinators were also in strong consensus regarding the challenges they saw with SP at their College. Their biggest concern was also the lack of faculty engagement in the process, leading them to question its very effectiveness if those working front-line in the classrooms were not well informed about it. According to one of the Chairs, Ryan:

If the SP is currently guiding us, can you tell me what its goals are right now? I don't really know. How can that be? And that's us the Chairs. Then you go to the teachers in the classrooms. Are they influenced by it? No. Yet they are the ones carrying out the mission of the school through to its students ... If they are not very aware of it, how much can it affect what they do?

All of the Chairs/Coordinators also identified that their fellow faculty members' lack of understanding about the SP process in general, how it works, how it benefits the College, and their role within it was a major barrier to their engagement in the process. As evidence of this viewpoint another Chair, Sam stated: "If I had a problem about the SP, it's what's done about it, how does the larger community get involved in that, how do they benefit from that, sometimes

that gets diluted along the way.” Some of them (5/12 participants) described how even they were unclear about their role in SP, making it more of a challenge for they themselves to engage in it.

Sam: I don’t know what my role is, to be honest.

Chantal: I have never felt we contribute much except that we must report through our annual plans on those elements that appear in the plan.

Some of the Chairs/Coordinators (5/12 participants) also expressed how they did not feel very connected to the process because they found it a challenge to see their individual departments’ needs and concerns reflected in the strategic priorities of the College. This in turn led them to opt out of the process for the most part. As evidence of this viewpoint, another Chair, Bram opined: “As Chairs, we justify why we should get this project or that, by trying to fit our needs into the plan, but other than that the SP rarely guides us.” Many of them (7/12 participants) also attributed this challenge with engagement in SP across the campus to the College’s lack of consultation with its individual academic departments when it developed its strategic priorities:

Rachel: There was some consultation, but not much with the academic sector
... There is a lack of overall vision and that comes perhaps from a lack of connection to the front-line workers.

Ryan: Well, if departments are expected to be a part of this, there needs to be a lot more interaction between the administration and the departments.

Many of the Chairs/Coordinators (7/12 participants) also commented on the lack of communication about what was happening with the process, which also led them to feel uninformed and unheard, to the point of losing confidence in the exercise. According to Rachel:

Last year when the budget cuts happened, it was the same message from the administration at every meeting. No matter how much intelligent discourse came from faculty about where we were going, the same responses were repeated back to us. You felt like you were talking to a brick wall.

The Chairs/Coordinators also all agreed that the College should maintain its practice of linking annual work plans to the SP. Some (6/12 participants) declared that the way this currently happened was not how it should be, as evidenced by this excerpt of their discussion on the topic:

Ryan: Right now there is a need once you have decided your priorities for the year to make a way for them to fit into the SP ...

Janet: Isn't there a list of two or three priorities in the annual work plan?

Ryan: Exactly. And to me ...that's not how it should happen. We know what needs to be done on the ground floor in our departments. Administration doesn't know. We shouldn't be driven by them.

Another challenge expressed by many of the Chairs/Coordinators (8/12 participants) was that more resources were needed to support SP, especially in the areas of time, academic administration, data mining, and training for its leaders. As evidence of this viewpoint, John observed: "We have to have the resources to do the job", Janet added: "Give people more time. They are overloaded." They also discussed the lack of data mining services as follows:

Ryan: We need to do this. But, right now the expertise isn't there ...

Bram: Lack of data is a huge issue. You can't plan well ...

Ryan: And if you do plan, you can't check how you are doing very well.

Some of them (7/12 participants) also expressed how it was a challenge for them to receive adequate guidance on SP from their supervising Deans. According to Harry: "The Deans are overloaded. They can't respond adequately. Their workloads are too heavy to follow up effectively." A few of them (4/12 participants) also saw the need for more training on how to facilitate the process. Chantal summarized their discussion here as follows:

I think our administrators need to be better trained. A lot of them come from academia and they are not trained how to manage, and they make do. And then we the Chairs are not trained either. One of the problems is departments are told to do something, then there is no facilitation after that.

Many of the Chairs/Coordinators (10/12 participants) also expressed the lack of accountability toward the annual work plans of the College as well as SP itself:

Richard: We spend a lot of time preparing and writing annual plans and reports. What happens after that? There is no feedback.

Sam: And what happens at the end of the 5 years? Where is the accountability for that? This is what we say we are going to do. Did we do it or did we not. And if we didn't do it, what do we do about it?

Some of these leaders (4/12 participants) also discussed how the current SP was too focused on

the day-to-day rather than building accountability toward the College's 'big-picture' priorities, hampering efforts to achieve these broader goals. According to Bram: "Maybe our current SP is too much of a work plan, the things we know we can tick off the list." A concept map of these challenges with SP as seen by the Chairs/Coordinators is provided in Appendix 5C.

The Leaders' Views on the Prevalent Challenges - Cross-Group Analysis

The next step I took was to conduct a cross-group analysis of my findings in search of the common, opposing and/or divergent views held by the three leader groups, the Directors, Deans and Chairs/Coordinators on the prevalent challenges they saw with SP at their College. This phase was once again instrumental in helping me to see the more nuanced differences between the viewpoints held by each group on these challenges. The most prevalent issue expressed by all leaders was how to engage their colleagues, especially the front-line faculty in the SP, as evidenced by this excerpt from the Directors' discussion on the topic:

Steve: We need to come from what we're all here for, and that's the students, and then work our way up. *It is a challenge.*

Jane: Yes, faculty's the group that's the hardest to reach. We feel a bit out of touch with them. There are so many of them that it's a challenge.

The Deans all held a similar view to the Directors on this issue. According to one of their members, Rob: "The challenge is to take the teachers out of the minutiae of the day-to-day and bring them back to look at the bigger picture." All of the Chairs/Coordinators also expressed how they too found it a challenge to engage their faculty teams in the process. One of the Chairs, Rachel summarized: "There is a lack of overall vision and that comes from perhaps a lack of connection to these front-line workers. Yes, there is a lack of connection there somehow." Most of the Chairs/Coordinators (10/12 participants), also observed that one of the main factors leading to this disconnect was the lack of communication about the process, as evidenced by the following excerpt from the group's discussion on the topic:

Bram: Here we are in the middle of major renovations and changes ...
and yet we don't hear much about what's going on any more.

John: And that has to change.

Sam: If I had a problem with SP, it's how does the larger community get
involved in it, how does it benefit? That gets diluted along the way.

The next main challenge to emerge across all three leader groups (22/24 participants) was the issue of how to reflect the multiple and varied interests across the campus as inclusively as possible within the strategic priorities of the College. According to Director General Frankie: "All those who have an interest in the College should be consulted to encourage 'buy-in' to the plan", but at the same time it should not be overdone: "It's a check and balance thing." The Deans also shared this view, expressed here by one of the Deans, Arthur: "As many people as possible should be consulted, certainly within the College. Also a few external constituents too, businesses say. But keep it doable." The Chairs/Coordinators also expressed how it was a challenge for faculty to buy into the SP process, due to the College's lack of consultation on their needs. As expressed by one of the Chairs, John: "If we haven't even had minimal consultation, how do we buy in to the process when someone tells us 'Oh here, just do this.'"

Another challenge identified by most of the leaders (19/24 participants) was how to promote greater accountability toward not only the strategic priorities, but also the entire process of SP at the College. All of the Directors expressed how they wanted to do more next time to address this issue, as evidenced by Academic Dean and Director Steve's comment on this issue: "By establishing strategic plans and objectives there is an expectation of accountability, so an important aspect of the process is to follow up and make sure that goals are achieved." They also discussed how many external changes beyond their control made it harder for them to reach their strategic goals. According to Director General Frankie: "All these changes in the external environment we couldn't anticipate, budgetary cuts, the language laws and so on became real constraints for us."

All of the Directors also expressed a general satisfaction with the College's current practice of linking everyone's annual work plans to its strategic priorities. According to Academic Dean Steve: "At the end of the year, departments file an annual report. They are asked to link it to the strategic plan, so they are reminded that their annual plans should buy into that plan." In contrast, many of the Chairs/Coordinators (9/12 participants) declared that they did not receive enough feedback from their Deans on their annual work plans, making it a challenge for them to know if they were on track, and how to adjust if not. One of the Chairs, Bram stated: "I create an annual work plan and then no one reads it. Then I write a report and no one reads that ... the lack of follow-up is also a huge concern." Some of the Deans (3/5 participants) also expressed how it was critical for the College to establish goals that are measurable, yet at the same time meaningful, to facilitate their colleagues' ability to make the link between their own annual work plans and the SP. As one of the Deans, Arthur observed: "It's naïve to reduce strategic goals to just counting. We need goals that are both qualitative and quantitative."

Many of the Deans and Chairs/Coordinators (12/17 participants) identified two additional challenges they saw with the current SP, challenges that were not mentioned at all by the Directors. The first main challenge was that a stronger central academic vision was needed to drive every decision, strategic or otherwise, across the College, and currently that was not how they saw things happening. One of the Deans, Sue summarized their discussion on this topic as follows: "We are the academic sector and to me we have to somehow stand out ... but right now we don't." The Chairs/Coordinators expressed that they needed to see their individual Department's needs and concerns more clearly reflected in the overall strategic priorities of the College. One of the Chairs, Ryan summarized how the current practice whereby Departments were expected to consult the SP, then determine how their own goals fit was not how it should

happen: “We know what needs to be done on the ground floor in our Departments ... We should be deciding ourselves what needs to be done.”

The second main challenge to be identified by many of the Deans and Chairs/Coordinators (13/17 participants), and yet none of the Directors was that the College needed to do a better job at managing its resources in support of their SP. Some of the Deans (3/5 participants) discussed this issue at some length, with one of their members, Arthur providing the following example of how this has affected their ability to deliver on their SP responsibilities: “The reason we don’t have time [as academic administrators] is because we are doing tasks now that are not a good use of the Deans’ time.” Some of the Chairs/Coordinators (4/12 participants) also discussed how the College was taking on too much, leading to cut backs in critical areas such as the closing of the student employment center, Chairs, Chantal summarizes the group’s viewpoint on this topic:

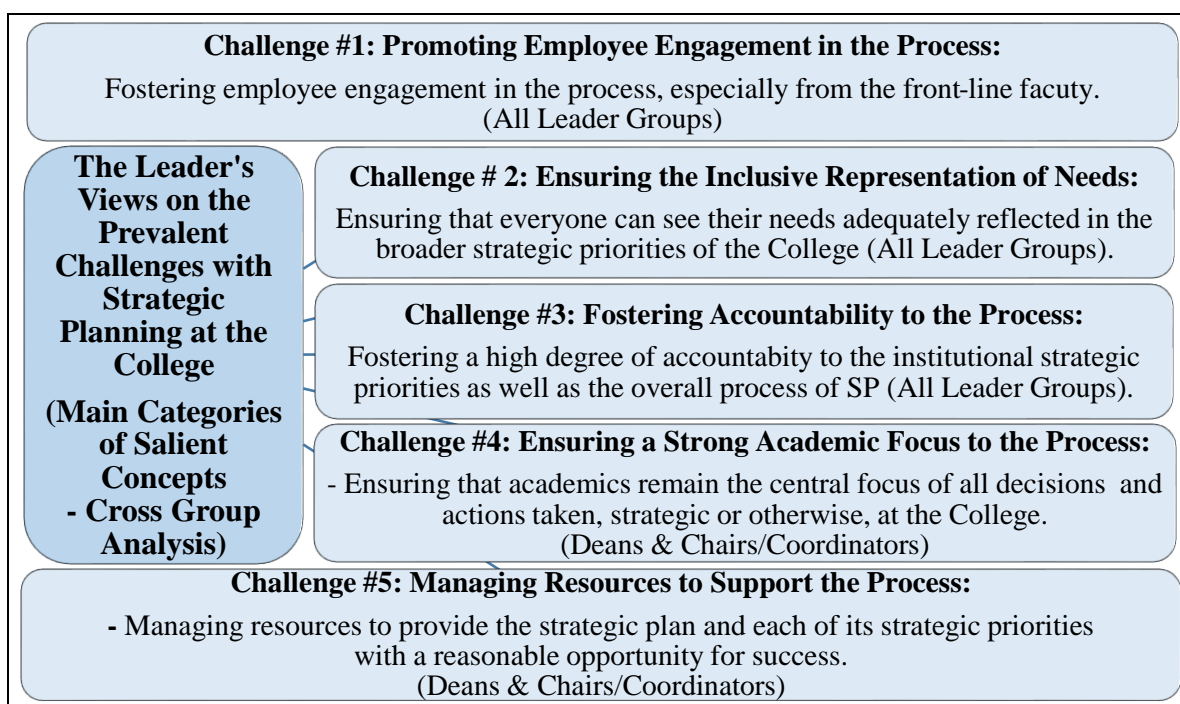
We send students abroad to study but we don’t have an employment center? ...
I am not saying do one or the other, but if we have these statements ... guiding
principles ... then we have to be sure that we have practical guiding principles.

Some of the Chairs/Coordinators (5/12 participants) also highlighted how there was also a lack of resources to support the process, especially in the areas of time, academic administration, data mining and training of SP leaders. On the subject of data mining for example, they described that without adequate data, they were ill-informed when it came to making decisions. One of the Chairs, Molly expressed this idea as follows: “The other thing that would be helpful would be empirical data on where we need to improve in our departments.” Some (4/12 participants) also described how the leaders of SP including themselves were not adequately trained to facilitate the process. Chantal summarized the group’s viewpoint as follows: “The administrators may have a lot of good will ... but they’re floundering, they are not trained. And it’s obvious ... they are using a tool they actually don’t know how to use effectively.”

My analysis of the data reveals so far that most of the leaders (20/24 participants) saw

Strategic Planning (SP) as an effective guide for strategic action. In this second phase of the analysis, I saw a marked difference between the leader groups with the Deans and Chairs/Coordinators expressing generally less satisfaction than the Directors in terms of how SP was currently employed across the campus. What appears to be at issue is not the process itself but *how* it is being used. As expressed by one of the Chairs, Sandra: “SP is a perfectly effective model if it’s used well. It doesn’t need to look the same as in business; it can be adapted to be effective.” I saw this trend continue into this second phase of my analysis with the leaders’ views coalescing into three main challenges they all saw with the process (promoting engagement, representing constituents’ needs, and fostering accountability) while the Deans and Chairs/Coordinators brought forth two additional challenges not mentioned by the Directors (ensuring a strong academic focus, and managing resources to support the process), likely indicating less satisfaction with how they saw SP currently employed at their College. The concept map below summarizes how I saw their views coalesce into five main challenges with SP at their College:

Figure 10. Leaders’ Views on the Challenges with Strategic Planning - Prevalent Themes



Chapter Six: Findings III – The Leaders’ Solutions to the Prevalent Challenges with Strategic Planning at Their College

In this final chapter on my findings, I present my analysis and interpretation of the leaders’ responses on how to address the prevalent challenges they identified (see Chapter Five) with Strategic Planning (SP) at their College. I now explain how I saw their solutions to these challenges emerge from their discussions in response to my last two research questions: ‘How could SP happen more effectively at your College?’ and ‘How could you help make it happen more effectively?’

The Leaders’ Solutions to Challenge #1: Fostering Employee Engagement in the Process

All of the leaders identified employee engagement as the biggest challenge to SP at their College. More than a third of their responses to my research questions (88/258 in total) addressed this one issue. Their responses were so rich and varied that I decided to group them into a series of overarching sub-themes to identify the main solutions proposed for this one challenge, as follows:

Rally everybody around the common baseline of student success: Fully half of the leaders (12/24 participants) gave ideas on how to unite everybody across the campus on the central issue of student success. Academic Dean Steve summarized the Directors’ discussion here as follows:

Make the strategic objectives from an *academic* perspective ... as relevant as possible to the classroom and learning, that they link into the type of thinking the faculty are doing in terms of innovation or adjustments and so on ... it is important for everyone to have a common understanding of these joint responsibilities regardless of what they do.

The Deans echoed the Directors’ view on this topic, as illustrated by the following excerpt:

David: Making sure they [the students] have what they need should be the common theme we all share.

Sue: We need to look at the big picture beyond each person’s small piece of it. Get everyone to look at what’s best for the *students*.

In contrast, the Chairs/Coordinators stated that the College should avoid too much of a ‘one-size-

fits-all' product-development approach such as used by corporations. Instead, it should be ready to work more closely with their academic departments and faculty teams to ensure that the resources needed were in place to serve the specific needs of students in their classrooms. One of the Chairs, Ryan summarized their discussion as follows:

We have students who come here [to the College] and we need to teach them the best we can, and they are all individuals. We don't need a product. We need a whole bunch of individuals working with other individuals who have the resources they need to adapt to the situation they are in.

Make a targeted effort to foster employee engagement in SP, especially from faculty:

The most widespread view across all three leader groups (20/24 participants) regarding this challenge was that a specific approach was needed to engage employees in the process in order to ensure its success, especially when it came to the all-important front-line faculty of the College. Each group stressed in different ways how promoting employee engagement in SP should be 'Job Number One' for every leader at the College. More than half of the participants (13/24 leaders) described how important it was for the most senior administrator of SP at the institution, in this case the Director General of the College, should be highly committed to building this commitment to the process. As one of the Deans, Rob opined: "I hope the new Director General would come in with a different vision and listen closer to our problems." Each leader group also had its own viewpoint on how to go about fostering this engagement. The Directors expressed that their role was to clarify the purpose of SP, as described by one of the Directors, Martha:

We also need to clarify that the strategic plan is still important in an educational institution. Some people look at it as a corporate thing that should not come into an educational setting. We have a role in saying *why* it is important and how it can be implemented in our type of organization.

The Deans saw their role as going beyond simply explaining the SP, to supporting their colleagues in using it effectively. One of the Deans, Sue declared: "Our number one role would

be to disseminate the plan to everyone ... facilitate their ability to operate within it, and guide them through the process.” The Chairs/Coordinators asked for more information on their role, and the role of their Departments in the process, and that until then, they would carry on as usual, operating for the most part independent of the SP. As expressed by one of the Chairs, Bob:

“Until things change, we see things that we think need to be done. We do them. Life goes on.”

A few of the Directors (3/5 participants) expressed that their primary role was to ensure that employees were informed of the SP objectives, as well as their role in achieving them. One of the Directors, Martha described how every fall she met with her team to inform them of the work plan, to “make sure they are aware of the objectives and where they are involved ...so that they can actually see themselves in those objectives.” In contrast, the Deans and Chairs/Coordinators all expressed that they needed to do more to reach out and engage their colleagues in the process rather than establishing the strategic priorities or work plans themselves. As evidence of this viewpoint, one of the Deans, Rob declared: “The one thing that we haven’t done ... we haven’t involved faculty in goal setting enough. So, I think each year we could ...delve down and get some information from faculty to help us create our work plans for the year.”

While the Chairs/Coordinators also commented on how big a challenge it was to engage their fellow faculty in departmental affairs, never mind the larger SP, it was this group of participants who proposed the most ideas (67/88 total responses) on how to address this issue. Like the Deans, they too expressed how important it was for them to engage their faculty teams in establishing their own departmental goals linked to the SP to promote ‘buy-in’ to the process. As one of the Chairs, Molly stated: “When people come up with items for the annual plan, they are proposing to help in an area they are comfortable in, and that empowers them to buy-in.” The Chairs/ Coordinators also suggested that they should be more systematic in ensuring that every

faculty member had the opportunity to become more actively involved in the broader College community so that they too get to experience first-hand what is going on outside of their own classrooms. Another Chair, Rachel proposed: “Delegate more. Make sure everybody’s on a College committee for example”, to which Janet added: “There is so much going on in the College. They need to get out of their corner and see there’s more going on.” Harry asked for more release time from teaching to allow faculty to get involved in larger roles at the College, as well as a more regular rotation of this release time to allow more of them the opportunity to experience this level of involvement: “If you want to get more people involved, make sure the release time ... circulates among different faculty.”

Employ consultative and collaborative decision-making at all times across the College:

Many of the leaders (20/24 participants) also identified that the way decisions were currently being made was another major challenge to getting things done at the College. While the leaders provided only a few solutions (11 in total) on this topic, those that did surface from the data coalesced into clear ideas on how to address this challenge. Many of the leaders (15/24 participants) declared that decision-making should be less top-down and hierarchical. In illustration of this viewpoint, one of the Deans, Sandra indicated: “Instead of seeing that everyone has a role to play to students, it becomes a hierarchy of who is more important in the [decision-making] food chain. That’s a hindrance.” All of the Directors suggested that employees should be brought together more often to work together toward the many commonalities they shared across the campus. As evidence of this viewpoint, Academic Dean Steve declared: “It is important for people to have that common understanding of their joint responsibilities regardless of what they do.” All of the Deans shared the idea that they should spend more time with their faculty teams to facilitate greater understanding and collaboration on common strategic priorities

across the campus. According to one of the Deans, David: “Acknowledging and emphasizing the common goals ... our condition is not really our own condition. It is the students’ condition and their ability to develop.” They also expressed how it was a challenge for them to get decisions made in the context of the many collective agreements governing employees across the campus:

Rob: That’s the big challenge we face now. Part of that is the three or four different collective agreements we have. They give all these different parties too much latitude ... too much freedom.

Researcher: So how do you address this challenge?

Arthur: Next!

Some of the Chairs/Coordinators (5/12 participants) held an opposing view on this topic, stating that these collective agreements played a critical role in clarifying the roles within SP, and as such did not impede but supported the process. One of the Chairs, Harry summarized as follows:

It’s important that there be such agreements to support people’s roles. People can work above and beyond if they so choose, but you do need a baseline beyond which they can’t compel you to go. Faculty have demonstrated over and over that enough of them are willing to do so though.

All of the Chairs/Coordinators also agreed that there was a need for more collaboration with their academic administrators on SP initiatives to foster faculty ‘buy-in’ to the process. As one of the Chairs, Bob stated: “If the Dean came to our department meetings more often and said, ‘Okay, let’s talk about the strategic plan ...’ that would be a good start.”

