Managing and leading a multiple institution collaborative requires greater flexibility in strategic planning efforts. Political realities as well as output goals must be kept constantly in balance in order to succeed. This case study describes a collaborative venture involving nine California Community College districts at the inception of the project. All original districts are still involved and one additional California district has joined the Consortium.

More recently, an Oregon Community College district joined the Consortium.
COMMUNITY COLLEGE MIS CONSORTIUM

INTRODUCTION
Unlike the University Center, the MIS Consortium has one shared vision upon which every district in the collaboration agrees: To develop an integrated MIS package for the member community colleges. Developed by users to meet user's needs, the software will run on the various platforms and systems of the member districts.

PLANNING AND COLLABORATION
Planning by the Consortium has been advanced by the common vision we share. District Chief Information Systems Officers have been our primary environmental scanners as they looked for hardware and software developments in the field, and as they evaluated potential commercial partners. Consortium Board sub-committees have also formed, as needed, to plan and redirect efforts. The Consortium has focused on mutual goals and negotiated agreement on process. I intend to focus on the political realities of multiple institution collaboration and the team learning which must occur if an initiative is to be successful.

Collaborative principles under which we function have included: discussion among co-equals at multiple levels of each institution and in the various consortium work groups, reaching consensus on development and implementation strategies--probably the most extensive of these has been the agreement reached regarding the functional requirements of the software (a copy of which is available for review for those of you who might be interested), and the respect which has evolved among colleagues working on the project. One major issue which required considerable conversation was the work style difference between contract employees and district loaned staff.

BALANCING POLITICAL DIFFERENCES
But the most challenging and important planning and collaboration factors have been the political needs and differences in culture of each district. Managing these differences in perception and in expressed needs at every level of the collaboration has become our most essential task. The willingness of each district to stay involved as well as the efficiency with which our products are generated is influenced by our response to political situations within the districts.

To put the process in Peter Senge's words, the need to map our mental model of the "how" requires team learning at a variety of levels.¹ For the Consortium, this has meant sifting through the input of many teams in addition to the obvious joint powers agency formed by the 10 districts. Each team operates within its own dynamics.

At the most fundamental level is the team of CEO and District Board. Over our four years in history, the CEO and Board of each district has struggled with issues of commitment and staying the course. None of us anticipated the length of time and the complexity to be addressed in meeting our goal.

For small districts the issues are often those surrounding commitment of significant resources when

¹Peter M. Senge, The Fifth Discipline (New York: Doubleday, 1990) p. 188.6
they do not benefit from economies of scale. The advantage is that by joining the Consortium they stand to gain from the collaborative efforts with large districts. For the large districts, the question has often been whether they could more easily (with less complexity) achieve the goal on their own given the large sums of money they are committing to the project. The advantage has been that in pooling their resources and developing a product with transportability, Consortium members might recover their investment by making their product available to different sized institutions operating with different hardware.

One collaborative challenge has been identifying and responding to the needs of each district in order to keep the project afloat. Thus, at times we have shifted the priority regarding which modules should come out of development first in order to address a pressing need of one or two districts. At other times the Board has struggled to define the scope of work. At one time strong marketing and promotion of the anticipated product was seen as a way to ensure a return on our investment. Ultimately, the Board held a retreat and decided unanimously that our goal was first to develop a product which met the member district's needs and the product's marketable potential would be determined later.

Another challenge for the Board has been as arbitrator for the other work groups on the project. At the Chief Information Systems Officer level the mapping has involved reaching agreement about compatible platforms, analysis of different systems in use, and consensus about the most flexible yet serviceable platform on which to build the system. Each CISO obviously comes to the table with his or her own commitment to products and equipment which he or she helped select and having convinced others at his or her own district of the benefits of his or her selection. Now those decisions must be modified.

At the staff levels of the SCG and the Design Teams, other issues of personal commitment to existing processes, hardware, and software have had to be overcome. The resistance to changing dynamics is most active at this level.

Staff changes, especially at the CEO's level, have required a continual process of re-commitment to the concept and the agency. Of the original CEOs, only four remain.

TEAM LEARNING
Another major element of both strategic planning and collaboration involves team learning and the need to distinguish between dialogue and discussion. Our inclination in higher education, and in this project as well, has been to move directly into discussion with its deliberation of pros and cons of the action to be taken. What we have learned more slowly and more painfully has been the need to stop, step back, and engage in dialogue. Again, Peter Senge's model is instructive. As a key to team learning, Senge describes dialogue as a process where one suspends one's assumptions and participates in conversation as a colleague, where the process of thinking through everyone's assumptions and ideas is more important than taking a stand and defending it as one does in discussion. For the Consortium Board, this has become an important part of our retreats. Senge's requirement that all participate as colleagues has not been problematic but with a roomful of action oriented, action generating, CEOs having to put our own needs and agenda aside to frame and redirect the larger picture has been a learning process. The success of our efforts is evident in our accomplishments to date. This team learning process is repeated in each district over and over.

