COLUMBIA COLLEGE
Steps in a SWOT

Introduction

This tool was designed to assist members of the Columbia College community to complete a SWOT Analysis of a particular area of the college such as the department they work in.

Although a SWOT Analysis may come in many forms, SWOTs have several things in common. They get members of a group or team to share their views with each other; to rate the views of others; to tabulate the rating; to view the overall group rating; and to recommend changes to the area being rated based on summarized results.

The steps presented here are designed to move a group through the SWOT Analysis in a brief period of time. The steps may be slowed down, if the group would like more time to discuss and/or reflect on what is being shared. However, they should keep in mind that a SWOT is an annual activity in the development of a Marketing Plan.

Who Should Participate in a SWOT

Although a SWOT typically involves team members within a department/organization, it should also be understood that stakeholders from outside the department/organization may provide additional valuable input in a full or partial SWOT Analysis especially when the departments/organizations primary purpose is to service said stakeholders (or customers).

In the case of an educational program at Columbia College it may therefore be valuable to include such stakeholders as employers and graduate students. As these individuals normally sit on a program Board of Advisors, this may be a good place to start.

Internal departments that are not educational programs may consider including representatives of other departments in the organization they provide services to.

Please refer to attachment #1 for a graphical view of the SWOT steps.

Step 1 Create a Personal List of Items

- Each participant involved in the SWOT Analysis should create a personal list of items on their own. Normally each list will consist of up to 3 items under each of the following four headings; Strengths and Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

- Participants should understand that strengths and weaknesses relate to areas within the organization and opportunities and threats relate to areas outside the organization.

- Participants should identify those items that are “most important to them”. They should place these items on their list.

- Since, what comes to a person's mind first is normally what is most important to them, should mean that this step will "not" take a lot of time to complete. Therefore participants should normally be given about 10 to 15 minutes to complete it.

Step 2 Clarify Items

- Each participant's personal items are next combined with all the other participants items under each of the four SWOT headings.

- The combined lists are next shared with all the members of the group.

- Each member reviews the items and the facilitator then leads the group through the lists, one item at a time, and asks if anyone in the group needs clarification on an item.

- Other participants are reminded not to openly express their support or non-support of any item as this will occur as a later step.

- If a participant needs clarification for an item, then the facilitator will ask, whose item it is and then ask the originator of the item to help clarify it.

- If deemed necessary, the facilitator may ask the originator if the wording can be changed and if they agreed, it is changed to wording they are comfortable with.

- Once there is no further need to clarify a single item the facilitator moves to the next item on the list.

- Once all items are clarified and where necessary changed the facilitator moves on to step three.

- Seeking clarification can take a considerable amount of time and group members need to be patient and respectful of others. It may take from 1 to 5 or more minutes to review each item.

Step 3 Determine Personal Priorities

- Depending on the number of items on each list it may be necessary for the group to have a break while the lists are placed on 8x11 paper and copies are made so that each participant has their own personal set of listed items. Because of the need to break, it may be wise to have participants complete step three on their own.

- Each participant is given or e-mailed the set of four lists and asked to prioritize the items on each from most important to least important. They are to place the number one beside the most important, the number two beside the second most important, and so on until each item has received a number. They will follow this same process until all four lists of items are numbered.

- When they have concluded their prioritizing they will then hand the lists to the facilitator or designate who will tally each list.

Step 4 Create Group Prioritized List

- The items will be placed on a new set of lists accordingly to the priority established by the group votes.

- The new prioritized lists are then shared with all participants.

Step 5 Group Determines How Many Items Can Be Completed

- Once the four lists are finalized it is time for the group to assess, review, and discuss the items in order to identify the most important windows of opportunity and problem areas and determine how many of the items can realistically be completed in a twelve month period.

- It is important to keep in mind that some items are simple and inexpensive to manage while others are more complex and costly.

- The intent here is not to modify the list, per se but to determine how many items starting with the highest priority item can be completed within the designated time.

- It is also important to recommend who inside or outside the group would be best suited to work on each item beginning in September of this year.

Step 6 Submit Recommendations to President

- Once the group determines what number of items on each list could be completed in a 12 month period and by whom, the group leader will then present the list to the President.

- The President will receive the full lists with noted action items and seek clarification on items.

- The President will then review each of the lists with the Vice President Finance and Accounting and determine what items would fit within the college's budget for the next year.

- The final list will be reviewed with the Board, as required, to seek their input and approval for the following year Marketing Plan.

Step 7 Approved Items Added to Marketing Plan

- Once the Board input has been received the finalized list of short and mid term goals will be added to the Marketing Plan for the college starting September of that year.

ATTACHMENT 1
Steps in a SWOT

Step 1 Create a Personal List of Items	Create 4 separate lists titled Strength, Weakness, Opportunities & Threats
Step 2 Clarify Items	Review each list of items as a group and allow members to seek clarification
Step 3 Determine Personal Priority	Each member numbers items on each list from most to least important
Step 4 Create Group Prioritized List	Individual priorities are tallied up in order to create 4 group prioritized lists
Step 5 Group Determines How Many Items Can Be Completed	Participants review prioritized lists as a group in order to determine how many items on each list could be worked on in the following year and by whom
Step 6 Submit Recommendations To President	Full set of recommendations are submitted to the President and Board for final approval and budgeting
Step 7 Approved Items Added to Marketing Plan	Approved items are added to following year Marketing Plan