

7 goals

Like a contractor following an architect's plan, when Rosemary DePaolo started at UNC Wilmington in June 2003, she drew upon the campus community to draft the university's future.

Constructing the future in words and deeds

Enhance the student learning experience.

"No one had any idea what the university's strategic plan would look like in the beginning, but the chancellor had the foresight to create task forces where concentrated focus would have the greatest effect. These task forces later became essential components to implement the strategic plan," said Ken Spackman, director of university planning and a mathematics faculty member since 1983.

The university is currently undergoing a process to figure out what it wants to be like 10 or 15 years from now. What direction should it take in the area of the facilities or academics? How does it retain and continue to recruit quality faculty? How can UNCW better serve its students?

Recruit, retain and develop quality faculty, administration and staff in appropriate numbers.

"I remember before Chancellor DePaolo arrived, people were reluctant to start planning until we could see what direction she wanted to take the campus. But she made it clear that while UNCW must have a vision, it would not be 'her' vision, but rather 'our' vision. That's when

the benchmark forums started," said Spackman.

The open forums led to developing a strategic plan from scratch, enabling the university to establish seven goals. The work of the task forces established earlier converged with the planning process and contributed to the formulation of a strategic plan for 2004-09 (www.uncw.edu/planning/StrategicPlan.htm), which is a living document, being tweaked by events, but keeping its defining shape.

Embrace and enhance diversity throughout the university's constituencies, culture, curriculum and outreach activities.

The plan states the strategic vision, identity statement and core values of UNCW. The goals and objectives are set forth to guide faculty, staff, administration, alumni, students and friends in succeeding in the vision.

For instance, Goal I is "Enhance the student learning experience." Two of the task forces, those looking at the basic studies and the first-year experience, address this goal and its four objectives – campus-wide.

Create an educational environment that prepares our students to be global citizens.

The diversity task force looks at embracing and enhancing diversity throughout the university's constituencies, culture, curriculum and outreach activities. Preparing students to be global citizens is what the internationalization task force attends to. The safety task forces were created to address needs identified in the events of spring 2004.

Spackman explains that strategic planning is nothing new, having been utilized in the corporate world for decades. It is a way to attain goals by setting targets and measuring progress toward those goals. It is a more recent tool in academia, but an essential one because the demographics of students are changing so fast, the state has been reducing its support, resources are becoming more scarce, distance learning has had impact and the education market has become more competitive.

Strengthen the university's regional engagement and outreach activities.

For years each university division conducted its own strategic planning. But UNCW is now undergoing a comprehensive, collaborative effort that will impact the operation of the university.

Focusing on what direction the university takes can help strengthen each area of campus. For example, enhancing the first-year experience of freshmen takes a collaborative effort from many

units on campus – student affairs, academic affairs, orientation, admissions, the advising center, housing, and campus activities.

Enhance the quality of UNCW's environment and provide a campus that is attractive, functional and, above all, safe.

"With more units sharing ideas and opening up the process, the campus can be more informed, and individuals or departments can bring forth ideas of collaboration to extend the strategic goals and objectives for the good of the entire university," Spackman said.

While the university adapts to the strategic plan and starts implementing identified strategies from the task forces, Spackman said assessment of the plan is the next phase.

"How do we assign accountability and assess our progress toward reaching our goals? A good strategic plan evolves, and the assessment will indicate whether or not we are having an effect on our objectives," he said.

Ensure adequate resources to achieve university goals by increasing public financial support and private giving.