Foster ‘interconnectivity’ across the institution: The Directors’ and Deans’ groups both discussed the importance of building greater interaction between the various sectors of the College on SP issues, offering a number of solutions (10 in total) on how to go about doing so. One of the Directors, Justin commented: “We need to look beyond our individual sectors. How can we expand working with others, so people can say “Now I know the problems happening there and they affect me too?”” Another Director, Martha added how various groups across the campus should take the time to pool their ideas on how to achieve certain common strategic

objectives: “It would be interesting for all the Departments to look at say the Continuing Education strategic objectives and ask: ‘This is what we need to get done. Is there another way?’” The Deans also discussed how employees from various sectors needed to gain a greater appreciation of the many commonalities they shared when it came to serving student needs. One of the Deans, Sue suggested: “Not everyone’s job is focused on the student. I always thought it would be good to spend half a day in the shoes of people in various places.” The Deans suggested having employees from various sectors to work in closer proximity to each other:

Arthur: Have offices mixed with teachers from different disciplines together.
 The English teacher sees the mathematician working with homework or dealing with office hours in a different way. Or regular events in the faculty lounge to get people to mix more often.
 David: Creating that interconnectivity.
 Arthur: If this were one of your SP goals you could create structures to foster it

The Deans also suggested that more opportunities were needed for SP consultations that cut across traditional groupings in the College to encourage input from those who do not always contribute:

Rob: If you look within departments, not everyone necessarily has a voice.
 There are many whose voices are silenced, perhaps because they don’t feel they can speak up and challenge and so on. You need to get away from that Department model sometimes when you build your plan.
 Sue: No party lines, it’s a free vote.
 Rob: Your groups should be a cross. Maximum one person per discipline.

Communicate effectively on the process of SP, as well as its progress along the way:

More than half the leaders (13/24 participants) contributed suggestions on how to improve awareness about SP around the College. Director General Frankie started this topic off by stating that every leader should be able to communicate knowledgeably and passionately about the SP:

Can they [the leaders] explain the process, and can they be passionate about it?
 It’s not only that they understand, but can they bring other people along? If they don’t have that passion, a big ingredient is missing.

The Directors’ group also discussed how they could improve their own communication with faculty in particular on the process of SP. One of the Directors, Jane summarized their discussion

here by stating: “It would be better if they [the faculty] were more aware of what we do, and we had more communication with them. The SP can help with that.” The Deans’ group all shared a similar view on this topic, as illustrated by their colleague David’s comment on how they had to be able to convince their fellow colleagues on the value of SP: “We need to be able to understand fully its direction and then convey that to others.” The Deans also discussed at some length how they wished for a clearer and simpler plan that focused on the broader strategic objectives, rather than the operational details of the current plan, one that would make it easier for them to ‘sell’ the SP to their academic teams next time around. As evidence of this viewpoint, one of the Deans, Rob stated: “If the broad strokes were there this would be a better guide, rather than all these details.”, to which Sue added: “The plan has to be simpler. It has to be less detailed if you want to be able to show people how they fit.” Many of the Chairs/Coordinators (7/12 participants) also discussed how they needed to see more effective communication between administrators and faculty on strategic affairs to encourage their involvement in SP endeavours at the College:

Rachel: The communication between faculty and administrators must be looked at, how faculty input is utilized, accepted, valued.
 Ryan: So, that needs to be challenged.
 All: Yes. Agreed.

A concept map of these solutions to engagement in SP at the College is given in Appendix 6A.

The Leaders’ Solutions to Challenge #2: Ensuring the Inclusive Representation of Needs

The next main challenge to emerge from the leaders’ views on SP at their College was how to go about representing everyone’s diverse interests across the campus as inclusively as possible in its strategic priorities. Their responses on this issue coalesced into two over-arching sub-themes of solutions as follows:

Make room for both common as well as sector-specific priorities in the process: Most of

the leaders (22/24 participants) expressed how it was important for the strategic priorities to reflect only the broader goals shared by all, but also program- and department-specific needs of the College. Some of the Directors (4/7 participants) also insisted how there should be more opportunity to debate those priorities. According to one of the Directors, Jane:

We are focusing on certain broad orientations in the current plan, and there ought to be more debate about that. We should also give different sectors of the College the possibility to bring forward different perspectives ... there are priorities that we have to look at together as a College but there are also those that each team needs to work at on their own in terms of the strategic plan.

All of the Chairs/Coordinators shared a similar view to that of the Directors on this point, stating how everyone needed to be able to see their needs expressed somewhere in those strategic priorities, especially when it came to the all-important front-line faculty of the College. One of the Chairs, Ryan summarized their discussion on this topic as follows: “I find we are such a diverse community, we have so many different things going on. I think a strategic plan within different sections of the organization makes a lot of sense.”

Consult widely but within available resources to establish the strategic priorities: All of the Directors and Deans, and yet none of the Chairs/Coordinators proposed suggestions on how to conduct as broad a consultation as possible on the strategic priorities of the College, but within available resources. The Directors started off by compiling a list of who should be consulted:

Frankie: Everyone in the College should be consulted when we build the plan.
 Martha: Externally, the business community, local community, others.
 Steve: Our students for sure because they could point out things that we are not clearly seeing, and universities and our feeder high schools.
 Frankie: Our Board of Directors for sure ... to monitor the strategic plan.

The Deans also shared this view, with one of their members, Arthur declaring that while as many parties as possible should be included in this consultation, “You need to keep it doable.” Both the Directors and Deans groups insisted that students should also be included in this consultation.

Academic Dean Steve suggested: “Students should should have some role in it, for sure because they could point out things perhaps that we are not clearly seeing in some instances.” One of the Deans, Rob also contributed: “Here we are with the students as the focus of what we do, and we haven’t even talked about them and their involvement in this ... they are the ones to give you feedback that is so critical.” A concept map of these overarching sub-themes of solutions to building inclusive strategic priorities for the College is provided in Appendix 6B.

The Leaders’ Solutions to Challenge #3: Fostering Accountability to the Process

Most of the leaders (19/24 participants) provided responses to fostering greater accountability not only to the strategic priorities, but also to the entire SP of the College. Almost as many responses (87 in total) were provided for this challenge as for that of promoting employee engagement (88 total). Most of the Chairs/ Coordinators (10/12 participants) called for more accountability to the strategic goals of the College, declaring that until its administrators did more to delegate the responsibility for both the writing as well as the achievement of those goals to those carrying them out, their colleagues’ lack of commitment to the process would likely persist. One of the Chairs, Bram summed up their discussion as follows: “I create an annual plan and no one reads it. Then I write a report on it and no one reads that. This lack of follow-up is a huge concern.” They also called attention to the lack of accountability to the overall results of the process. One of the Coordinators, Sam stated: “At the end of five years, where is the accountability for that?” Did we do what we said we would do, and if we didn’t what are we going to do about it now?” The leaders’ suggested concrete ideas about accountability which coalesced into the following subthemes:

Establish Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely (SMART) goals:

- **Specific goals:** These leaders described how the SP priorities should be specifically

oriented toward the *strategic direction*, to “implement a common vision” (the Directors), “go beyond our day to day” (the Deans), and “focus on our shared goal of student success” (the Chairs/Coordinators). One of the Directors, Jane expressed this widely-held view as follows: “You are going beyond, so there’s a vision beyond the plan itself, and this is how we get to that larger vision. So, if we put something into the SP, it has to be to get somewhere significant.”

• **Measurable goals:** The leaders also declared that for these goals to be strategic they also needed to be more *measurable*, as reflected in Academic Dean Steve’s comment: “How will we know if we achieved what we set out to do? With good indicators, you have better measurements and therefore better follow-up in terms of accountability.” One of the Deans, Rob echoed this sentiment as follows: “Being measurable is important for having some way of gauging success.” One of the Chairs Sam took it a step further, stating: “The strategic plan has to contain ‘measurables’. Then we need to report, to get it out there to let people know.” The Chairs/Coordinators pointed out the importance of data mining to establish strategic goals based on empirical data. According to one of Chairs, Molly: “It’s a lot easier with those benchmarks to address specific issues and monitor the effectiveness of changes made.”

• **Achievable goals:** These leaders called attention to checking in first with those who will be doing the work to ensure that any proposed goals are reasonably *achievable*. Director General Frankie stated “You need to ask them: ‘Can we improve? Is it feasible? Otherwise the plan will just stay on a shelf and not be used’”. They also insisted how the SP goals needed to remain responsive to any changes in the environment and yet still be doable. As pointed out by one of the Deans, Sue: “You have to make room for changes - it [SP] has to be more of a roadmap.”

• **Relevant goals:** The leaders also commented how these goals had to be *relevant* to those implementing them. One of the Deans, Arthur specified: “I don’t think we want a business

model where you are only counting how many students enrolled last year, how many passed. We need goals that can be qualitative as well as quantitative.” The Chairs/Coordinators insisted that those goals needed to focus on the must-dos first. One of them, Sam expressed: It’s got to be the necessities first ... and that gives you a focus moving forward.”

- **Timely goals:** The Directors also stated how there needed to be not only measurable targets but also concrete timelines to track their achievement over time. One of them, Justin elaborated: “This is our accountability toward the goals. We put them down on paper, then look back and say, “Did we achieve our goal, or what are the steps we need to take now to improve along the way?” Another Director, Suzanne added: “It’s also important to review along the way, ‘Are we working on what we said we would do?’, so at the end of the year it’s not like ‘Oops!’”

Ensure transparency about the overall process as well as its progress along the way:

Many of the leaders (14/24 participants) stated how they wanted to see more concrete evidence about what kind of progress was being made along the way. One of the Chairs, Chantal summed up their viewpoint here as follows: “For SP to be effective it needs to be seen to work. Unless decisions are made with the departments, and then we get to do those things, how are we going to get buy-in to the plan?”. One of the Coordinators, Sam echoed this sentiment: “We need more transparency - how it’s going, what’s happening, what everyone’s doing”. Many leaders also expressed how it was important to celebrate the successes of SP not only at the end, but also at regular intervals along the way. As evidence of this viewpoint, Academic Dean Steve declared:

As we come to the end of a plan it is our responsibility to celebrate the accomplishments ... and during the process we should also celebrate our substantial achievements in accomplishing these tasks and be more explicit about doing so since it is quite impressive at the end of the day.

A concept map of these solutions to building accountability to SP is included in Appendix 6C.

The Leaders' Solutions to Challenge #4: Ensuring a Strong Academic Focus to the Process

All of the Deans and Chairs/Coordinators, and yet none of the Directors – other than the Academic Dean - expressed the idea that academics and academic concerns needed to be more strongly reflected as the central focus of the SP, as well as the entire institution. According to the Academic Dean of the College Steve, the challenge here is to pursue strategic objectives “from an academic perspective, to make them as relevant as possible to the classroom and learning, so that the objectives link to the type of thinking the faculty are doing in terms of innovation or adjustments and so on.” The Deans and Chairs/Coordinators provided many more responses to this challenge (39 in total), which coalesced into the following two overarching sub-themes:

Ensure that academics are the central focus of SP as well as the entire institution: The Deans discussed how the organizational decision-making structure of the College should be restructured to better reflect academics as the central focus of not only the SP but also the entire institution. They expressed that with only one out of the seven Directors (the Academic Dean) at the senior management table directly representing the academic sector of the College, they could see how academics might not always be at the forefront of decisions being made at that table. As evidence of this viewpoint, here is an excerpt from their discussion on this topic:

- Susan: Structure is behind many of the weaknesses of the current SP.
- Arthur: That's a flaw in an academic institution where any number of people have more say than the academic people if we have a structure like now based on a system where academics have only *one* vote at the Directors' table, then decisions will inevitably go that way.
- Rob: What you're missing is your Venn diagram in terms of how these things fit together.

The Deans also expressed that, as the key administrators heading up the academic sector of the College, they needed to do a better job next time at ensuring that academic concerns remained at the forefront of the SP priorities. According to one of the Deans, David: “Ultimately, we are

responsible as academic administrators to get the ball rolling on this ...” The group also pointed out how it was critical for the Director General of the College to share this academic-centered vision. Another Dean, Arthur summarized their discussion on this topic as follows:

Let’s say we want to move academics to the forefront of the College. We put *that* into the SP. Once it’s in your SP, then it should shape the kind of Director General you hire to make sure that this happens.

Employ highly-consultative and collaborative SP practices across the academic sector:

The second solution shared by both the Deans and Chairs/Coordinators on building a stronger academic focus to SP was the need for more consultation on strategic affairs across the academic sector of the College. The Deans expressed how they needed to do more next time to consult their academic departments when the College was setting its strategic priorities. One of the Deans, Rob suggested: “We take some of the ideas from them and move forward ... “then delve down and get some information from faculty to help us create our work plans for the year.” The Chairs/Coordinators commented how it was not enough for the Deans to simply consult their academic departments when setting these priorities, but that they also needed to be willing to work in closer collaboration with them to reach those goals:

Sam: It goes back to the fact that we were not involved in writing the plan. It came top down from the administrators.

Richard: If they want buy-in, let them come around and ask for feedback on it.

Chantal: For SP to be effective, it needs to be seen to work ... Unless decisions are made with the departments, and then those things actually happen, how are we going to get buy-in to the plan?

The Chairs/Coordinators also proposed a way forward on this issue, as summarized by one of the Chairs, Ryan:

Strategic planning at the College level should not be about the delivery of education to the students ... it should be about how the administration supports the faculty so that they can carry out the mission of the institution, which is student success.

A concept map of these solutions to a stronger academic focus to SP is provided in Appendix 6D.

The Leaders' Solutions to Challenge #5: Managing Resources in Support of the Process

Many of the Deans and Chairs/Coordinators (12/17 participants), and yet only one Director identified the lack of resources as a challenge to SP at the College. While they provided only a few solutions (17 in total) to this issue, they did coalesce into two salient sub-themes, as follows:

Maximize the use of existing resources in support of the process: All of the Chairs/Coordinators suggested that the College was taking on too much and should focus on the essentials before taking on new SP initiatives. Here is an excerpt of their discussion on this issue:

Chantal: It's nice to talk about international initiatives ... but that's like icing on the cake. We've got problems here at home.

Sam: The strategic plan has to be the must-dos first.

Only one Director, Justin commented on this issue, emphasizing that a better sharing of resources was needed to optimize their use in support of the SP:

Colleges need to work better toward that common goal [student success] ... Where we can get better is when we can share our resources better. We are all part of one thing, but also part of a bigger package.

Allocate adequate resources to areas critical to the process: The Deans and Chairs/Coordinators also discussed how more resources were needed in the areas of time, academic administration, data mining and leadership training. The Deans suggested that with one more Dean on their team in this hard-pressed area, they could each spend some time teaching to stay better connected to the realities of this critical role at their institution:

Rob: We've talked about the importance of a Dean teaching. Where would we make the time? Yet it's important to bring us back to the realities of teaching.

Researcher: One more Dean, then part of every Dean's job could be teaching?

Sue: In some Colleges, Deans must teach.

Arthur: Or they have Assistant Deans so they can get into the classroom.

The Chairs/Coordinators also expressed how the academic administrators could make better use of their time, so they would have more time to spend with their academic departments and faculty:

Researcher: Have fewer meetings? Or make the ones they have more useful.

Richard: Yes, there has to be better way. The Deans used to walk around a lot more to find out what was going on. A former dean always had the door open. This is not happening now.

This group also suggested a more targeted approach to SP to make better use of everyone's time:

Harry: You can't expect everyone to be at it all the time. Target the people who need to be involved. What you want is for those who need to put in the effort when it is appropriate.

Ryan: We can't force people to do this. You should be creating buy-in. You should create an atmosphere where they are encouraged to participate.

One of the Chairs, Bram stated what was needed in terms of data mining: "Have a professional whose job it is to look for and report on patterns, trends, grads. What would happen if we did this, or we changed that?" The group also declared that the leaders of SP including themselves needed to be better trained to facilitate the process:

Chantal: What is needed to make SP to work is to make sure there is facilitation so people understand the process, what can be done with it, how it can be used to benefit the department, the programs.

Richard: Then it's very important that the leaders are trained to facilitate that.

A concept map of these solutions on how to support the process of SP is provided in Appendix 6E.

The Leaders' Solutions to the Challenges with Strategic Planning – Cross-Group Analysis

In this chapter, I have provided a detailed explanation of how I saw the leaders' responses to the prevalent challenges with SP coalesce into concrete solutions for how it could happen more effectively at their College. I now conduct a cross-group analysis of the three leader groups, responses to those challenges to further enrich my understanding of how these leaders think this process could be carried out more effectively. Once again, this phase of my analysis was invaluable in shedding light on the differences between the most senior leaders (Directors) and those working close to the frontlines of the College (Chairs/Coordinators) regarding this issue. The Deans and Chairs/Coordinators had significantly more to say about these challenges than the Directors. I noticed that the farther away each group was situated from the top levels of

decision-making, the more they seemed to want to contribute on these challenges. Based on these observations, it seems to me that the closer the leaders worked to the front-line classrooms of the institution, the more they felt invested in making a difference for the students in the classrooms, and that they see SP as an opportunity to achieve this goal.

Comparing the three leader groups' responses to these prevalent challenges with SP also led me to observe that each group had a very different take on how to go about addressing some of these important challenges. For example, when it came to the number one challenge identified by all of the leaders, that of engaging their colleagues in SP, the Directors focused on the ideas of consulting as widely as possible to build the SP priorities of the College, and informing their team members of their responsibilities related to those goals, "so they can actually see themselves in those objectives." The Deans took this idea one step further, expressing how they were willing to "take some ideas from them [the faculty] and move forward" from there to incorporate them into the strategic priorities of the College as well as their own annual work plans. In contrast, it was the Chairs/Coordinators who insisted that the very success of SP depended on their Deans working in closer partnership with their academic departments and front-line faculty members to ensure a stronger academic-centered focus to the institution as well as its SP. As stated by one of the Chairs, Chantal: "Unless the decision is made to say: 'Okay we are going to facilitate input from the departments and then we are actually going to do something about it', how are we going to get buy-in?" Reflecting on the differences I saw between these three groups' responses to this challenge, it appears that those working at the frontlines of this College have a strong desire to work in close collaboration with their Deans and Directors on all aspects of SP to support student success. See Figure 11 below for an overview of how I saw the leaders' solutions to each challenge emerge from the research data.

In the next and final chapter of this presentation, I discuss the salient findings from this study in light of my conceptual framework in search of key take-aways on how HEIs could employ SP more effectively.

Figure 11: Leaders' Solutions to the Challenges with Strategic Planning: Prevalent Themes



Chapter Seven: Discussion and Lessons Learned

The purpose of this study was to examine at the leaders' perspectives at one Canadian Higher Education Institution (HEI) on how Strategic Planning (SP) currently happens at their College to generate concrete, evidence-based lessons learned on how these institutions could employ the process more effectively across their campuses. In this closing chapter, I discuss my findings on their views by connecting them back to the literature, looking at them through the lens of my conceptual framework to gain further insight into how HEIs should address this issue.

Looking at the Findings Compared to the Strategic Planning Models

I start off by discussing the findings in relation to the three SP models, Business, Political and Collaborative Strategic Planning (SP) selected from the literature as most relevant to my research problem (see Chapter Two). The purpose in doing so is to take a closer look at the leaders' notions of strategic planning in light of these three SP models.

Business Strategic Planning (SP) was the first to evolve from a rich military history back in the early 20th century. While this model has evolved considerably since then, it still retains some of its traditional military characteristics including top-down hierarchical decision making, a highly-structured and disciplined approach to planning, and a drive to gain advantage over one's competitors (Copeland, 1958; Drucker, 1984; Mintzberg, 1994; Porter, 1985; Wall & Wall, 1995). A more recent look at Business SP (see Chapter Two) revealed how it too like other models has evolved toward more agile and democratic planning practices to respond to volatile global market conditions, and more socially responsible and sustainable ways to operate (Akedo, 1991; Bryson, 2011; Kondo, 1998; McGonickle & Starke, 2006; McWilliams et al, 2006; Siegel & Wright, 2006; Sanaghan, 2009). All three leader groups made contributions reflecting these characteristics of Business SP (see Findings Chapters). The one point they all expressed in

common with this model was that SP should remain a highly-structured and disciplined exercise. The Directors contributed the most comments that reflected the traditional top-down approach of Business SP, including how they alone should steer the process, how there should be a strong common strategic vision for all, and how their role was primarily to consult rather than collaborate with others in implementing the process. The Deans expressed that broader consultation was needed to build a more inclusive strategic vision for the institution, making more room especially for the needs of their academic teams in the strategic priorities of the College. Beyond that however, they did not mention collaborating any further with them on strategic affairs. The Chairs/Coordinators' responses were the most removed from the traditional hierarchical approach of Business SP, calling for a more inclusive and transparent approach, one that is driven by collaboration and accountability to motivate people wanting to engage in the process. The concept map used to interpret the leaders' responses in connection with this model is provided in Appendix 7A.

The central premise of Political SP is to identify the key factors in driving drive strategic change across the highly politicized planning climates of organizations such as HEIs. Its salient characteristics include paying close attention to participants' needs and interests, responding to issues of contention up front, determining acceptable responses to address those issues, then taking steps to build consensus toward making those changes happen (Bryson, 2011). Most of the leaders contributed responses connected to the characteristics of this model (see Findings Chapters). All of the Directors emphasized how SP should build strong consensus of the strategic vision of the institution, ensuring that everyone has a clear understanding of their joint responsibilities in achieving this shared vision. Most of the Deans and Chairs/Coordinators also called for such a common vision, but one that was more inclusive with room for the expression

of strategic priorities specific to each program area across the campus. However, none of the leaders made any specific comments to suggest that SP should be driven entirely from the central premise of this model, nor did they make any specific reference to its characteristics of identifying key issues of contention up front, molding them into politically acceptable goals, then building consensus toward making those changes happen. This perspective on my topic of research has led me to conclude that each HEIs should carefully consider its own political landscape when developing their SP initiatives. There is not enough evidence from my findings however to support employing this model as the central premise of SP in every instance. Instead, each institution should consider its own specific planning environment before deciding to adopt any or all approaches offered by this model. The concept map used to interpret the leaders' responses on this issue is provided in Appendix 7B.

