

**RD 351 Strategic Planning & Decision Making**  
**Spring – 3 credits**

Instructor: Charlene Stern, Ph.D. Candidate

Telephone: 907-474-5293

E-mail: cbstern@alaska.edu

Office Hours:

Course Dates/Times:

Audio conference: 1-866-832-7806

PIN: 7590345

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The ability to plan strategically is fundamental to the success of organizations and communities alike. Rural leaders, in particular, must be incredibly adept at making strategic decisions about how to achieve desirable outcomes with limited human and financial resources. This course takes a practitioner approach to equipping students with basic knowledge of strategic planning processes as well as opportunities to engage with proven tools from the field. This course will emphasize business and technical writing and include student-moderated discussions.

**Prerequisites:** RD 300; RD 325; and junior standing; or permission of instructor.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

To help students to: 1) establish a framework for understanding strategic planning in the context of rural communities; 2) develop a competence in planning tools and techniques; and c) provide an opportunity to build writing capabilities and oral presentation skills.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to: 1) articulate key strategic planning concepts and processes; 2) describe best planning practices in the context of rural communities; and 3) apply tools and techniques to support community and/or organizational decision making.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

In order to receive full credit for this course, students are expected to read assigned material prior to the class, contribute to class discussions, and submit quizzes and assignments in a timely manner. Please let the Instructor know in advance if you expect to miss class. Missing four classes will result in an automatic deduction of one letter grade. Missing five or more classes will result in an automatic deduction of two letter grades. During certain class sessions, students will be broken into small groups via multiple audio-conference lines to work together to collectively apply concepts to case study scenarios. During these sessions, the Instructor will ask students to take turns serving as moderators. The role of moderators is to pose relevant questions to spur group discussion, encourage participation from all group members, summarize group comments, and report back to the larger class.

**REQUIRED READING**

The required readings for this course will be posted on Blackboard. A schedule of assigned readings is included on pages 5-6 of this syllabus. Additional readings may be

assigned in preparation for particular guest presenters. The assigned readings must be read *before* class since they will constitute much of the in-class discussions.

### STUDENT EVALUATION AND GRADING

Grades for the course will be assigned on the basis of the following point/grade scale:

A + : 98 -100 %	A : 93-97 %	A - : 90-92 %
B + : 88-89 %	B : 83-87%	B - : 80-82 %
C + : 78-79 %	C : 73-77 %	C - : 70-72 %
D + : 68-69 %	D : 63-67 %	D - : 60-62 %
F : below 60%		

Incomplete - An incomplete is a temporary grade used to indicate that the student has satisfactorily completed (C [2.0] or better) the majority of work in a course but for personal reasons beyond the student's control has not been able to complete the course during the regular semester. Negligence or indifference are not acceptable reasons for an I grade. Instructors include a statement of work required of the student to complete the course at the time the I grade is assigned, and a copy of the notice of the incomplete grade will be sent to the dean of the school or college in which the course is given. One year is the longest amount of time allowable for completion of the I. The I grade is not computed in the student's GPA until it has been changed to a regular letter grade by the instructor or until one year has elapsed, at which time it will be computed as an F. A senior cannot graduate with an I grade in either a university or major course requirement. To determine a senior's GPA for honors at graduation, the I grade will be computed as a failing grade.

Work for this course is weighted as follows:

• Class attendance & participation	15%
• Blackboard Posts	5%
• Assignment 1: SWOT Analysis	10%
• Assignment 2: Visioning Framework	15%
• Assignment 3: Theory of Change	15%
• Assignment 4: Strategic Plan Critique & Presentation	15%
• Assignment 5: Final Paper	25%
TOTAL	100%

### ASSIGNMENTS

Students are highly encouraged to use this class as an opportunity to challenge their technical writing skills. **Written assignments are expected to follow the APA style manual, be free of grammar and spelling mistakes and conjugations (i.e. can't, won't, etc.), and include complete (and correct) citations for all sources referenced.** Students are urged to utilize the UAF writing center to review their draft papers for clarity and technical editing. Please note that any title page(s), reference page(s), or images that take up more than a half a page will not be counted towards the minimum page requirements for Assignments. Late assignments will not be accepted and students will receive a "0" for any assignments not received by the Instructor after the required due date. The only exception to this policy is in the case of emergencies in which case, students must notify the Instructor immediately. It is at the discretion of the Instructor whether or not the student will receive an extension.

