

Urban University Strategic Planning:

An Executive Summary of the Strategic Plans of IUPUI's Peer Institutions

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Developing a vision for the future and a blueprint to achieve goals are important responsibilities for any institution of higher education. Currently, Indiana University Purdue University – Indianapolis (IUPUI) is in the process of developing a new strategic plan in order to continue to set forth the strategic direction of the university through the year 2025 (<http://strategicplan.iupui.edu/>). A part of this planning process includes a comprehensive examination of institution-wide strategic plans at peer institutions. IUPUI has identified twelve official peer comparison institutions (<http://planning.iupui.edu/79.html>) to use for university benchmarking and comparison projects. This paper will summarize common elements of the peer institution strategic plans and include brief summaries of the plans of specific institutions. Common elements shared in this summary include: research development, student success, academic advancement, sustainability, community development, health promotion, global engagement, diversity, and resource responsibility. This information can help inform the planning process and identify common patterns of strategic plans at urban institutions.

### **Common Elements in All Plans: Academic Advancement, Research Development, and Student Success**

There were three common elements found in all plans: research development, academic advancement, and student success. This is not surprising given the core values and purpose of institutions of higher education. Since these elements are central in all plans, this section will briefly highlight a few initiatives but not share detailed information about these shared characteristics. Research and innovation are seen in all plans. For example, the University of Utah's new plan will have a focus on inter- and trans-disciplinary innovation. There is a focus on entrepreneurship through research as well (<http://admin.utah.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Strategic-Plan-June-2012.pdf>). The University of South Florida has

aspirations to advance research to achieve future international recognition including a desire for future membership in the Association of American Universities

(<http://www.ods.usf.edu/Plans/Strategic/>). In addition, the university has an emphasis on positive social change through research.

Student preparation can also be seen as a focus. Wayne State University's first goal is to improve student success. Specifically, Wayne State has a focus on improving retention and graduation through enhanced interventions, enhance campus life, improve systems and services and simplify general education requirements (<http://president.wayne.edu/strategic-plan.php>).

The University at Buffalo also has a strategic goal of student success in the plan. Programs like theme-based co-curricular experiences, finish-in-four, and need-based programs are planned to enhance the student experience and increase success (<http://www.buffalo.edu/ub/2020>).

The final goal that can be seen in all strategic plans is academic advancement. For example, the University of Alabama at Birmingham has goals to transform both undergraduate and graduate learning that prepares students for rewarding careers and lives. The plan has a concentration on creating academic programs that will increase college access and graduation rates for the area with a particular focus on historically underrepresented groups (<http://www.uab.edu/plan/>). The University of New Mexico's plan has a vital academic climate strategy. The university included plans to provide high quality education that supports the success of all students, through diverse intellectual thought and the development of the whole person. It is clear that academic advancement, research development, and student success are central elements of any strategic plan of an institution of higher education and have been found in each of IUPUI's peer institution's plans.

### **Sustainability**

A focus on sustainability and the environment is found in five of the strategic plans of urban institutions. In particular, this seems to be a more recent trend and is more prominent in the strategic plans that have been written in recent years. For example, sustainability is a central focus of the strategic plan at the University of Cincinnati. The institution plans to create a sustainability culture through several different strategies including, curriculum embedding, reducing waste and carbon footprint, and improving ratings on a sustainability report card (<http://uc.edu/uc2019>).

While still early in the strategic planning process, the University of Utah has already identified a strategic goal of the pursuit and practice of sustainability. It is planning to integrate sustainability values into all areas of the university and make climate an interdisciplinary effort. Sustainability is seen as justice issue for the local area and a climate action plan is being created as a part of the plan (<http://admin.utah.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Strategic-Plan-June-2012.pdf>). Temple University has planning principles for campus planning, in which sustainability is listed as a core principle. The university strives to enhance environmental sustainability at the campus, in particular in working with the new building plan. It is clear that sustainability has become a more recent focus of the strategic plans of urban institutions.