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again as different issues are raised at different levels of each institution and with different work groups.

**FLEXIBILITY**

Finally, the need for flexibility cannot be overemphasized. Any major collaboration takes time and plans must be constantly re-assessed and modified to fit unanticipated complexities. Altering original plans, however, is difficult with multiple constituencies because each sub-set is also responding to its own constituency issues. Often we have yearned for the simpler process of being an independent software development business without the structures which frame our discussions and inhibit our dialogue. Ultimately, however, the Consortium is an example of an incredibly successful collaboration and of what is possible when the goal is common and the players' commitment to the goal allows them to make just-in-time changes to meet that goal.

The lessons we have learned include:

1. To be effective a collaborative planning effort must take into account the political agendas of all members.

2. The collaboration will only be successful if trust and flexibility exist and the project can make changes to accommodate the needs of a partner without losing sight of the common goal.

3. A forum must exist to resolve conflicts as they arise.

4. Periodic time must be set aside to evaluate progress, redirect efforts, ensure partners renew their commitment to the goal, and celebrate success.

Strategic planning principles can help but I would end by saying that collaborative ventures are not for the faint of heart.
Strategic Planning And Collaboration
A Case Study
Alan Brown
Arizona State University
Phoenix
Arizona

This brief paper attempts to make a few significant points about Strategic Planning and the process of Collaboration. It outlines a series of questions to be used in setting ground rules for collaboration as well as a set of landmines to avoid.
STRATEGIC PLANNING AND COLLABORATION

STRATEGIC PLANNING
This brief paper attempts to make a few significant points about Strategic Planning and the process of Collaboration. Strategic planning has been touted as one of the essential tools to assist organizations adapt to changed conditions. There is no doubt that strategic planning is a useful and a powerful tool for helping people tap into their dreams and values and move to a higher level of motivation and insight. The process, however, is not a "magic bullet" and the effectiveness of the process depends largely on the skills of individuals involved and the process which is designed and utilized.

Many believe the effort of strategic planning ends with the development of the vision, mission, strategic goals or other formats that are used. What is often overlooked is the need for the development of an implementation plan which translates the strategic plan to the reality of the operations and tasks that are essential for the attainment of the strategic plan.

Attainment of an implementation/strategic plan requires ongoing monitoring and attention. Many boards, executives and managers complete the plan and assume it will happen. Strategic planning requires new belief systems, new ways of thinking and new ways of behaving. Staff and policy groups must view policies, decisions and behaviors through the glasses provided by the directions of the strategic plan. Policies, decisions and behaviors must be made with reference to their ability to support the strategic directions.

Strategic planning must be an ongoing process. Not only should progress be monitored, problems identified and considered, but also re-evaluated in terms of the strategic directions in the original plan. When necessary, the plan should be adapted or modified in light of new information and levels of progress.

Strategic planning must be developed and implemented in an open spirit of participation and ownership. Too often, one or a few leaders push a plan without involving key persons and maintaining the understanding of the stakeholders in the organization. Collaboration is the result of shared beliefs, motivations and values. When these are not maintained, support and motivation for implementing the plan diminishes.

COLLABORATION
Cooperation, in which partners agree to work together to meet their individual goals without substantially changing the services they provide or the rules and regulations governing their institutions, is not enough. Collaboration partners share a vision, establish common goals, and agree to use their power to achieve them, commit resources and willingly alter existing policies to meet the common goal.

Establishing Shared Leadership
A collaborative is most effective when all partners exercise leadership. Partners work as equals rather than dominating those they perceive as less powerful.

Setting Ground Rules
Successful collaboration requires that everyone in the group contributes to and develops a stake in the process. Ground rules can ensure that partners use time wisely, share leadership, and head in the same direction. These rules should cover maintaining communication among partners, operating the collaborative on a day-to-day basis, resolving organizational and personal conflict issues, and planning and conducting meetings. Collaboratives need to decide:

1. Where, when, and how often will partners meet?
2. How will partners share responsibility for organizing and leading the meetings?
3. Who prepares and contributes to the agenda?
4. What rules should guide the dialogue?
5. Will partners make decisions by majority rule or consensus?
6. What can partners do to ensure that decisionmaking occurs inside the group and not behind the scenes?
7. What happens if there is a problem or conflict?
8. How will partners handle logistical arrangements?
9. Under what circumstances should there be a third-party facilitator?

