As a functional division, Facilities Services (FS) confronts numerous roadblocks when directing time and effort toward developing strategic and innovative practices. Typical for many Facilities divisions are the expectations that day-to-day functions are to be carried-out in a cost-effective manner while reserving capacity to react to unanticipated needs. The Facilities’ culture at Saint Louis University was one of being proud to be “behind the scenes” and “quietly effective”.

In 2010 we recognized that higher education will be addressing major trends requiring our division to be a proactive partner at our University. To this end, we instituted a strategic planning and culture change practice to reposition Facilities Services to be operationally excellent and strategically capable of contributing to the long-term direction of the University.

Our innovative, five-year strategic plan uses yearly cumulating themes of Building Capability, Creating Involvement, Using Measurement, Improving Execution, and Conducting Evaluation. These themes move the Division forward on its strategic initiatives of building operational excellence through best practices, benchmarking, working with key University divisions to contribute to their strategic success, developing our employees’ operational and strategic leadership abilities, and pursuing internal and external recognition and feedback.
A Historical Perspective

Institutional benefits

Our Strategic Planning and Culture Change Practice created numerous institutional benefits at the strategic, division, and employee levels:

Strategic Level: As Facilities Services (FS) developed its capability to think and act strategically over the last four years, the work culture shifted dramatically. Our core values (P.R.I.D.E. in our work - Passion, Resourceful, Innovative, Dependable, and Expertise) became drivers of the Division’s mission. The Strategic Initiatives (strategic and operational excellence, stakeholder recognition, environmental resource optimization, excellence in people, and partnering) became the impetus for pursuing our vision. Gradually, the work culture shifted from one of reactive responsiveness to proactive competence. The Division’s newly acquired strategic skills, processes, and culture benefitted the University in the following ways:

- FS easily aligned its strategic plan with the University’s strategic plan.
- FS Vice President was identified for leadership roles on the University’s strategic committees.
- FS’ strategic plan was referenced by top administration as a model for other divisions.
- Divisions view FS as a potential partner in achieving their strategic success.
- Certain FS strategic initiatives are contributing to long-term University cost savings.
- FS is developing its overall level of capability to respond to shifting University priorities.

Divisional Level: In addition to the benefits accrued to the University, the Division is committed to becoming operationally excellent. The confidence to pursue this goal rests on having planning, measurement, execution, and personnel development processes in place. Our Strategic Planning and Culture Change Practice provided the rationale and processes, produced the experiences and tools, and changed the culture. Benchmarking, best practices, balanced scorecard and continuous improvement are tools used to assist us in meeting our desired outcomes. In addition to building capability to think and act strategically, this innovative practice has yielded the following outcomes:

- Finalized the strategic implementation of our Facilities Asset Management Information System (FAMIS) software for space planning and operationalized it.
- Created a benchmark ranking matrix and 5-year recognition plan to receive outside feedback about the quality of our services and to gain recognition for our accomplishments.
- Displayed mission and core value plaques at FS offices/time clocks to build employee awareness.
- Implemented numerous initiatives and collaborated with internal and external stakeholders to increase our waste diversion rate towards our goal of 30%.

Employee Level: This practice created opportunities for employee development as well as involvement. Employee feedback guided our actions taken and created motivation to pursue building competencies.

- Various types of groups/surveys continue to be used to generate input
  - Oversight meetings, action plan reviews, review & revise sessions, stakeholder response surveys, planning retreats, management audits, focus groups, functional strategic leadership assessment, etc., were incorporated into our strategic planning activities
  - Employee development activities included strategic leadership development sessions, employee training sessions, boundary spanning, mentoring, training, coaching, etc.