### **Community Development**

Nearly all of IUPUI's peer institutions have a focus on community development and engagement; in fact, it is found in 11 of the 12 plans. One great example of a community engagement emphasis can be seen in the strategic plan at Temple University. Metro-engagement is one of the four main strategic goals of the institution and the plan overall is very focused on developing the surrounding Philadelphia community. Temple also has a strong focus in

infrastructure development in the local community as a part of their destination campus goal. (<http://www.temple.edu/2020/>). The University of New Mexico has a strategic focus on the community in its plan. In this plan, there is a significant emphasis placed on the cultural resources that the local area brings to the institution. The University of South Florida includes a goal of community-based scholarship that is focused on positive social change in the community (<http://www.ods.usf.edu/Plans/Strategic/>). It is clear that engagement in the local community is a central aspect of the strategic plans of urban institutions.

### **Health Promotion**

The theme of health promotion is found in six of the 12 peer institution strategic plans. Not only was there a larger focus on health and wellness, many of the plans seemed to have a great emphasis on the health needs of the local and regional community. This corresponds well to the civic engagement trend but is a specific application. For example, one of the University of Cincinnati's strategic goals is mission-based healthcare and attention to the health of the local community is a focus (<http://uc.edu/uc2019>). Also, the University of Illinois at Chicago places a strong emphasis on expanding local reach in healthcare services and disease prevention (<http://www.uic.edu/uic/about/leadership/strategic-plans.shtml>).

Finally, one of the most detailed examples of this can be seen in the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Its plan included improving health and quality of life in its larger goal of service to the community and state. There is a specific focus on its region responsibility for health and includes specific health care issues it will work to improve, including obesity, cancer, stroke (<http://www.uab.edu/plan/goals-a-objectives-sidebar/goal-iv-service-to-community-and-state>). With several institutions reviewed having medical schools; this is not surprising, but the prominence of community health appears to be more common at urban institutions.

### **Diversity**

Celebrating and increasing diversity is a central part of many of the strategic plans of urban institutions. In fact, it can be found in half (six) of IUPUI's peer institutions strategic plans. For example, one of the goals of the University of Illinois at Chicago is to provide an outstanding education to a diverse student body (<http://www.uillinois.edu/strategicplan/plans/>). The institution is focused on recruiting and retaining a diverse student body that includes historically underrepresented groups. In addition, metrics are provided for graduation goals for groups. The University of Louisville has diversity, opportunity, and social justice as a strategic goal. The institution plans to assist women and minorities in becoming leaders of the university. Co-curricular and service learning opportunities are promoted as ways to promote principles of social justice ([http://louisville.edu/provost/strategicplanning/strategic\\_plan.pdf](http://louisville.edu/provost/strategicplanning/strategic_plan.pdf)). The University of Cincinnati also includes diversity as a strategic goal and looks at elements like hiring practices, student recruitment, and retention, and a diversity plan. The institution plans to embed diversity principles and provide programs that allow for a common diversity experience. (<http://uc.edu/uc2019>). Diversity is an important component of a university's success and its inclusion provides an important strategic value and direction.

### **Resource Responsibility**

Ten of IUPUI's peer institutions included an emphasis on alternative resource generation and cost containment strategies as one of the primary strategic goals. Recent national and state economic challenges may have impacted this focus. For example, the University of South Florida created a plan with the assumption that tuition and state funding would not increase during the plan period (<http://www.ods.usf.edu/plans/strategic>). Virginia Commonwealth University included a commitment to efficiency and cost containment

(<http://www.future.vcu/ed/index.html>). Wayne State University (WSU) was the most explicit about resource challenges, providing detailed information about the financial challenges of Wayne State University amidst the state and national economic environment. Wayne State not only has a goal of obtaining more sustainable revenues, but also gaining an understanding of the future of higher education in order to prepare economically (<http://president.wayne.edu/strategic-plan.php>). It is clear that managing resources efficiently is important, and institutions are planning on a shift in the resource generation and management.

### **Global Engagement**

Global Engagement was a prominent focus of seven of the peer institutions strategic plans. The emphasis was not only on globalization and developing globally-minded students but also on gaining global recognition. For example, Virginia Commonwealth University has a strong focus on creating student experiences at all levels that will make them successful in a global context (<http://www.future.vcu.edu/index.html>). While the University of Utah is still in the process of creating their plan, they are developing a global vision and strategy ((<http://admin.utah.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Strategic-Plan-June-2012.pdf>). In addition, global recognition is emphasized in the strategic planning process. The University of Colorado at Denver plans to have at least one faculty Nobel Prize Laureate winner (<http://www.ucdenver.edu/about/WhoWeAre/Chancellor/Documents/FinalStrategicPlan.pdf>). The University of Illinois at Chicago intends to gain international recognition for research and discovery as a result of the implementation plan (<http://www.uillinois.edu/strategicplan/plans/>). While urban institutions have a local focus, it is clear they want to prepare students for a global world and move recognition beyond a regional and national level.