7 Landmines to Avoid

1. Waiting to convene a group until everyone is at the table. The enthusiasm of a wisely selected and enthusiastic core group can cool while others are being brought in. Do not waste time!
2. Not taking the time to involve key players who could easily block what the collaborative hopes to do. Whenever possible, try to make allies out of adversaries.
3. Allowing one partner to assume control of the group instead of establishing the expectation of shared leadership. Collaborative power grows when equals share authority and responsibility.
4. Allowing the media or political pressure to direct the collaborative’s agenda.
5. Neglecting to reflect periodically on milestones and landmines.
6. Failing to establish clear ground rules.

8 Developing a Base of Common Knowledge

In the most effective collaboratives, partners take time to understand each other's systems and explore their differences. Partners with limited knowledge of each other's organizations often rely on stereotypes and misconceptions to fill in the blanks. To avoid misunderstanding, partners must develop a base of common knowledge. This requires learning about each other's services and resources, goals, objectives, organizational cultures, and working constraints. Developing common knowledge also means understanding personal differences and working together to achieve small victories.

9 Deepening the Collaborative Culture
To realize the vision of change, the cultures of all the institutions and agencies in the collaborative change. Collaboration becomes a fundamental part of each agency's mission and approach. Leaders committed to collaboration find ways to reward staff who devote time and energy to the collaborative.
Collaborations may involve organizations with conflicting long-range agendas and still succeed. Even though the collaborating organizations are headed toward different ultimate goals, there may be sufficient common ground and interest to support a collaborative program that will advance both agendas despite the conflict in ultimate goals. These generalizations about strategic planning arise from my experience as Dean and Director of the Central Oregon University Center. This analysis is presented as a case study of one multiple-organization project and is intended to illustrate a practical approach to strategic planning in multiple institution settings.
Introduction

Collaborations may involve organizations with conflicting long-range agendas and still succeed. Even though the collaborating organizations are headed toward different ultimate goals, there may be sufficient common ground and interest to support a collaborative program that will advance both agendas despite the conflict in ultimate goals. These generalizations about strategic planning arise from my experience as Dean and Director of the Central Oregon University Center. This analysis is presented as a case study of one multiple-organization project and is intended to illustrate a practical approach to strategic planning in multiple institution settings.

The Central Oregon University Center

The Central Oregon University Center (University Center) is a partnership which involves (1) the Oregon State System of Higher Education (OSSHE), (2) the Oregon Office of Community College Services (OCCS), and (3) Central Oregon Community College (COCC). The mission of the University Center is to deliver baccalaureate, master's, and professional degree programs to Central Oregon. Those not familiar with geography and climate of the Northwest should know that the rain typical of the coastal Northwest is cooled, converted to snow, and deposited on the Cascades by the east-bound storm systems. This creates the powder skiing on Mount Bachelor (twenty minutes from Bend) widely acknowledged the best in the Northwest gives us a dry and sunny climate east of the Cascades very much like the mountains of Colorado and New Mexico. These same weather patterns, however, also create treacherous and difficult winter driving for travelers heading from Central Oregon to the Willamette Valley where are Eugene, Corvallis, and Portland, Oregon's population centers and the centers of the majority of Oregon's public and private education resources. Two factors create the need for four-year higher education programs in Central Oregon: a rapidly growing population and isolation caused by distance and weather.

The University Center is designed to serve this need by using (1) the facilities of COCC, (2) the technological capacity of Oregon ED-NET, and (3) the educational resources of all of Oregon's institutions of higher education. The University Center motto is "Education by All Means": it employs traveling faculty, community college faculty, adjunct faculty, two-way compressed video and audio, one-way video/two-way audio, computer-based delivery, video taped classes, and multiple combinations of the above.

This mission-oriented description of the University Center, however, neglects a very important political history which comes into play in the strategic planning. Since 1977, perhaps earlier, Central Oregon Community College and its larger community have worked to create a four-year college in Bend. The first four-year degree program opened in 1981, a BA in Business from Linfield College. The next year, 1982, Oregon State University began delivering, and continues to deliver, four-year programs to Central Oregon. Between 1983 and 1986, a committee of prominent citizens in Bend calling themselves the "Education Committee" actively planned for and lobbied the Oregon Legislature and the higher education community for a four-year institution in Bend (1985). These efforts led to the formation of a the Central Oregon Consortium for Higher Education (COCHE) which earned the support of the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) between 1989 and 1991. Participating institutions increased. However, COCHE died after the FIPSE money ran out. The University Center is the newest incarnation of this ongoing effort. It was funded in a budget footnote in the Higher Education funding bill of the 1994/95 Biennium by influential Central Oregon legislators expressing their vision they have for
higher education in the area. Throughout this fifteen to twenty year history and today, Central Oregon has never wavered in its ambition to become a four-year institution.