**Attendance and Participation: 15% grade**

See course requirements on page 1 for description of attendance and participation requirements.

**Blackboard Posts: 5% grade**

Students will be expected to complete (2) posts on Blackboard in response to the discussion questions posted.

**Assignment 1: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis (10% grade)**

A SWOT Analysis is a planning tool that provides a snapshot of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing an organization or community. For Assignment 1, students will use the template provided by the Instructor to conduct a SWOT Analysis of an organization or community of their choosing. In addition to the one-page SWOT Analysis diagram, students must complete a 3 page (double-spaced) paper summarizing key findings of their SWOT analysis and how those findings may inform future strategic planning efforts.

**Assignment 2: Visioning Framework (15% grade)**

Assignment 2 is a set of exercises based on the article, *Building Your Company's Vision*, by Jim Collins and Jerry Porras. Students will use the Visioning Framework template provided by the Instructor to articulate a core ideology (core values and core purpose) and an envisioned future (BHAG – Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal and vivid description) for an organization or community of their choosing. *Ideally, students will use the same organization or community as Assignment 1.* In addition to the completed Visioning Framework, students must complete a 3 page (double-spaced) paper summarizing key findings of their Visioning Framework and how those findings may inform future strategic planning efforts.

**Assignment 3: Theory of Change (15% grade)**

A Theory of Change (TOC) is a process of backwards strategy mapping intended to strengthen the pathway between a community or organization's desired impact and their proposed strategies. For Assignment 3, students will use the template provided by the Instructor to articulate a TOC for an organization or community of their choosing. *Ideally, students will utilize the same organization or community as Assignment 1 and 2.* In addition to a completed TOC, students must complete a 3 page (double-spaced) paper summarizing the key findings of their Outcomes Framework and how those findings may inform future strategic planning efforts.

**Assignment 4: Strategic Plan Critique & Presentation (15% grade)**

Students will be presented with two different strategic plans as a basis for their critique. Assignment 4 will consist of a 5 page (double-spaced) paper which compares the two plans and identifies the strengths and weaknesses of each using information learned in this course. The critique must include a **minimum of 3 references to course readings or lectures following the APA style manual.** Students will be expected to share a 5-7 minute presentation of their critique during class.

**Assignment 5: Final Paper (25% grade)**

The final paper will consist of a 10 page (double-spaced) critique of an existing strategic plan. The Instructor will provide a sampling of organization and community strategic plans of which

students will select (1) to serve as a focal point for their final paper. Assignment 5 is intended to be a technical paper which favors the use of passive voice. At a minimum, the paper should include: 1) an abstract; 2) an introduction that summarizes the key points of your paper; 3) a summary of the organization or community; 4) a description of the planning process; 5) a critique of the strengths and weakness of the plan; 6) 3-5 recommendations for strengthening the plan given the best practices and tools you learned in class; and 7) a strong conclusion that restates the key points of your paper. The final paper must be 10 pages in length (not including the cover page, reference page, or images that take up more than a half page), reference concepts from lectures/course readings, and include a minimum of 5 academic sources (in addition to the course readings) following the APA style manual.

### **SUPPORT SERVICES**

In addition to Fairbanks-based support services, each rural region provides different support services. If you are not sure where to get what you need you can talk to me or call your regional campus for information.

### **ACADEMIC SUPPORT**

- Academic Advising Center: (907) 474-6396; <http://www.uaf.edu/advising>
- UAF Writing Center: (907) 474-5314; FAX 1-800-478-5348; <http://www.uaf.edu/english/writingcenter>
- Rasmuson Library Off-campus Services: 1-800-478-5348; <http://www.uaf.edu/library/offcampus>
- The UAF Speaking Center; 907-474-5470

### **DISABILITY SERVICES**

UAF has a Disability Services office that operates in conjunction with the College of Rural and Community Development's (CRCDD) campuses and UAF's Center for Distance Education (CDE). Disability Services, a part of UAF's Center for Health and Counseling, provides academic accommodations to enrolled students who are identified as being eligible for these services. If you believe you are eligible, please visit <http://www.uaf.edu/disability/> on the web or contact a student affairs staff person at your nearest local campus. You can also contact UAF Disability Services by email at [uaf-disabilityservices@alaska.edu](mailto:uaf-disabilityservices@alaska.edu), by phone at (907) 474-5655, or by TTY at (907) 474-1827.

