

**COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIC AND  
BUSINESS PLANNING AT THE MICRO LEVEL:  
THE MURDOCH BUSINESS SCHOOL**

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## ABSTRACT

This paper analyses and critiques the traditional top-down strategic planning process that prevails in organisations. It investigates the argument(s) for a shift from the traditional to an emergent approach to planning issues. It argues, however, for a planning approach that has active staff/employee involvement and ownership of the process to nurture real engagement with the outcome(s) and to enhance authorship of, and commitment to, the final results. The empirical component is a case study of the planning process used by the Murdoch Business School within Murdoch University in Western Australia. It concludes that although the planning process was an effective example of participative decision-making it remained a limited form of empowerment. The University can publicly proclaim that it has implemented a 'best practice' planning process. The reality is that it has been no more than an organisational act of game playing unlikely to be repeated in future.

**Keywords:** *Traditional Strategic Planning*  
*Emergent Planning*  
*Participative Decision-making*  
*Public Sector Reform*  
*Action Research*

# **COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIC AND BUSINESS PLANNING AT THE MICRO LEVEL: THE MURDOCH BUSINESS SCHOOL**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Public universities in Australia have increasingly become the subject of greater financial and corporate accountability including the management of organisational outputs and outcomes. Further, the increasing emphasis on incorporating wider public sector reform under the aegis of managerialism has increased the utilisation of private sector management practices (Hughes, 2003; Funnell and Cooper, 1998; Levy, 1981). For universities the results are mainstream practices in strategic and business planning with a top-down senior management decision-making approach. This is concurrent to a small section of management in the private sector that is critically questioning the senior management and planning department dominance of the overall planning process. See for example the actions of Wesfarmers and its senior management team<sup>1</sup> (Switzer, 2003).

Traditional strategic planning in both the private and public sectors is a corporate managerialist, top-down model operating usually in an economic rationalist framework. Senior management, specialist planning staff and the office of the Chief Executive Officer have the exclusive responsibility for the planning and control process. The end result is often glossy, sterile documents that gather dust in various corners of the organisation. Such a formalised planning process has come under scrutiny and critique from a growing and diverse range of authors and consultants (Entrekin and Court, 2001; Desai, 2000; Wright et al., 1999; Mulhare, 1999; Gan, 1998; Mintzberg, 1994). This has resulted in these writers advocating a shift from the traditional to an emergent approach to planning issues.<sup>2</sup> It is argued that such a shift in approach better utilises the intellectual capital and embedded talent in an organisation and enables the business to engage and compete more effectively in the emerging knowledge economies.

This paper chronicles the strategic and business-planning process utilized in an academic organisational unit (AOU) of Murdoch University in Western Australia. The Murdoch Business School (MBS) is in the last stage of finalising its current strategic and business plan within the larger strategic framework explicated by the university. It argues for a planning approach that has active staff/employee (academic and general) involvement and ownership of the process to nurture real engagement with the outcome(s) and to enhance authorship of, and commitment to, the final results.

The paper is organised into two sections. The first analyses and critiques the prevailing standard planning practice(s) utilised by organisations, public and private, and advocates instead a more participative approach. The second section is a case study of the planning process used by the Murdoch Business School. The organisational and empirical component of this paper is written primarily as a textual analysis of the discourse (verbal and written) that occurred during the collaborative decision-making process. Field notes of the two authors, who were among the main participants during this extended process, are used as the major source for the analysis. Other organisational participants have not been interviewed at this stage. Those interviews and the resultant findings will be analysed and reported in another paper.

## **EMANCIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH**

The methodology used within this project is one we classify as emancipatory action research, where the researcher is an integral part of the process and the end aim is change in the system itself. It therefore has a critical inquiry edge (Crotty, 1998). The researcher(s) effectively become co-researchers with other people from within the organisation with responsibility for the project shared by everyone (Carson et al., 2001, pp.167-168). In a business or university domain, this tends to encourage new ways of thinking that leads to restructuring processes and attempts to deliver systemic improvements.

Action research of this type focuses on the notion that social science research has some identifiable form of usefulness to society. It is a research approach whereby a group of individuals collaborate with the intent of improving their work processes. One of the oldest and most sustaining definitions available is by Rappoport:

Action research aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by a joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework (1970, p.449).

The process encompasses a cycle of planning, acting, observing and ongoing reflection upon what has happened within the project. In the case of the Murdoch Business School (MBS) this cycle (not yet fully complete) has taken just over a year. The primary object utilising this approach was to shift the academic organisational unit (AOU) strategic planning responsibility from the management of the MBS to a more collaborative approach expected to deliver a committed and sustained set of outcomes.

## **TRADITIONAL PLANNING AND CONTROL APPROACH**

The management accounting literature abounds in texts oriented to the rationale and processes to be employed in the planning and control cycle(s). Bazley and Hancock define planning as "... the determination of objectives and expressing how they are to be attained" (1999, p. 387) and then go on to state that strategic decisions are "...those that determine the long term policies of the firm and are necessary if the firm is to meet its objectives" (1999, p. 390). Similar statements are made by other writers in both the accounting and management literature (Bartol et al., 2001; Horngren et al., 1997; Drury, 1996; Bryson, 1995; Emmanuel et al.; 1990; Mintzberg, 1973). The emphasis is on the importance and necessity of this managerial function to the ongoing success and survival of the organisation.

For many years the dominant paradigm has been the traditional approach, best represented by the viewpoint that managers (with the assistance of planning departments) are solely responsible for making the key decisions within an organisation and they are also accountable for ensuring the ongoing success of the organisation. The three underlying premises that have dominated the planning landscape are argued by Mintzberg (1994, p.42) to be as follows:

1. Strategy formation should be controlled and conscious as well as a formalized and elaborated process, decomposed into distinct steps, each delineated by checklists and supported by techniques.

2. Responsibility for the overall process rests with the chief executive in principle; responsibility for its execution rests with the staff planners in practice.
3. Strategies come out of this process fully developed, typically as generic positions, to be explicated so that they can then be implemented through detailed attention to objectives, budgets, programs and operating plans of various kinds.

The intentional, formalized planning approach with minor variations is still being promulgated widely in Australia. A prime example is the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Australia (ICAA), professional year program for graduate members. The Strategic Business Management module incorporates the steps advocated by the traditional adherents to the planning process (ICAA, 2001).

Traditional planning causes a tension and conflict as the desire in most organisations is to “...retain the stability that planning brings to an organization—planning’s main contribution—while enabling it to respond quickly to external changes in the environment—planning’s main nemesis” (Mintzberg, 1994, p.184). This is closely connected to the additional desire of senior management to maintain *control* over strategies, decisions, the future, customers, employees, markets etc. (Mintzberg, 1994, pp 201-202). This enables top management to feel more comfortable and in charge of what is ‘going on’ in the organisation and to feel that they are fulfilling their main leadership function as decision-makers.

