



SYDNEY COLLEGE OF DIVINITY

Excellence in theological education

STRATEGIC PLAN 2008-2012

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1. INTRODUCTION

As this Strategic Plan is launched I note that the Sydney College of Divinity has been operating for twenty-five years. Over that time the College has achieved much more than its founders probably envisaged. The number of Member Institutions has grown, and along with this the number of students. The number of awards taught has also increased, and research training is now a regular part of SCD activities. All of these factors point to an organization that has been responsive to new demands and a changing environment.

In recent years we have seen major developments in the higher education environment, with things often changing at a fairly rapid rate. Just as important is the fact that Australian society has also changed and with that, the place of churches and faith communities in the society. Internally, churches and communities have been discerning how best to engage in mission in these new situations. The institutions that will survive in this environment are those that are strategically placed to respond to the ever-changing demands.

The Sydney College of Divinity's Strategic Plan provides clear strategic goals for the next five years. It will become an invaluable resource for the whole SCD community – students, member institutions, administrators and graduates – that will enable us all to move into the future with confidence and purpose. It will be a clear indication to our stakeholders of our commitment to excellence in theological education.

I commend the Strategic Plan to the SCD community.

Gerard Kelly, STL, PhD(Th), STD
Vice-President
Sydney College of Divinity

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Strategic Plan of the Sydney College of Divinity 2008–2012 comprehensively addresses the main challenges facing the College at this stage in its institutional history and in the context of current issues and developments in the Higher Education sector. Its essential purpose is to establish the direction in which the College should head in the foreseeable future and the ways in which it may most effectively do so.

The Strategic Plan was produced by the Council in the course of 2007 and finalized in 2008, in consultation with other senior people within the College community. The Plan is based on a careful consideration of the present state of the College's operations and the external factors that must influence them.

The College's understanding of itself is captured at the head of the Plan in the articulation of its Vision, Mission, and Values. These statements embody the underlying principles on which the College was founded and on which it is resolved to build for the future. The Sydney College of Divinity seeks to provide academic training of the highest quality in theology and related disciplines, leading to accredited awards at all Higher Education levels. In broad terms, this program is intended to further theological scholarship and education, to equip Christians for leadership of and constructive participation in their respective churches and communities, and to contribute to public discussion of issues of faith.

The Plan proceeds to identify Goals in seven specific areas of operation, as follows:

- (1) Curriculum Development and Change
- (2) Teaching and Learning
- (3) Quality Assurance
- (4) Research and Scholarship
- (5) The College Model
- (6) Marketing for Organizational Growth
- (7) Best Practice Internal Management

In each case, statement of the focal Goal is accompanied by indication of the Key Results intended and the Strategic Objectives by which they may be achieved.

The Plan offers a clear expression of the unity of the College in relation to its academic and educational enterprise, while at the same time acknowledging the diversity it enfolds. The College is both multi-denominational in the extent of its membership and ecumenical in the conduct of its operations, and its member institutions range widely in size and educational focus. Yet the shared curriculum and the implementation of centralized procedures and quality assurance across all aspects of College life require purposeful cooperation amongst members through which the College is constituted. The very production of this Plan and the unanimity with which it has been adopted bear witness to the functional identity of the College.

With this notable unity in diversity, the Sydney College of Divinity affords unique opportunities in Australian Higher Education and Research. As the Strategic Plan is promulgated in the seven identified areas, across all member institutions, the College will be more firmly positioned to make a significant contribution to theological Higher Education and Research and to the communities for whose benefit these endeavours are conducted.

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Dean and Chief Executive Officer
Sydney College of Divinity

3. VISION AND MISSION

Preamble

The Sydney College of Divinity is a Higher Education Provider owned by a consortium of private Christian colleges, which are its Member Institutions.

Vision

The Sydney College of Divinity will operate as a leading theological provider, offering high quality, accredited awards to equip people for effective professional and lay ministry in a rapidly changing environment.

Mission

The Sydney College of Divinity will

- provide high quality, accredited education in theology and related disciplines from undergraduate to postgraduate levels;
- encourage theological scholarship and train future theological scholars;
- prepare leaders and ministers, both ordained and non-ordained, who are well-qualified to build the Church;
- contribute to the public discussion of issues of faith;
- encourage a theologically literate membership of the Church.

4. VALUES

Given that the Christian Gospel shapes who we are and what we do, the following values characterize the way we operate:

- Mutual respect and support for the mission and ethos of fellow Member Institutes.
- Excellence in quality of teaching and research.
- Lifelong learning and reflective practice.
- Affirming unity in diversity.
- Collegiality and co-operation among faculty.
- Celebration of faith in Christ and life in the Spirit.

5. GOALS, KEY RESULT INDICATORS, AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

5.1 GOAL 1: CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE

To refine, consolidate, review and implement the curriculum to ensure that it reflects the Sydney College of Divinity's Mission, and that it is academically challenging and professionally relevant.

