

## A Process Perspective about ACPE Strategic Plan(s)

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For several days there has been a lively response to the action of the ACPE Board that declared “an (immediate) temporary (for 2014) suspension of the current practice of the (Certification) Commission sub-committee’s vote on the request of Associate Supervisors to be made Certified Supervisors”. The resistance has been directed more toward the “immediacy” of the governing process than to the “revision” of the certification process. The anger was toward a perceived “stratagem.”

In these discussions a missing piece of background information has been *the strategic plan* referenced as rationale/justification for the Board’s actions. Perhaps there isn’t agreement among the members about the nature and purpose of a “*strategic plan*.”

What would be your answers to the following questions:

- **What** is a strategic plan?
- **Who** envisions it? adopts it? implements it?
- **How** is it attempted? processed? executed? realized?
- By **when** (i.e., time line) is it projected to be accomplished?

Those are “governance” questions by which the life and work of an organization/business are envisioned by leadership/management/directors.

No one can predict what the next year will bring. Adjustments may have to be made to the plan, the time line, etc. Some plans have to be aborted and a new strategic plan has to be formed. Strategizing for the future with an envisioned plan is good practice and can be productive. The implementing, executing, realizing the “plan” requires at least a) adequate communication of the plan, b) consultative wisdom of servant leaders, and c) the energetic cooperation of those most affected by the plan. No “*strategic plan*” is *de facto* consummated when it is envisioned by management, nor even when it is approved as an envisioned way forward by directors.

In May 2006, the ACPE Board of Representatives approved the *ACPE 2010: Into the Future* strategic plan. That plan was divided into five sections: Contextual and Pastoral Education, Supervisory Education and Certification, Development and Fundraising, Multicultural and International Learning, and Organizational Relationships in Pastoral Care. Through the fall 2013 Board meeting the annual regional reports to the Board contained progress being made toward those five values. Much of that envisioned plan was completed in five years. Even though some aspects of it have not yet been realized, that plan was transparently before us.

In the Fall of 2010 the Board appointed a Strategic Planning Work Group that was charged with developing mission/vision/values/initiatives, proposing governance changes as appropriate, and collaborating with Personnel and Executive Director Search Process. The Mission/Vision/Values statements were approved in the fall of November 2011, posted on the website, and presented in an article in the Newsletter by President Schwab in November 2011. Additional work of this group provided *six strategic initiatives* and a *proposed governance change*. The Strategic Plan and Proposed Governance Change were presented at the Annual Members Meeting in May 2012. The Strategic Plan 2020 was adopted, but the proposed governance change was not.

In the Fall of 2012, the President assigned task groups consisting of diverse representation from our Association to develop objectives and goals for each of the strategic initiatives named in the 2020 Strategic Plan:

- Actively and intentionally seek collaborative relationships with faith groups, seminaries, and other organizations involved in spiritual care education and practice
- Increase the number and diversity of certified supervisors in various contexts through a certification process
- Increase the number and diversity of accredited CPE centers in order to serve the needs of CPE students in various contexts utilizing an accreditation process
- Provide professional development opportunities for members of ACPE and those organizations with whom we collaborate that utilize content experts from within and outside the association
- Ensure the most efficient stewardship of resources and integration of contemporary learning modalities, by actively using current technology, routinely exploring technological trends and when cost effective, implementing new technological applications
- Through fund development and ACPE stakeholder input, build an endowment, nurture new and innovative programs and design and build a new ACPE headquarters.

The first draft of the 2020 Strategic Initiatives objectives and goals was presented to the Board in May 2013. The major energy expended in the 2013 Meeting of the Members was directed to the changes in ACPE governance and the new composition of the Board. The *ACPE Strategic Plan 2020*, which was still only in draft form, was not widely discussed by the membership in this time of much transition. Following the May 2013 meeting, the completed *ACPE Strategic Plan 2020* was posted on the ACPE website under “Who We Are” tab, then under “Strategic Planning Document,” but, given what else was happening in the transitional summer/fall of 2013 within our Association, not nearly enough members are familiar with the *ACPE Strategic Plan 2020*. The final draft was approved by the Board in November 2013, and President Brown-Haithco informed the membership of this action in her Newsletter of Nov/Dec 2013.

The Board charged the President and Executive Director along with Haas Consulting to develop the action plan for implementation of the *Strategic Plan 2020*. That work was completed in December 2013. This final approved Strategic Plan complete with action plans for implementation can be found on the ACPE website under the “Who We Are” tab.

On Jan 28, 2014 the task group on certification addressed the first “objective” of *Strategic Goal One* (located on page three of the 2020 Plan) which is “*to shorten the certification process from 3-5 years to 2-3 years.*” The recommendations of this task group were presented to the ACPE Board via a telephone conference on Feb 17, 2014, and “the Board voted to accept the Certification Process Task Group recommendation that the association declare an (immediate) temporary suspension of the current practice that the Commission sub-committee’s vote on the request of Associate Supervisors to be made Certified Supervisors.”

On Feb 19, this action of the Board was announced as the first step toward implementing the objectives of Goal One in the *Strategic Plan 2020* (cf., *Strategic Plan 2020, page 3, Goal One* that contains the action plan for initiative #2 as stated above). The purpose of this task group and of the Board is to make what is now referred to as ‘Associate’ the terminus certification of the ACPE in 2014. Practically, any “Associate ACPE Supervisor” who meets a sub-committee for certification in 2014 will be given a consult, perhaps have recorded recommendations for further learning, and will be granted “full” certified status for the supervision and certification of Levels I and II CPE and for Supervisory CPE.

Keith's opinion: going forward, some consensus of the members must be reached about the **purpose and the authority of any strategic plan**. Simply put: is a strategic plan an **intention** of someone(s) about how we will explore our work, mission and life together over a projected period of time so as to enhance our productivity? Or, is a strategic plan presumed to be a **mandate** that simply needs to be turned into rules and regulations? Until we have a clearer consensus of how we will utilize strategic plans for our life together, we will remain conflicted in our governance and less than productive in our mission.

I invite the current Board of Directors to devote time in the May 2014 Annual Meeting to the *Strategic Plan 2020* and the *Action Plans for implementation*. Such conversation might ensure collaboration and cooperation as we forge our future together. And, I want to trust that this is what we all want...a shared, enhanced future for everyone in every center for CPE.

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