The primary concern, however, is that the intentional approach with its deterministic emphasis has the unintended consequence(s) of limiting flexibility and organisational learning, stifling innovation and creativity and locking in organisations to unrealistically long planning horizons (Garraat, 2000; Desai, 2000; Bryson, 1995; Mintzberg, 1994). Intentional strategies are in danger of being overtaken by events in the business and wider environments and can often lead to organisational efforts and directions that are dysfunctional. The main fallacies identified include the assumptions of a world that would remain relatively unchanged during and after the lengthy planning process; that hard data could be dealt with in a detached and disinterested observer way; and, that strategies should, and could, be formalized and implemented in a (positivistic) rational and orderly sense (Boyett and Boyett, 1998, pp. 192-194). A different approach is necessary to address these concerns and to ensure that the planning process remains relevant and effective in the contemporary business environment.

### **EMERGENT STRATEGIC PLANNING**

There are a number of potential solutions to the dilemmas highlighted by the deep critiques of the intentional, formalized planning process. One of these is Gan’s (1998) proposition that organisations use what he calls a “means-end hierarchy” where the emphasis shifts to a focus on goals and relationships between goals<sup>3</sup>. This solution does not resolve the concerns of the “ownership” of outcomes, the management of change nor the vexed question of organisation decision-making being limited to the exclusive domain of specific ‘senior’ individuals or small, elite groups.

Another approach to planning is documented in Holloway (forthcoming 2004) and represents a paradigm shift in the approach to strategic planning. The following best captures the main elements:

With emergent strategies, senior management still sets the broad strategic direction but the specific business strategies emanate (emerge) from lower down the organisational hierarchy. These arise from decisions made by those 'closer to the coalface' and are thereby better focussed and have an enhanced likelihood of achieving the business objectives and aims. Entekin and Court (2001, p. 14) use the analogy of an airline flight where planes veer from the true course up to "...98 per cent of the time, but they still arrive at their destination because the pilot makes frequent *small* [emphasis added] corrections" (2004, p. 5).

This approach attempts to be more collaborative and involves, to some extent, the devolution of authority and decision-making to groups lower down the organisational hierarchy. If this approach is so successful it raises the puzzling conundrum as to why there are still so many traditionally top-down decision-making focussed organisations in both the private and public sectors. Boyett and Boyett (1998, pp. 140-141) provide speculative answers; resistance to an organisational cultural change from an emphasis on individuality to one of a collective nature; the team approach being perceived as too time consuming, risky and inefficient; managers feeling threatened by a loss of control, status and responsibility; and, even that the transition from traditional to high performing organisation is simply too hard to accomplish and sustain.

Under the 'emergent' school of thought, strategic planning changes focus and operates in an enhanced, facilitative way and enables organisation teams to evaluate alternative strategic decision options on an ongoing basis. In contrast, the selection of the most feasible strategic option should be based more on a rigorous, argument-based discourse in which all strategic alternatives/options are assessed openly (without fear or favour) by the participants (see Holloway, forthcoming 2004). The emergent school's concept of ongoing strategic planning comes close to emptying the notion of strategic planning by management altogether. It attempts to deliver flexibility through a notion of continuous adaptation, with the aim to deliver flexibility through adaptive responsiveness to the continually evolving organisational environment. This latter move can only be achieved through rethinking the approach to cognitive diversity and decision-management.

A key criticism of the 'emergent' approach is that the issues of embedded organisational power and authority are not effectively retheorised. The nature and depth of the implied 'employee empowerment' entailed by this move into participative staff involvement is unclear. It may well be that senior management still retains 'real' control of the final planning outcomes and, therefore, the resulting planning exercise may simply end up as another form of what Ciulla terms bogus empowerment. As she argues:

Authentic empowerment requires leaders to know what they are giving away and how they are changing the relationship between themselves and their followers...Power is a defining aspect of this relationship...Bogus empowerment attempts to give employees or followers power without changing the moral relationship between leaders and followers...Without honesty, sincerity and authenticity, empowerment is bogus...(1998, p. 84).

Emergent planning is an advance on the traditional method but it does not represent a panacea for all the identified problems that are evident with the dominant traditional paradigm. In the next section we argue for an approach that is more robust and has the

potential to be used within the different decision-making layers of a public or private sector organisation.

### **AN EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATIVE PLANNING APPROACH**

The extant literature with its prescriptive edge centralising organisational power, authority and decision-making in the hands of senior management requires an alteration and shift in focus if effective participative planning is to be adopted. The new approach is to involve employees from the commencement of the planning cycle, by permitting and encouraging active involvement, full participation in and psychological ownership of the process. This acts as an effective counterfoil to the shortcomings of "...failing to communicate a vision, planning problems, not matching vision with processes, not being committed..., failing to lead by example, demonstrating inconsistencies of attitudes..." (Walderssee and Griffiths, 1997, p.10).

Does this participative approach work? What are the benefits? There are two strands of literature that argue positively in favour of just such an intellectual turn. The first is grounded in industrial relations research. The notion is that employees should have control of the organisation as a whole and to discover new, and presumably better, ways for organising work – a form of workplace democracy (a normative concept). The argument is that the idea of participation is central to notions of democracy, which apply to most social institutions, including politics, community, family and school. It therefore should naturally apply to the workplace (Ciulla, 1998, p. 74). Benefits for organisations identified in this literature are presumed to be self-evident.

The second strand is grounded in organisational development literature in the management discipline. Most of that literature had focussed on quality of worklife, job enrichment and employee motivation – again primarily normative concepts. A seminal paper by Black and Gregersen (1997) analysed and brought together the major findings in the academic and practitioner literature. They took a multidimensional view that examined the degree of integration of participation and decision-making processes and their relationship with job satisfaction and performance. The results clearly identified that the greater the degree (or depth) of employee involvement in five key decision-making processes (identifying problems; generating alternatives; selecting solutions; planning implementation; and, evaluating results) the greater the level of job satisfaction and job performance. It should be noted that this refers to individual not collective outcomes for worker participation. This and other similar studies (Witt et al., 2000; Tremblay et al., 2000; Latham et al., 1994; Pearson, 1991) have empirically validated the organisational benefits of participation in decision-making.

The first pragmatic step in the proposed methodology is to utilise an organisational action framework that truly incorporates a collective and collaborative approach to decision-making and the planning process. The management role then becomes one of facilitation not top-down dictatorial management decision-making process. The intellectual underpinning for this move comes from action learning and action research methodologies, which are oriented to both change and learning/research within organisations. They are participative and egalitarian and have a problem/solution orientation that is recursive (cyclic in nature). The resulting empowerment and engendered ownership of the outcome(s) are reflexive, flexible and responsive to the organisational context and constraints (Sankaran et al., 2001).

Within this approach the effected employees form groups that are empowered to consider, debate alternatives, construct outcome(s) and actively engage in and manage the planning process from both bottom up and top down. Senior managers and employees are equal and active participants and any power imbalance has to be acknowledged and openly surfaced. During this collaborative period a Habemasian informed, argument-based discourse is used to identify and engage with the strategic alternatives and arguments (see Holloway, forthcoming 2004). The result is a more effective organisational process with enhanced employee engagement in, and ownership of, the outcome(s) and minimising, if not eliminating, resistance to the implementation of the agreed outcome(s).