**Oregon State System of Higher Education**

However, in the State Capital and in the Willamette Valley the view is different. Even though the "Education Committee" was successful in getting the endorsement of every public four year institution in the state and of two private four-year institutions, the campaign for four-year status was unsuccessful because the Chancellor of the State System, then Bud Davis, opposed it. From his perspective and that of the Board of Higher Education, there could be little hope of funding more institutions when resources were declining and the Oregon tax payers were revolting. A short time after the "Education Committee" lost in this effort, Ballot Measure 5 (November 1990) re-wrote higher education history in Oregon. Measure 5 won voter support because it promised to control and reduce property taxes. But few citizens foresaw the effects of Measure 5 on many state agencies. These effects spread over three funding cycles (six years) have resulted in OSSHE and other state agencies receiving greatly reduced appropriations in each funding cycle. OSSHE as a system has become leaner; institutions have learned to deal with non-formula-based funding; faculty have gone without pay increases; close to 100 programs have been cut; and tuitions have more than doubled. It is no surprise that in this environment there has been little support for creating another four-year institution in Central Oregon.

**Strategic Planning**

OSSHE has responded to these extended budget crises by reinventing itself in many ways. Crises frequently force planning, and planning frequently produces renewal. This has been true in Oregon. The planning product is "Education Unbounded: A Vision of Public Higher Education Serving Oregon in the Year 2010." Although OSSHE did not create the partnership which forms the University Center, and has no enthusiasm for creating another four-year institution, it can nevertheless find within its "Vision of 2010" rationale for supporting the University Center.

From their perspective, the COCC President and Board see the University Center as the means to move COCC toward their long-term goal. They believe the goal can be achieved. In a draft "Vision Concept Paper," they say, "The long-term future for COCC is unlimited and is constrained only by the combined imagination of the Board of Directors and the leadership staff of the College." They list a number of specific statements which are local initiatives consonant with many of the OSSHE 2010 goals. Key phrases in the COCC vision are taken directly from the OSSHE 2010 statement. By employing this common language COCC assures a resonance with OSSHE that demonstrates the visions are synchronous. The potential for conflict in directions--OSSHE on the one hand looking for programmatic alternatives to building new buildings and new campuses, COCC on the other hand not wavering from its long term goal of becoming a four year institution--meet in a vision which maps a common program.

As Director of the University Center, I ask, "Can such a partnership work, or must it be hopelessly politicized?" It can work. The "Vision of 2010" advances several important and relevant agendas: (1) New partnerships--Build collaborations and realize efficiencies resulting from collaboration; (2) Turf--Systemwide resources will be focused on local, regional and state needs; (3) Seamlessness--Clients will more easily tread the path through the educational systems kindergarten through higher education; (4) Technologies--Institutions and students must have increased access to technologies, and (6) Information--Information access will be made easier.

The University Center addresses these goals as follows:

Collaborations--The University Center provides a setting for innovation. For example the COCC English faculty have been approved by Eastern Oregon State College English
Department to deliver all upper-level English courses of the minor for the BA in Multidisciplinary Studies. Secondly, we are working to develop a collaborative Environmental Technology degree program and anticipate that at least one class will meet simultaneously on three campuses (four-year and community) and be taught by a team of three teachers representing each of the three campuses.

Turf--Currently two private colleges, three OSSHE institutions, and the newly independent public Oregon Health Sciences University deliver programs to the University Center. The number of institutions will grow; each new program changes the turf map.

Seamlessness--In the Eastern Oregon State College Multidisciplinary Studies Program, a student can complete an COCC AA degree in two years, complete an Eastern BA degree in four years, and earn a basic license to teach elementary education granted by the Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC), all of this at a cost lower than the student would have paid had he/she spent four years at Eastern.

Technologies--The University Center relies on technologies and helps students develop increasing competency in the use of technologies.

Information--University Center is working with two major library collaborative initiatives to support University Center students, Portals (Portland group of libraries who cooperatively purchase data-base access) and ORBIS (a union catalog based on Innovative Interfaces Inc.’s software).