Key Results

- 5.1.1 A curriculum development policy.
- 5.1.2 A shared curriculum which minimizes duplication and overlap between course units and which achieves greater Discipline integrity.
- 5.1.3 Academically defensible levels of course units offered.
- 5.1.4 Content and sequencing within a program which reflects breadth and depth of knowledge, skills, and application within each Discipline.
- 5.1.5 A curriculum which meets the needs of individuals and communities, and which allows for the understanding, expression, and interpretation of denominational differences.
- 5.1.6 Standardisation of assessment in shared course units.
- 5.1.7 A curriculum which is informed by research and contemporary practice.

Strategic Objectives

- 5.1.8 Fully implement and develop the shared curriculum according to the Curriculum Policy.
- 5.1.9 From February 2009, commence a refinement of the Sydney College of Divinity's Curriculum, to achieve a further reduction of the number of course units by addressing issues of duplication, overlap, and currency, within the current five-year period of accreditation.
- 5.1.10 Identification of which course units require standardization of assessment, and development of a bank of equivalent assessment items, from which items can be selected to better reflect denominational differences and interpretations.
- 5.1.11 Discipline Coordinators to monitor and review content, sequencing, and currency of course units, on an ongoing basis.
- 5.1.12 Provide professional development opportunities that will better inform faculty as to how denominational differences and interpretations can be incorporated within the shared curriculum.
- 5.1.13 Maintain and enhance moderation procedures of each discipline, both internally and externally.
- 5.1.14 Benchmarking of curricula and course materials, and assessment methods

5.2 GOAL 2: LEARNING AND TEACHING

To pursue best practice in Learning and Teaching according to national benchmarks.

Key Results

- 5.2.1 A high quality of learning and teaching and the provision of opportunities and rewards that encourage faculty to be effective, innovative, and reflective professionals.
- 5.2.2 Faculty engaged in evaluating learning and teaching performance, in a way that maintains standards and improves performance.
- 5.2.3 A learning environment that fosters increased independence in learning, and a higher degree of student-centredness in the process.
- 5.2.4 Flexibility in teaching practice through innovations and increased student engagement in learning.
- 5.2.5 A stronger teaching/research nexus with an understanding and acceptance of its influence upon the learning and teaching process and outcomes.
- 5.2.6 Relevant and premium quality infrastructures and learning environments in which learning and teaching occurs.

Strategic Objectives

- 5.2.7 Implement Learning and Teaching Enhancement Plan of Academic Board.
- 5.2.8 Establish a Learning and Teaching Committee.
- 5.2.9 Implement, monitor, and review the Academic Board Policy on Evaluation of Learning and Teaching.
- 5.2.10 Develop guidelines for the recruitment, development, and retention of the highest quality academic staff.
- 5.2.11 Encourage the development of initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and the student learning experience.
- 5.2.12 Maintain best practice in learning and teaching strategies and delivery modes.
- 5.2.13 Provide professional development opportunities to further the development of teaching competencies.
- 5.2.14 Develop and monitor key performance indicators for learning and teaching and develop procedures to address areas of concern.
- 5.2.15 Increase the overall satisfaction rates of students by seeking and monitoring student feedback.
- 5.2.16 Regularly benchmark teaching practices, and assessment methods, in terms of relevance, academic quality, teaching research nexus, and professional standards.
- 5.2.17 Provide satisfactory library and other learning resources.

5.3 GOAL 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE

To develop and demonstrate a sustained culture of continuous quality improvement.

Key Results

- 5.3.1 Enhanced and improved QA standards.
- 5.3.2 A successful AUQA review.
- 5.3.3 A culture of continuous review and improvement.

Strategic Objectives

- 5.3.3 Ensure all quality assurance processes and procedures meet the standards required for a successful AUQA audit in 2009.
- 5.3.4 Develop strategies and policies for implementing the findings of the AUQA audit.
- 5.3.5 Promote a culture of continuous improvement.
- 5.3.6 Introduce continuous improvement processes that ensure a model on the Plan, Implement, Improve, and Review cycle.
- 5.3.7 Develop a culture of evidence that enables verification and validation in processes and procedures.
- 5.3.8 Regularly benchmark all aspects of SCD operation.
- 5.3.9 Ensure that review cycles are regularly employed in all operations.

5.4 GOAL 4: RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

To encourage a research culture across faculty and students that encourages high impact research, informs scholarship and underpins teaching and learning.

Key Results

- 5.4.1 A triennial Conference as a compulsory part of the academic life of the College, bringing together all faculties and the broader community of learners.
- 5.4.2 An ongoing faculty seminar series.
- 5.4.3 An annual research training program, including the mentoring of early career academics.
- 5.4.4 60% of faculty holding research active status within five years, and all teaching informed by relevant and current scholarship.
- 5.4.5 A system for measuring the professional development activities of a member of faculty.
- 5.4.6 A digital repository for research which has a high profile on search engines.
- 5.4.7 Growth in operation of SCD Press and SCD e-journal

Strategic Objectives

- 5.4.7 Develop a Research Plan for faculty research and the research degree programs that
- builds on current research strengths and directions;
 - encourages high impact research and scholarship across the College;
 - supports explicit Member Institution research priorities;
 - aligns with the National Research Priorities Framework.
- 5.4.8 Adequate provision of supervision, library facilities, and funding for research degree candidates.
- 5.4.9 Attract and maintain high quality students.
- 5.4.10 Attract funding for research.
- 5.4.11 Assist faculty to integrate non-academic writing into a research program.
- 5.4.12 Develop the Sydney College of Divinity Press, e-journal and e-thesis site.
- 5.4.13 Implement a process to evaluate completion rates and graduate destinations.
- 5.4.14 Provide quality professional development of Faculty.
- 5.4.15 Provide quality training for research supervisors.
- 5.4.16 Develop processes and procedures that ensure quality outcomes in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research in research degrees.