Collaborative Strategic Planning (SP) aims to build commitment and collaboration right from the start to drive strategic change across Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). It does so by connecting everyone to the common institutional vision, connecting those shared aspirations to the daily operations of the institution, and the institution to the broader Higher Education landscape. Its main characteristics include the use of external expertise as needed to guide the process, employing proven strategies adapted to the culture of these institutions to promote engagement in the process, emphasizing transparent face-to-face interaction to foster unity of purpose, and building everyone's capacity to think and act strategically together toward a common vision (Sanaghan, 2009; Hinton, 2012; Sanaghan and Hinton, 2013). The leaders from across all three focus groups, the Directors, Deans and Chairs/ Coordinators contributed many responses reflecting this model's central premise of collaborative SP (see Findings Chapters). Their comments echoed many of the ideas suggested by this model, from ensuring that

participants feel heard and valued throughout the process, breaking down silos by educating them on other perspectives across the campus, to seeking out opportunities to optimize the sharing of resources. All three leader groups also expressed the importance of transparent face-to-face interaction to foster a unity of purpose across the institution, including connecting everyone to its strategic priorities and connecting its annual operational work plans through to those SP priorities. All three leader groups also specifically mentioned making a special effort to engage faculty in SP. The Chairs/Coordinators offered the most suggestions on this issue, most of which centered around the administrators working face-to-face more often with these key front-line faculty teams to support them in carrying the institution's strategic vision through to the students in their classrooms. Not all of the strategies presented by the Collaborative SP model came up for discussion in the leaders' focus group sessions. For example, none of them mentioned the idea of employing a representative SP steering committee to guide the process. The Directors' group even insisted how it was their role alone to initiate the process, then act as its steering committee throughout. In contrast, the literature recommends the use of such a representative group to foster equity and inclusiveness in the process. This group should be headed up by the most senior administrator of the institution and include local business and community leaders, faculty, staff and even students. The group should remain relatively small and consistent in membership to allow its participants to develop a working knowledge of the process to facilitate strategic thinking and acting across the institution (Hinton, 2012, Sanaghan, 2009). This model also recommends the use of external expertise to fill any gaps of knowledge until the institution gains the expertise to carry out a fully functioning SP of their own. This expertise can also bring other perspectives to the mix, helping to build credibility and trust in the process (Sanaghan, 2009; Carron et al, 2010; Bryson, 2011; Hinton, 2012). One of the Chairs,

Bram suggested that the College bring back its Institutional Development Office as a way to build up its own internal expertise for future SP endeavours:

The commitment to strategic planning here is dropping. We no longer have someone at the College whose job is dedicated to Institutional Development. ... Now we rarely think of the strategic plan except when it's time to make a new one. It's time to bring that office back.

The idea of creating such a service hub to foster institutional forward-thinking, planning and action is not a new one. Many HEIs employ such service hubs, often integrating such related functions as institutional research, data-mining, and SP itself into a central repository of knowledge to support evidence-based decision-making across the campus (Armstrong, Greene, Harvey & Pimental, 2017; Knight, 2016; Brown, Hewitt, Lin & Vater, 2017). It is also interesting to note that none of the leaders mentioned the idea of connecting the individual institution to the wider landscape of Higher Education. A key factor for HEIs surviving in turbulent times is for them to be willing to experiment with innovative SP approaches, all while building on successful practices of the past (Bryson, 2011; Hinton, 2012; Taylor & Machado, 2010). In my view, it is critical that HEI SP leaders keep abreast of best practices and leadership developments from the literature as they adapt the process to their own planning environments. The concept map of the leaders' responses on this issue is provided in Appendix 7C.

Looking back at my findings in comparison to the three SP models revealed that each leader group had different ideas about how to make strategic change happen. The College administrators (the Directors and Deans) remained primarily focused on consultation with their work teams to determine strategic priorities and action plans, but there was little discussion of working in closer collaboration with them from there to achieve those objectives. In contrast to this view, the Chairs/Coordinators not only insisted that more consultation was needed, but that the very success of SP depended on a more collaborative face-to-face approach to the process.

Interpreting my findings connected to these models also led to new insights regarding my topic of inquiry, including that HEIs should employ a representative planning group to guide the process, external expertise to fill any gaps in institutional SP knowledge, a service hub to foster forward-thinking and action planning, and evidence-based approaches from the literature to hone their SP initiatives. Interpreting my findings in this manner suggests that HEIs should employ a highly-disciplined yet collaborative SP approach with a focus on inclusive, equitable, transparent and accountable practices to engage everyone in a dynamic strategic change process. It is important that HEIs undertaking SP should ensure that everyone across the campus is on the same page in terms of not only the strategic vision and targeted priorities, but also the SP model chosen to support them in their pursuit of those goals.

Looking at the Findings in Light of the Prevalent Challenges from the Literature

I now discuss the prevalent challenges the leaders saw with SP at their College, as well as their solutions to those challenges, examining them in light of the prevalent challenges from the literature, in search of further insight into how HEIs should employ SP more effectively.

By far the most prevalent challenge as identified by every leader was the lack of employee engagement in the process of SP at their College. This one challenge was the highlight of every focus group discussion, with their discussions revolving around how to draw everyone into the process, how to make them *want* to get involved, with the leaders offering many suggestions on how to go about doing so. Their responses coalesced into a series of overarching sub-themes of solutions to this challenge (see Chapter Six). The leaders' responses to this challenge also resonated across the literature on the subject, with many sources/studies indicating that the success of HEI SP is indeed closely linked to everybody's willingness to engage in the process (Carron et al, 2010; Bryson, 2011; Morrison et al, 2014); Sanaghan & Hinton (2013). Strategies

from the literature that reflect the participants' responses on this issue include encouraging transparent face-to-face interaction to foster unity of purpose, building consensus and collaboration on addressing issues, and thinking and acting together collaboratively toward strategic change (Bryson, 2011; Sanaghan, 2009; Hinton, 2012).

Emerging as a close second from the leaders' perspectives on SP at their College was the challenge of representing the diverse needs across the campus as inclusively as possible in the strategic priorities of the College. Most of them expressed how their colleagues needed to see the aspirations of their particular sector of the institution clearly reflected in the process before they were ready to commit to it. This challenge also clearly resonated in the literature as one of the key factors to the success of HEI SP. While it may take more time and effort, participants need to feel consulted, informed and involved every step of the way to foster buy-in to the process (Bryson, 2011; Sanaghan & Hinton, 2013; Hunter, 2013). Room should be made for both the broader visionary objectives as well as specific concerns across the campus in the strategic priorities of the institution. HEIs should also employ a representative mix of administrators, staff, faculty and students as well as the wider community - board of governors, alumni, and local business leaders – on its SP steering committee (Hinton, 2012, Sanaghan, 2009). These strategies can go a long way in demonstrating to its SP participants that the institution is committed to working in collaboration with the wider community in achieving its strategic vision.

The lack of accountability to the process itself as well as its declared priorities emerged as a close third in terms of the main challenges the leaders saw with SP at their College. This challenge also resonated across the literature on my topic of study. Accountability in HEIs is not simply a matter of declaring the intended strategic goals, then identifying lines of responsibility for their accomplishment. It is about *how* that accountability is delegated. Leaders need to

work in close collaboration with their work teams, especially their key front-line faculty:

[I]t is key to build consensus from the start to ensure involvement and commitment across the various faculties, schools and departments ... it will be essential to bring the academic community on board from the very start. (Hunter, 2013, p. 1).

SP leaders should also encourage autonomy of action and show trust in others that they can get the job done (Dooris, 2002 - 2003; Sanaghan, 2009; Hinton, 2012). They should also build support for future SP endeavours by employing SMART goal-setting, then tracking and sharing the accomplishments of the current plan (Bryson, 2011; Marshall, 2008; Wirkkula, 2007). Keeping track of progress in this way has the added advantage of allowing for the SP to be adapted to changes in the planning environment along the way: “The organization needs to measure current performance against previously determined expectations and then consider any changes or events that may have impacted the desired course of actions” (Lerner, 1999, p. 7).

The next main challenge to emerge from my findings was how to go about ensuring that academic concerns remain the central focus of both the process of SP as well as the functioning of the entire institution. This view was expressed by all of the Deans and Chairs/Coordinators, and yet none of the Directors of the College. This marked contrast between the views of the academic leaders (the Deans and Chairs/ Coordinators) to those of the senior managers (the Directors) on this topic suggests that there remain fundamental issues regarding how the College currently involves its academic sector in decision-making that have yet to make themselves felt at the more senior administrative level as acutely as they are being experienced by those working at the front-line academic level of this institution. In my view, this is a key issue that this College should address with its entire community before proceeding with any future SP endeavours. The challenge of reflecting academics as the central focus of SP as well as decision-making across HEIs was not reported in any significant manner in the literature. Perhaps this is an issue more

specific to this one institution, or at most to the network of Colleges to which it belongs.

However, the literature does highlight that how decisions are made, how others make their voices heard, and how accountability is upheld is a key factor to HEIs transforming their plans into concrete strategic action through to the front lines of their institutions (Institute on Governance, 2017; (Dooris, 2002 - 2003; Sanaghan, 2009; Hinton, 2012). SP is not a stand-alone process (see Chapter One); rather it is only one in a series of interrelated, or ‘nested’ elements in an overall management plan that guides the organization to operate within its planning environment (Nickols, 2016). HEIs should therefore ensure that all of these decision-making structures, policies and practices are well in place, and that they all work synchronously together to support the institution’s strategic planning efforts.

Another important challenge that many of the leaders saw with SP at their College focused on how the institution should do a better job of managing its resources in support of its SP. Once again, apart from a comment by one of the Directors, it was the Deans and Chairs/ Coordinators who provided all of the responses to this issue. The literature on this issue also highlighted that HEIs should set realistic goals in keeping with the resources available to them. SP can be instrumental in focusing everyone’s efforts toward strategic change, but only for a limited number of priorities. The process should “‘stick to the knitting’ - stay with the business it knows by focusing on the central vocation of the institution” (Peters and Waterman, 1994, p. 292). It should do enough, but not too much; taking on too many priorities only dilutes overall efforts (Goldman & Salem, 2015; Hayward, Ncayiyanga & Johnson, 2003). HEIs should also employ a resource-mobilizing plan to ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to the overall process, as well as to each strategic priority to give it a reasonable chance of success. This plan should also identify where resources might be lacking, and how those missing resources will be

acquired (Sahoo & Senapati, 2008; World Bank, 2007). HEI SP should not only be used to drive strategic change across the campus but also to optimize the use of resources (Sanaghan & Hilton, 2012). According to Hinton, SP is the one place where the institution can pull together all of its forecasting measures including academic success, information technology, facility development and financial management plans into one resource-optimizing initiative:

The advantages of using the strategic planning process for this integrative purpose are numerous; the two primary gains are in anticipating and prioritizing budget demands and identifying complimentary, competing, or contradictory goals ... without a SP process to integrate the multiple and varied issues, there is no one place to organize planning and resource allocation (Hinton, 2012, p. 34).

Linking the academic success plan to the SP for example can foster dialogue across the campus and lead to new resource-sharing opportunities. Any resources freed up from these efforts could then be redirected to areas lacking in support, or on to new strategic directions.

Looking at the Role of Strategic Planning Leaders Through the Leadership Frameworks

Lipsky's Street-Level Bureaucracy framework and Tolstoy's bow-wave metaphor presented in Chapter 2 offer a useful lens to gain further insight into the role of the leader in facilitating Strategic Planning (SP) across Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Lipsky's Street-Level Bureaucracy (SLB) emerged in the 1980s as a significant new contribution to leadership research based on the study of front-line public service workers' influence on public policy, lending new insight into the nature of leadership (Lipsky, 1980). In applying this framework to the Quebec CEGEP network (see Chapter Two), I was able to observe first-hand that indeed SLB plays itself out every day in the way that their faculty use their discretion in applying academic policy through to their students, profoundly shaping how that policy is actually delivered to the front lines of these institutions. Connecting my findings to this SLB framework contributed further insight into how SP could happen more effectively

across HEIs. Doing so confirmed that these institutions should make a targeted effort to engage everyone across the campus in the process, and further to that a special effort was needed to encourage the all-important SLBs of the academy, their front-line faculty to *want* to engage in the process. The leaders from all three focus groups of this study, the Directors, Deans and Chairs/Coordinators, all proposed many concrete strategies related to this concept (see Chapter Six), reflecting their recognition of the key role that faculty play in driving the strategic vision through to the front lines, the classrooms and students, of the institution. Highlights from these strategies include employing highly consultative and collaborative decision-making through to the front lines of the institution, making room for both college-wide and sector-specific strategic priorities, delegating the accountability for achieving those goals through to the those doing the work at the front lines, and ensuring regular and transparent communication and on the progress being made toward those priorities. The Deans and Chairs/Coordinators added to these strategies, insisting that there needed to be a stronger focus on supporting the all-important front-line SLBs, the faculty not only in terms of the SP but also all decision-making at the College. These two groups also stressed the importance of making the most of available resources, as well as the need for more resources in support of SP, especially in the areas of time, academic deans, data mining, and training its leaders in how to facilitate the process.

Grint's exploration of Tolstoy's bow-wave metaphor for leadership (1997, 2000, 2001, 2005) has inspired a whole new generation of scholars to revisit this elusive construct and what it is all about (see Chapter Two). While this body of literature, like the metaphor itself, continues to provide a murky view at best into the nature of leadership, connecting my findings to what these scholars have to say about it has shed further light on the role of the SP leader in HEIs. Connecting the findings to this body of literature reinforces the idea that the success of any

leadership effort across complex organizations such as HEIs rests firmly in the hands of their so-called followers. These followers do not blindly follow their leaders; the most effective leaders are those who earn the engagement of those they lead (Cronin & Genovese, 2012). Such leadership endeavours should be driven by a collective rather than by individual leaders; the key is to make the most of this shared effort between leaders and followers (Grint, 2005). SP should therefore remain a highly collaborative effort across these institutions, led by a well-trained and committed team of leaders to facilitate the endeavour. All of the leaders who participated in this study also declared how it was critical for them to consult their colleagues as inclusively as possible when setting the College's strategic priorities. The Chairs/Coordinators even took this idea a step further, declaring how they needed their own leaders, the Deans, to work in closer collaboration with them in order for their faculty teams to actually want to engage in the process of SP at the College. The study participants also highlighted that SP in HEIs should remain highly responsive to changes in the planning environment, so should the leader who facilitates the process. The effective SP leader has to be able to live with uncertainty and be ready to respond accordingly; what is needed in one instance could be different in another, then things can change (Cronin & Genovese, 2012).

What resonated the most with me regarding Grint's description of the nature of leadership is that "leadership should not be reduced to the actions of the leader, nor even to the relations between the leader and the led" (Grint, 1997, p. 17). Rather the focus should be on tracing the mobilization of all resources both human and material toward goal achievement. On this matter, all of the study participants declared how they wanted to see greater accountability not only to the strategic priorities but also to the entire SP process (see Chapter Six). This in turn suggested to me that the success of SP in HEIs should not be evaluated solely on the extent to which its

strategic priorities are achieved, but also on how effectively the process was in mobilizing all available resources both human and material to fulfil the strategic vision of the institution.

Implications: Lessons Learned on Strategic Planning in Higher Education Institutions

This in-depth examination of the leaders' views on Strategic Planning (SP) at one Canadian Higher Education Institution (HEI) has led to a series of concrete, evidence-based lessons learned on where these institutions should focus their efforts to make the most of this planning tool across their campuses. By working persistently to weave these lessons learned into the very fabric of the institution, incorporating them into 'the way things are done', HEIs will become more effective at driving strategic change across their campuses. Key take-aways from this study include that first and foremost HEIs should ensure that their entire community is on the same page in terms of not only the strategic vision and targeted priorities of the institution, but also on the SP model they choose to pursue those goals. These institutions should also employ a highly-disciplined yet collaborative approach to SP, with a focus on inclusive, equitable, transparent and accountable practices to engage their entire community in a dynamic strategic change process. The leaders of SP should be highly committed to the strategic vision of the institution, and well trained to facilitate the process. These leaders should also ensure that the process as well as they themselves remain highly responsive to the volatile planning environments encountered by these institutions. According to Grint, "Leadership, in effect, is too important to be left to leaders" (2005, p.4). This led me to reflect how I too have come to appreciate through this research journey that SP in HEIs is too important an issue to be left to its leaders alone. While the leaders of SP do play a key role in how it unfolds across these institutions, at the same time this study highlights how they need to work in close collaboration with their followers to make the most of the process, to the benefit of these institutions as well as

the whole of society. Ultimately, it comes down to how well every member of these dynamic teaching and learning communities, leaders and followers alike, mobilize their actions and resources together toward reaching the institution's targeted goals.

Researcher Reflexivity

A word is needed here on the issue of researcher reflexivity (see Chapter Three) and its possible effects on this study. Researchers and participants alike construct this process of 'meaning-making' together, with the researcher bringing their combined knowledge and experience to bear to shed light on the 'truth' of a given matter (Bradley, 1993; Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Kegan, 1980). My own reflexive understandings have evolved over the course of this research journey and contributed to the study outcomes. In Chapter One, I introduced my background as a researcher to help the reader understand the personal experiences, assumptions and preconceptions I brought to this inquiry. In Chapter Two, I expanded on the conceptual lens through which I examined my data, where I undertook a review of the literature to look at what has gone on before in terms of SP in HEIs before going on to study how it could happen more effectively. In Chapter Three, I described how I engaged in a rigorous interactive experience of knowledge production with my participants, employing a social constructivist approach to glean a deeper understanding of their views on this dilemma. Embarking this research journey confirmed much of what I had previously experienced as a participant and leader myself in various SP initiatives. This experience also led me to re-evaluate my own predilections for seeing the situation as very much a 'we versus they' dynamic whereby the leaders of SP are in charge, and the followers simply, well, follow. I have since come to appreciate through this reflective journey that for HEI SP to be effective it needs to be a highly collaborative effort whereby leaders and participants alike commit to building the process

together, and then making it work. All this led me to reflect that there are many parallels between SP in HEIs and my research approach. Qualitative research from a social constructivist stance is also not a ‘we-they’ dynamic; instead I have come to learn first-hand how critical it is for the researcher just like the HEI SP leader to listen closely to and collaborate with my participants to create that experience of mutual knowledge production. I also found myself becoming more sensitive to my dual role as both researcher and participant in this collaborative group effort of ‘meaning-making’ about my research dilemma. This led me to pay more attention not only to what the participants but also what I as the researcher/interviewer contributed to this collaborative process. I also learned that qualitative research using the constant comparative method is also a highly iterative process just like HEI SP whereby results do not emerge only at the end; rather there is a deepening of insight throughout as the researcher reflexively revisits and revises previous interpretations. I also came to appreciate the valuable learning opportunity my study participants provided in allowing me to listen in on their thoughts and feelings on my research problem. Without their participation, my entire research journey would not have been possible, and for that I am grateful. It is a privilege that I do not take lightly; I have done my utmost to reflect their views as inclusively and faithfully as possible in my study findings, employing many measures to stay as true as possible to what the participants had to say on my topic of research. I also made a conscious effort to recognize and declare any personal biases I had as a researcher, striving for the utmost in integrity and authenticity throughout this inquiry.

Study Limitations

This study like all others also has its limitations. The intensive nature of my chosen research topic meant that I was only able to conduct this inquiry at one research site, thus limiting its scope and applicability to other settings. I hope that the in-depth look that the study

gave me would be of interest to the network of Quebec CEGEPs, if not to the wider HEI landscape. Another key limitation to the study was that I was unable to recruit as wide a range of participants as originally hoped (see Chapter One), which in turn limited the scope of the data I was able to collect regarding what was going on with SP across this College. Instead, this narrower focus on fewer participants meant that I was able to gain a more in-depth understanding of the views of those who did participate in the study. Another limitation of note was the selection and wording of my research questions. While I did my best to develop as meaningful and targeted questions as possible based on my review of the literature, feedback from research advisors and workplace peers, as well as my extensive personal experience with HEI SP, the way I phrased my focus group questions will have had some influence on how my participants responded to this inquiry. However, I believe that these questions have led to a rich, informative, and constructive discourse on the subject. These questions are also now available as a reference for others who may wish to undertake further studies of a similar nature (see Appendix 3A).

Directions for Future Research

Despite these limitations, this inquiry has enabled me to offer fresh insights to the literature, by examining the views of those living HEI SP day-to-day for their take on how the process could be employed more effectively across these complex institutions. More such research is recommended to continue to build on the practical, evidence-based lessons learned from this study. The scope of this research should also be expanded to include different types and settings of HEIs to add to our knowledge of what is going on with this research phenomenon. Future studies should include a wider range of participants, to incorporate the views of not only the SP leaders, but also the policy makers (Board of Governors, Academic Council etc.), faculty, staff, and students across these complex institutions.

References

- Akao, Y. (Ed). (1991) *Hoshin kanri: policy deployment for successful TQM (originally published as Hoshin kanri katsuyo no jissai, 1988)*. Cambridge, MA: Productivity Press.
- Ali, S. A. (2016). Exploring the nature of leadership development of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics. (Masters' thesis). *Theses and dissertations*. New Zealand Unitec Institute of Technology.
- Anderson, Gary (1998). *Fundamentals of educational research (2nd edition)*. New York, New York, Routledge Publishing.
- Aponte, L.G. (2011). A grounded theory approach to studying strategic planning in higher education: A qualitative research methodology utilizing the literature review and interview. (Doctoral dissertation). *Theses and Dissertations*. The University of Toledo, Ohio.
- Archer, Margaret (2007). *Making our way through the world: human reflexivity and social mobility*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Armstrong, K., Greene, J. Harvey, G. and Pimental, M. (2014). The creation of an integrated services division to advance university strategic initiatives. *Planning for Higher Education*. 45 (2), 107 – 113.
- Bacig, K. L. Z. (2002). Participation and communication in strategic planning in higher education: A case study. (Doctoral dissertation). *ProQuest Publications*.
- Baghrmian, M. (2004). *Relativism*. London: Routledge Publishing.
- Bell, C. and Roberts, H. (Eds.). (1984). *Social researching*. London, Routledge Publishing.
- Berg, B. L. (2004). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences (7th ed.)*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

- Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L. (1992). *Invitation to a reflexive sociology*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Bradley, J. (1993). Methodological issues and practices in qualitative research. *Library Quarterly*, 63 (4), 431 – 439.
- Brown, N. J., Hewitt, G., Lin, W. and Vater, R. (2017). The evolution of Institutional-Research professionals in small- and medium-sized institutions. *New Directions for Institutional Research*. 2017(173), 89 – 96.
- Bryson, J.M. (1998). A strategic planning process for public and non-profit organizations. *Long-Range Planning*, 21 (4), 73 - 81,
- Bryson, J. M and Crosby, B. C. (2004). *Leadership for the common good: tackling public problems in a shared-power world*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Bryson, J.M. (2011). *Strategic planning for public and non-profit organizations (4th edition)*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Business Dictionary (2019). What is strategic planning? *Business Dictionary*. Retrieved January 21, 2019 from <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/strategic-planning.html>
- Carron, G., De Grauwe, A., Gay, D. and Choudhuri, S. (2010). Strategic planning: concept and rationale. *UNESCO Working Paper*. Paris, France: International Institute for Educational Planning.
- Chaffee, E. (1985). Three models of strategy. *Academy of Management Review*, 10 (1), 89 – 98.
- Charmaz, K. (2001). Qualitative interviewing and grounded theory analysis. In J. Gubrium and J. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context and method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Chawla, M. and Berman, P. (1996). Developing and implementing a resource mobilization strategy. *Data for Decision Making Project*. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID).
- Collins English Dictionary (1992). Glasgow: Harper Collins.
- Copeland, M. T. (1958). *And mark an era: the story of the Harvard Business School*. Boston, MA. Little Brown and Company.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (3rd ed.)* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Cronin, T. E. and Genovese, M.A., (2012). *Leadership matters: unleashing the power of paradox*. New York: Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social science research: meaning and perspective in the research process*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Denzin, N., and Lincoln, Y. (Eds.). (2011). *Handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Dewar, J.A. (2002). *Assumption-based planning: a tool for reducing avoidable surprises*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Dooris, M. (2002 - 2003). Two decades of strategic planning. *Planning for Higher Education*, 31 (2), 26 – 32.
- Dooris, M., Kelley, J. and Trainer, J. M. (2004). Strategic planning in higher education. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2004 (123), 5 – 11.
- Drucker, P. (1984). *The practice of management*. New York: Harper and Row.