The University Center in its second year this fall enrolled 80.4 FTEs, 392 individual class enrollments and 160 students known to be seeking degrees. These enrollments will increase and each enrollment will help build the case for a four-year institution in Central Oregon. These programmatic activities, strategically define a broad middle ground between competing agendas, serve the visions of both OSSHE and COCC, and thereby advance the agendas of both.
COMMUNITY COLLEGE MIS CONSORTIUM (CCMISC)

ORGANIZATION:

1. Originally Nine Districts/14 colleges
2. Now 10 Districts/15 colleges in California and one district in Oregon:
3. Member districts include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
<th>ENROLLMENT</th>
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<td>Butte Community College District</td>
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<td>3,013</td>
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<td>Yosemite Community College District</td>
<td>19,232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Oregon Community College</td>
<td>2,500*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*New Member 1995

FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE:

4. **Joint Powers Agency**

5. **Board of Directors**
   Made up of CEOs from each district.

6. **Chief Information Systems Officers Advisory Committee (CISOAC)**
   This committee is comprised of the Chief Information Systems Officer from each Member District. They are advisory to the Board and to the Executive Director. The Chair also sits on the Board as an ex officio member. This committee's role is to see that the software being developed meets each district's needs and will function properly in each environment. The Chair of the Steering Committee sits as an ex officio member.

7. **System Coordinating Group (SCG)**
   There are four SCGs, one for each area of the system development: Student Services, Administrative Services, Instructional Management and Human Resources. Each group is composed of a second level administrator from the respective area from each District, i.e., a Dean or Vice President. The primary role of these committees is establishing the overall
functionality or capability of the system. They also play major roles in oversight and coordination of Design Team activities and linkages between the various areas.

8 **Design Team**  
There are numerous design teams under each SCG. For example, Student Services includes design teams for Admissions, Registration, Matriculation, Grades and Attendance, etc. Each design team is comprised of district staff who are users and area experts. The team of 6-10 are assisted by two Information Systems Analysts who serve as staff to the Consortium. Their role is to refine the system functionality and design the processes.

9 **Steering Committee**  
The primary role of the Steering Committee is to oversee and coordinate activities of the SCGs and to represent users interests, if necessary, to the Board. This committee is comprised of the Chairs of the four SCGs, the Chair of the CISOAC, and the Executive Director.

10 **Consortium Staff**  
Consortium staff are all the people who are assigned to the project full-time. This includes district staff and contractors. The current complement is 40 people.

11 **Goal**  
To design and develop a comprehensive, totally integrated community college management information system which has the following system characteristics:

1. Open system
2. Utilizes relational databases
3. Client server
4. Easy to maintain
5. Graphical user interface (Windows)
6. Integrated system
7. Flexible - off the shelf with capacity to customize
8. Designed by users
9. Meets industry standards
SCOPE OF THE PROJECT:
There are 4 major integrated systems:

**Administrative/Financial**
(11 modules)

- Payroll
- Purchasing
- Receiving
- Facilities Management
- Fixed Assets
- Auxiliary Fund Accounting
- Employee Benefits
- Accounts Payable
- Budget & General Ledger
- Warehouse
- Accounts Receivables & Fees

**Human Resources**
(5 modules)

- Applicant Management
- Employee Records
- Position Control
- Employee Utilization
- Compensation

**Instructional Management**
(2 modules)

- Course & Curriculum/Curriculum Assessment
- Scheduling

**Student Services**
(7 modules)

- Admissions
- Matriculation
- Registration
- Attendance & Grades
- Academic History
- Student Services Scheduling
- Categorical Programs

FUNDING BASE:

12 **District Assessment**
Each district is assessed, annually, proportional fees based on the Consortium formula.
The formula includes a fixed amount for administration from each District plus a per head count assessment of the base year enrollment.

13 District Fair Share
District Fair Share allocation is an allocation for staffing the project with Information Systems staff. A District's fair share is determined by taking the number of staff needed; at the present time that number is 21; and multiplying it by the percentage of Annual Assessment that a District provides, i.e., if a District's assessment was 20% of the total, their fair share of staffing would be 4 FTE. Therefore, in addition to the Annual Assessment, a district is also responsible for paying the appropriate amount for the number FTE they owe. A District may lend their own district information systems staff in lieu of payment if the staff have the skills needed by the project.

TIMEFRAME FOR DELIVERY:
The first module of the software (Applicant Management) is scheduled for delivery November, 1995. Thereafter, software modules will begin to be delivered every 2-3 months. Version 1 of the entire system is scheduled for completion by the end of Fiscal Year 1997-98.

Each module will be pilot tested by selected member districts prior to release to the other districts.

Delivery is scheduled first to member districts but the possibility of making the system available to other districts is being investigated now.

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