### **PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism is quoting from, paraphrasing or using specific material contained in any published work without providing appropriate citations or recognitions. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and incidents will be handled in a manner consistent with UAF policy.

### **HARASSMENT POLICY**

University of Alaska Board of Regents (BOR) have clearly stated in BOR Policy that discrimination, harassment and violence will not be tolerated on any campus of the University of Alaska. If you believe you are experiencing discrimination or any form of harassment including

sexual harassment/misconduct/assault, you are encouraged to report that behavior. If you report to a faculty member or any university employee, they must notify the UAF Title IX Coordinator about the basic facts of the incident. Your choices for reporting include: 1) You may access confidential counseling by contacting the UAF Health & Counseling Center at 474-7043; 2) You may access support and file a Title IX report by contacting the UAF Title IX Coordinator at 474-6600; 3) You may file a criminal complaint by contacting the University Police Department at 474-7721.

## COURSE OUTLINE

Date	Readings	Assignment
1/20	Introductions; Review of Syllabus	
1/25 1/27	<b>Introduction to Strategic Planning for Rural Communities</b> Excerpt from <i>Reclaiming Indigenous Planning</i> (2013), Walker et al. (Eds.)  C. Stern, Redefining Our Planning Traditions: Caribou Fences, Community and the Neetsaii Experience (2009). In M. Williams (Ed.). <i>The Alaska Native Reader: History, Culture and Politics</i> . Duke University Press.	
2/1 2/3	<b>Understanding the Context</b> Excerpt from <i>Rebuilding Native Nations: Strategies for Governance and Development</i> (2007), M. Jorgensen (Ed.) Indigenous Strategic Planning, D. Champagne <a href="http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2013/05/26/indigenous-strategic-planning-149312">http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2013/05/26/indigenous-strategic-planning-149312</a>  Inuit Circumpolar Conference Alaska Strategic Plan 2010-2014	<b>BB Post due 2/1</b>
2/8 2/10	<b>Leadership in the Management of Change</b> Excerpt from, <i>It Starts with One: Changing Individuals Changes Organizations</i> (2013), J. S. Black and H. Gregersen  Excerpt from, <i>Good to Great</i> , Jim Collins	
2/15 2/17	<b>Designing &amp; Facilitating a Strategic Planning Process</b> <i>Readings to be posted on Blackboard</i>	<b>BB Post due 2/15</b>
2/22 2/24	<b>Assessing Your Current Reality: SWOT Analysis</b> <i>Readings to be posted on Blackboard</i>	
2/29 3/2	<b>The Power of Vision</b> <i>Building Your Company's Vision</i> by James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras	<b>Assignment 1 Due 2/29</b>
3/7 3/9	<b>Issue Framing and Prioritization</b> <i>Readings to be posted on Blackboard</i>	
3/14-18	Spring Break Week– No Classes	
3/21 3/23	<b>Theory of Change and Outcome-based Planning</b> <i>Readings to be posted on Blackboard</i>	<b>Assignment 2 Due 3/25</b>
3/28	<b>Strategy Development</b>	

3/30	<i>Readings to be posted on Blackboard</i>	
4/4	<b>Critiquing Strategic Plans</b>	<b>Assignment 3 Due 4/4</b>
4/6	<i>Readings to be posted on Blackboard</i>	
4/11	<b>Critiquing Strategic Plans</b>	
4/13	<i>Readings to be posted on Blackboard</i>	
4/18	<b>Student Presentations of Assignment 4</b>	<b>Assignment 4 Due 4/18</b>
4/20	<i>Readings to be posted on Blackboard</i>	
4/25	<b>Implementing, Communicating &amp; Evaluating Your Strategic Plan</b>	
4/27	<i>Readings to be posted on Blackboard</i>	
5/2-6	Finals Week – No Class	<b>Assignment 5 Due 5/4</b>