- Dyson, A. H. (2004). Writing and the sea of voices: Oral language in, around, and about writing. In R.B. Ruddell, & N.J. Unrau (Eds.), *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading*. Newark, NY: International Reading Association, 146 – 162.
- Egan, K. (1997). *The educated mind*. University of Chicago Press.
- Elliott, R., Fischer, C., and Rennie, D. (1999). Evolving guidelines for publication of qualitative research studies in psychology and related fields. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 38 (3), 215 – 229.
- Emmott, S. (2013). *Ten billion*. Toronto: Penguin Canada Books Inc.
- Evans, J. (2012). Managing assumptions, risks and impediments in strategic planning. *Vistage Research Center*. Retrieved June 3, 2018 from: <https://www.vistage.com/research-center/leadership/growth-strategy/managing-assumptions-risks-and-impediments-in-strategic-planning/>
- Furco, A. and Lockhart, K. N. (2018). Building a university-wide agenda for intercultural competence and understanding: lessons learned at the University of Minnesota. *Metropolitan Universities*. 29, (1). 77- 92.
- Freire, P. (2007). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Continuum Publishing.
- Gardner, J., Bennett, P., Hyatt, N. and Stoker, K., (2017). Applying project management strategies in a large curriculum conversion project in higher education. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*. 20, (3), pages N/A. Retrieved June 3, 2018 from <https://institute.franklin.edu/i4-blog/Applying-Project-Management-Strategies-Large-Curriculum-Conversion-Project-Higher-Education/gardner-joel>
- Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Githens, G. (2012). How to identify strategic assumptions. *Leading Strategic Initiatives*.

Retrieved June 3, 2018 from <https://leadingstrategicinitiatives.com/>

Glaser, B. G. and Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publication Company.

Goldman, C. and Salem, H. (2015). Getting the most out of university strategic planning: essential guidance for success and obstacles to avoid. Santa Monica, CA: RAND

Corporation. Retrieved June 3, 2018 from http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pub/perspectives/PE100/PE157/RAND_PE157.pdf

Grint, K. (1997). Introduction - reading Tolstoy's wave. In Grint K. (Ed.), *Leadership: classical, contemporary, and critical approaches* (pp. 1 – 17). New York: Oxford University Press.

Grint, K. (2001). *Leadership: a very short introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Grint, K. (2005). *Leadership: limits and possibilities*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Grint, K. (2000). *The arts of leadership*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Guba, E. (1990). *The paradigm dialog*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Hayward, F., Ncayiyanga, D., and Johnson, J. (2003). *A guide to strategic planning of African higher education institutions*. SA: Center for Higher Education Transformation.

Hill, H. (2003). Understanding implementation: street-level bureaucrats' resources for reform. *Journal of Public Administration*. 13 (3): 265–282.

Hollingworth, M. (2008). Strategic assumptions: the essential (and missing) element of your strategic plan. *Ivey Business Journal Online*. Retrieved June 3, 2018 from

<http://iveybusinessjournal.com/publication/strategic-assumptions-the-essential-and-missing-element-of-your-strategic-plan/>

- Hunter, F. (2013). The importance of strategic planning in higher education. *EAIE Blog*. European Association of International Education. Retrieved June 3, 2018 from <http://www.eaie.org/blog/the-importance-of-strategic-planning-in-higher-education/>
- Institute on Governance (2018). Defining governance. *Institute on Governance*. Retrieved June 2, 2018 from <http://iog.ca/defining-governance/>
- Johnstone, E.B. The economics and politics of cost-sharing in higher education: comparative perspectives. *Economics of Education Review*.23 (4), 403-410.
- Jorna, F and Wagenaar, P. (2007). The iron cage strengthened? Discretion and digital discipline. *Public Administration*. 85 (1): 189–214.
- Kegan, R. (1980). Making meaning: the constructive-developmental approach to persons and practice. *Journal of Counselling and Development*. 58 (5), 373 – 380.
- Kegan, R. (1982). *The evolving self: Problem and process in human development*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Keller, G. (1983). *Academic strategy: The management revolution in American higher education*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Kelly, M. (1994). Theories of justice and street-level discretion. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory: J-PART*. 4 (2), 119–140.
- Kezar, A., and Eckel, P. (Eds.). (2000). *Moving beyond the gap between research and practice in higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey–Bass Publishers.
- Kim, H. and Rehg, M. (2018). Faculty Performance and Morale in Higher Education: A Systems Approach. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*. Retrieved May 24, 2018 from: <https://doi.org/10.1002/sres.2495>.

- Knight, W. (2016). The case for a cabinet-level chief institutional effectiveness officer at all colleges and universities. *Association for Higher Education Effectiveness (AHEE)*. Retrieved June 3, 2018 from https://www.ahee.org/files/2016/05/The-Case-for-a-Cabinet-Level-Chief-IE-Officer_AHEE_April_2016.pdf
- Kondo, Y. (1998). Hoshin kanri: a participative way of quality management in Japan. *The TQM Magazine*. 10 (6), 425-431.
- Kuhn, T. S. (1996). *The structure of scientific revolutions (3rd edition)*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Leithwood, K. (2005). Educational leadership: A review of the research. *Laboratory for Student Success (LSS)*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University.
- Lerner, A. L. (1999). A strategic planning primer for higher education. *California State University Strategic Planning Report 1999*. Northridge, CA: California State University.
- Lincoln, Y. and Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Lipsky, M. (1980). *Street-level bureaucracy: dilemmas of the individual in public services*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Lovinguth, S. J. (1996). Strategic planning outcomes at four-year private colleges and universities. (Doctoral dissertation). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*.
- Luke, J.O. (2014). Effective strategic planning for disruptive and challenging times. *Higher Learning Commission Annual Conference 2014 Collection of Papers*. Retrieved June 3, 2018 from <http://cop.hlcommission.org/Leadership/luke.html>
- Mackey, E. R. (2008). Street-level bureaucrats and the shaping of university housing policy and procedures. (Doctoral dissertation). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*.

- Marshall, S. (2008). Leading change at the middle: Stories of higher education middle leaders' 'success'. (Master's thesis). *New Zealand Unitech Institute of Technology*.
- Martin, R. (2013). Strategy and the uncertainty excuse. *Harvard Business Review*. January 2013. Retrieved June 3, 2018 from <https://hbr.org/2013/01/the-uncertainty-excuse>.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA. SAGE Publications.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2002). Understanding and validity in qualitative research. In Huberman, A. M. and Miller, B.M. (Eds.) *The qualitative researcher's companion*. Thousand Oaks, CA.: SAGE Publications.
- Maykut, P. S. and Morehouse, R. (1994), *Beginning qualitative research: a philosophic and practical guide*. London, U.K.: Palmer Press.
- Maynard-Moody, S. and Musheno, M. (2003). *Cops, teachers, counselors: stories from the front lines of public service*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Mayo, E. (1945). *Social problems of an industrial civilization*. Boston: Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University.
- McGonickle, M. and Starke, J. (2006). *Planet U: sustaining the world, reinventing the university*. Gabriola Island, B.C.: New Society Publishers.
- McKinley, J. (2015). *Critical argument and writer identity: social constructivism as a theoretical framework for EFL academic writing*. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*. 12 (3): 184–207.
- McWilliams, A., Siegel, D. and Wright, P. M. (2006). Corporate social responsibility: international perspectives. *Journal of Management Studies*. 43, (1), 1 – 18.
- Merton, R. K. (1948). The self-fulfilling prophecy. *Antioch Review*, 8, 193–210.

- Miles, M.B., and Huberman, M.A (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: an expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Mintzberg, H. (1994). *The rise and fall of strategic planning*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Mintzberg, H., and Quinn, J. B. (2002). *The strategy process: concepts, contexts, cases* (4th edition). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Moore, M. H. (2000). Managing for value: organizational strategy in for-profit, non-profit, and governmental organizations. *SAGE Journals*, 29 (1), 183 – 204.
- Morrison, J., Bellanca, R., and Abernathy, B. (2014). Leading strategic planning through faculty engagement. *Higher Learning Commission Annual Conference Collection of Papers 2014*. Retrieved June 3, 2018 from <http://cop.hlcommission.org/Leadership/morrison.html>
- Nagel, E. (1961). *The structure of science: problems in the logic of scientific explanation*. New York, NY: Harcourt Publishing.
- Newstrom, J. W. and Davis, K. (1993). *Organizational behavior: human behavior at work*. Chicago, IL: McGraw-Hill Publishing.
- Nickols, F. (2016). Strategy, strategic management, strategic planning and strategic thinking. *Distance Consulting*. Retrieved June 15, 2018 from http://www.nickols.us/strategy_etc.pdf
- Nikolov, D. (2006). Decentralization and decentralized governance for enhancing delivery of services in transition conditions. *UNDESA (United Nations Department of Social Affairs)*. Retrieved June 3, 2018 from: <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan025134.pdf>
- OECD (2016). Economic outlook 2016. *OECD Economic Outlook Series*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

- O'Donovan, D. and Flower, N. (2013). Strategic planning is dead. Long live strategy. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. January 2013. Retrieved June 3, 2018 from https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_strategic_plan_is_dead_long_live_strategy
- Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Peters, T. and Waterman, R. (1982). *In search of excellence: lessons from America's best-run companies*. New York: Harper Business Publications.
- Porter, M.E. (1979) How competitive forces shape strategy. *Harvard Business Review*. 57, (2), 137 - 145.
- Porter, M. E. (1985). *Competitive advantage: creating and sustaining superior performance*. New York: Free Press.
- Rapp, M., Rhomberg, M. and White, K. (2016). Integrating the crowd through social media: how higher education can profit from viral mechanisms. *Social Computing and Social Media*. 9742, 393 – 404.
- Reason, P. (Ed.). (1994). *Participation in human inquiry*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Rowan-Kenyon, H., Martinez Aleman, A., Gin, K., Blakeley, B. Gismondi, A., Lewis, J. McCready, A., Zepp, D. and Knight, S. (2016). Social media in higher education. *ASHE Higher Education Report*. 42 (5), 7 – 128.
- Rowley, D.J., Lujan, H.O., and Dolence, M. G. (1997). *Strategic change in colleges and universities: planning to survive and prosper*. San Francisco, CA.: Jossey-Bass Publishing.
- Rudd, J. M., Greenley, G. E., Beatson, A. T., and Lings, I. N. (2008). Strategic planning and performance: Extending the debate. *Journal of Business Research*, 61, 99–108.

- Rumelt, R. P. (2011). *Good strategy, bad strategy: the difference and why it matters*. New York: Crown Business Publishing.
- Sagemuller, I. (2018). How strategic planning helps higher education accreditation. *U-Planner*. Retrieved January 21, 2019 from <https://www.u-planner.com/blog/how-strategic-planning-helps-higher-education-accreditation>.
- Sahoo, R. K. and Senapati, T. (2008) *Resource mobilisation for higher education*. New Delhi: Regal Publications.
- Sanaghan, P. (2009). *Collaborative strategic planning in higher education*. Washington, DC: National Association of College and University Business Officers.
- Sanaghan, P. (2011). A collaborative strategic planning approach. The Sanaghan Group. Retrieved June 3, 2018 from <http://www.thesanaghanguroup.com/PDFs/planning.pdf>.
- Sanaghan, P. and Hinton, M. (2013). Be strategic on strategic planning. *Inside Higher Education*. Retrieved June 3, 2018 from <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2013/07/03/essay-how-do-strategic-planning>
- Scott, K. W. (2004). Relating categories in grounded theory analysis: Using a conditional relationship guide and reflective coding matrix. *The Qualitative Report*, 9 (1), 113 - 126.
- Seltzer, J.B. (2014). What is resource mobilization and why is it so important? *Health Communication Capacity Collaboration*. Baltimore, MA: John Hopkins University. Retrieved June 3, 2018 from <https://healthcommcapacity.org/resource-mobilization-important/>
- Shenton, A.K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *IOS Press: Education for Information*. Newcastle: Northumbria University. 22, 63 – 75.

- Snellen, I. (2002). Electronic governance: implications for citizens, politicians and public servants. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*. 68 (2), 183–198.
- Spillane, J. (2006). *Distributed leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Stewart, D.W., Shamdasani, P. N. and Rook, D.W. (2007). *Focus groups: theory and practice (2nd edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Strauss, A. L., and Corbin, J. M. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Sytsma, S. (2009). The changing way of leading. *International Journal of Educational Reform*. 18 (3), 185 – 199.
- Taylor, J. S., and Machado, M. L. (2010). The struggle for strategic planning in European higher education: the case of Portugal. *Research in Higher Education Journal*. 6, 1- 20.
- Tobin, G.A. and Begley, C.M. (2004). Methodological rigour within a qualitative framework: methodological issues in nursing research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 48 (4), 388 - 396.
- Tolstoy, L. (1869). *War and peace*. Maude et al 1991. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Trowler, P. (2002). *Higher education policy and institutional change: intentions and outcomes in turbulent environments*. Society for Research into Higher Education: Open University.
- Tromp, S. A. and Ruben. B. D. (2010). *Strategic planning in higher education: a guide for Leaders (2nd ed.)*. National Association of College and University Business Officers.
- Yang, C. S. and Roche, S. (Eds). *The role of higher education in promoting lifelong learning*. Hamburg, Germany: UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning.
- Vitalis, A. and Duhaut, N. (2004). Nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication et relation administrative : de la relation de guichet à la relation de reseau. *Revue française d'administration publique*. 110 (1), 315 – 326.

- Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher mental processes*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Wall, S. J., and Wall, S. R. (1995). The evolution (not the death) of strategy. *Organizational Dynamics*. 24 (2), 6.
- Warwick, R. and Board, D. (2013). *The social development of leadership and knowledge: a reflexive inquiry into research and practice*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Wirkkula, L. M. (2007). Human perspectives on strategic planning: The lived experience of deans at a public research university. (Doctoral dissertation). *ProQuest Publications*.
- World Bank (2002). *Annual report 2002*. Washington, DC: World Bank. Retrieved June 3, 2018 <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/379051468163155729/pdf/multi0page.pdf>
- World Bank (2017). Tertiary education overview. Washington, DC: World Bank. Retrieved August 15, 2018 from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/tertiaryeducation>
- Young, R. D. (2003). Perspectives on strategic planning in the public sector. University of South Carolina: Institute for Public Service and Policy Research. Retrieved July 7, 2018 from <http://www.ipspr.sc.edu/publication/perspectives%20on%20Strategic%20Planning.pdf>
- Zaccaro, S., Kemp, C., and Bader, P. (2004). Leader traits and attributes. In J. Antonakis, A. Cianciolo, & R. Sternberg (Eds.), *The nature of leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. 101 – 124.
- Zairi, M. and Erskine, A. (2017). Excellence is born out of effective strategic deployment: the impact of Hoshin planning. *International Journal of Applied Strategic Management*. 2 (2), 1 – 28.

Appendix 3A. Research Questions and Focus Group Sub-Questions

Research Question	Focus Group Sub-Question		Purpose of the Sub-Question
1: What are the leaders of a Canadian Higher Education institution's views about how strategic planning happens in their College?	1-(a)	What does strategic planning mean to you in general?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To initiate the conversation by engaging the participants engage in a broader reflection about the topic of the inquiry. fore launching into an in-depth discussion of the process in their College.
	1-b)	How do you describe/make sense of/understand how the current strategic planning process happens here in this College?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To bring the conversation of the group around to the main purpose of the study.
2: How do the leaders see their role in strategic planning?	2-(a)	What do you see as/what do you think about your role in the strategic planning process as a leader at this College?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To invite participants to share their views on how they engage in the strategic planning process of the College.
3: How can these leaders help make this process happen more effectively? What are some concrete, practical ways they think this could be done?	3-(a)	What are the main challenges you see with the current strategic planning process? Can you share some concrete examples?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To invite participants to share their views on the challenges with how strategic planning currently happens at the College.
	3-b)	3-(b) What are some ways that you as leaders could help make the process move more effectively from the plan to daily, targeted action, particularly in terms of engaging as many members of the community in the process in a way that is meaningful to them? What are some useful, concrete examples/ideas on how this could be done here at the College?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To invite participants to share their views on how to address the challenges with how strategic planning currently happens at their College.
	3-(c)	What are some practical, concrete ways to build that better understanding/meaningfulness of the process, moving from the plan into action for the team of people you lead? What could you do to help make this happen? Can you share some concrete examples?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as 3 (b).
	3-d)	What do you think could be some ways to help you the leaders who facilitate the strategic plan across the college to build this greater, more shared/meaningful understanding of how this process works, as well as solutions on how to use it more effectively? What are some concrete examples/ideas of what you might need/how you could work together to be more effective as leaders of this process?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as 3 (b).

Appendix 3B: Recruitment of Participants Statement

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am conducting a research study at this College to explore ways to use the strategic planning process more effectively in Higher Education institutions. I am conducting the study as part of my Master's in Arts thesis at the Faculty of Education, Department of Integrated Studies in Education (DISE) at McGill University with my supervisor Dr. Anila Asghar (Assistant Professor, DISE). I am interested in exploring your perspectives on the strategic planning process here at this College, as well as your suggestions for improving the process.

You have been contacted because you are a key leader of the strategic planning process in this College community. I invite you to participate in a focus group to help explore the above research topic. It should take no more than 60 to 90 minutes for you to participate in this session. As a follow-up to the focus group sessions, I may also invite a limited number of you to participate in an individual follow-up interview of 30 to 45 minutes to gain further insight into the research questions. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your participation will provide much valuable insight into more effective, hands-on methods for strategic thinking, planning and concrete action toward shared goals in higher education institutions.

In order to participate in this study, please contact me at karen.oljemark@mail.mcgill.ca, and I will be in touch with you in the near future to follow up.

I thank you in advance for your valuable participation. Should you have any questions regarding the study, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor Dr. Anila Asghar at anila.asghar@mcgill.ca.

Karen Oljemark
MA Student in Educational Leadership, McGill University

Appendix 3C: Focus Group Interview Guide and Questions

Introduction

1. Opening Statement

First of all, thank you for returning your signed informed consent form and giving me permission to record this session. Do you have any questions about your informed consent at this time? I appreciate you taking the time to talk with me today. There are no right or wrong answers. I am here to better understand your thoughts and ideas around the process of strategic planning and moving these plans to concrete action here at the CEGEP. This session should take about 75 to 90 minutes.

2. Confidentiality and Participation

As a researcher I will report about what you have to say. When reporting about your experience, you will be asked to allow me to use your own first name or select a pseudonym to disguise your name should you so wish. For the purpose of today's session, you may feel free to use your own name, of course. Also, the name of this institution will not be divulged in the reporting, to help protect your confidentiality.

I will need to collect some basic demographic information about you for the purpose of the study. Please complete the following questionnaire and leave it with me at the end of the session today.

A comment about confidentiality and focus groups: Since the focus groups will be made up of others from the CEGEP community of which you are a member, your identity may well be known by the other participants. Confidentiality cannot be entirely guaranteed. To help ensure the confidentiality to the extent that is possible, you are asked to keep the conversations during this session confidential. Also, you should not disclose any information of a personal nature or talk about sensitive issues which you do not feel comfortable sharing in a focus group setting.

Last but not least, remember your participation is voluntary in this session. You may withdraw at any time without any penalty or prejudice.

3. Recording of the Session

In order to make sure that I can listen well to what you have to say and so that what you have said can be reviewed, remember that this session is being recorded. No one other than the researcher and the transcriber will have access to the recording. The recording will be transcribed and no one other than the research team will see the transcript.

4. Questions

Do you have any questions before we begin? If you have any questions at any time, please let me know.

Section 1: Identification/Demographics Questions

Note: The participants will answer these questions on a handout to be completed by each participant and left with me at the end of the focus group session.

Your First Name (or Pseudonym should you prefer) _____ to be used in reporting this study

Male/Female

Age Range: (18 to 29/ 30 to 39/40 to 49/50 to 59/60+)

Income: (0 to 20,000/20,000 to 40,000/40,000 to 60,000/60,000 to 80,000/80,000 to 100,000/100,000 +)

Highest Level of Schooling: High School/College/University (Undergraduate, Masters, Doctorate)/

Other (specify) _____

How many years have you been working at/involved with this institution? 0 -5/6 – 10/11- 15/16+

What is your current role in this institution? _____

Section 2: Focus Group Questions

Preliminary Questions

1. How long have you been involved with/working at this College?
2. What is your current role/position in the organization?

Main Questions

Research Question #1: *What are the leaders of a Canadian Higher Education institution's views about how the strategic planning process happens in their College?*

1. What does strategic planning mean to you in general? (Start by writing it down).
2. How do you describe/make sense of/understand how the current strategic planning process happens in this College?

Research Question #2: *How do these leaders perceive their role in this strategic planning process?*

1. What do you see as your role in the strategic planning process as a senior administrator at this College?
2. What do you think about your current role in the strategic planning process?

Research Question # 3: *How can these leaders help make this process happen more effectively? What are some concrete, practical ways they think this could be done?*

1. What are the main challenges you see with the current strategic planning process?
2. Can you share some concrete examples?

A preliminary review of the research literature on the strategic planning process in Higher Education institutions reveals that one of the main challenges faced by the leaders of the process is moving the strategic plan from its initial vision/goal statement to actively engaging each and every member of the community in thinking strategically and taking concrete, focused day-to-day action steps toward these shared vision/goals. Generally speaking, the farther away individuals are removed from the direct sphere of influence of the leaders who drive the process, the more challenging it becomes to engage them in this process, in a way that is meaningful to them.