## **Individual Plan Summaries**

### **University of Cincinnati**

The strategic plan of the University of Cincinnati was in part developed to coincide with the university's bicentennial (<http://uc.edu/uc2019>). The plan, which is slated for completion in 2019, has a different focus than the previous plan. The preceding plan, UC 21, was in place for six years, but the institution decided refinement was necessary. The institution shared in its planning documents that UC 21 was about "defining," and UC 19 is about "achieving" (<http://uc.edu/uc2019>). While the plan is scheduled to go through 2019, most of the goals are scheduled to be completed within five years. The plan has lofty yet attainable goals and is comparable to many other urban universities strategic plans.

The plan boasts nine transformational goals: learning, discovery, community, economy, sustainability, global engagement, diversity, mission-based healthcare, and collaboration (<http://uc.edu/uc2019>). In addition, there are core principles that guide all strategic plan goals including retention rates, giving, and national scores. The implementation phase of the plan is detailed in planning document. Along with the transformational goals, there are action steps, responsible parties, timeframes and targets for each of the goals (<http://uc.edu/uc2019>). The plan has very specific targets for development including, retention targets, engagement scores, and entering ACT scores. In completing many of the plan targets, the institution hopes to attain some of the some recognition as top research institutions like those in the Association of American Universities (<http://uc.edu/uc2019>).

### **Temple University**

Temple University has two documents that guide the strategic direction of the university: one for campus development, and another for an academic strategic plan. The plans, as a part of

Temple 20/20, are set to guide the university through the next several years (<http://temple.edu/2020>). Both documents celebrate the rich history of Temple and are seen as living documents, flexible to change as the university develops. In the campus development plan, there is a strong focus on the Philadelphia community, developing a district corridor area, spaces that promote student engagement, renovation of several properties, creating more on-campus residential and dining options, and increasing sustainability. There is a larger goal to make Temple a destination campus. The plan makes the assumption that research will increase, enrollment will remain the same, and there will be no major instructional shifts. Visually, the plan and website are attractive, sharing a lot of photos and sketches of upcoming projects where stakeholders can track progress (<http://temple.edu/2020>).

The academic strategic plan has some similar themes, but brings in a different focus. The academic plan has four strategic points: Opportunities for success, research excellence, metro-engagement, and global commitment (<http://temple.edu/2020>). Plans are in place to maintain much of the strong reputation and structures of the university with some enhancements. For example, there is a continued commitment to student success, increasing access, yet maintaining high academic standards and small class sizes. The metro-engagement plan is strong and distinct, incorporating mutually beneficial partnerships to enhance the Philadelphia area and local community, including curricular components. Both of the Temple plans set a blueprint in motion to enhance many structures of the university and continue student success and impact the local community.

### **University of Alabama at Birmingham**

The University of Alabama at Birmingham has a strategic plan that takes the university from the year 2010 to 2015 (<http://www.uab.edu/plan/>). Along with the central strategic plan,

the university also has strategic planning documents for the medical school and healthcare programs. While there is a separate plan for the medical school, you there is still a major emphasis on community health. The plan even identifies specific health issues the university wants to lead research in: obesity, cancer, strokes, infant mortality. Furthermore, the plan has a strong focus on cultural and social development in Birmingham, stating clearly in the mission statement that the knowledge gained is intended to be applied within the community. In addition, there is a strong social justice focus, noting several goals to diversify the campus and increase college success at all levels in the state, in particular with historically underrepresented groups. The plan is guided by the mission and vision, which are brief yet communicate the important groundwork for the strategic planning documents (<http://www.uab.edu/plan/>).

The six strategic goals of the university-wide plan include: transforming undergraduate learning, transforming graduate and professional education, research and scholarship, service to community and state, community/financial support, and living/learning/working environment (<http://www.uab.edu/plan/>). Rationales and context are provided for each of the strategic goals, and well-developed score cards with specific annual targets for each goal can be found. Not surprisingly, there is a strong focus on academics, research, and financial stability like many other plans. However, the focus on campus environment and work-life balance as main goals in the strategic plan are unique. Overall, the strategic plan of the University of Alabama at Birmingham has some very important and distinct goals that will help enhance the campus and wider community in the coming years.

