



# Strategic Planning Recommendations: Open Forum #1

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We had our first open forum last Friday to receive feedback on the strategic planning recommendations. Thanks to everyone who attended—for reading the recommendations and for thinking about them. One general comment was an appreciation for creating the Dean's Advisory Council. It has provided a representative group of people for others to talk with about the process along the way, according to Faith Thompson, which created ongoing feedback and improved understanding throughout the building. I sometimes forget that the idea for the DAC emerged from our planning process, and from my perspective it has been a terrific development.

There were a number of observations about possible connections between the recommendations. Cate Cunningham identified the electronic delivery of course materials as important, and noted that moving in that direction will cause us to work more collaboratively and it even may promote our thinking about a more curriculum-based approach to our work. She noted that we will save \$10,000 this year by moving materials for Essentials of Municipal Government from a notebook to a CD. Now we're talking! Lydian Altman pointed out that the strategic public leadership recommendation connects with the initiative to create a more collaborative work environment. The proposal to help clients through "strategic planning on steroids" will require greater collaboration between colleagues in public leadership and those in other fields—like performance measurement and program evaluation.

Marsha Lobacz emphasized that the information resources project must insure that electronic information is archived and easily searchable. I agree, and it should be easier for people to find specific information electronically than by looking through hard copies of *Popular Government* and *NC Legislation*. Katherine Zeph talked about the tensions around asking people to pay for materials and giving away information—more of an open source approach. The information resources project needs to establish criteria so that there is greater uniformity in decision-making about when we charge for information.

Greg Allison asked about the DAC's interest behind the recommendation to create a streamlined curriculum in local government budget, finance, and taxation. He mentioned that they have moved in that direction out of necessity—colleagues have retired and they simply don't have the resources to do everything. They have found that they can be more efficient by not delivering the same content to many of the same people in different courses, and that the information actually can be delivered more effectively when one topic builds more naturally and sequentially from an earlier



one. Greg also feels like he has learned a lot that will be helpful through the revisions that have streamlined Municipal and County Administration. That essentially is the DAC's and my interest. What are the challenges of moving to more of a curriculum-based approach, and what are the benefits? So much of our teaching is narrowly based around individual client groups. How can we move to an approach that brings different clients together for certain core subjects? We are looking to Greg and his colleagues to help us understand how to develop a curriculum on a broader scale.

Brad Bednar made an interesting point about why people may not be commenting electronically about the planning recommendations. It may be that folks don't feel like they understand them enough to comment—they may see the general idea, but for many people it is difficult to see how the recommendations relate to their own work. He felt like the discussion in our forum gave him a better feel for some of the recommendations. Is it possible to schedule a series of sessions (maybe brown bags) that would include short presentations on at least the major recommendations? As we talked about this in the group, the idea that emerged was to find a way to provide additional information about the major recommendations as a first step in implementing them—information from a short presentation and discussion could further refine each recommendation and help people decide whether they want to work on it. This is a good idea and we will figure out how to do it

Thanks again for everyone who came to the first forum. I thought the feedback was really helpful. You still have two more opportunities to offer face-to-face feedback in a forum: Tuesday, October 6, from 4-5pm and Thursday, October 8, from 9-10am. Both sessions will be in Room 2321. Please remember that you can offer feedback via Blackboard or my emailing me or any member of the DAC. By the way, M & Ms are only available via the live forums.