3. Given this challenge, what are some ways that you as one of the leaders of the strategic planning process here at the College could help make the process move more effectively from plan into daily, targeted action, particularly in terms of engaging every member of the community in the process in a way that is meaningful to them?
4. What are some useful, concrete examples/ideas on how this could be done here at the College?
5. What are some practical, concrete ways to proceed from here to build a better understanding/gain more meaningfulness of the process of moving from the plan into action for the team of people you lead? What could you do to help make this happen?
6. Can you share some concrete examples?
7. What are some of the challenges you foresee or anticipate in implementing these actions?
8. What do you think could be some ways to help the leaders who drive the strategic plan across the college to come together to help build this greater, shared/meaningful understanding of how this process works, as well as solutions on how to use it more effectively?
9. What are some concrete examples/ideas on how this could be done?

Concluding Questions

1. Is there anything else you wish to add about this topic as we wrap up?
2. Is there anything that wasn't asked about that you think is important for us to know?
3. Do you have any questions? Is there anything else you need to know?
4. I may need to contact you to follow up and verify your contribution to the focus group. Would it be all right for me to contact you if necessary?
YES ____ NO ____
5. As well, I may contact you to do an individual follow-up interview to gain greater insight into this research topic.

Thank you so much for taking the time to participate in this study. Your valuable contribution is much appreciated.

Appendix 3D: Participant Consent Form

From Strategic Planning to Strategic Action in a Canadian Higher Education Institution: An Exploratory Study

Researcher:	Karen Oljemark	Tel:
Email address:	Karen.oljemark@mail.mcgill.ca	
Dept /Affiliation:	Physical Education/General Education	
Supervisor:	Anila Asghar, McGill University Professor (DISE)	Tel:

Purpose of the Research:

This research study will explore ways to use the strategic planning process more effectively in higher education institutions. I am conducting the study here at this College as part of my Master's in Arts thesis at the Faculty of Education, Department of Integrated Studies in Education (DISE) at McGill University with my supervisor Dr. Anila Asghar (Assistant Professor, DISE). I am interested in exploring your perspectives on the strategic planning process here at this College, as well as your suggestions for improving the process.

Research Questions:

Research Question #1: What are the leaders of a Canadian Higher Education institution's views about how its strategic planning process happens at this College?

Research Question #2: How do these leaders perceive their role in this strategic planning process?

Research Question # 3: How can these leaders help make this process happen more effectively? What are some concrete, practical ways they suggest this could be done?

What is involved in participating?

As one of the key leaders in this College, you are invited to participate in a focus group on this research topic. Your time commitment will be about 60 to 90 minutes for the focus group. You may be contacted afterward to clarify your response if needed. A limited number of you may also be invited to participate in an individual interview of about 30 to 45 minutes to help me gain deeper insight into your views.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw at any time. There are no consequences for refusing to participate in this study.

The focus group sessions and individual interviews will be audio-taped and a transcript will be made of the audio-tapes to help the researcher review your responses. There will be no way for anyone reading the results of this study, however, to be able to link any data with your name. Pseudonyms or your own (first) name if so requested will always be used in any publications that may result from this study, as well as in the stored data. If you withdraw from participation at a later date, all data of any kind will be erased and/or destroyed.

Confidentiality means that no person at the College or any other organization will have access to the materials collected and that they will be coded and stored in such a way as to make it impossible to identify them directly with any individual. Data will be stored on a password secured hard drive, and will be destroyed after 5 years. All other information (consent forms, audio-tapes, transcripts,

back-up data storage devices, paper copies) will be stored in a locked storage area, and will be erased and/or destroyed after 5 years.

The actual location of the focus group session will be on campus at the College, but it will be chosen so as to protect your confidentiality as much as possible. However, you should be aware that since the focus group will be made up of others from the College community of which you are a member your identity may be known by the other participants. For this reason, focus group participants will be asked to keep each others' input during the focus group session confidential. Any follow-up interviews will be conducted at a location chosen in consultation with the interviewee.

I will be sharing my research findings with the study participants. The results of the study may be presented at professional conferences and submitted for peer review and publication in professional journals or newsletters. All reporting will be de-identified. Institutional affiliation will not be disclosed in the reporting of the research results. Findings will be reported in a generalized and aggregate manner. Data from this study may also be used in future studies.

Participant's Signature: _____

Please tick the appropriate box, sign, date and return to Karen Oljemark.

☐ I have read and understood the information provided on the consent form, and I agree to participate in this study. I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I may withdraw from participation at any time.

☐ I give consent to the researcher to use my data in future studies.

Participant's name (print): _____
First name, Last name

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____
signature dd / mm / yyyy

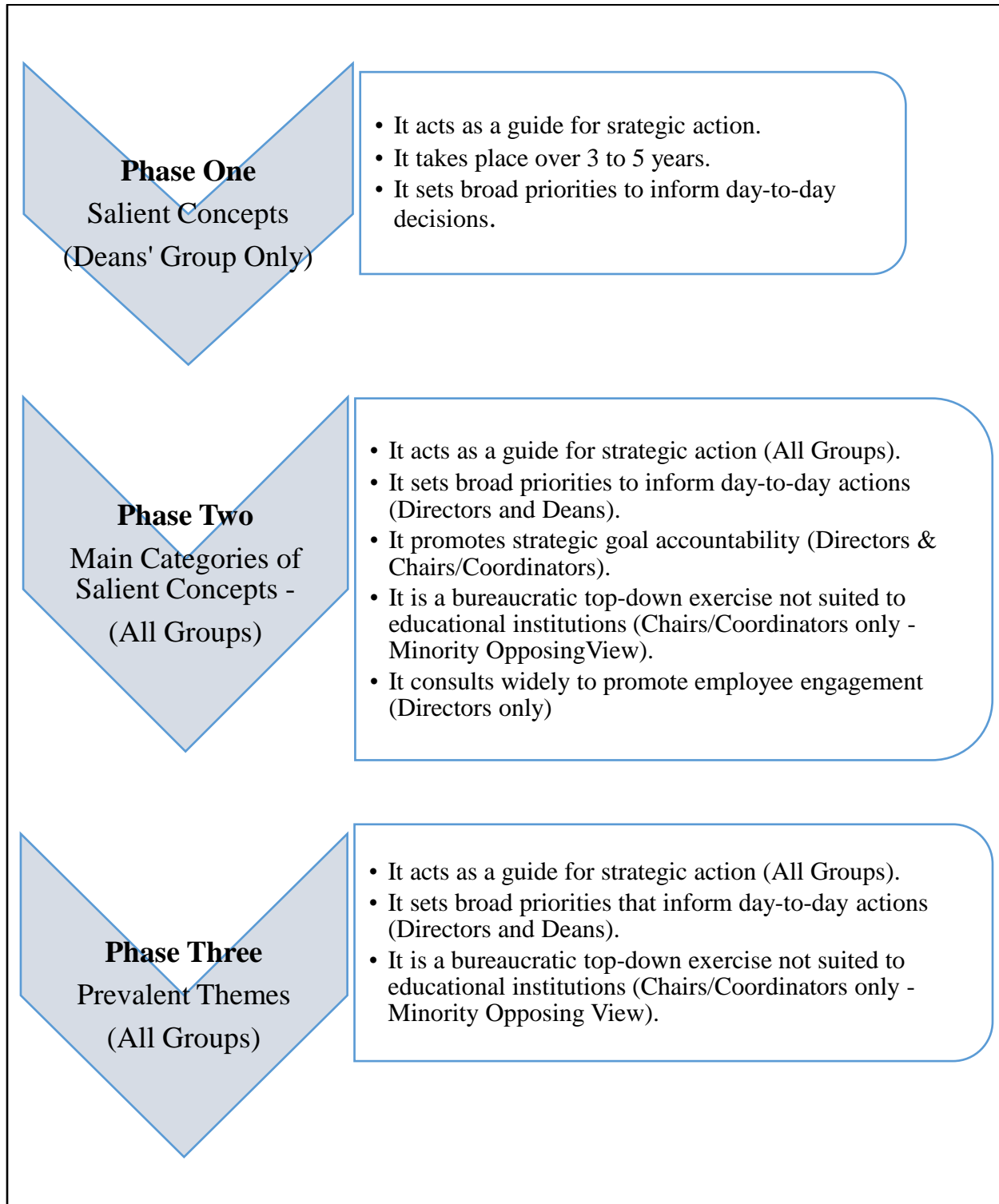
Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____
signature dd / mm / yyyy

Thank you for considering my request. If at any time during the study you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at karen.oljemark@mail.mcgill.ca or at ____ or my McGill faculty supervisor Dr. Anila Asghar at anila.asghar@mcgill.ca. Should you have any questions or concerns about your rights or welfare as a participant in this study, please contact the McGill University Research Ethics Officer at lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca or by calling the office at (514) 398-6831.

Sincerely,

Karen Oljemark
MA Student in Educational Leadership, McGill University Department of Integrated Studies in Education (DISE)

Appendix 3E. Flowchart of the Analytical Approach for the Study



Appendix 3F. Sample Matrix: The Leaders' Views Regarding their Role in Strategic Planning – Main Categories of Salient Concepts

Research Question 2)	What do you see as / think of your role in the strategic planning process of the College?	Number of Responses*
Directors' Views	● To promote awareness of the as well as the purpose of the process.	2/7
	● To manage people's expectations of the plan.	2/7
	● To establish the overall process and the act as its steering committee throughout.	1/7
	● To link the strategic priorities to operational action.	2/7
	● To ensure achievements are celebrated regularly throughout as well as at the end of the process.	1/7
Deans' Views	● To promote (sell) buy-in to the strategic planning process by all employees, especially the faculty members.	5/5
	● To ensure that there is a strategic plan, but one that is simpler and clearer and therefore more easily communicated.	5/5
	● To ensure that the academic administration plays a strong role in the establishment of the strategic plan priorities.	5/5
	● To develop a strategic plan that sets the broad strokes, that allows for the details to evolve as it is implemented (macroscopic vs. microscopic).	3/5
Chairs' / Coordinators' Views	● A clearer understanding is needed of the role of the Chair/Coordinator as well as the Department/Program within the process.	5/12
	● To continue to facilitate the development of annual work plans for the Departments/Programs; it is a challenge to engage faculty in the development of these plans.	5/12
	● To make use of the process to promote the needs of the Departments / Programs.	5/12

*The number of participants in the group who expressed this view.

Appendix 3G. Sample Matrix: The Leaders' Views of the Main Challenges with Strategic Planning at Their College – Cross-Group Analysis

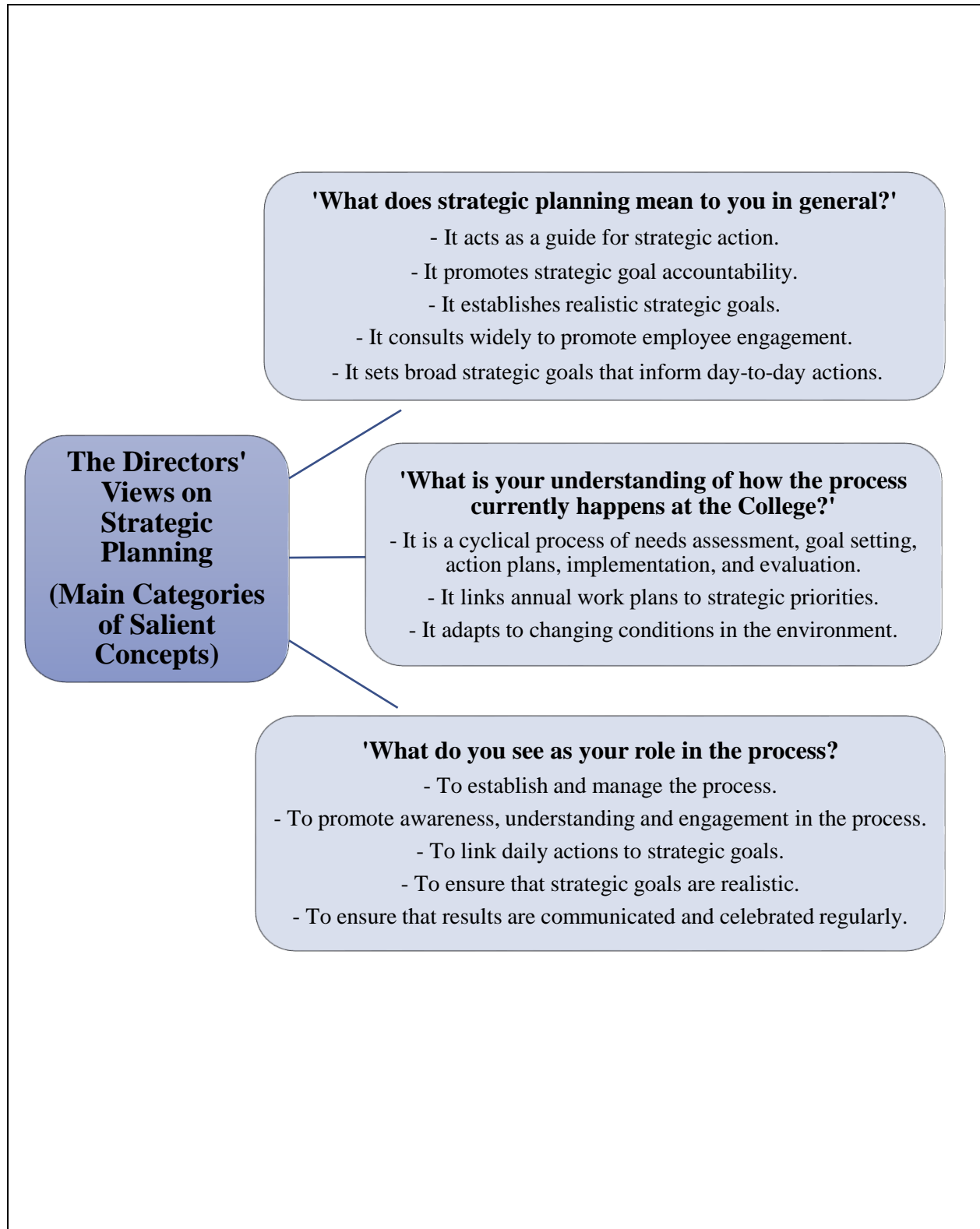
Research Question	'What are the main challenges you see with the current strategic planning process?'	Number of Responses*
Directors' Views	• Managing the competing priorities of the various constituents (departments/programs/services) of the College.	7/7
	• Setting common priorities that are at the same time relevant to the various constituents	4/7
	• Making sure that the process is adaptable to changing internal and external factors	2/7
Deans' Views	• Setting strategic goals that are both measurable and yet concrete and relevant to the constituents	2/5
Chairs' / Coordinators' Views	• There is a general lack of understanding about how the current process works.	12/12
	• There is a lack of consultation with the academic Departments in particular.	7/12
	• It is a challenge to keep informed about what is happening with the process as well as progress made toward established goals.	7/12
	• There are not enough resources put toward the process for it to be effective.	4/12
	• The leaders of the process are not adequately trained to facilitate it.	4/12
	• There is a lack of adequate data for the purpose of setting priorities and monitoring progress toward those goals.	6/12

Cross-Group Analysis

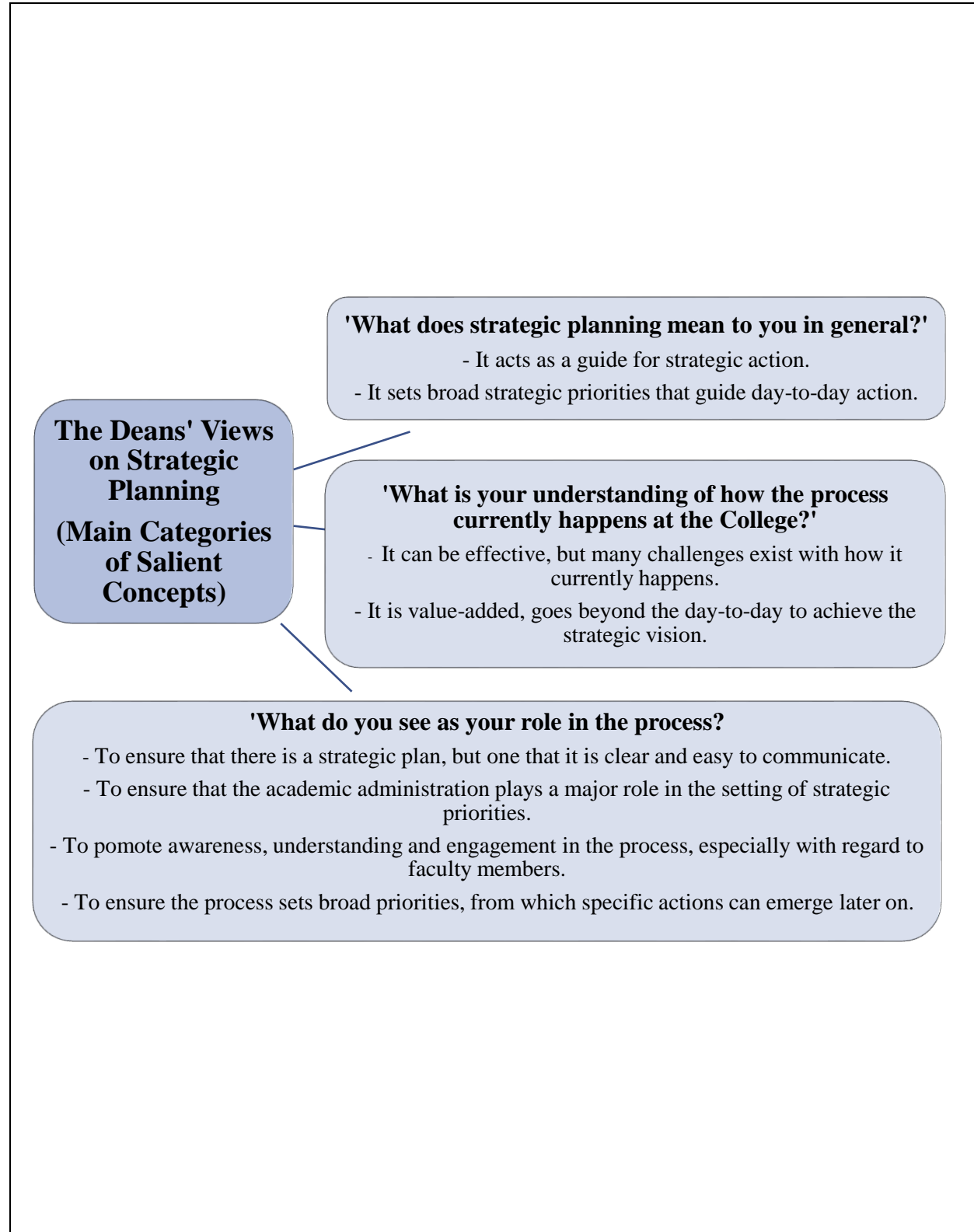
• SP can be an effective guide for strategic action, but the current process needs to address certain challenges to be more effective. (All Leaders)	18/24
• It should do more to promote accountability by regularly tracking progress toward goals. (Directors & Chairs/Coordinators)	9/12
• It is a bureaucratic top-down exercise not particularly suited for use in educational institutions. (Chairs/Coordinators Only)	4/12
• Find effective ways to consult as many stakeholders as possible to set strategic planning priorities (All Leaders)	17/24
• There is a lack of employee connection to the process, especially for faculty members. (Deans and Chairs/Coordinators)	17/17
• The academic vision of the College is needs to be more clearly expressed as the central focus of the whole process. (Deans Only)	5/5
• Maintain the current practice of linking annual work plans to strategic priorities, but allow more room for the expression of Departmental/Program needs as well. (Directors & Chairs/Coordinators)	7/12
• The current plan is too detailed, too operational; more strategic, big-picture goals are needed. (Deans and Chairs/Coordinators) GS	8/17

*The number of participants in the group who expressed this view.

