

Diné College Planning Framework

Foundations

The Diné People have had an education system in place since the beginning of time. That system is woven in songs, prayers, ceremonies, and oral storytelling of the Diné Creation Story, which frames the story of Diné College. In this way, the story of Diné College comes from the womb of Mother Earth, Father Sky, sacred mountains, darkness and day, white and yellow corn, Corn Pollen Boy, Beetle Girl, Changing Woman, First Man and Woman, fire, water, and air.

Diné College was established in 1968 as the first tribally-controlled community college in the United States. In creating an institution of higher education, the Navajo Nation sought to encourage Navajo youth to become contributing members of the Navajo Nation and the world society. The mission of Diné College is to advance quality post-secondary student learning and development to ensure the well-being of the Diné People.

Diné cultural history is rooted in the male-female dualism guided by the Protection Way and Blessing Way of teaching. These teachings frame the mission and core educational models of the College. Protection Way teachings protect one against the imperfections of life, corruption, and evil. They help an individual cope with life's hardships and problems. Blessing Way teachings help the individual fulfill a good life and stay on the path of harmony and balance. A balanced life is the state of *hózhó*, bringing female and male teachings together and complementing all of life around us. These teachings give us the Diné Life Standards for walking in beauty and harmony with the world order:

- *Beauty Before Me.* Planning short- and long-term goals for the journey of life.
- *Beauty Behind Me.* Connecting home and self-identity through K'é.
- *Beauty Below Me.* Connecting with Mother Earth in relation to Diné and Western knowledge.
- *Beauty Above Me.* Connecting with Father Sky in relation to Diné and Western knowledge.
- *Beauty All Around Me.* Connecting with the environment and universe in relation to Diné and Western knowledge.
- *With Beauty I Speak.* Integrating Diné and Western knowledge sources.

"Through these teachings, I am Sa'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón. I will have knowledge, K'e, balance, and strength."

Sa'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón is central to Diné College. Based on the fundamental teachings of the Diné People, Sa'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón involves the four cardinal directions that reflect the four stages of the life cycle and serve as a means for internalizing knowledge. The internalization process of knowledge becomes the core of one's life. The Life Principles include:

- *Nitsáhákees* (Critical thinking)
- *Nahat'á* (Planning)
- *Iná* (Implementation), and
- *Siihasin* (Reflection and Assurance)

Sa'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón guides Diné College's mission, vision, principles, and values. Sa'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón is a life journey for living in harmony and balance with all parts of one's life and environment.

Through its history, the College has developed different expressions of Sa'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón. The Basket Model, Corn Stalk Model, Cradleboard Model, Diné Philosophy of Learning, and Diné Education Philosophy are all extensions of one's life, environment, and Sa'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón principles. The core of these models frames the College's mission, vision, principles, curriculum, and pathway for the future of the College and the Navajo Nation.

Recent Planning Efforts

Recent planning efforts of the College have been guided by the Sa'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón principles. In winter, 2011, the Board of Regents (BOR) began refocusing on the College's mission, vision, principles, and goals. That work continued through 2011-12, during which a focused accreditation visit took place. A representative task force steered preparations for the visit, in April 2012. President George transformed that task force into a standing committee, in fall 2012, to coordinate planning and accreditation activities. The Planning and Accreditation Committee has met regularly to complete the work that had been initiated by the Board of Regents.

Planning Framework

The Sa'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón principles are the basis for planning at the College. *All elements of the College's planning framework are derived from the fundamental teachings and Life Principles of the Diné People.*

Basic Elements of Planning. Strategic planning is planning that is undertaken for the whole College. It is meant to guide the College over a number of years. Annual planning takes place at the department or unit level and is done each year. It can sometimes be challenging to *see* how these important pieces all fit together to result in positive outcomes and progress for our institution.

Applying Diné Teachings to Planning. As part of the strategic planning process, the College's mission and principles are in place to guide the College's progress over a number of years. Given that Diné College's mission and principles are rooted in Diné teachings, it makes sense to draw from Diné teachings to illustrate clearly the connections between mission, principles, strategic planning, and annual planning. The Diné Life Principles – Nitsáhákees (Critical Thinking), Nahat'á (Planning), Iná (Implementation), Siihasin (Reflection and Assurance) – are powerful tools for addressing any issue, project, or situation that life may bring, including planning for an institution. The Life Principles make up a recursive cycle of steps for accomplishing hózhó.