A vital element in this process is the freedom of information to move across, between and around organisational layers and or barriers so that collaborative decision-making can become more effective. As Wheatley argues:

Information is unique as a resource because it can generate itself. It's the solar energy of organisation - inexhaustible, with new progeny possible with every interpretation. As long as communication occurs in a shared context, fertility abounds. These new births require freedom; information must be free to circulate and find new partners....

Of course, such freedom is exactly what we prevent. We have no desire to let information roam about promiscuously procreating where it will, creating chaos. Management's task is to enforce control, to keep information contained, to pass it down in such a way that no newness occurs. *Information chastity belts are a central management function* (emphasis added) (1999, p. 97).

If information is withheld from participants we move into the situation that Ciulla (1998) identifies as the problem of bogus empowerment. This is potentially disastrous. When staff/employees identify that this is occurring the legitimacy of the whole participative process is questioned.

An important issue within the methodology is the binding nature of the decisions taken. It is essential to ensure the individuals within the groups voluntarily take responsibility for the decision of the group. Overt or covert coercion cannot and should not occur. Voluntary responsibility is combined with the commitment of members of the group to accept their own personal cognitive fallibility, respect the views of others and recognise the only legitimate authority being that of the 'better argument'. This moves to meet Grice's (1975) claims that pragmatic judgments must be maximally relevant, truthful, informative and perspicacious. If all these demands are fulfilled (in which notions of truth are replaced by those of epistemic justification) then decision outcomes are of maximum epistemic value.

It must also be remembered that groups may well impose voluntarily assumed boundaries on themselves to keep within certain legal and/or moral parameters. Holloway and De Reuck point out that "Government secret services, one imagines, set extremely low standards for moral and legal justification in their pursuit of maximally epistemically justified decision outcomes" (2001, p. 14).

Another concern is the too early emergence of an *Alpha Argument*. This occurs when an unfolding, early argument tends to dominate the conversation amongst group members. This can build up too quickly taking all along with it and forcing members into mute acquiescence.

This may lead to irritation amongst the majority if the dominant position starts to be questioned, the latter usually occurs with the pressures of time constraints.

The *Alpha Argument* occurrence can also lead to the problem of *groupthink* first identified by Janis (1972). Group decision-making can result in poor decisions because of the perceived need by the group to maintain cohesion through the reduction of conflict by pursuing the goal of concurrence and consensus seeking outcomes. This occurs when social pressures arise, when the aim is to make decisions efficiently (in other words quickly and expediently) as well as the desire to avoid conflict<sup>4</sup> and thereby ensure (falsely) constructive decision outcomes. The way to overcome this tendency is to actually reward divergent thinking and constructive alternative arguments. To achieve this diverse techniques such as encouraging and rewarding counter arguments; seeking outside comment; using multiple advocacy; and, engaging in dialectical enquiry whereby underlying assumptions of the problem are identified and challenged are utilised (Baker, Barrett and Roberts, 2002, p. 333). Group diversity with process rules that prevent silencing manoeuvres constitutes the strongest counterweight to groupthink tendencies.

The next section details to what extent this overall methodological approach was employed in the construction of the current Murdoch Business School strategic and business plan.

## **MURDOCH UNIVERSITY AND THE MURDOCH BUSINESS SCHOOL**

Murdoch University (MU) is one of four public universities and one private university located in Perth, Western Australia<sup>5</sup>. The University is the smallest in size of the public universities with three campuses: the main campus at South Street and satellites at Rockingham and Peel. The University consists of three academic divisions and nineteen discipline-based schools, which form the core of the academic organisational units (AOUs). In 2003 there were 8,469 equivalent full time students (12,611 enrolments): these students were supported by 470 full-time academic and 696 full-time administrative staff. The majority of students are non-school leavers forming nearly sixty percent of the student population (Murdoch University, 2004).

The University has a high, national reputation for its teaching quality and research quantum. It is the only university in Australia to have eight times in the past nine years a 5-star rating for graduate satisfaction with the quality of teaching as rated by the independent *Good Universities Guide*. In research it ranks tenth of thirty-nine for universities when one excludes the biases for those that have medical schools and the associated access to large grants (Holloway, forthcoming 2004, p. 10).

The Murdoch Business School (MBS) was formed in January 2002 following the amalgamation of the former Schools of Commerce and Economics. It is one of nine schools in the Division of Arts. The School of Commerce was at the time in its 18<sup>th</sup> year and the School of Economics in its 27<sup>th</sup> on campus. Between the two Schools, four Undergraduate and thirteen Postgraduate programs are offered. The largest degree program is the Bachelor of Commerce with a 1,092-student load at the August 2003 census date and serviced by 59 full-time academic and general staff (Murdoch University, 2004).

The MBS has enjoyed considerable success in a number of areas. In teaching there have been sustained high-level ratings, including the recent award of the Prime Minister's Excellent Teachers award to a staff member in MBS. The School has also enjoyed high

levels of graduate satisfaction, graduate employment and individual staff contributions to community service.

### **ACTUAL PLANNING PROCESS AND OUTCOMES – TO DATE**

The initial MU planning process involved a hybrid ‘emergent’ process. In April 2001 the entire university community and stakeholders commenced the participatory planning process: documented and critiqued in Holloway (forthcoming 2004). The Vice-Chancellor (Professor John Yovich) officially launched the final strategic framework in December 2003 after it had been scrutinised and passed by Senate (the governing body) in August of that year (Senate, Murdoch University, 2003). The substantial delays in finalising the organisational strategic plan resulted from the uncertainties raised in the whole tertiary sector during the previous eighteen months. The concerns resulted from the Federal Governments Crossroads reform agenda. (Nelson, 2003).

The most valuable elements that were produced as part of the MU combined top-down and bottom-up approach were the communally debated (vigorously) and derived organisational values, themes and overall mission statement. There was almost universal acceptance that the concept of ‘sustainability’ would be central to the University’s strategic focus. The final document was deliberately brief and concise (6 pages in total) with the objective of constructing the institution’s strategic thinking but not weighed down by intricate and detailed operational plans – see appendix A.

Divisions and Schools were then responsible for developing their own strategic and operational plans nested within the larger organisational strategic framework. These were to be developed using a similar participative approach to allow both academic and general staff to be closely involved. The Murdoch Business School commenced the planning process early using the ‘draft’ University strategic plan finalised in May 2002. The whole process was then put on hold by MU Senate because of the Federal Government Crossroads reform agenda combined with the appointment of the new Vice Chancellor. The ‘final’ plan was not expected to deviate significantly from the ‘draft’, and this eventually proved to be the case.

The MBS undergraduate planning process recommenced with a half-day strategic options workshop at the end of semester in December 2002. The workshop was attended by thirty-two members of academic and general staff and an external consultant. David Holloway, who had been involved in the University’s planning process, facilitated the main plenary sessions. The aim of the day was to open up discussion and debate potential themes and values but it was not intended to finalise the process. At the end of each plenary session the larger group was split into four smaller breakout groups. This ensured all participants had the opportunity to contribute. The feedback from staff and the consultant (verbal and by email) was positive and concerns over levels of cynicism and lack of interest were misplaced. A similar but separate session had been held earlier in November, 2002 to discuss future options at the postgraduate level (Holloway, 2003).