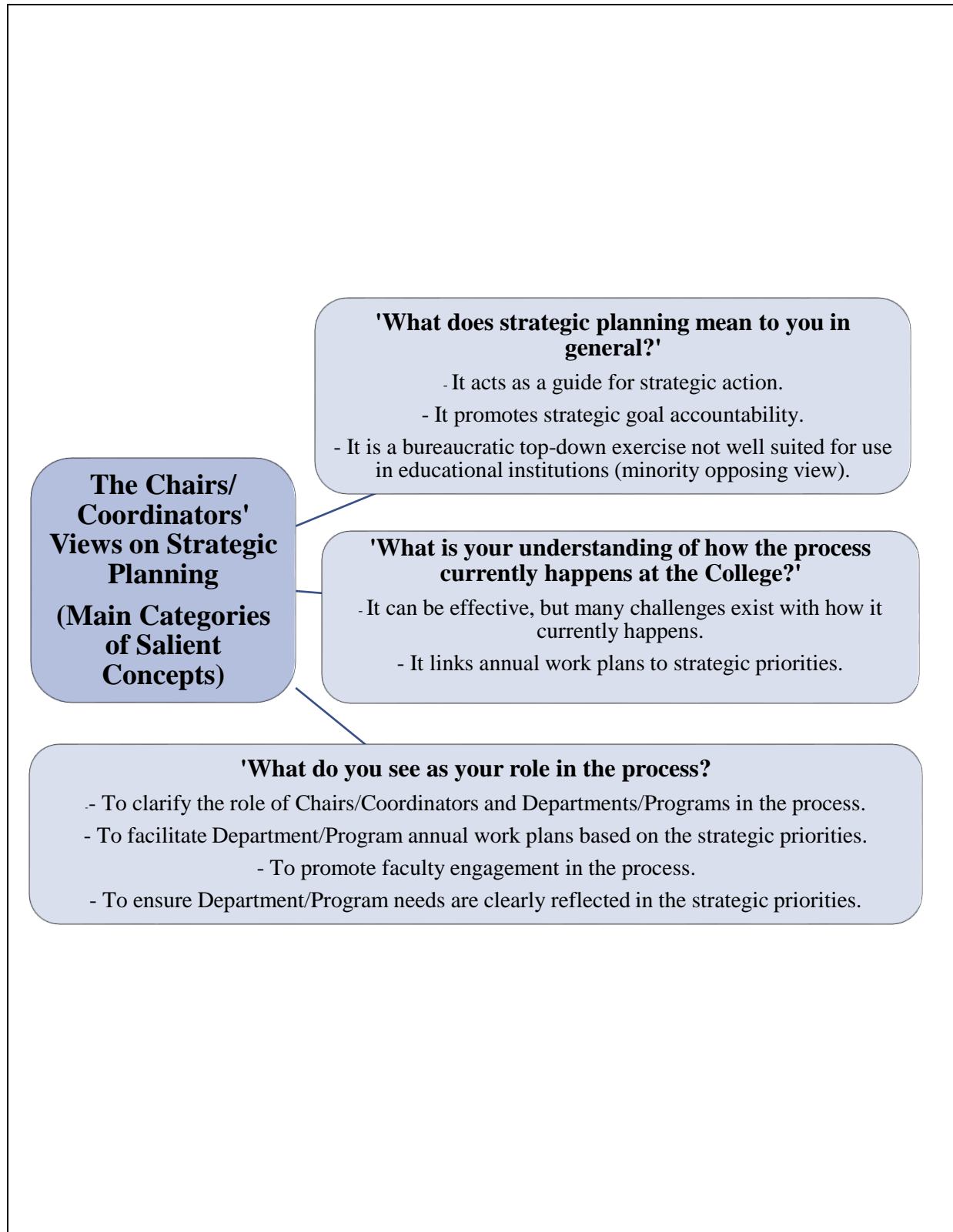
**Appendix 4A: The Directors' Views on Strategic Planning –
Main Categories of Salient Concepts**



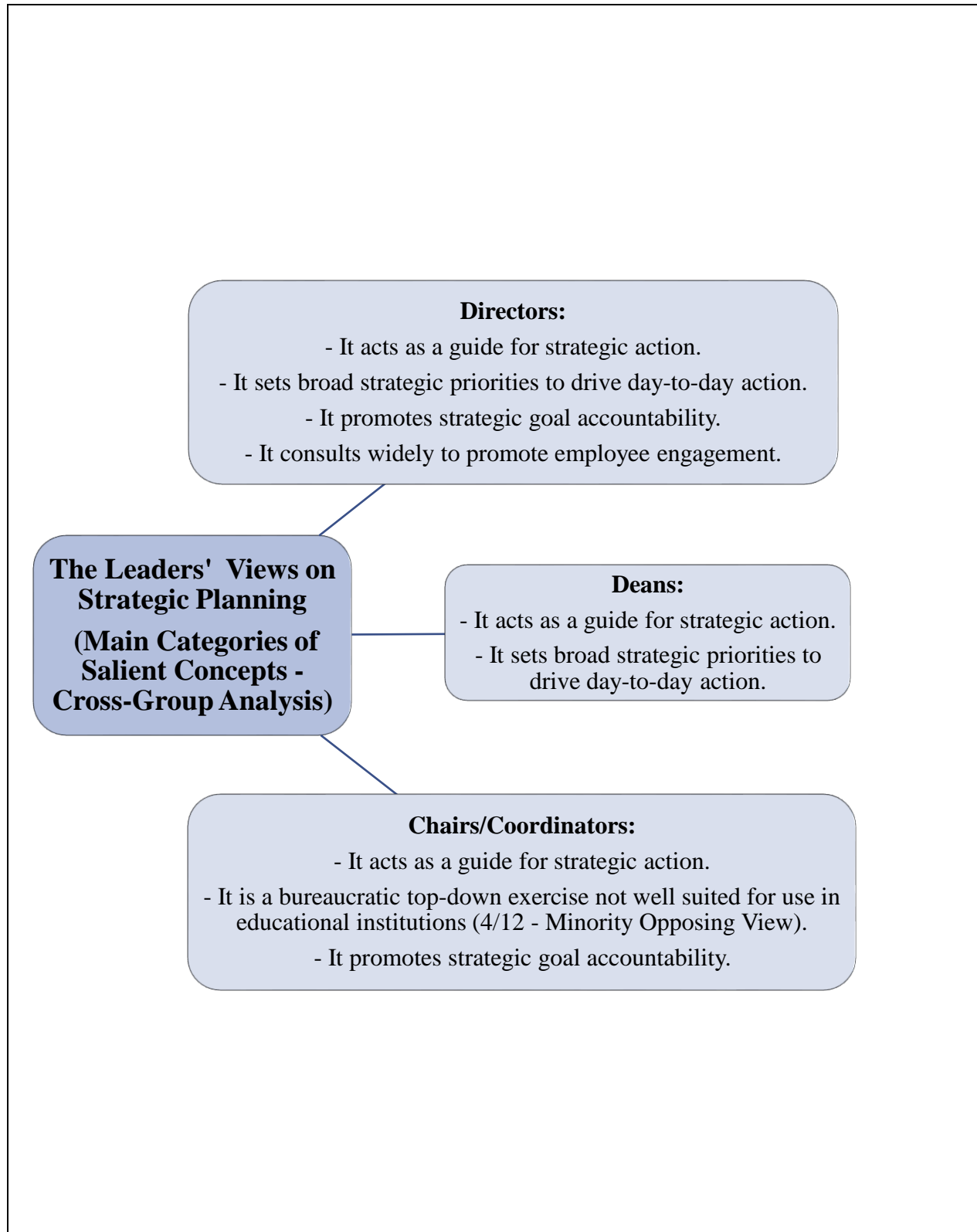
Appendix 4B. The Deans' Views on Strategic Planning - Main Categories of Salient Concepts

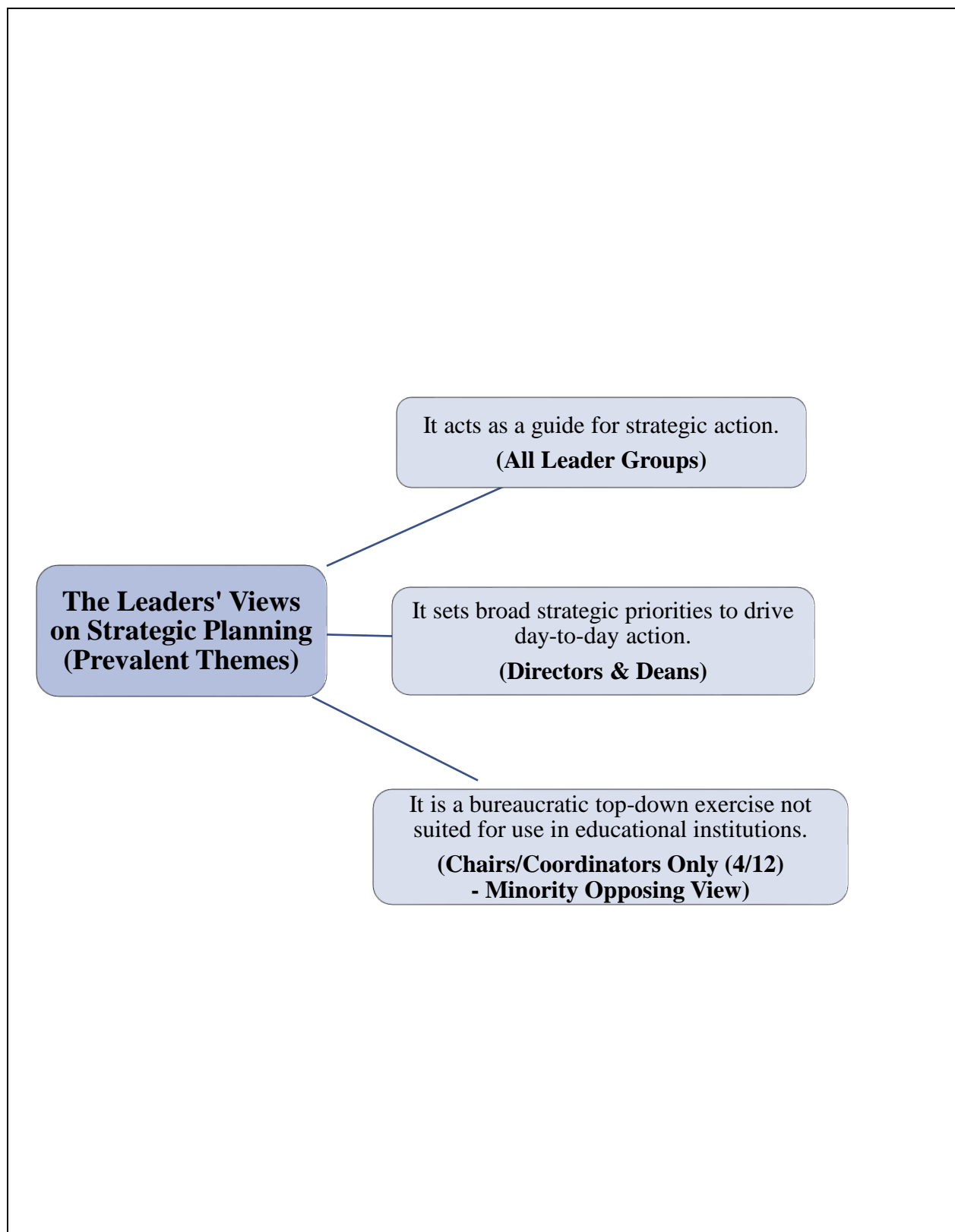


**Appendix 4C. The Chairs/Coordinators' Views on Strategic Planning –
Main Categories of Salient Concepts**

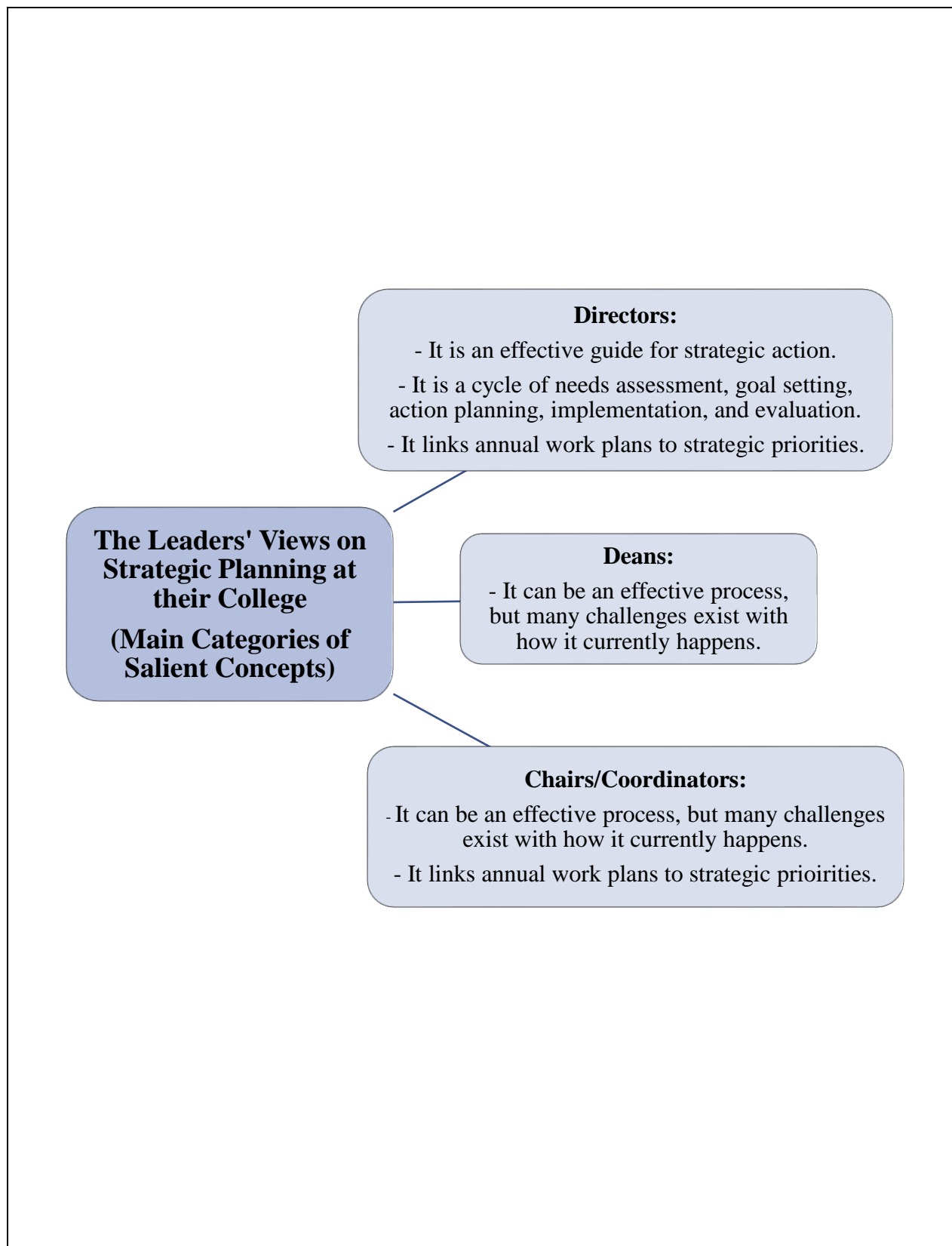


**Appendix 4D. The Leaders' Views on Strategic Planning –
Cross-Group Analysis**

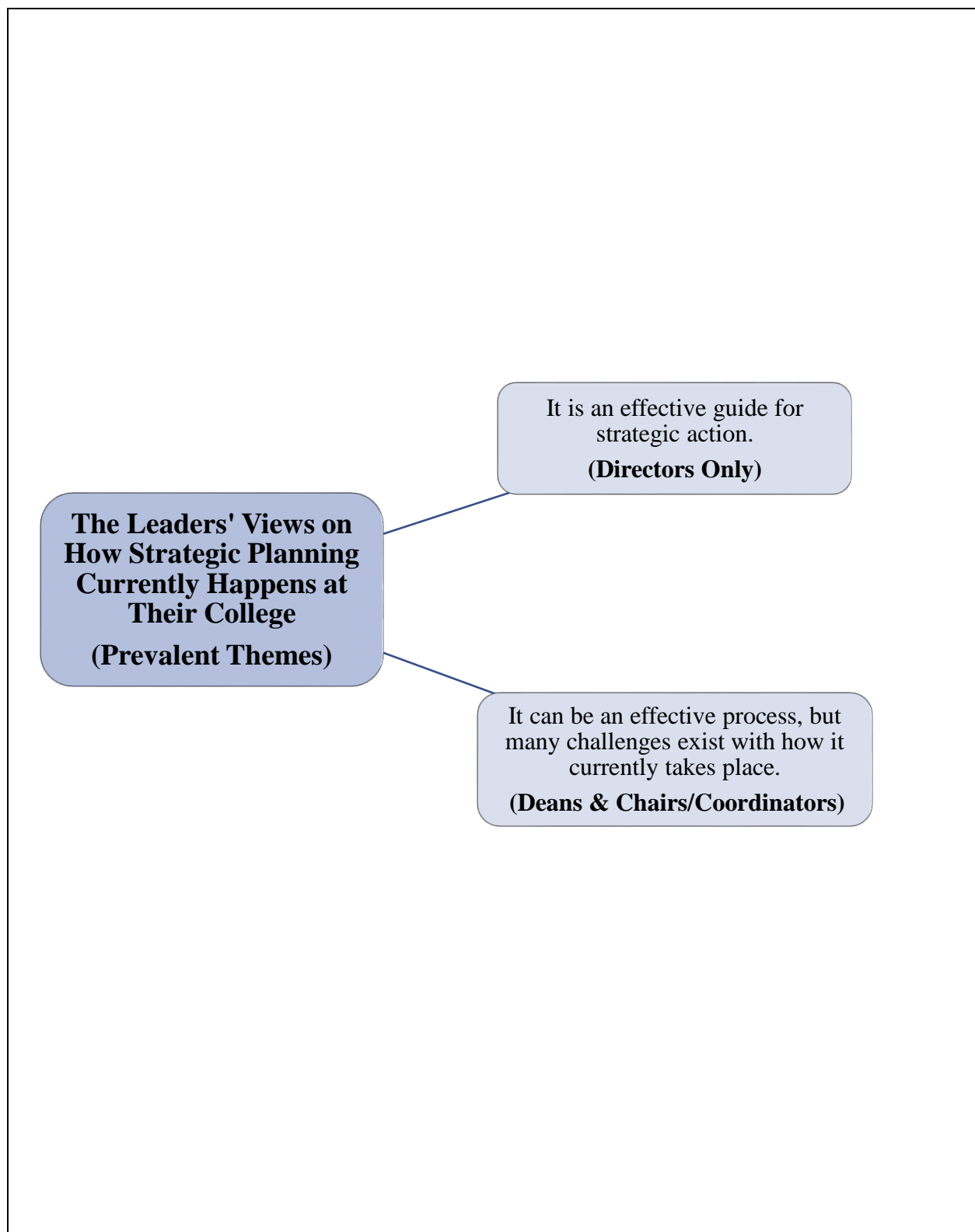


Appendix 4E. The Leaders' Views on Strategic Planning - Prevalent Themes

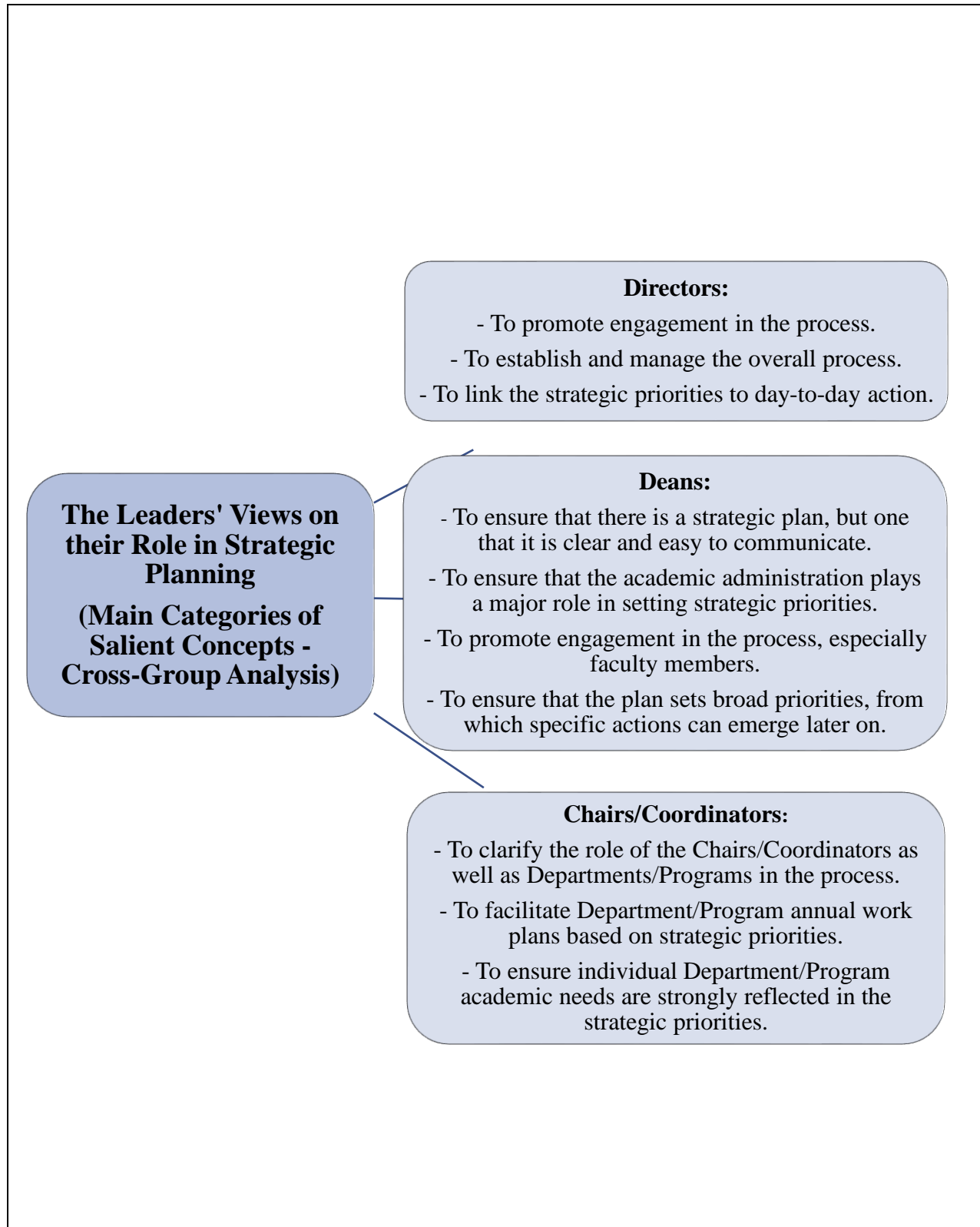
**Appendix 4F. The Leaders' Views on Strategic Planning at Their College –
Cross-Group Analysis**