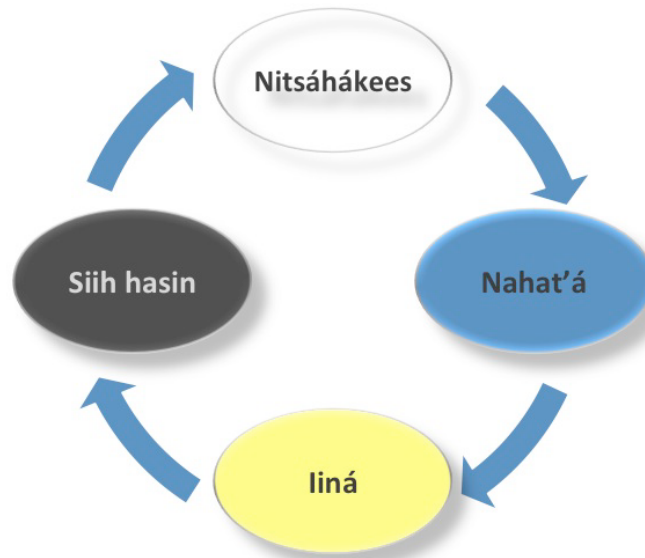


FIGURE 1: *Diné Principles*

Within each of the four steps, all four of the steps exist. This concept makes the use of Nitsáhákees, Nahat'á, Iiná, Siihasin for planning at the College even more fitting (see Figure 1 above).

Strategic Planning using Nitsáhákees, Nahat'á, Iiná, Siihasin. The application of Nitsáhákees, Nahat'á, Iiná, Sih Hasin to *strategic planning* (longer term, institutional planning) is used to plan out steps leading to positive outcomes for the whole college over multiple years. This is a macro level of planning completed over a four-year cycle. Within this process, the college's mission, principles and *strategic goals* are formulated to guide the whole institution (see Figure 2 on the following page).

Connecting Annual Planning to Strategic Planning using Nitsáhákees, Nahat'á, Iiná, Siihasin. By zooming in on the Iiná (Implementation) step of strategic planning, the process of *annual planning* can be seen as a smaller cycle of Nitsáhákees, Nahat'á, Iiná, Siihasin, which takes place at the entity (or department or unit) level. In this process, entities follow a similar cycle of planning steps. However, here entities create their own *departmental goals* that link to the strategic goals of the institution, tying all of the planning elements together (see Figure 3 on the following page).

Improving for a Better Future. All elements of the planning process using Nitsáhákees, Nahat'á, Iiná, Siihasin are integrally important. However, in relation to progress or improvement, the Siihasin step of the processes is of utmost importance. The feedback, reflection and evaluation that take place in this step of the process enable the entity and the whole institution to provide improvements and assurance for a better future.



FIGURE 2: Strategic Planning as aligned to the College's principles

Connecting Annual Planning to Strategic Planning using Nitsáhákees, Nahat'á, liná, Siih Hasin:
 By zooming in on the liná (Implementing) step of strategic planning, the process of *annual planning* can be seen as a smaller cycle of Nitsáhákees, Nahat'á, liná, Siih Hasin, which takes place at the department or unit level. In this process, departments follow a similar cycle of planning steps. However, here departments create their own *departmental goals* that link to the strategic goals of the institution, tying all of the planning elements together.