The results from these sessions were fed into a formal planning day held on 19 February, 2003. The full day session was opened by the Vice Chancellor, facilitated by the consultant and attended by fifty academic and general staff. The sessions (plenary and breakout groups) focussed on five main planning areas; international/offshore operations; domestic programs (undergraduate/postgraduate); research and consultancies; teaching and learning; and administration. The purpose of this particular day was to generate realistic, achievable ideas

that would assist in setting goals and targets for the MBS over the immediate and medium term future. The final strategic and business plan was to dovetail into the University strategic framework and directions. Ultimately the timeframe was overly optimistic and was not achieved.

The debates continued and smaller self-selected groups met over the next few months until the documented outputs were provided to a full meeting of the whole School on 23 April, 2003. Once again, there was extensive debate with no final decisions reached and it was decided to send all the material generated to a smaller working group chaired by Associate Professor Lanny Entrekin. The group comprised seven staff members from across the School, which met several times over the next seven months. Their brief was to distil all the documentation into a cohesive 'draft' plan to be referred back to the whole School for any amendment and ratification. During this period several formal and informal discipline-based discussions and innumerable 'corridor chats' occurred. One of the primary reasons for this delay was the University itself failing to deliver a 'final' strategic framework to the Murdoch community (van Rhyn, 2003).

The working group produced a 'draft' plan, which was presented to the whole School at a meeting held on 10 December, 2003. The plan has now been submitted to the respective discipline groups for final discussion and ratification. The final outcome is contained in Appendix B. The present phase is now concerned with the construction of detailed operational and business plans to ensure the goals and targets identified can be realistically achieved within an acceptable timeframe.

### **CRITIQUE – EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION OR GAME PLAYING?**

Did this particular participative methodology work in the case of the MBS? It could be argued that in practice it was not much different from the 'emergent' approach. There was a difference and the difference was primarily in the attitude of the workforce. There was a strong prevailing mood that was determined not to let the process be 'captured' by the management of the MBS. Consequently, the workforce involvement was genuine and at times highly contentious, which is precisely what was needed. It is through a level of constructive conflict and argument-based discourse that enabled the more 'robust' decision outcomes to be reached.

However, at times there was discomfort with the process and a feeling that the School was engaged in an exercise of 'paralysis by analysis'. A notion that is often surfaced by critics of teamwork participation and is especially aimed at the committees system frequently used in Universities. The critics present cases where decisions are never finalised and continually go in circles and the organisation never effectively progresses at the pace that is required in contemporary business environments. The criticism is supported by those at senior management level who are in favour of a top-down decision-making approach. An ex-Vice Chancellor of Murdoch University is an example of this particular mindset. He was an ardent advocate of a market-forces approach within higher education and a wholehearted believer in the managerialist perspective of the role of 'managers managing' their organisational domains (Schwartz, 2002, 2001, 2000). In a paper given at a right wing think tank (Centre for Independent Studies) in February 2000 he argued that Universities in Australia represented the last of the great socialist enterprises exhibiting "...a centrally controlled, provider-driven mentality" (p. 2). An attitude we would argue is prevalent throughout the tertiary sector.

There is strong defence for the need for discourse. Wheatley's (1999, p. 69) defence against such a negative claim is that the need for extensive discussion and dissension is vital to the ultimate acceptance of a particular plan:

After a period of sometimes maddening dissension, the dissections cease and people sit back content, filled with energy and commitment. Usually we endure these processes wondering why we have to go through them, especially because so often the agreed-upon plan bears a striking resemblance to what was proposed initially. But it is the *participation process* (emphasis in the original) that makes the plan come alive as a personal reality. People can commit themselves because it has become real for them.

A key failing of the committee system is that effective power, authority, and responsibility for decisions is not delegated to those groups. Usually, their role is one of recommendation and advice to other internal governing bodies or senior managers. Effective participation must involve 'real' empowerment in which there needs to be institutional freedom of information, good faith and authenticity as well as a change in manager/workforce power relationships.

Another dilemma surfaces with the use of the term 'empowerment'. This effectively means that the 'real' power ultimately continues to reside with senior management. The workforce is only 'empowered' to the extent permitted by management. The problem with an empowerment 'scheme' as applied in the Murdoch University and MBS context is that "...the language used often raises unrealistic expectations about how much power and control employees actually gain over their work" (Ciulla, 1998, p.74). The result is that if there are no other changes in organisational power relationships then the workforce is disappointed at the limits placed on participation.

The usual bureaucratic management model is one of 'command and control'. It is characterised by a hierarchical 'top-down' organisational structure in which power and authority is usually heavily centralised and there are few opportunities for collaborative decision-making. At MU participation has been limited to the strategic and business planning process. The organisation can legitimately claim the use of a best-practice leading edge planning process. The ultimate test will be whether the workforce is allowed into the contested arena of budget-setting and management of resources utilising a collaborative and participative decision-making framework.

To utilise such a collaborative and participative decision-making approach universities need to significantly transform prevailing organisational management values and culture. There are a number of identified organisation cultures within universities (Dopson and McNay, 1996; McNay, 1995; Bergquist, 1992) but currently dominant in Australia is top down decision-making managerialism. In the Miller et al. seminal paper on change management they identify that organisational change of the required magnitude should best be described as 'quantum'. There are significant barriers to such change not least being that such "...upheavals threaten the rewards, reputations, and power of elite executives" (1997, p. 73).

Murdoch University currently has a relatively new Vice Chancellor (Professor John Yovich) appointed from July 2002. He has appointed a number of new senior executives, who have yet to establish their management credentials. It is unlikely that the senior executive group will undertake such a momentous change in approach to decision-making when settling into

the new roles. Time only will show if deeper levels of participative decision-making will be introduced.

If no further participative decision-making occurs then it was a case of limited empowerment, which at the time enabled public proclamation of the implementation of a 'best practice' planning process. The great danger of this "half-hearted" or limited attempt at workforce engagement is the perception that such involvement is no more than an organisational act of game playing.

## CONCLUSION

The case study of what has occurred within Murdoch University and the Murdoch Business School shows that any organisation, even a highly politicised and bureaucratic one, is capable of making major shifts in management thinking to incorporate what has been learnt through extensive research, business experience and consultancy. It is evident that traditional, formalised strategic planning processes have serious flaws and that effective employee participation can deliver significant organisational benefits and more robust, epistemically sound decision outcomes.

The key issue is however the degree of legitimacy conferred on the process by the limited level of empowerment that was allowed to occur. Universities like all organisations must be reflexive and respond to external exigencies. For universities the response to external reform exigencies should not then result in a knee-jerk 'command and control' reflex reaction by senior management.