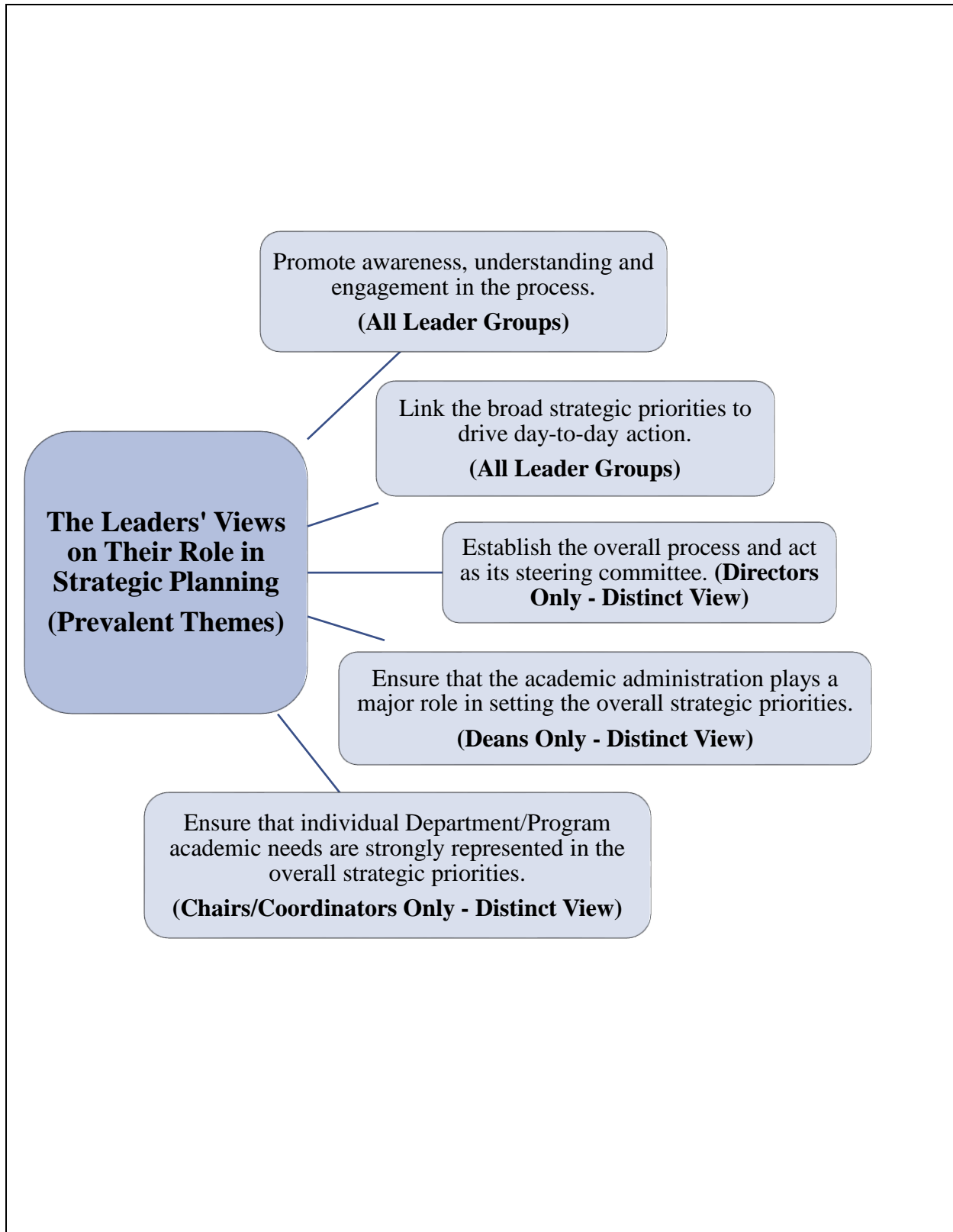
**Appendix 4G. The Leaders' Views on Strategic Planning at Their College –
Prevalent Themes**



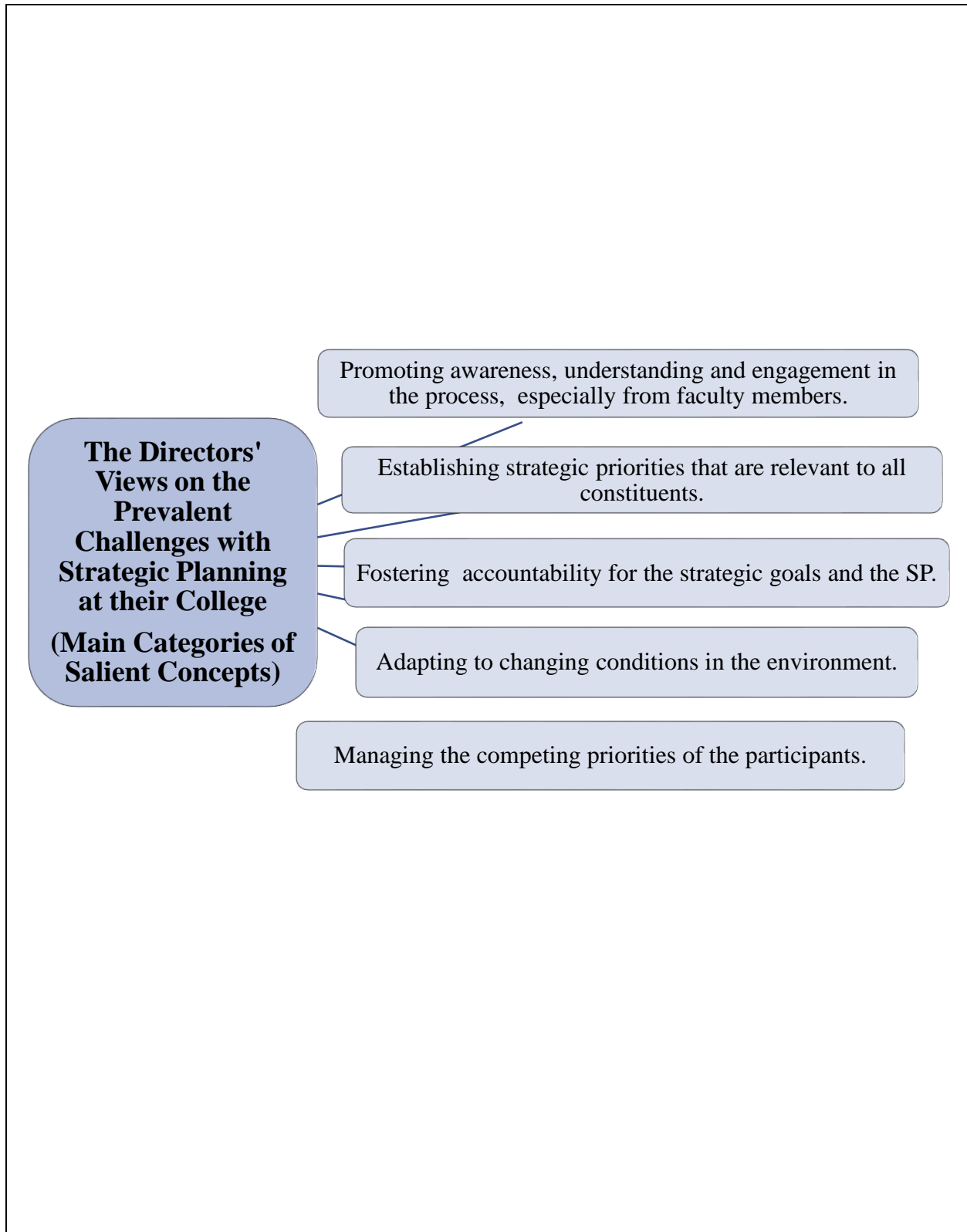
**Appendix 4H. The Leaders' Views on Their Role in Strategic Planning –
Cross-Group Analysis**



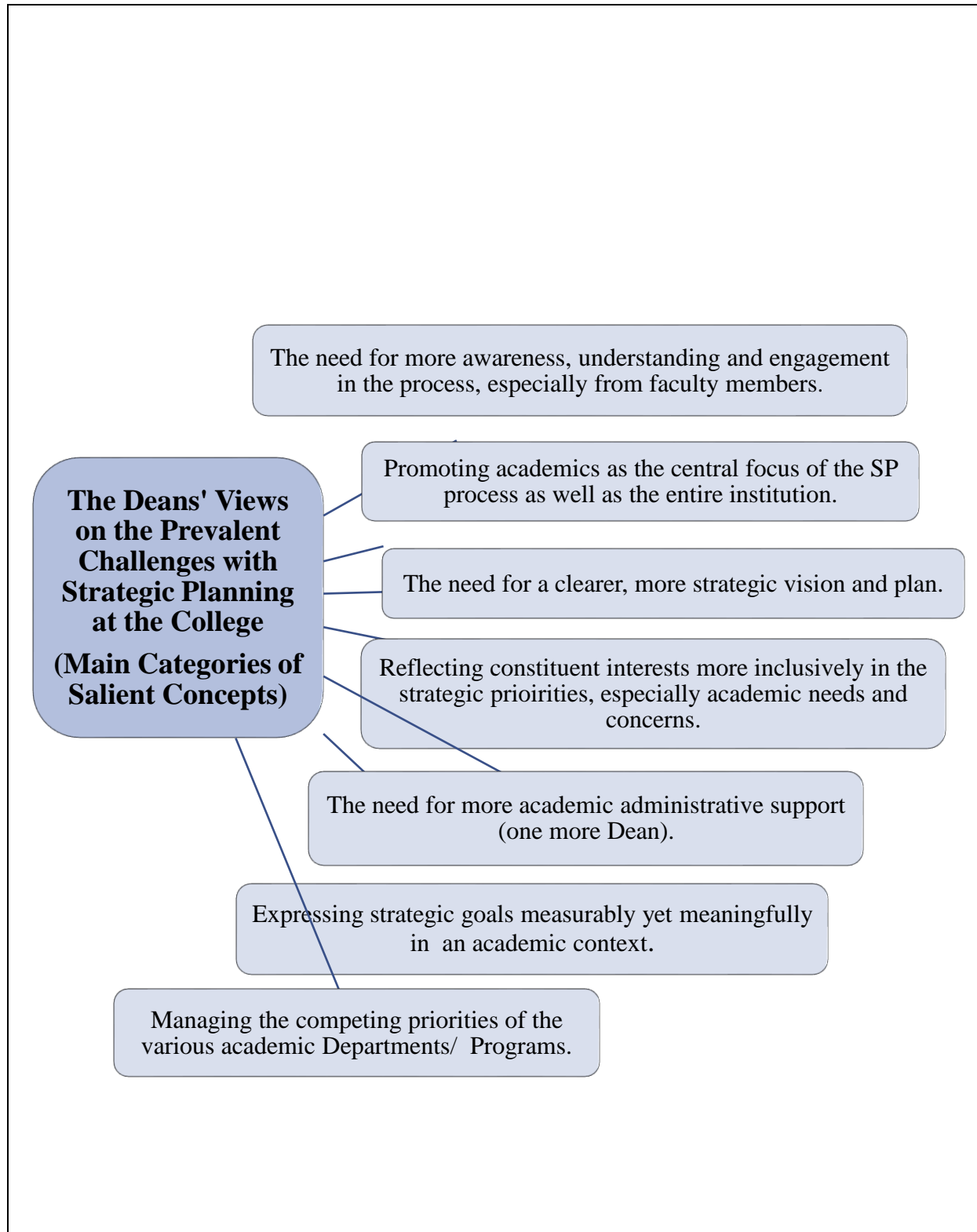
**Appendix 4I. The Leaders' Views on their Role in Strategic Planning –
Prevalent Themes**



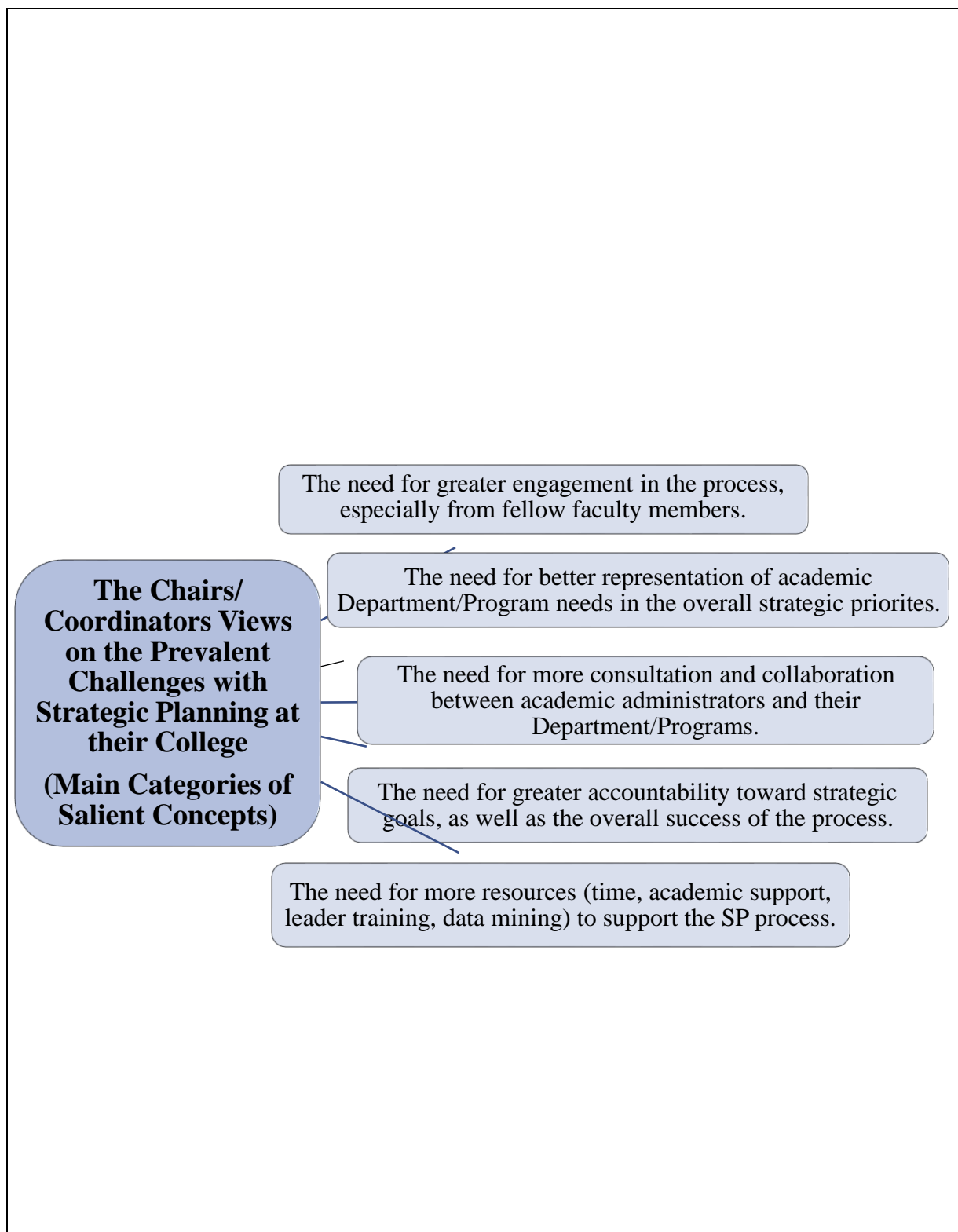
Appendix 5A. The Directors' Views on the Prevalent Challenges with Strategic Planning at Their College - Main Categories of Salient Concepts



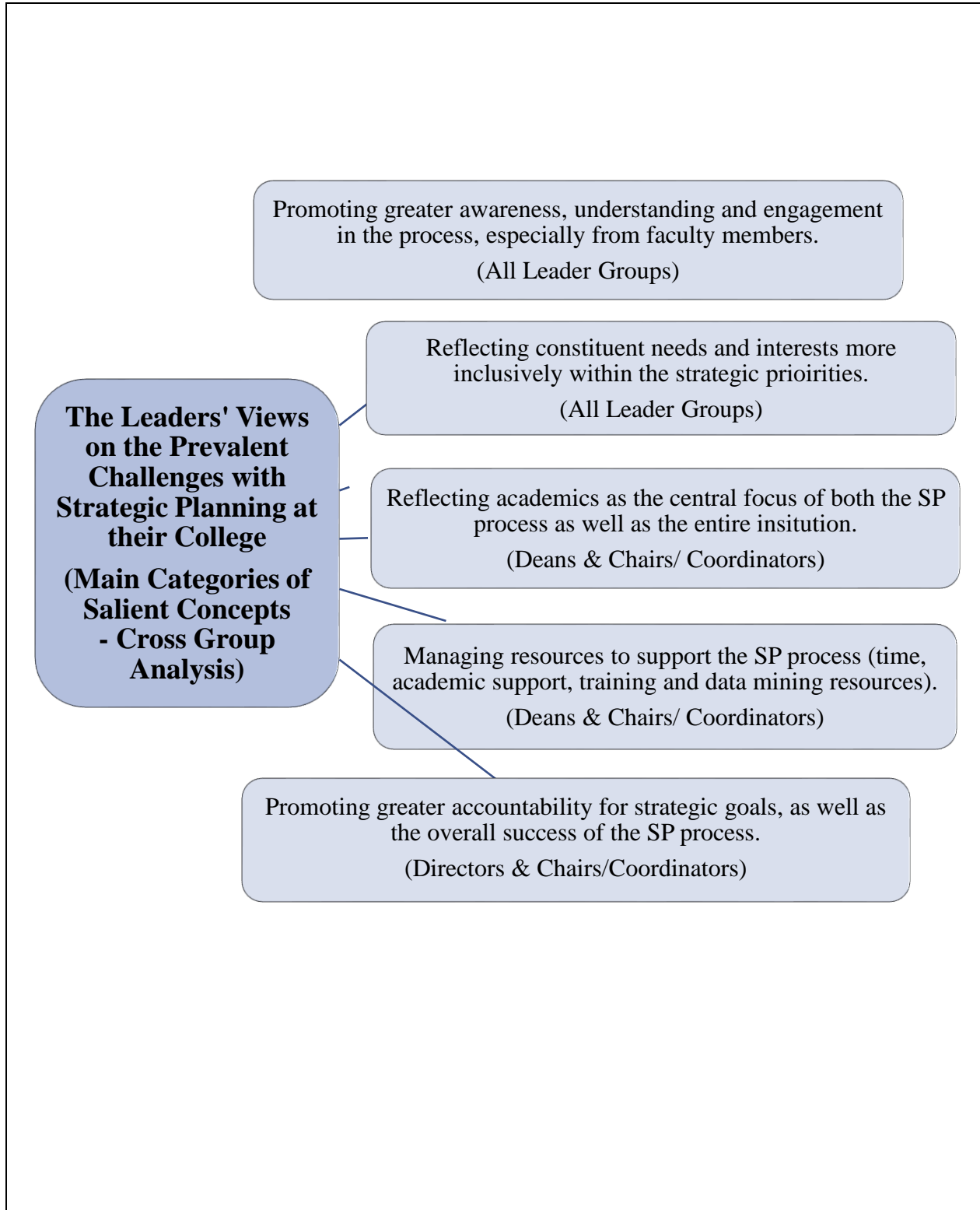
Appendix 5B. The Deans' Views on the Prevalent Challenges with Strategic Planning at Their College - Main Categories of Salient Concepts



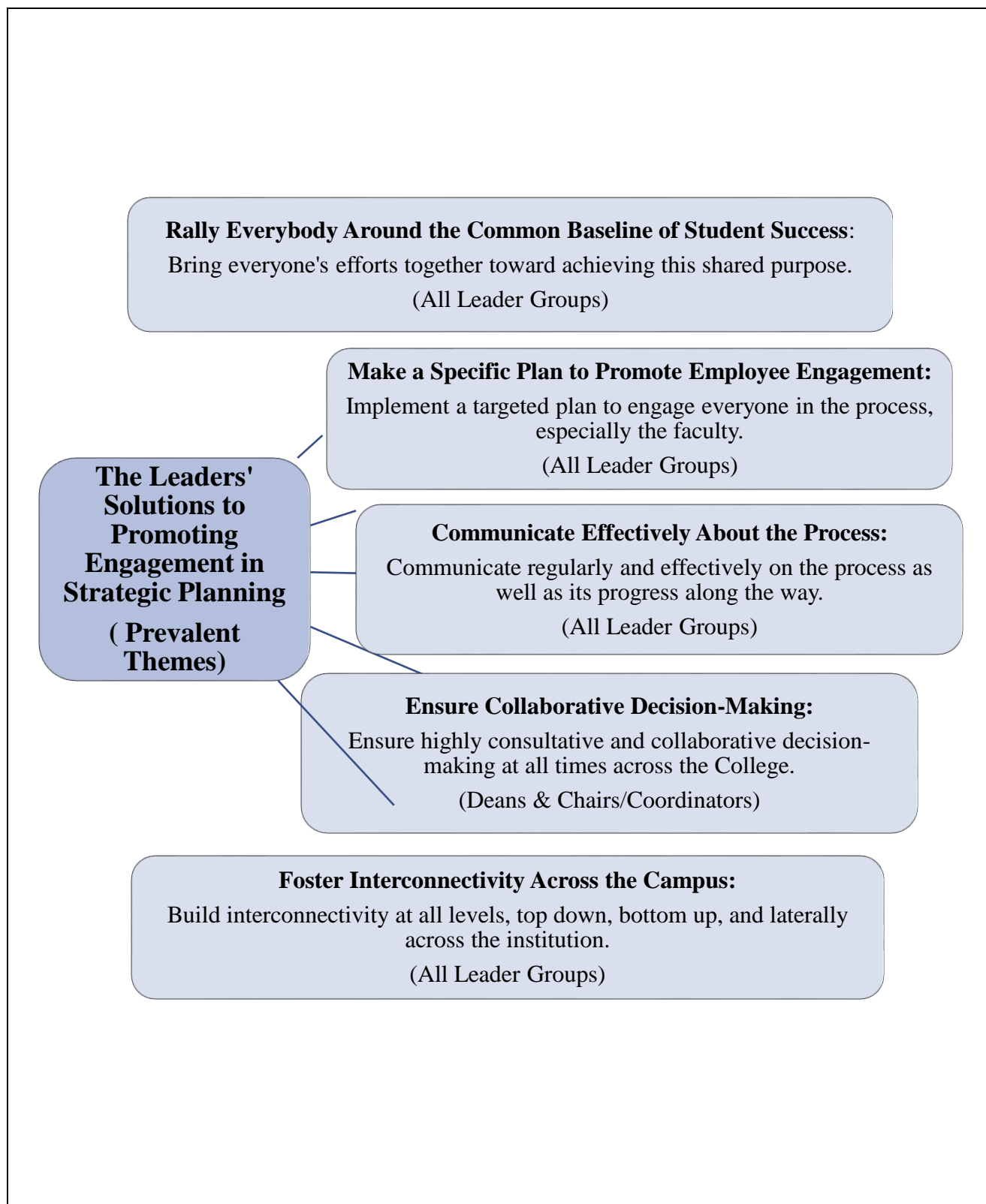
Appendix 5C. The Chairs/Coordinators' Views on the Prevalent Challenges with Strategic Planning at Their College - Main Categories of Salient Concepts