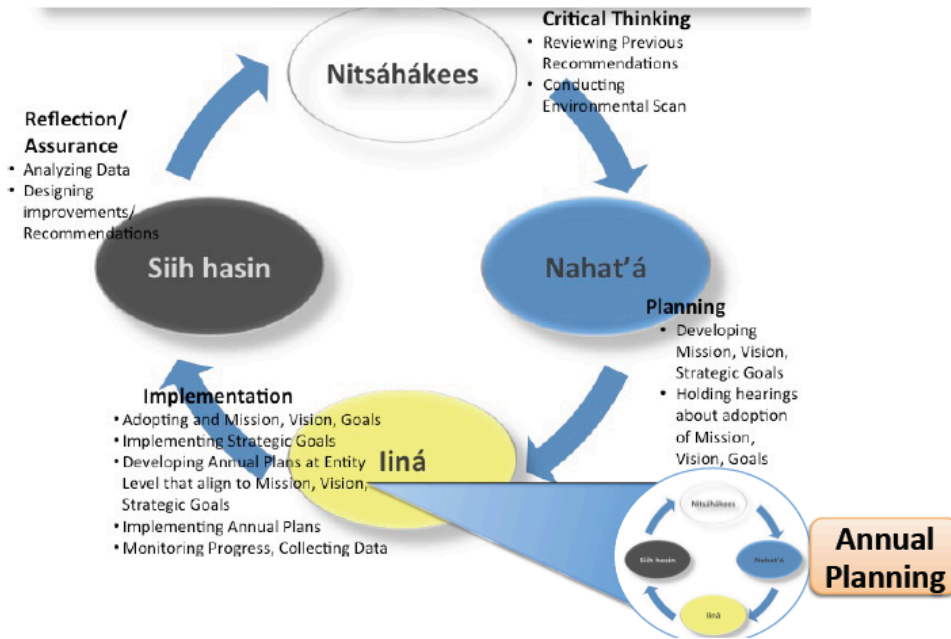


FIGURE 3: Connecting Annual to Strategic Planning

Planning Templates

Templates in WEAVEonline, a web-based set of planning and assessment tools, support the overlapping, interconnected thinking-planning-implementation-reflection and assurance cycles that are consistent with the College's principles. The following concepts are key to using these templates.

Entities. These are departments, offices, or individuals who are responsible for developing an annual plan. Another way to think about this concept is in reference to the College's organizational chart. Entities are those academic and support units that would otherwise appear on this chart. They can exist at an executive level at the top of an organizational chart, at a mid-management level, or at an operational level.

Strategic goals and strategic objectives. The BOR and College's planning committee have drafted new strategic goals and objectives for the College as a whole. They are meant to be long-term. They are outlined in the following section of this document. There are six strategic goals, and twenty-one strategic objectives. The strategic goals outline broad, expansive purpose statements. The strategic objectives outline purpose statements in each of the six areas that indicate something that the College wants to maintain, increase/improve, decrease/improve, or eliminate.

Annual plans. These are developed by academic and operational departments (as opposed to annual assessment plans for academic programs, which are developed by faculty) on an annual basis. The plans include objectives, or statements of purpose, that are meant to be accomplished within one year, or one annual planning cycle.

Measures, targets, and findings. Measures are tools for evaluating the extent to which an entity's members have accomplished what they set out to do in their annual plan. Targets are specific levels of effectiveness that the entity's members seek to achieve. Findings are the data that the evaluation tools provide over the course of the annual thinking-planning-implementation-reflection and assurance cycle.

Action plans for improvements (with requests for additional College funding). As entity members complete their annual plans and gather findings from implementing the assessment measures that they have designed, they have the opportunity to determine, from the analysis of data that they collect, whether or not they have achieved their targets – that is, whether or not they have met their objective, partially met it, or not met it. If the members partially met their objective or did not meet it, WEAVEonline prompts them to develop an action plan for improving that objective in the next annual planning cycle. It also prompts entity members to request for additional College funding if appropriate.

Revised Mission, Vision, Principles, Strategic Goals, and Strategic Objectives

In 2009-2011, the College experienced administrative turnover and little coordinated planning and evaluation. Emerging from this period, members of the College community recognized opportunities for improving planning, evaluation, and assessment in ways that honor the College's mission, vision, principles, and long-term goals (as expressed in the College's Progress Report

2011, to the Higher Learning Commission, and in the College's Focused Visit Report 2012, submitted to an evaluation team that visited the College in April, 2012).

During this same period, the College's Board of Regents met with members of the College's administration, previous administration, the College's Planning and Accreditation Committee, and several planning consultants to evaluate the institution's mission, vision statement, principles, values, and goals. The Board initiated clarifications and improvements in each of these areas. After the Planning and Accreditation Committee was formalized, in October, 2012, the BOR tasked that Committee to complete the work that the BOR had begun, establish a Planning Framework (which is what this document is designed to do), and hold Open Hearings for the entire College community to finalize revised mission and vision statements, and principles, values, and goals. These revised planning elements follow.

College mission. *Diné bina'nitin áyisíí ásiláago binahjí', ólta'í na'nitin náasjí' yee inááhwii-dool'álgíí yéego bidziilgo ádiilníít, áko Diné nilínígíí t'áá altso yá'át'éehgo bee bił nahaz'áq dooleeł niidzin.* Rooted in Diné language and culture, our mission is to advance quality post-secondary student learning and development to ensure the well-being of the Diné People.

College vision. *Nihí'ólta'gi, Diné Bibidziilgo Ólta'gi na'nitin at'áq ádaat'éii ólta'í bee nanitin-ígíí dóó t'áá ha'át'íi shíí bee biká aná'álwo'ígíí bidziilgo dóó bohónéedzáqgo ádiiniít niidzin. Díí binahjí' Diné bi'ólta'gi óhoo'aah ts'idá bohónéedzánii bee bił haz'á ilíí dooleeł.* Our vision is to improve continuously our programs and services to make Diné College the exemplary higher education institution for the Diné People.

