

In discussing budget cuts at schools in Tennessee, a friend asked why her university was spending money on things like rec centers and other extras while considering cutting academic programs. Of course you can argue about the merits of these additions to the campus, but it's interesting to think about what it would take to make this change in course. It would be a major change of institutional strategy, undoing years of investments on the campus that in this case make it increasingly a full-service residential university.

But one can conceive that such an institution might need to make a major change in direction, rather than keep pursuing a strategy that no longer works. The possibility of this change of direction has to be at least a theoretical possibility. But can you imagine the planning process that would lead to this conclusion? A typical strategic planning process will prescribe pulling together a group of people to work out a new vision. This way you get the benefits of many people thinking through the problem and a shared commitment to the course of action. But in general a process like that will involve a lot of compromises and splitting the difference, with the likely result of ending up close to where you started--the closest thing to you are doing--at least everyone

If the planning group goes into a formation and working through to come up with a dramatic new likely that dramatic ideas will come that is that in addition to the will also "own" it and have the most virtues--selling other people on it is theoretical alternative is for one of organization's leader, to impose his or her idea on the organization. You can argue that's what happens in the corporate sector, but higher education governance has little place for that.

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very intense process of group ideas together, they might be able vision as a group. But it is more from individuals. The problem with individual creating the idea, they intense sense of the idea's another matter altogether. A those individuals, presumably the

It seems to me that you might find the conditions for a group to develop and embrace a radically new idea of the institution when it finds its survival at stake, but I'm not sure how often that happens. I think about Antioch trying to save its residential college in Ohio, or the efforts to save the College of Santa Fe by selling it to Laureate or merging it into the New Mexico public system. Neither of these came together in the end. (While it's probably the end for the College of Santa Fe, I'm betting that Antioch will rise from the ashes.)

If I'm on track about this read on the dynamics for a group considering major changes in direction, it is unlikely that a well-established campus will remake itself until it faces a deep crisis that threatens its survival. A budget cut at a public institution probably doesn't rise to that level.

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