5.5 GOAL 5: THE COLLEGE MODEL

To safeguard and enhance our College model as a provider of theological higher education.

Key Results

- 5.5.1 A clear definition and defence of our nature as a provider of higher education, specifically in terminology, forums, and publications, which Australian Higher Education authorities both respect and understand.
- 5.5.2 Recognition by higher education and government authorities and other bodies of the importance of our unique nature as a provider of higher education.
- 5.5.3 A study, with external advice and expertise, of benefits and costs of moving to self-accreditation.
- 5.5.4 Clearly understood and equitable processes to ensure our unity in the light of the diversity of our membership.
- 5.5.5 A collaboration in high quality education and training that leads to re-accreditation or self-accreditation.
- 5.5.6 Quality graduates from across the diversity of Christian traditions educated in theology and formation for Christian ministry.

Strategic Objectives

- 5.5.7 Develop a membership policy for growth and diversity, with admission criteria and exit policies.

- 5.5.8 Establish the viability and benefits of self-accreditation.
- 5.5.9 Establish and maintain a graduate profile with ongoing data collection.
- 5.5.10 Strengthen the capacity of the institution and its membership to manage the speed and quantity of change in a rapidly changing higher education environment and Australia's socio-cultural context.
- 5.5.11 Clarify the intersecting roles and responsibilities of the Member Institutions, Academic Board, and the Dean's Office, under the Council's direction.
- 5.5.12 Continue the development of all Council members and Member Institutions in their understanding of the higher education sector.
- 5.5.13 Lobby Federal and State Governments to improve their understanding of the unique nature of Sydney College of Divinity and our wide-ranging contribution to Australian society.
- 5.5.14 Ensure the national and international availability of our awards.
- 5.5.15 Foster the sharing of resources among Member Institutions.
- 5.5.16 Identify opportunities for further co-operation among Member Institutions and develop methods to deepen ecumenical relationships and theological dialogues among faculty.
- 5.5.17 Establish transparent decision-making and communication processes that are equally inclusive of all Member Institutions.
- 5.5.18 Develop strategies to enhance the place of the Sydney College of Divinity in the higher education sector.
- 5.5.19 Maintain our strengths in a competitive environment.

5.6 GOAL 6: MARKETING FOR ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH

To become a brand that has gained such value as to be acknowledged as a preferred provider.

Key Results

- 5.6.1 Growth in student enrolment and existing total fees over the next five years.
- 5.6.2 Recognition as a quality institution with the capacity to diversify.
- 5.6.3 Efficiency and productivity with the capacity to influence Government.
- 5.6.4 Economies of scale and market advantages.
- 5.6.5 A mature self-awareness as a business unit.

Strategic Objectives

- 5.6.6 Increase the numbers of Member Institutions and students we serve.
- 5.6.7 Develop unity and consistency across Member Institutions in marketing Sydney College of Divinity as a brand.
- 5.6.8 Establish business relationships and product packaging for promotion.

- 5.6.9 Identify methods to promote the Sydney College of Divinity, including people to champion Sydney College of Divinity.
- 5.6.10 Identify new market opportunities, nationally and internationally.
- 5.6.11 Develop closer relationships with other theological higher education providers.
- 5.6.12 Design and produce a new logo.
- 5.6.13 Form a constructive Marketing Plan.

5.7 GOAL 7: BEST PRACTICE INTERNAL MANAGEMENT

To establish and sustain best practice standards of internal organizational management.

Key Results

- 5.7.1 A highly skilled and strategically oriented Dean's Office and Committee structure.
- 5.7.2 Effective communication and integration of operations between the Dean's Office and our Member Institutions.
- 5.7.3 Secure and sustainable funding.
- 5.7.4 A sound Business Plan.

Strategic Objectives

- 5.7.4 Develop appropriate KPIs for the organization.
- 5.7.5 Ensure a suitable staffing structure of Dean's office that is sufficient for our needs.
- 5.7.6 Ensure synergy across Member Institutions, especially in respect of:
 - marketing;
 - professional development.
- 5.7.7 Recruit, develop, and retain high quality academic, administrative, and support staff within the Office of the Dean.
- 5.7.8 Establish position descriptions, with KPIs and performance reviews for all employed staff.
- 5.7.9 Conduct performance reviews (against KPIs) of Council and Academic Board.
- 5.7.10 Ensure best practice budgetary processes.
- 5.7.11 Develop risk management protocols.
- 5.7.12 Identify and access government and non-government sources of funding.
- 5.7.13 Establish a task force to consider methods of ensuring the financial sustainability.