College principles. *Nihina'nitin, Sq'ah Naaghái Bik'ehózhóón bił hadét'éego, dóó inda Diné yee iiná íít'ínígi át'éego nahasdzáán bikáa'gi dóó yádíłhił biyaagi bohónéedzánígi át'éego yee hiná. Díí binahjí' t'áá altsodéé' bik'ihwiinít'íígo bitah yá'áhoot'éego yee iiná íít'í.* Our educational principles are based on Sa'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón, the Diné traditional living system, which places human life in harmony with the natural world and universe. The system provides for protection from the imperfections in life and for the development of well-being.

The principles are four-fold:

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|---------------------------|--|
| <i>Nítsáhákees</i> | Critical thinking. <i>Baa nitsídziikes.</i> Apply the techniques of reasoning. <i>Nítsáhákees nahaaldeeł.</i> Analyze alternative solutions through the use of the principles of logic and creativity. |
| <i>Nahat'á</i> | Planning. <i>Nahat'á anitsíkees bee yáti' doo íishjání óozin.</i> Develop and demonstrate communication skills. <i>Nahat'á nahaaldeeł.</i> Demonstrate systematic organization skills. |
| <i>Íiná</i> | Implementation. <i>T'áá hó ájitéego hózhóqgo oodáát.</i> Demonstrate self-direction based on personal values consistent with the moral standards of society. <i>T'áá hó ájitéego hózhóqgo oonish.</i> Demonstrate quality, participation, work, and materials. |

Siihasin Reflection and assurance. *Siinasingo oodáál*. Demonstrate competency. *Siinasin nahaaldeel*. Demonstrate confidence.

College values. Our employees and students will adhere to the following values to achieve the mission and purposes of the College:

T'áá hó ájitéego Excellence and self-initiative in problem-solving, compassion, setting clear goals, and establishing positive working relationships.

Ahíł na'alnish Cooperating and helping one another, keeping all employees well informed, using proper language for communication, respecting one another on equal terms, and honoring K'é.

It idlí Respecting the cultural, racial, and gender diversity of the Diné People, maintaining safe, courteous, respectful, and positive learning environments, and valuing inclusiveness.

It ééhózin Understanding, thoughtfulness, competence, confidence, conscientiousness, and reflectivity for serving the needs of the Diné People.

Strategic Goals and Strategic Objectives

The strategic goals and strategic objectives will be in effect for four years, from spring, 2013 to spring, 2017. They will be reviewed and revised annually, with minor changes, additions, and deletions, and revisited anew at the conclusion of the four-year, strategic planning cycle. The strategic goals and strategic objectives will serve as guideposts for the development of entities' annual plans. Entity members will select (and likely be prompted by the Planning and Accreditation Committee to consider) strategic goals and strategic objectives relevant to their units, and construct annual operational plans associated to those strategic elements as well as the College's Principles, accreditation criteria, and any other applicable entity-specific standards.

The strategic goals and strategic objectives, started by the BOR and expanding by the Planning and Accreditation Committee, are as follows:

- 1. Perpetuate Diné language, culture, and respect for Diné principles and values.**
 - 1.1. Expand Diné language and culture programs.
 - 1.2. Develop co-curricular programs and activities that promote Diné language proficiency.
 - 1.3. Increase employees' understanding of and commitment to Diné principles and values.
 - 1.4. Increase students' understanding of and commitment to Diné principles and values.
- 2. Achieve student success through relevant teaching and learning**
 - 2.1. Improve student learning in the general education program.
 - 2.2. Improve student learning in certificate and academic program offerings.
 - 2.3. Improve transfer students' success.

- 2.4. Improve student support services.
 - 2.5. Improve both instructional delivery and support systems.
 - 2.6. Develop faculty development services that promote relevant teaching and learning.
- 3. Increase access to higher education and lifelong learning.**
 - 3.1. Improve recruitment and enrollment services.
 - 3.2. Establish dual enrollment courses and services.
 - 3.3. Promote community involvement.
- 4. Develop new certificate, associate's, and bachelor's programs and services that are responsive to the needs of the Diné Nation.**
 - 4.1. Improve the processes for critically reviewing current certificate and program offerings.
 - 4.2. Establish new program offerings in response to Diné Nation needs.
- 5. Improve institutional communication, governance, and resource structures.**
 - 5.1. Improve institutional governance structures.
 - 5.2. Increase fiscal resources from tribal, federal, state, and private sectors.
 - 5.3. Improve planning, evaluation, and budgeting processes.
 - 5.4. Develop and implement an institutional communication plan.
- 6. Promote transparency and accountability.**
 - 6.1. Improve data collection and analysis systems.
 - 6.2. Improve policy coherence.
 - 6.3. Improve employee recruitment, support, and retention processes.