If organisations and particularly universities are to reap the benefit from the existing high levels of knowledge/intellectual capital then strategic decision-making should not remain the exclusive right of specific individuals or very, small elite groups merely because of their organisational roles. Effectiveness and not efficiency should be the aim of well-constructed decision outcomes and planning processes. The adaptability and self-organising capability of the workforce requires an inclusive, not exclusive, and participative decision-making methodology to unlock and realise the full future potential of the organisation.

### **Bios**

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Dianne van Rhyn is also Senior Lecturer in Accounting in the Murdoch Business School. Her research interests are in social and environmental accounting, critical theory and accounting education. One of her current research projects is on the cultural assets of the Hmong hill tribes in Vietnam. She has also been the Head of School of the nascent Murdoch Business School for a two-year period ending in July 2002.

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## **ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Michael Chaney the retiring CEO of Wesfarmers (the leading Western Australian company) describes his leadership and decision-making interaction as: “I believe strongly that a team of good people can contribute more than one individual...We have a very informal, collegial atmosphere in the office...I have always found collaboration much more effective than direction” (Switzer, 2003, p.43).

<sup>2</sup> Emergent strategic planning is based on the assumption that the business environment is unpredictable and chaotic and requires top management to only set broad strategic direction and instead allow a collective decision approach to create specific, adaptable business strategies by other layers in the organisation who are “...close to the action” (Wright et al., 1999, p.7).

<sup>3</sup> Means-end hierarchy is a proposed conceptual model that focuses on problem solving and which uses a simple “...framework that decomposes problems into goals and sub-goals in a top-down, most-general to most-detailed fashion” (p. 2). This is then applied in a planning situation such that the generation of strategic alternatives corresponds to the decomposition of a goal into sub-goals.

<sup>4</sup> One solution is to run different break out sessions where membership of smaller sub-groups is rotated.

<sup>5</sup> The other universities are the University of Western Australia (the oldest); Curtin University (technology focus); Edith Cowan University (the newest with a teaching focus) and the University of Notre Dame (a private Catholic university).

Approved by Senate August 18 2003

Official Launch by Vice Chancellor on December 11 2003

[MURDOCH](#)

[INDEX](#)

[SEARCH](#)

[PEOPLE](#)

## Murdoch University Strategic Plan 2003-2007



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From the Vice Chancellor,

Like universities throughout the world and in all ages, the mission of Murdoch University is to add to the store of human knowledge and to inspire future generations to continue the quest for truth and wisdom.

Murdoch University is differentiated from other universities by the way that we pursue our mission. It lies in the emphasis that we place on diversity, human values and sustainability. Taken together these features define the 'Murdoch Ethos', and are encompassed in the Vision, Values and Defining Themes and Goals of our Strategic Plan.

In developing our Strategic Plan, a broad cross-section of the Murdoch community were involved in defining just what it is we want Murdoch University to be. It was their vision that by the end of 2007, Murdoch University will have grown substantially; will be well-known as a high quality, research-intensive university; will increase access for students from diverse educational backgrounds; will expand in the Rockingham-Kwinana and Peel regions; will deliver courses flexibly to meet student needs; will have developed the campus infrastructure in an environmentally sustainable way; and will practice its defining themes, with an interdisciplinary and international perspective in teaching and research.

I commend to you Murdoch University's Strategic Plan 2003-2007 as the roadmap to a strong, sustainable, independent University.

Professor John Yovich  
Vice Chancellor

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### Mission

To extend knowledge, stimulate learning, and promote understanding, for the benefit of the community

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## Vision

Murdoch will be a prominent and influential research-intensive University in the local, national and global communities. It will be renowned for its teaching quality, research excellence and innovation, and promotion of social and scientific critique. Murdoch University will embrace cultural diversity and ensure an international perspective in its activities, incorporating principles of sustainability, social justice and global responsibility.

Murdoch University is a multi-campus institution. By engaging with communities in the sphere of influence of our campuses, Murdoch will be a significant contributor to cultural and community life and development in the region.

Through excellence and accessibility in the learning environment, student care and service provision, Murdoch will engender a vibrant and positive on-campus life and foster an expanding, active alumnus.

Murdoch University will have increased financial reserves and more diverse sources of income as a result of an entrepreneurial outlook combined with prudent management that will ensure long-term independence.

## Values

Murdoch University is committed to providing an educational environment that fosters an open, critical, equitable and participatory approach to teaching and learning, and thus promotes intellectual independence and the best civic attributes in its graduates.

A rigorous, analytical and holistic approach to the various forms of knowledge within a sustainable framework will be encouraged through interdisciplinary courses of study, sound scholarship, academic freedom, and high quality, innovative research that is sensitive to contemporary issues.

The Murdoch University community will abide by the values of integrity, tolerance and mutual respect.

## Defining Themes

### **Equity and Social Justice**

Provide equity of access to study and employment at Murdoch University for people who have the intellectual ability to succeed.

Promote a better understanding of social justice issues wherever relevant in course offerings.

Conduct research into equity and social justice issues of importance to our communities.

### **Sustainability**

Focus on sustainable long-term solutions.

Aim to meet the needs of current and future generations through an integration of environmental protection, social advancement and economic prosperity.

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### **Global Responsibility**

Promote an understanding of the worldwide interconnections between economic, environmental and social activities.

Interact with our community and manage our resources at a local level in a globally responsible way.

### **Innovation and Entrepreneurship**

Approach the challenges of the future using new ways of thinking and acting, and a willingness to take informed risks.

Ensure the management approach taken by Murdoch University is characterised by a spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship.

## **Goals**

### **To provide quality contemporary education which empowers the students of today to live and work in the world of tomorrow.**

In welcoming Australian and international students from diverse backgrounds Murdoch University recognises that individual students may be seeking different things from their University experience throughout their lives.

Students can expect to study in a student-centred environment that provides suitable physical facilities, sufficient learning resources and accommodates a variety of learning styles to enable them to learn effectively. Academic curricula will be coherent and robust, and reviewed and refreshed regularly to ensure the appropriateness of content and process.

All graduates require in depth knowledge of a field of study with an awareness of other disciplines, and the capacity to communicate effectively, work collaboratively and independently, think critically and creatively and understand ethical and social justice issues. These are expressed in the University's statement of graduate attributes.

The notion of quality improvement will infuse our processes and culture. Mechanisms such as accreditation, fitness for purpose analysis through quality audit and benchmarking will inform our self-reflection. Improved outcomes will be achieved through regular review and implementation of necessary changes.

### **Key Strategies:**

- To provide a student-centred learning environment for all students.
- To provide coursework curricula that are pedagogically sound, academically coherent, robust and relevant for society and the learner.
- To enable graduates to achieve good employment outcomes.
- To enhance the educational quality of courses and the teaching and learning experience.
- To provide ongoing learning opportunities for graduates and the community.

### **Desired Outcomes:**

- To maintain student satisfaction with the quality of teaching within the top 20% of the Australian public universities, as measured by the Course Experience Questionnaire (that is to retain our five star teaching rating).

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- To maintain the rate of student satisfaction with the quality of teaching above 80%, as measured by unit surveys.
  - To increase the percentage of graduates who demonstrate their commitment to lifelong learning by undertaking further study.
  - To increase the percentage of graduates who are able to gain their preferred employment to within 2% of the state average.