### **University of Louisville**

The University of Louisville completed a university strategic plan in 2007, and it leads the university through the year 2020 (<http://louisville.edu/provost/strategicplanning/>). There is

as strong focus on Kentucky and the local region in the documents, highlighting what the university brings to the state. In addition, the plan recognizes other higher education institutions in the local area, and the strengths and contributions they bring to the region. In fact, the university has separate marketing documents for the strategic plan to engage the local community. In the planning documents, short articles from key administrators are used to share the story of the campus community. In addition, the university has one university-wide strategic plan but has implemented several subordinate plans for large administrative and academic units at the institution (<http://louisville.edu/provost/strategicplanning/>).

The plan boasts five strategic themes: educational excellence, research and scholarship, community engagement, diversity, opportunity, and social justice, and creative and responsible stewardship (<http://louisville.edu/provost/strategicplanning/>). The University of Louisville is one of the few urban institutions reviewed that shares a dedication to a liberal arts curriculum and influences the planning documents. The strategic plan has several goals and general performance assessments associated with each of the strategic themes. While there are enhancements noted in the plan, many points relate back to continuing work and maintaining excellence in already established areas. The plan will assist in providing direction for the university in the coming years as it advances to 2020.

### **The University of Illinois at Chicago**

The University of Illinois at Chicago's strategic planning process began in the year 2006 and takes the university through the year 2016 (<http://www.uillinois.edu/strategicplan/plans/>). Prior to the planning process, the university completed an environmental scan which examined demographics, the State of Illinois, national factors, political and economic factors, higher education as a whole, international factors, anticipated demographic shifts, and technology

impacts and online learning. After the environmental scan, the strategic plan began with a three step process. The larger University of Illinois developed a system-wide plan in 2005, which included a strategic planning framework for all campuses in the system. This was followed by plans for each campus. Finally, subordinate plans were developed for each one of the schools, colleges, and major administrative units. In addition, a competitive benchmark process was included in the plan (<http://www.uillinois.edu/strategicplan/plans/>).

Seven main goals for the strategic plan were developed including (paraphrased): outstanding education to a diverse student body; international recognition for research and discovery; Chicago and Great Cities community and civic engagement; healthcare promotion and prevention; destination for faculty, staff, students, and visitors; secure resources and use wisely; and comprehensive marketing plan to increase visibility (<http://www.uillinois.edu/strategicplan/plans/>). Each goal has a metrics to guide implementation. Interestingly, the plan also provides what it calls stretch goals for the “maybes,” with big ideas that depending on resources, may or may not be completed within the plan’s timeframe. These include ideas like, globalizing the campus and curriculum, developing a charter school for math, science, and health careers, creating interdisciplinary and engaged clusters of excellence, promoting education on demand, and an institute for urban leadership (<http://www.uillinois.edu/strategicplan/plans/>). Overall, the University of Illinois at Chicago has a strong strategic plan the builds on its assets with ideas that will lead it into the future, both strengthening the institution, the university-system, and the Chicago area.

### **University of South Florida**

The University of South Florida’s strategic plan leads the university for the next five years, from 2013-2018 (<http://www.ods.usf.edu/Plans/Strategic/>). The plan is bold and

transformative, yet recognizes the current realities of higher education. Within the plan, several strategic planning challenges were noted, including for-profit institution competition and financial constraints. In fact, the plan was created with the assumption that tuition and state funding sources would not increase during the plan period. However, the plan has a strong vision for the university, including posturing for future membership in the Association of American Universities. The plan as with many urban institutions includes a significant focus on the state and local community and research and discovery (<http://www.ods.usf.edu/Plans/Strategic/>).

The strategic plan of the University of South Florida includes four main goals (paraphrased): student success and global citizenship; research and innovation for positive change including health and sustainable development; strong partnerships of the future of region and global economy; and a secure economic base and greater business transparency (<http://www.ods.usf.edu/Plans/Strategic/>). The plan also includes a detailed planning, performance, and accountability matrix to guide implementation. In addition, a performance dashboard can be found on the website with regular progress updates to increase movement towards goals and accountability. The plan includes some notable marketing materials with good use of student images (<http://www.ods.usf.edu/Plans/Strategic/>). The University of South Florida's strategic plan provides an important direction for the university in the coming years.