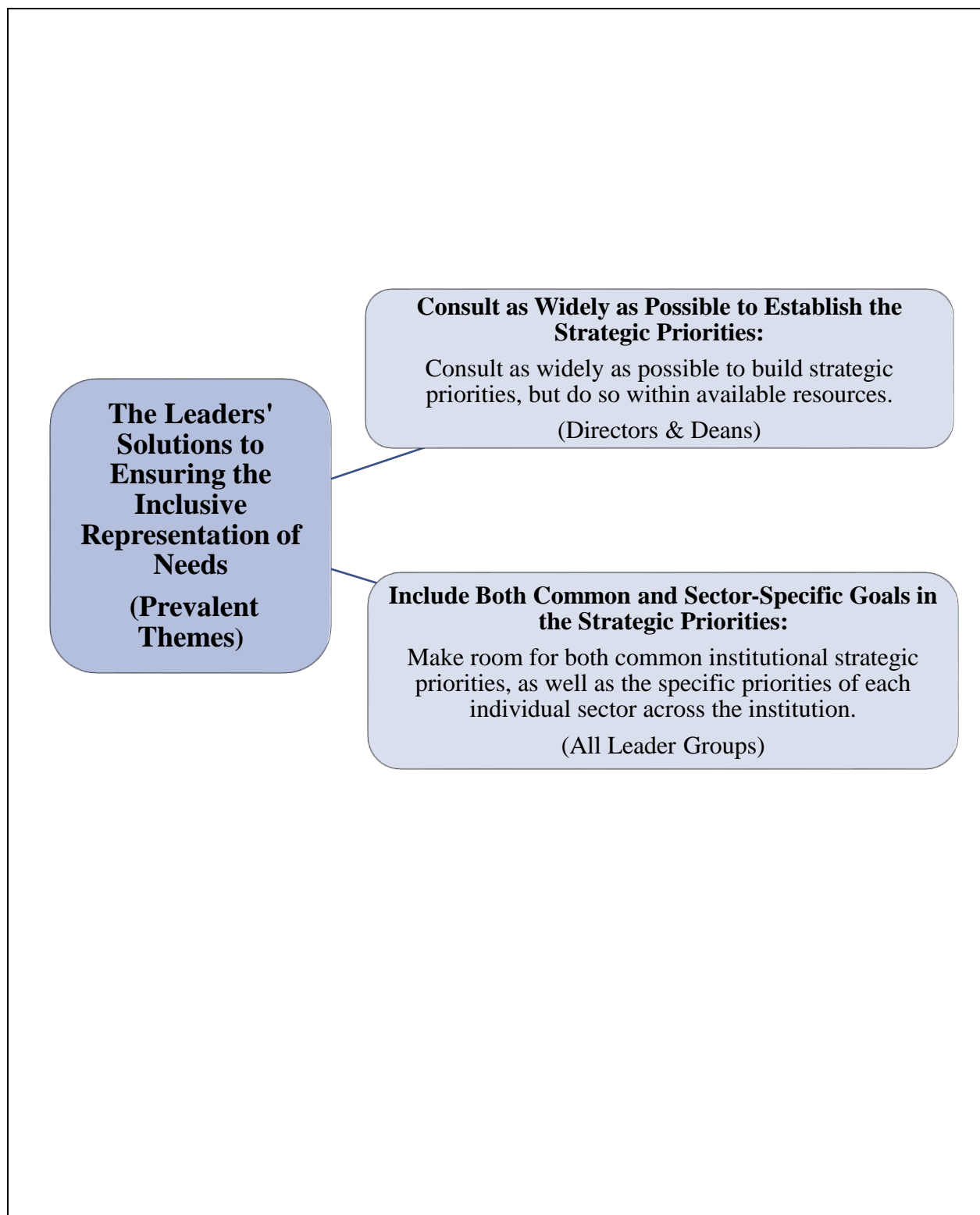
Appendix 5D. The Leaders' Views on the Prevalent Challenges with Strategic Planning at Their College – Cross-Group Analysis



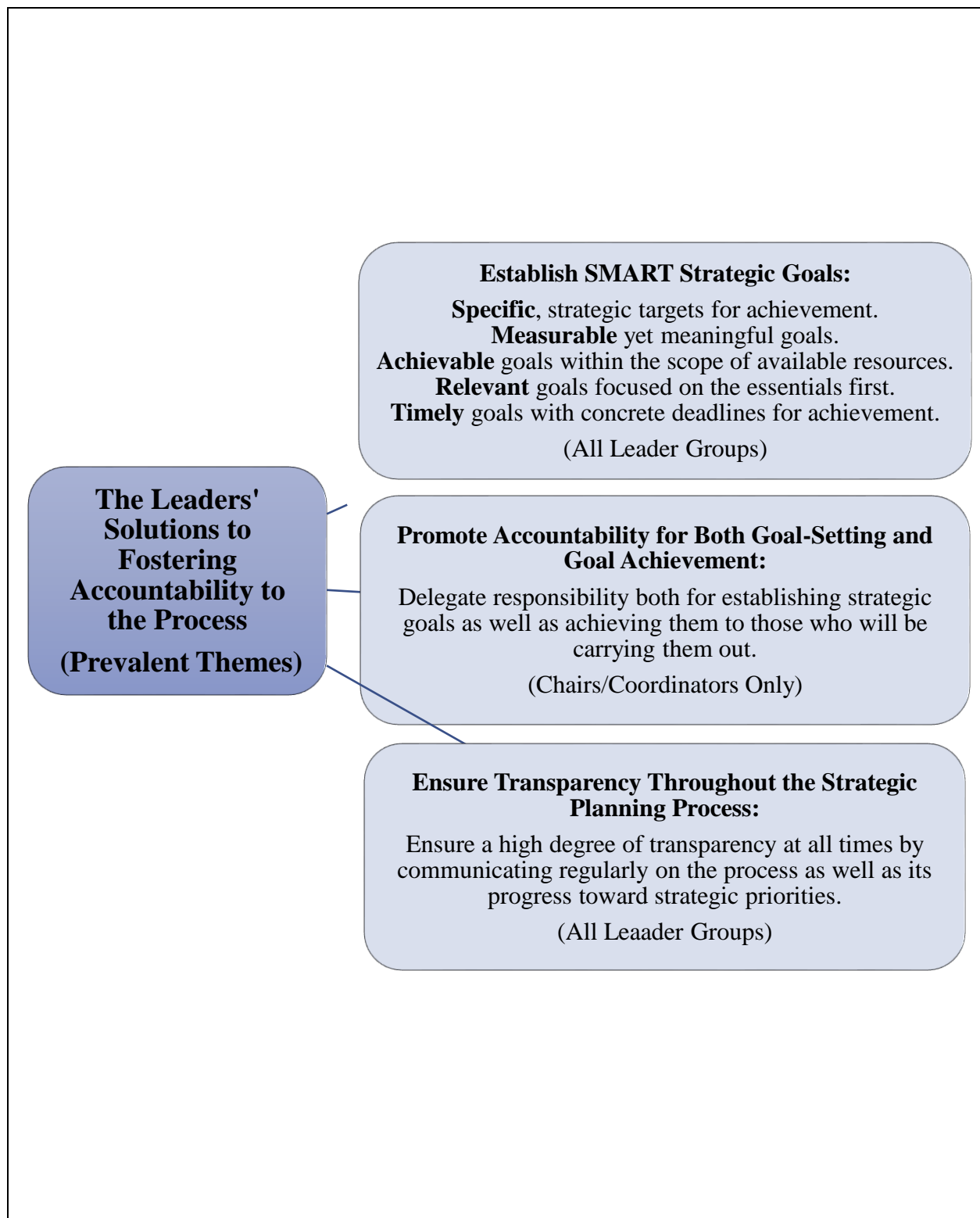
**Appendix 6A. The Leaders' Solutions to Promoting Engagement in Strategic Planning –
Prevalent Themes**

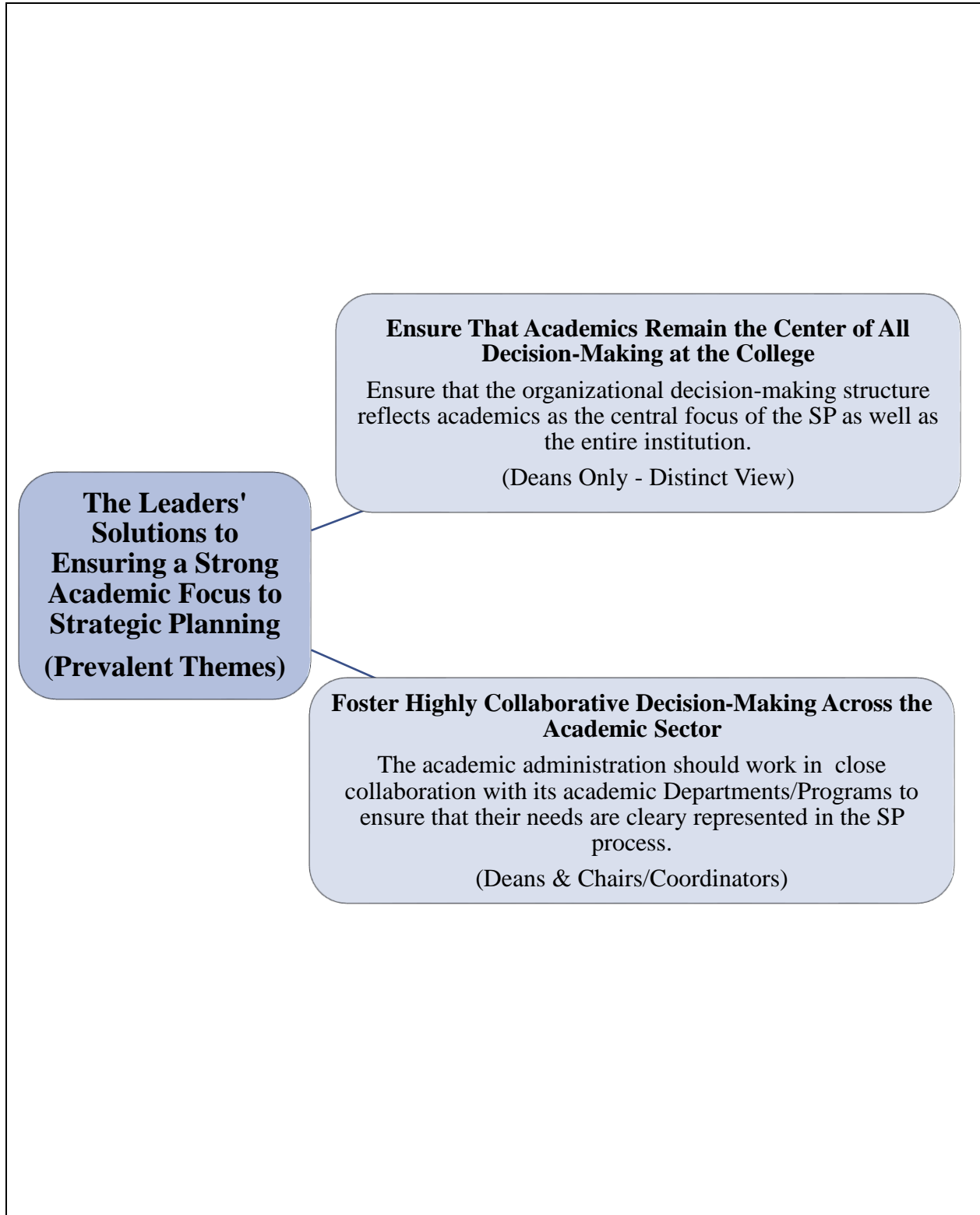


**Appendix 6B. The Leaders' Solutions to Ensuring the Inclusive Representation of Needs -
Prevalent Themes**

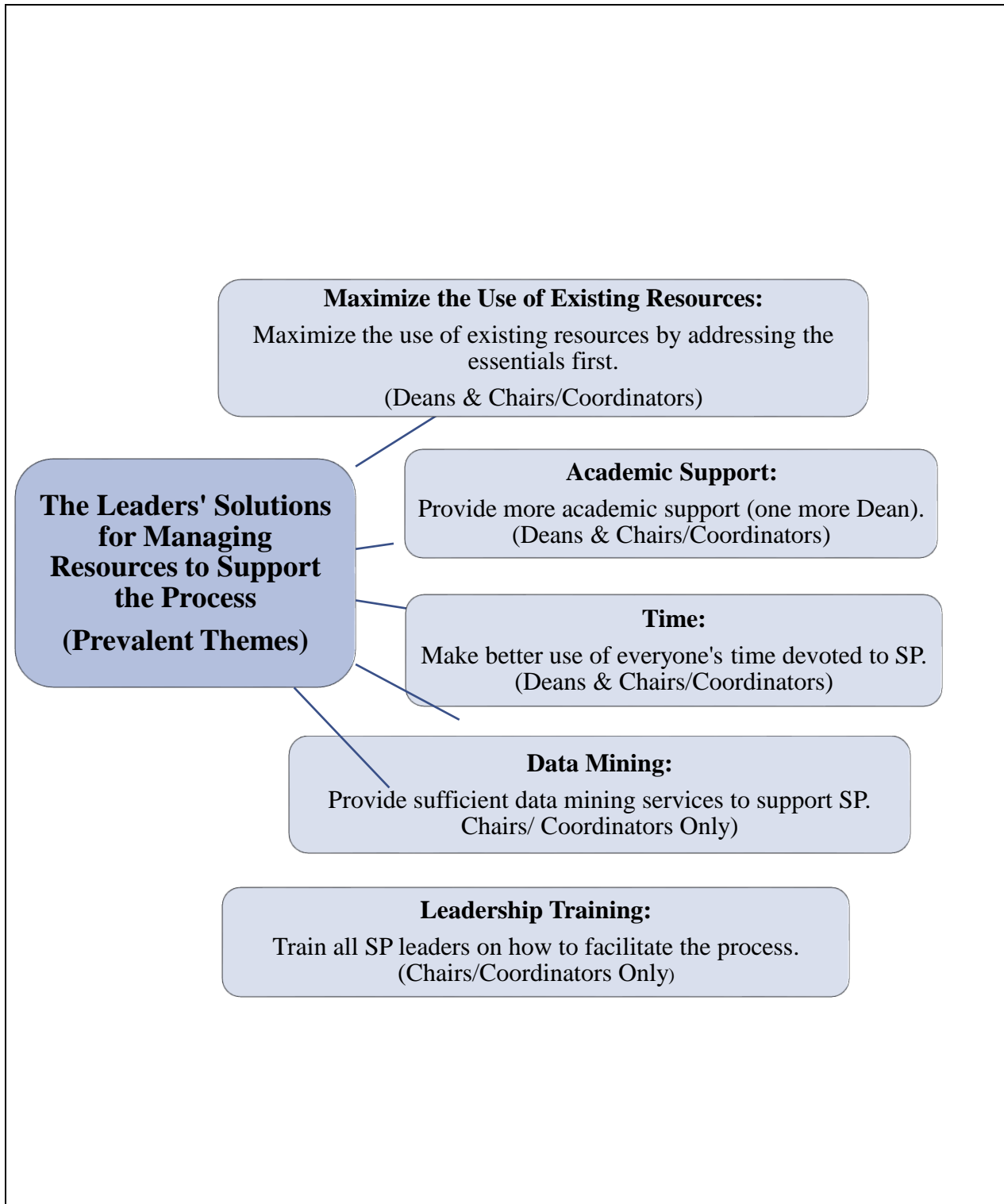


**Appendix 6C. The Leaders' Solutions to Fostering Accountability to the Process –
Prevalent Themes**

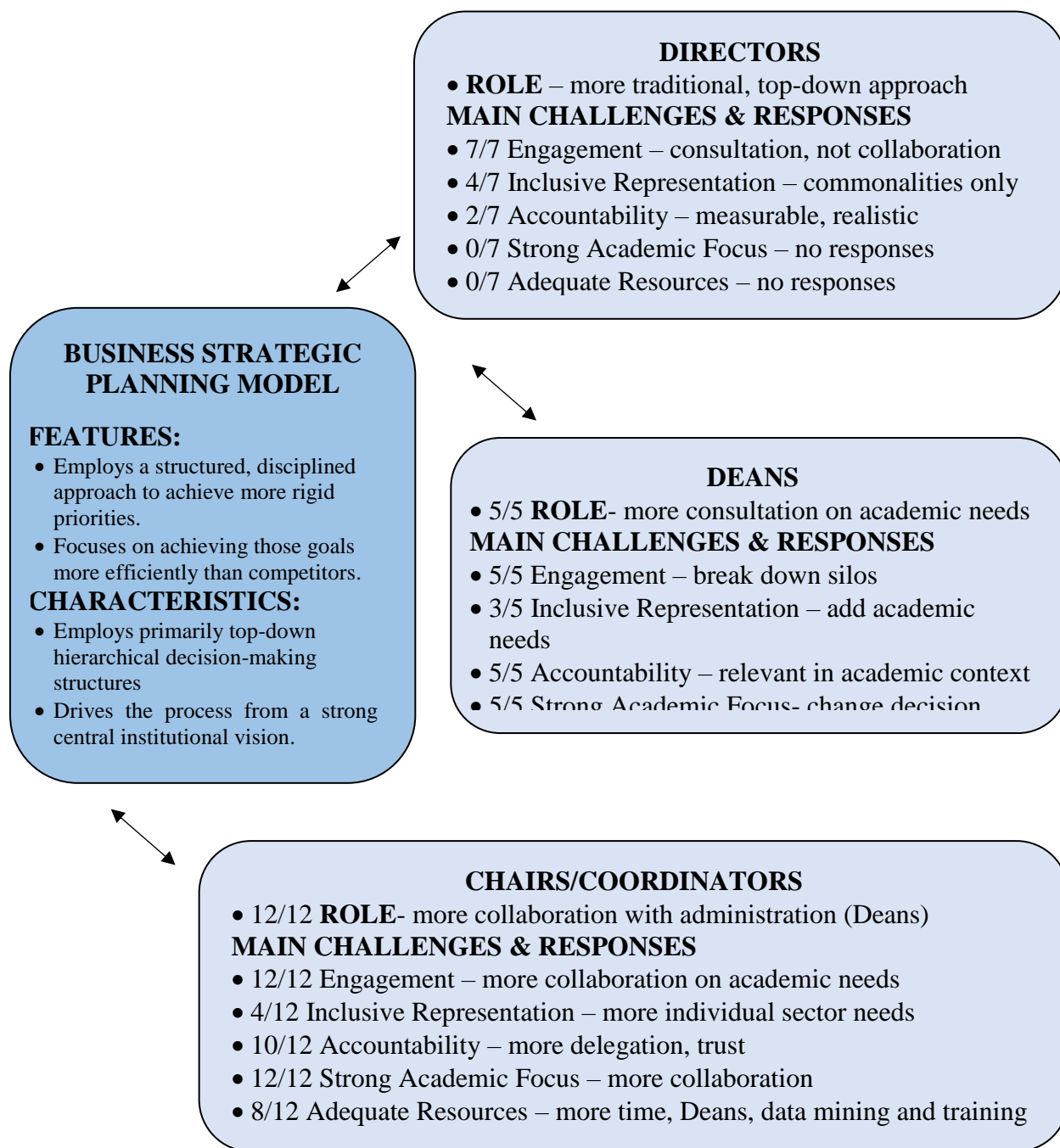


Appendix 6D. Leaders' Responses to Ensuring a Strong Academic Focus – Prevalent Themes

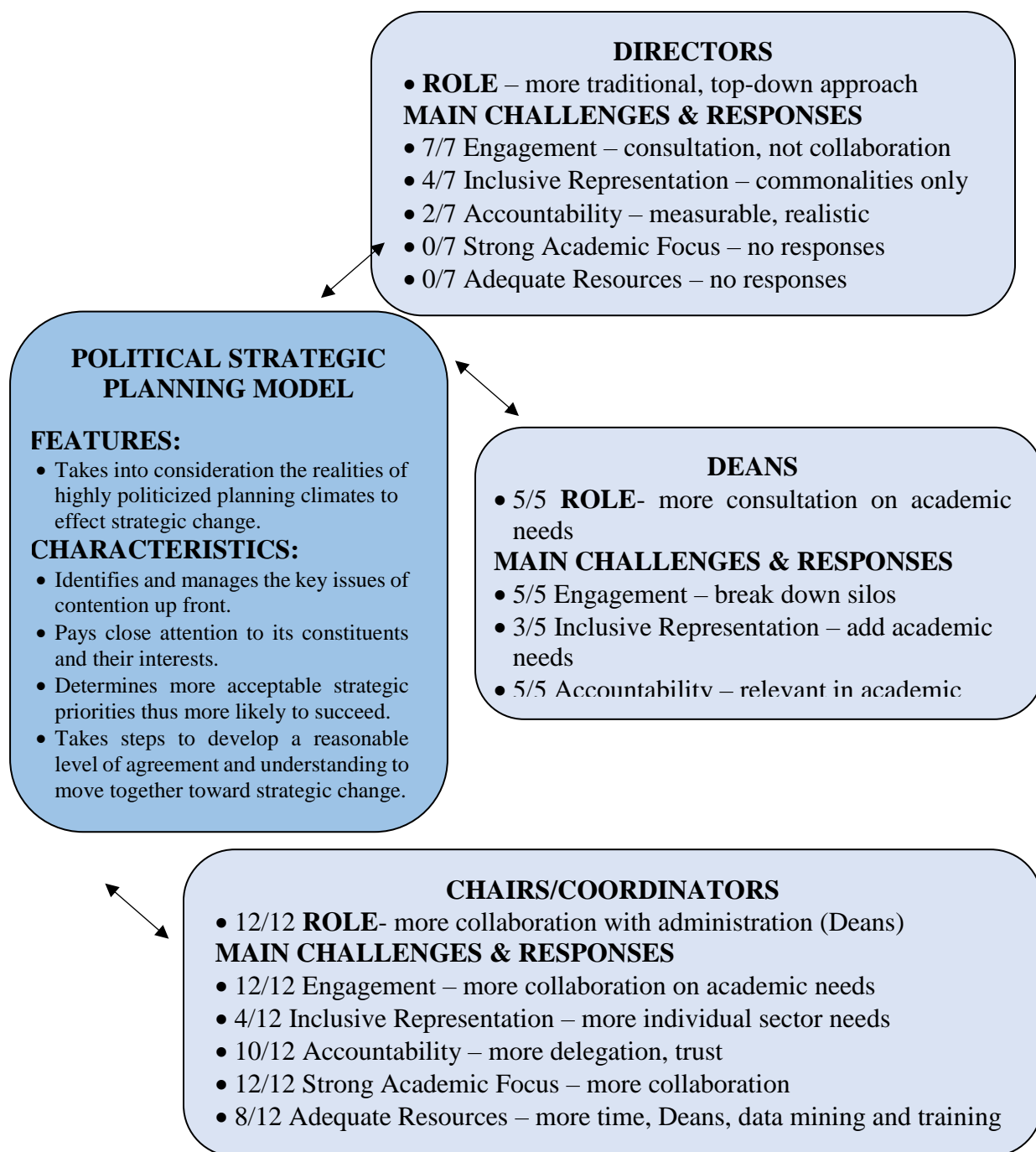
**Appendix 6E. The Leaders' Solutions to Managing Resources to Support the Process -
Prevalent Themes**



Appendix 7A. The Leaders' Solutions to the Prevalent Challenges and the Business Strategic Planning Model



Appendix 7B. The Leaders' Solutions to the Prevalent Challenges and the Political Strategic Planning Model



Appendix 7C. The Leaders' Solutions to the Prevalent Challenges and the Collaborative Strategic Planning Model