**To contribute to the knowledge, wellbeing and sustainability of society by conducting high quality multidisciplinary research and development.**

Many aspects of the Australian natural and social environment are unique and therefore require unique solutions. Murdoch University will conduct research in areas that are aligned with national, State and community priorities. The University will continue to build on its record of research excellence through focused, innovative and enterprising approaches.

Maintenance of a productive research culture requires a pool of talented postgraduate research students. Murdoch University will ensure they have quality supervision, clearly defined projects, sufficient resources and opportunities for developing generic skills.

Long-term and enduring partnerships will be built between Murdoch University researchers and other complementary national and international government agencies, universities, industrial and commercial partners and venture capital companies. Murdoch University will support researchers to generate intellectual property that has potential commercial value and, where appropriate, to assist in successful technology transfer and commercialisation.

**Key Strategies:**

- To focus research into areas of recognised and growing strength.
- To strengthen postgraduate research.
- To extend existing research relationships, and foster new ones, with external partners.
- To exploit Murdoch University's existing and potential intellectual property, technology transfer, and commercialisation.

**Desired Outcomes:**

- To increase research productivity as measured by the Research Funding allocation and rank.
- To increase research income to \$40 million by 2007.
- To increase the number of postgraduate research student completions per 10 Staff FTE.
- To maintain postgraduate research student time to completion for MPhil and PhD within 2 and 4 years respectively.
- To maintain the rate of student satisfaction with the quality of supervision above 80% as measured by the postgraduate research student surveys.

**To engage with communities in the Rockingham-Kwinana and Peel Region and the sphere of influence of our campuses to build productive partnerships in order to expand community participation in lifelong learning, support the sustainable development of the region through relevant social and scientific research, and enrich the cultural life of the community.**

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Murdoch University is committed to playing a pivotal role in the social, cultural and economic development of Western Australia. Its strong commitment to the communities within the sphere of influence of its campuses is evidenced in its decision to partner with communities in the South West corridor, with particular emphasis on Melville, Fremantle, Cockburn and the Rockingham-Kwinana and Peel Region.

The dynamic and emerging demographic growth of the region provides an opportunity to make a contribution to the expansion of wealth creation opportunities, assist in the preservation of the unique and distinct characteristics of the region and help redress the imbalance by increasing participation rates in university education.

Murdoch University will actively participate in the provision of research expertise and research outcomes in the South West corridor by becoming a key partner in the planning, development, implementation and problem resolution process.

**Key Strategies:**

- To actively promote the vital importance of and the benefits and relevance of higher education and training for those seeking careers in a knowledge economy.
- To maximize opportunities for increased collaboration with Rockingham-Kwinana and Peel community organisations, industry and government agencies.
- To support key research initiatives which have significant strategic value to, and will provide the impetus for, sustainable developments and activities in the Regions.

**Desired Outcomes:**

- To assist in increasing participation rates in higher education to the state mean.
- To increase research income stemming from research based in Rockingham-Kwinana and Peel Region.

**To achieve Murdoch University's strategic objectives by providing effective leadership and applying our human, financial and physical resources in a planned and accountable fashion.**

Achievement of Murdoch University 's goals in education, research and regional engagement requires effective leadership, careful management of resources and the commitment of staff and student body to achieve these common goals. The implication of targets in our operational plans needs to be understood and considered in the provision of relevant infrastructure and support.

Murdoch University should lead the way in its governance and business practices by being ethical, innovative, efficient and effective in the provision of services to our internal and external stakeholders and clients. Staff are recruited with the skills for the tasks to be undertaken and assisted to develop their skills to meet future requirements. Staff will be provided with an accessible work environment in which they have the infrastructure and services to meet their objectives and fulfil their potential. Policies and procedures will incorporate an appropriate international and intercultural dimension. Student and administrative services will support the needs of students from culturally and socially diverse backgrounds.

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Murdoch University will support the development of a vibrant campus life by engaging with internal and external stakeholders, including the student body, and providing to them the opportunity to access the University's facilities and other infrastructure.

The generation of increased revenue from diversified sources is essential for the long-term stability of Murdoch University. This will be facilitated by the projection of a strong image as a successful research-intensive university with demonstrated pedagogical quality and innovation.

**Key Strategies:**

- To increase income from a diversified range of sources.
- To implement user focussed, cost effective and appropriate support and service delivery systems for students and other stakeholders.
- To ensure that all governance and business processes are ethical, effective, efficient, equitable and transparent.
- To attract, develop and retain highly skilled staff within a work environment that motivates them to support Murdoch University's objectives and to achieve their full potential.
- To nurture a strong community spirit within the University.

**Desired Outcomes:**

- To achieve ratios of total operating and teaching related expenditure to total load (EFTSU) equal to the state average.
- Increase income by \$30 million and diversify the sources by 2007.

**CWIS HOME**

**CONTENTS**

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[Murdoch University CWIS Administration](#) queries to [cwis@www.murdoch.edu.au](mailto:cwis@www.murdoch.edu.au)

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# Murdoch University

## Murdoch Business School

### Strategic Business Plan

#### Executive summary

The Murdoch Business School (MBS) formed in January 2002 following the amalgamation of the former Schools of Commerce and Economics from the Division of Business, Information Technology and Law at Murdoch University. This Strategic Plan aims to consolidate a recently restructured MBS and pave the way for sustainable growth.

Since forming, the MBS has experienced contraction in a number of areas. Staff numbers have declined, the MBS has withdrawn from teaching in offshore programs and there has been a reduction in the number of overseas full fee-paying students attending the Murdoch Campus. During 2003, MBS has been laying the foundations for a turnaround strategy to underpin the growth strategy contained in this Strategic Plan. The MBS has recently restructured into a functional matrix, recruitment has commenced to fill some of the vacant academic positions and the relationship with the offshore partner in Malaysia is being revitalized.

This Strategic Plan identifies ways in which the MBS can achieve sustainable growth, locally and offshore while maintaining high quality teaching. The MBS aims to increase flexible learning delivery, maintain and improve teaching and learning quality assurance, improve student and industry linkages and recruit staff who can contribute to academic excellence. The MBS estimates that if the strategies for Education, Research, engaging with the local and overseas regions and Management of the School detailed in this report are implemented the university could expect an increase in revenues of \$5.6 million a year. To be able to achieve this outcome, improvements in facilities, staffing levels and promotion of the MBS are essential

#### **Murdoch Business School Mission**

To extend knowledge, stimulate learning, and promote understanding, for the benefit of the community

#### **Vision**

As part of the Murdoch University community MBS will be a prominent and influential research-intensive University in the local, national and global communities. It will be renowned for its teaching quality, research excellence and innovation, and promotion of social and scientific critique. Murdoch University, and particularly the MBS, will embrace cultural diversity and ensure an international perspective in its activities, incorporating principles of sustainability, social justice and global responsibility.

Within Murdoch University, the MBS is part of a multi-campus institution. By engaging with communities in the sphere of influence of our campuses, MBS will be a significant contributor to cultural and community life and development in the region.