### **University of Utah**

The University of Utah is currently in the process of developing a strategic plan to guide the university (<http://admin.utah.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Strategic-Plan-June-2012.pdf>). A formal timeline for plan development and implementation has not yet been established. The plan is being marketed at the "New U" and has a strong focus on developing the strengths of

the university and the local community as a way to “connect the dots among existing assets. The initial plan indicates an emphasis will be placed on sustainability, social responsibility, and a commitment to the state of Utah. While the full plan has not yet been developed, seven core commitments have been published in initial documents: student success and engagement; research and teaching excellence; diversity; the pursuit and practice of sustainability; and a collective global vision and strategy. It will be exciting to see observe the initial planning develops into a completed strategic plan to guide the direction of the “New U.”

### **The University of New Mexico**

The most recent information that could be obtained for this summary about the University of New Mexico’s strategic direction was a plan that was developed during an 18 month process in 2001 (<http://www.unm.edu/~unmstrat/>). The documents indicate that the plan was set to guide the university for the next five to ten years. No plans after that timeframe could be obtained. The University of New Mexico’s plan boasts many of the strategic advantages of the university, including the location and the rich culture and available resources. Service to the Albuquerque area, the State of New Mexico, and public responsibility are central in the planning documents. In addition, the strategic plan includes a useful visual model that illustrates the interconnections of the strategic goals (<http://www.unm.edu/~unmstrat/>).

The plan has two main types of goals, academic goals and administrative support elements. The academic goals include: vital academic climate, public responsibility, diversity, and areas of marked distinction. In the academic goals, there are strong foci on campus climate and environment, increasing educational access, and gaining more national and global recognition for programs and research. The administrative support elements include: planning, resources, and management systems and support functions (<http://www.unm.edu/~unmstrat/>).

The administrative support goals have a greater emphasis on increasing efficiency and maintaining and enhancing an infrastructure to support the academic mission. The university includes a detailed implementation plan to keep the university on course to achieve the listed goals. While the plan has not been updated recently, it provides important information about the direction of the university.

### **Wayne State University**

Wayne State University's strategic plan sets the direction of the institution from 2012 to 2017 (<http://president.wayne.edu/strategic-plan.php>). The plan highlights the long history of the institution and contributions made to the state of Michigan through a variety of professional graduates. It also focuses on recent campus developments in research, academic programs, and infrastructure. However, the plan is unique for other urban institutions in how forthright it is about the challenges facing Wayne State University and higher education as a whole. In the years prior to the plan, major budget reductions have been implemented; 80 million has been lost since 2002. With these significant challenges, gaining sustainable revenue becomes more important, as state appropriations are not expected to increase. There is also a larger goal of better understanding the climate of higher education in the United States from a larger perspective and creating more avenues for accessibility and affordability (<http://president.wayne.edu/strategic-plan.php>).

The five strategic goals of the Wayne State University plan include: improve student success; preserve stature and ranking as a premier research university; strengthen community engagement; develop a financial model to support the university's priorities; and build pride and advocacy amongst members of the WSU University (<http://president.wayne.edu/strategic-plan.php>). In addition, there are foci on strengthening research, increasing spirit and pride, and

enhancing community engagement. Another unique aspect of the plan is the intention to make more use of social networking, which is not seen in the plans of other institutions

(<http://president.wayne.edu/strategic-plan.php>). While it seems as if Wayne State University has experienced a few difficult years, a solid strategic plan can help the university adjust and set a positive strategic direction moving forward.

### **Virginia Commonwealth University**

Virginia Commonwealth University's strategic plan sets the future direction of the university from 2011 to 2017 (<http://www.future.vcu.edu/index.html>). The strategic plan has been coined the "quest for distinction," and is seen as the next phase in the university's development. The introduction capitalizes on the strengths of the university. In addition, a comprehensive environmental scan details the challenges and opportunities at the institution. Strong concentrations can be seen on health sciences, cost containment, and a dedication to the larger community. The plan has been well-coordinated with other ongoing university efforts, and includes helpful visuals of each plan with corresponding goals and metrics that assist in connecting campus initiatives (<http://www.future.vcu.edu/index.html>). Another unique aspect of the plan is the appendix, which has detailed information about the development process.