Next Steps

The Planning and Accreditation Committee is piloting this Planning Framework, in Spring, 2013. Several academic departments and several support entities have established and are implementing annual plans that connect to, and extend, the strategic goals and objectives spelled out above.

Two important steps must follow. The first step is to establish an Institutional Effectiveness office so as to coordinate a number of important planning and evaluation functions:

- Environmental scanning
- Planning/evaluation
- Academic assessment
- Process improvement
- Internal/external reporting
- Accreditation functions

The second main step is to connect the Planning Framework with other functions and processes:

- Academic master plan
- Facilities master plan
- Technology master plan

- Development master plan
- Budgeting
- Academic program review
- HLC accreditation criteria

Terminology

The College's Board of Regents, administration, and Planning and Accreditation Committee recognize that using a common language of thinking, planning, implementation, and assurance and reflection is essential to successful planning and efforts to improve the College's programs and services. The definitions presented below are an important step in this direction.

Action plans. Activities designed to help entity accomplish intended outcomes/objectives.

Annual budget. Annual budget allocation to a College entity sufficient to accomplish its annual goals and objectives.

Annual planning. A process that takes place every year by which an organizational entity selects one or more strategic goals or strategic objectives; designs action steps, measures, and targets for achieving those goals; gathers and reviews findings; and designs and implements improvements better to achieve the goals in subsequent annual planning cycles.

Assessment. While "assessment" generally means "measurement," the term is increasingly used in the higher education context to refer to a systematic cycle of collecting and reviewing information about student learning. The complete cycle involves: clearly stating expected goals for student learning (Student Learning Objectives & Targets), offering learning experiences, measuring the extent to which students have achieved expected goals (Measurements), and using the evidence collected to improve teaching and learning.

Association. Key goal, standard, priority, or plan to which an entity's outcome/objective has significant connection (as utilized in WEAVEonline).

BOR. Board of Regents.

Core indicators. Planning and data indicators that are critical to effective monitoring and assessment of entities' goals and objectives.

Curriculum map. A representation of a program's learning outcomes that shows where they are taught within the program, often a matrix or Venn Diagram.

Direct measure. Process used to directly evaluate student work. It provides tangible, self-explanatory, and compelling evidence of student learning. Examples include: exam questions, portfolios, performances, projects, reflective essays, computer programs, and observations.

Document connection. Desired display locations for a document in WEAVE's Document Repository.

Document repository. Entity-level storage of documents, can be connected to assessment elements.

Entity. Basic organizational unit in WEAVEonline, includes program, division, department, administrative group.

Feedback loop. A cycle in which data-driven decisions are made for an entity, either academic or academic support, or the College as a whole.

Goal. Broad statement of what the entity aims to achieve inside or outside the classroom.

Indirect measure. Process that provides evidence that students are probably attaining learning goals. These require inference between the student's action and the direct evaluation of that action. Examples include: course grades, student ratings, satisfaction surveys, placement rates, retention and graduation rates, and honors and awards earned by students and alumni.

Master plans. Comprehensive, long-term goals in a core set of College operations, e.g., academics, facilities, distance education, and development.

Mission statement. A short statement or description that defines an organization's or entity's core purpose and focus.

Objective. Statement that indicates a non-academic task to be accomplished in order to achieve a goal.

Outcome. Related to learning goals, these are the specific result – measurable statements of the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and habits of mind that students acquire as a result of the learning experience.

Principle. An important assumption or guideline for activities and interactions within an organization.

Priority. Perception of value action plan could have for enhancing quality.

Relevant teaching and learning. Instructional practices and materials that empower students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using appropriate cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Rubric. A grading guide that explicitly states the criteria and standards for student work. The traits of student work are separately named, and each trait is evaluated from high to low.

Strategic planning. An organization's process for envisioning a desired future.

Supplemental budget amount requested. Supplemental budget request for implementing an improvement action plan (as utilized in WEAVEonline).

Target. The overall level for satisfactory performance on a Measurement-Outcome/Objective.

Values. Lasting beliefs shared by members of an organization.

Vision statement. An aspirational description of what an organization hopes to achieve in 5-10 years.