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Through excellence and accessibility in the learning environment, student care and service provision Murdoch will engender a vibrant and positive on-campus life and foster an expanding, active alumnus.

Murdoch University will have increased financial reserves and more diverse sources of income as a result of an entrepreneurial outlook combined with prudent management that will ensure long-term independence. MBS is committed to supporting and enacting this Vision.

## **Values**

Murdoch University is committed to providing an educational environment that fosters an open, critical, equitable and participatory approach to teaching and learning, and thus promotes intellectual independence and the best civic attributes in its graduates.

A rigorous, analytical and holistic approach to the various forms of knowledge within a sustainable framework will be encouraged through interdisciplinary courses of study, sound scholarship, academic freedom, and high quality, innovative research that is sensitive to contemporary issues.

The MBS supports the Murdoch University values of integrity, tolerance and mutual respect and these will be enacted through the core values of Responsibility, Innovation, Diversity and Enterprise Management

## **Defining Themes:**

**The Murdoch Business School commits to Murdoch University's four major Values as follows:**

### **Equity and Social Justice:**

- MBS will provide equity of access to study and employment within the MBS for people who have the intellectual ability to succeed.
- MBS will actively promote a better understanding of social justice issues wherever relevant in course offerings.
- MBS staff will conduct research into equity and social justice issues of importance to our communities.

### **Sustainability**

- MBS will focus on sustainable long-term solutions.
- MBS will aim to meet the needs of current and future generations through an integration of environmental protection, social advancement and economic prosperity.

### **Global Responsibility**

- MBS will promote an understanding of the worldwide interconnections between economic, environmental and social activities.
- MBS will interact with our community and manage our resources at a local level in a globally responsible way.

### **Innovation and Entrepreneurship**

- MBS will approach the challenges of the future, using new ways of thinking and acting, and a willingness to take informed risks.
- The approach to the management of MBS will be characterised by a spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship.

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## Murdoch Business School Goals

In line with the values and key result areas of Murdoch University, the Murdoch Business School focus for the future will encompass, **R**esponsibility, **I**nnovation, **D**iversity and **E**nterprise in the key areas of;

**Education: To provide quality contemporary education which empowers the students of today to live and work in the world of tomorrow.**

As Western Australia's smallest Business-School, MBS works hard to ensure our student learning environment is one of our competitive advantages. The School is recognised as having friendly staff, a high standard of teaching delivery and seeks continual improvement in this area. Our aim is for students to study in a student-centred environment that provides suitable physical facilities, sufficient learning resources and accommodates a variety of learning styles to enable them to learn effectively. To achieve this, we believe the academic curricula needs to be coherent and robust and so commit to review and refresh our teaching content and process to ensure courses remain highly relevant and appropriate. The school commits to continuous quality improvement and will annually review all processes and activities so timely changes can be implemented.

**Key result areas:**

**To provide a student-centred learning environment for all students by;**

1. Expanding flexible delivery of learning by extending student access through a range of modalities.

**To provide coursework curricula that are pedagogically sound, academically coherent, robust and relevant for society and the learner and to enhance the educational quality of courses and teaching and learning experience by;**

1. Ensuring the graduate attributes are embedded in all course curricular by the end of 2004.
2. Developing and implementing quality assurance measures and standardising generic processes and practices for all coursework by the end of 2004.
3. Maintaining a high level of industry relevance in all course work offered within MBS.
4. Basing new course initiatives on industry research and a demonstrable business case.

**To increase the percentage of graduates who demonstrate their commitment to lifelong learning by undertaking further study and to provide ongoing learning opportunities for graduates and the community by;**

1. Facilitating an increase in the number of students continuing on to higher degrees.
2. Increasing the flexibility of student access to the university and in particular the MBS, through flexible learning initiatives.
3. Increasing the profile of the MBS among Local Businesses and the wider Community by establishing industry links and increasing the level of consultancy.

**To increase the percentage of graduates who are able to gain their preferred employment to within 2% of the state average by;**

1. Actively promoting the MBS programs to establish a high profile as a preferred provider of business education at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.
2. Promoting the MBS by building close ties with the local business community, through an industry linkage program and industry based 'practicums' for post-graduate and undergraduate students.

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### **Desired Outcomes:**

- Cancellation of non viable and non 'staffable' majors and units
- All Coursework to be available through flexible delivery by 2007
- To maintain student satisfaction with the quality of teaching within the top 20% of the Australian public universities, as measured by the Course Experience Questionnaire.
- To maintain the rate of student satisfaction with the quality of teaching above 80%, as measured by unit surveys.
- To increase the percentage of graduates who demonstrate their commitment to lifelong learning by undertaking further study.
- To increase the percentage of graduates who are able to gain their preferred employment to within 2% of the state average.

### **Constraints and Limitations**

The MBS has a number of severe limitations that require urgent action:

1. A high turnover of both permanent and casual staff has severely reduced staffing levels particularly at the senior level. The number of staff with PhDs has declined significantly and the school is relying heavily on Contract / Casual staff. This limits the Schools ability to attract research funds, mentor early career researchers, conduct research, and supervise and teach post -graduate students.
2. Declining preferences and enrolments: Enrolments at the Rockingham Campus and the proportion of overseas full fee-paying students have declined severely impacting revenue.
3. Inadequate teaching and campus facilities for post-graduate course-work students.

### **Research: To contribute to the knowledge, wellbeing and sustainability of society by conducting high quality multidisciplinary research and development.**

Research achievements within the Murdoch Business School (MBS) have been equitable to other business schools, but lower than in other areas of the University. This lower rate is in part a result of the past high workloads carried by staff and off shore teaching. The MBS aims to revitalise a research ethos within the school by providing a nurturing research environment for academic staff and postgraduate research students to the benefit of the Australian community and the enhancement of knowledge. The School is committed to providing staff and research students with time to do quality research by managing teaching allocations, providing a supportive framework for researchers, preserving Outside Studies Program opportunities, and research teaching buy-out mechanisms.

### **Key Result Areas**

#### **To focus research into areas of recognised and growing strength by;**

1. Nurturing research centres that are within or connected to the MBS.
2. Implementing a broader focus on research through a Centre for Innovation and Human Resource Management within MBS.
3. Expanding MBS research capacity by the appointment of strong researchers to senior positions and developing a stronger adjunct position profile to bring external researchers into MBS research programs and provide supervision opportunities.
4. Nurturing Early Career Researchers (ECRs) through an active program of meetings, seminars and mentoring to assist them conduct research activities and achieve funding and publications.

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**To strengthen postgraduate research by;**

1. Increasing both the number of students and the research output of postgraduate research students.
2. Ensuring postgraduate research students have access to quality supervision and monitoring of academic progress.
3. Ensuring postgraduate research students have adequate access to equipment and funding.

**To extend existing research relationships, and foster new ones, with external partners by;**

1. Promoting a positive research environment within the MBS through an active research seminar series, the recruitment of research oriented staff and active collaboration with the Division of Arts research groups, outside researchers and research centres.
2. Encouraging greater levels of dissemination of research outcomes among the economic, business, social policy makers and broader communities.