The plan includes four themes (paraphrased): provide students with high quality learning experiences in a global environment; make contributions in research, scholarship, creative expression, and clinical practice and enhance the quality of life; achieve national recognition with a commitment to human health; and become a model for community engagement and regional impact (<http://www.future.vcu.edu/index.html>). The plan has an annual process to review progress and implementation of the strategic plan and also will continue to use peer benchmarks as a metric for the strategic plan progress. In addition, there are compact planning

processes linked to larger strategic plan, in which each vice president is responsible for developing (<http://www.future.vcu.edu/index.html>). It is clear that the Virginia Commonwealth University has made significant progress in recent history, and is on course to continue progress with a well-developed strategic direction for the future.

### **University of Colorado at Denver**

University of Colorado at Denver strategic plan provides the direction for the institution from 2008 to 2020 (<http://www.ucdenver.edu/about/WhoWeAre/Chancellor/>). The plan was developed after major consolidation by Board of Regents, which included joining a medical campus with the larger university. The plan includes a comprehensive environmental overview, the “our university today” section (faculty, research, students, healthcare, economic impact, and facilities). In addition, the document provides a lot of information on the strategic planning task forces and how the features were decided. The plan is also provides many personal connections to faculty, staff, students and alumni, incorporating several quotes and individual profiles in the margins. Overall, the plan is bold and visionary, reaching for high achievement and recognition, like a faculty Nobel Prize Laureate. (<http://www.ucdenver.edu/about/WhoWeAre/Chancellor/>).

University of Colorado at Denver’s plan includes seven strategic priorities (paraphrased): opportunities of consolidation; outstanding and innovative educational experience; research and creative work for the public good; world-class health care programs with national recognition; diversity and culture of inclusion; partnerships that engage local, national, and global communities; and resources to achieve vision while being responsible stewards (<http://www.ucdenver.edu/about/WhoWeAre/Chancellor/>). The plan includes several financial assumptions: growth in faculty, tuition revenue research, research funding, financial aid, gradual state appropriations increase, capital projects, graduates increase. Unlike many

other universities, revenue from the state and other areas is expected to increase. One distinguishing feature of the central strategic planning document is the epilogue, which provides a call to action for the community to promote the strategic plan and implement the strategies (<http://www.ucdenver.edu/about/WhoWeAre/Chancellor/>). It provides strong closure and sustained future energy to an important planning process.

### **University at Buffalo**

The strategic plan of the University at Buffalo is still in progress but is slated for completion in 2020 (<http://www.buffalo.edu/ub/2020>). The plan is still in draft format and only three of the 11 strategies have been finalized. It is housed on an attractive and comprehensive website, with abundant information on the planning process. The plan includes eight steps for the university to achieve distinctiveness and highlights targets of opportunity. Also, the plan highlights distinctive traits of the University at Buffalo future graduate, which is not seen in other plans. It is important to note the larger NY SUNY 2020 planning process has greatly impacted the direction of the plan at the University at Buffalo (<http://www.buffalo.edu/ub/2020>). While the full plan has not yet been developed, much information can be gained from some of the initial documents.

The plan includes 11 strategies: academic, student success, research and scholarship, community engagement, regional economic development strategy, institutional faculty hiring strategy marketing/branding/communications/image development, campus support infrastructure, resource development, resource allocation policies and methods strategy, and implementation strategy (<http://www.buffalo.edu/ub/2020>). The goals of academic strategies, student success strategies, and research and scholarship strategies have been defined. Each of the strategies has a matrix which includes: objectives, initiatives/actions, and questions. While

not fully developed, interesting trends can be seen like developing mandatory curricular components for freshman seminars, service learning, and capstone courses (<http://www.buffalo.edu/ub/2020>). The plan has a strong start and will continue to develop as other strategies are completed.

### **Conclusion**

Working towards a common vision for the future is an important aspect of any higher education institution. As Indiana University Purdue University – Indianapolis (IUPUI) develops a new strategic plan in through the year 2025, it is important to consider best practices in strategic planning and examine the strategic direction of several peer institutions. This analysis will enhance the strategic plan development and allow for critical review of initial goals of the planning committee. This paper assists in this process by synthesizing common elements in IUPUI's peer institutions and summarizing each of the individual plans. As IUPUI moves to the future of the institution, a look at like institutions and the future direction of higher education as a whole will inform the process and strengthen the final product.