**To exploit Murdoch University's existing and potential intellectual property, technology transfer, and commercialisation by;**

1. Market and disseminate our research output and skills.
2. Improve external links via consultancies, industry and policy groups and other forums.

**Desired Outcomes:**

- Increased number and quality of MBS academic publications
- Increased number and values of research income/grants.
- Increased completions by Post-graduate research students.

**Constraints and Limitations**

The recent high turnover of senior staff from senior lecturer level is inhibiting the research capability of MBS. The school now employs a high number of junior staff who are on short term or casual contracts and their ability to conduct research is limited by lack of job security, high teaching loads and lack of mentors. Combined, these factors contribute to a reduced number of staff with Doctorates and experience to supervise postgraduate research students and particularly PhD students. Additionally, job in-security and short-term employment hamper the ability of contract and casually employed staff to conduct research.

**Regional: To engage with communities in the Rockingham-Kwinana and Peel Region and the sphere of influence of our Australian campuses. To build productive partnerships, both locally and overseas, in order to expand community participation in lifelong learning, support the sustainable development of the region through relevant social and scientific research, and enrich the cultural life of the community.**

- MBS aims to achieve this by developing and nurturing industry links in the southern corridor to develop research and industry partnerships for staff and students and by building relationships with our off shore partners.

**Key result areas:**

**To actively promote the vital importance of and the benefits and relevance of higher education and training for those seeking careers in a knowledge economy by,**

1. Developing closer links with regional Business/Industry and the wider community through the active involvement of all the staff in local affairs.
2. Promoting the MBS to Schools, TAFE's, Industry and Government and the local community as the preferred provider of business education for the region.
3. Maintaining a supportive and enabling relationship with our off-shore partners.

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**To maximize opportunities for increased collaboration with Rockingham-Kwinana and Peel community organisations, industry and government agencies by,**

1. Developing partnerships with industry to develop student placement opportunities and structured work experience.
2. Expanding the Workplace Learning Placement Program.

**To support key research initiatives which have significant strategic value to, and will provide the impetus for, sustainable developments and activities in the Regions by,**

1. Canvassing research opportunities for collaborative partnerships within the region

**Desired Outcomes:**

- ❑ Increased student enrolments from the Rockingham, Peel regions measured by increased participation rates in higher education toward the state mean.
- ❑ Increased numbers of student enrolments from overseas students, both at the Murdoch Campus and with our offshore partners.
- ❑ Increased participation in research from within the Rockingham-Kwinana and Peel Regions.

**Constraints and Limitations**

The MBS capability for developing strong industry links and programs within the region is restricted by high teaching loads, limits in administrative support, the lack of high profile senior staff and the number of staff on short-term contracts.

**Management: To achieve Murdoch University's strategic objectives by providing effective leadership and applying our human, financial and physical resources in a planned and accountable fashion.**

Despite having experienced a period of instability, the MBS has internally positioned to allow the school to manage future growth effectively. Some of the staff vacancies are in the process of being filled and the MBS is committed to seeking continuous contracts for staff occupying ongoing positions. The MBS also plans to initiate policies and procedures in a number of critical areas to improve quality assurance, cost effectiveness and promote a safe and healthy work environment.

**Key result areas:**

**To increase income from a diversified range of sources by.**

1. Boosting the number of full fee paying students, particularly at the post-graduate level.
2. Increasing the number of grants attained by staff.
3. Providing consultancy services to Industry and Government.

**To implement user focussed, cost effective and appropriate support and service delivery systems for students and other stakeholders by,**

1. Providing staff with support and infrastructure deliver flexible modes of learning.
2. Exploring alternate delivery modalities to maximise student learning and enable staff work loads to remain reasonable.

**To ensure that all governance and business processes are ethical, effective, efficient, equitable and transparent by,**

1. Ensuring any new ventures, courses or consultancies are based on a sound business case that offers either financial or other substantive gains to the MBS.
2. Instituting transparent governance practices.

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**To attract, develop and retain highly skilled staff within a work environment that motivates them to support Murdoch University's objectives and to achieve their full potential by,**

1. Recruiting high quality staff within the Lecturer B and C categories.
2. Rebuilding staffing levels to a sufficient critical mass staff to ensure workloads are equitable with other areas of the University community.
3. Developing and supporting staff so they can engage in research, teaching innovation and actively contribute within the University and wider community.
4. Developing and supporting staff through the internal promotions processes to promote academic and career advancement

**To nurture a strong community spirit within the University by,**

1. Implementing and monitoring quality assurance programs and processes.
2. Including casual and contract staff into MBS activities to promote a sense of collegiality.
3. Implementing a healthy lifestyle program within the MBS.

**Desired Outcomes:**

1. Revitalise the staffing profile and improve staff morale.
2. Clarify the commitment of the School to those staff who are employed on a contract basis
3. Implement a staff well-being program in 2004.
4. Have Quality assurance programs in place and operating effectively by 2005.
5. Improved job satisfaction ratings and improved staff morale by the end of 2005.

**Constraints and Limitations**

The most pressing constraint for the MBS is the high turnover of staff that has lead to a lack of senior staff, a high proportion of staff on short-term contracts and low morale among the remaining staff. Inadequate physical facilities and financial resources are also of concern, particularly for postgraduate students. Another concern is the internal constraints on staff progression through internal promotions' outcomes, which have alienated some staff and contributed to the high staff turnover. Additionally, staff appointed in the current recruitment drive, might not be in place until the middle or end of 2004.

**Marketing**

MBS enrolments have declined and MBS needs to take immediate action to alter student perceptions and preferences. Currently, statistical figures show an overall increasing trend for Australian higher education student enrolments, with business disciplines growing at a faster rate. The majority of growth is attributable to enrolments from overseas students, with business school enrolments outperforming growth in all disciplines by a substantial margin. In contrast, fluctuations in growth are predicted for the local Australian student market. The MBS believes that attracting increased numbers of overseas students, particularly from targeted markets in China, Malaysia and India is an urgent priority. Attracting students to Murdoch will allow us to implement effective quality control and is the most cost effective option to increase funding for staffing and facilities. MBS strongly believes the School needs to be involved in promoting and marketing the School for this strategy to be most effective.

**Key Result Areas**

To increase the number of students within the MBS by increasing the number of full fee paying students, both domestic and international, cross-disciplinary enrolments and completion of double degrees by.

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1. Increasing MBS profile throughout selected international target markets.
  2. Attracting students from targeted markets to study at Murdoch at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels..

**Desired Outcomes:**

1. To increase the number of domestic, international and graduate students by 3%, 5% and 4.5% respectively.
2. To rectify the Murdoch TER preference scores, to equal those acceptable by Curtin.
3. To increase overseas student enrolments to meet Australian National standards.
4. MBS Staff to be actively involved in managing and implementing the MBS marketing strategy.

**Limitations and Constraints**

MBS is currently threatened by Competitors' advertising, facilities, staffing levels and the degrees offered. It is important to note that the future success of MBS however, is not only based on the profits generated.