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The Four-Year Cycle at a Glance

The Mission Integration Planning & Contact Cycle plays a vital role in the collaborative relationship the Marianist Province has with its sponsored schools and retreat centers. This process serves as leaven to sustain the Catholic and Marianist mission and identity of the sponsored ministry. The four-year Mission Integration Planning & Contact Cycle builds on itself and helps these ministries achieve their Mission Integration goals.

Year 1: Plan Development

The objective of Year 1 is to develop and begin to implement a new Mission Integration Plan. It is a collaborative effort of the sponsored ministry's community and engages the support and feedback of the Office of Sponsorship. This culminates in a teleconference with the Office of Sponsorship, the leadership of the sponsored ministry, and the chair of the Mission Integration Team to review the Mission Integration Plan submitted by the ministry.

Year 2: Visitation and Review

Year 2 includes a visitation by a representative of the Office of Sponsorship to monitor the ministry's progress in implementing its Mission Integration Plan. The visitation also includes a review of the ministry's ongoing relationship with the Province and a discussion of ways the ministry and the Province can strengthen their collaborative relationship and partnership in mission. This discussion takes into consideration the different requirements of the *Sponsorship & Services Agreement*, including the Mission Integration Plan. During this visit the Office of Sponsorship representative meets with various members of the sponsored ministry's community to obtain their input. The results of these visits are documented and shared with the leadership of the ministry.

Year 3: Progress Update

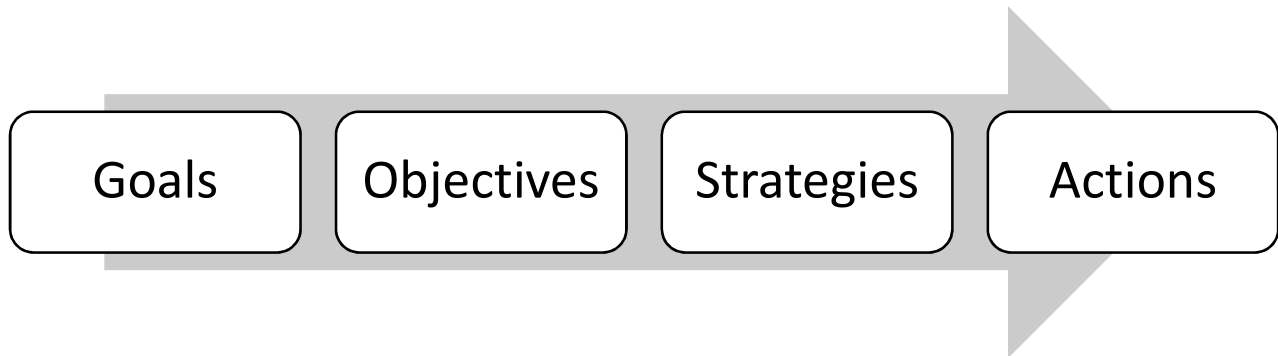
The objective of Year 3 is to review progress in implementing the Mission Integration Plan. The chair of the Mission Integration Team and the leadership of the sponsored ministry meet via teleconference with the Office of Sponsorship to demonstrate evidence of progress made with the plan.

Year 4: Visitation and Evaluation

Year 4 includes a visitation and evaluation by a team selected by the Office of Sponsorship from other Marianist-sponsored ministries. Similar to the Year 2 visitation, the visiting team meets with various members of the sponsored ministry's community to evaluate progress made in implementing the Mission Integration Plan and to suggest areas of focus in developing the next four-year Mission Integration Plan. The results of these visits are documented and shared with the leadership of the sponsored ministry and evaluated by the Office of Sponsorship.

Year 1: Plan Development	Year 2: Visitation and Review	Year 3: Progress Update	Year 4: Visitation and Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Development of a new four-year Mission Integration Plan•Review of Plan with the Office of Sponsorship•Implementation of Year 1 Action Items•Development of Year 2 Action Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Implementation of Year 2 Action Items•Visitation by Office of Sponsorship•Development of Year 3 Action Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Implementation of Year 3 Action Items•Teleconference with Office of Sponsorship•Development of Year 4 Action Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Implementation of Year 4 Action Items•Visitation and Evaluation by Peer Review Team•Review of Visitation and Evaluation by Office of Sponsorship

The Four-Year Plan: Charting a Course



As the Mission Integration Team of a Marianist-sponsored ministry, you are charged with developing a Four-Year Mission Integration Plan designed to enhance the Marianist character of your school.

The sections in this series outline a planning methodology, borrowing concepts and language from common planning models and adapting them to our purpose. We begin by addressing the initial big picture elements of the planning process, posing three critical questions for the planning team.

The Planning Process

The Office of Sponsorship of the Marianist Province of the U.S. initiated a four year cycle of planning and contact for Marianist-sponsored schools in 2009. Formerly, schools completed and submitted a Mission Integration Plan each year, outlining activities for only that year.

In moving from an annual plan to one that covers a longer period of time, we expect the plan to be a more significant means for growth of sponsored schools in their Marianist character. An annual plan tends to focus on short range results realized by short term activities. The Four-Year Plan necessitates a more reflective process that asks your school to answer three questions:

1. Where are we now?
2. Where do we want to be in four years?
3. How will we get there?

These are not trivial questions. Answering them should not be a mere exercise to be completed in a single meeting, but rather a process which, if done thoroughly, should require at least a few months to complete. The product should be a well-articulated plan to move the school significantly forward as a vehicle for Marianist Education.

Developing the Four-Year Mission Integration Plan is the responsibility of your Mission Integration Team (MIT). However, meaningful answers to the above questions will require input from the broader school community. The completed Plan will require ownership by that community in order to be effectively realized.

Where Are We Now?

Effective planning always requires some assessment of the current reality. You know generally where you want to go: you want your school to be more characteristically Marianist. You need to know where you are now in order to effectively plan your route.

As the planning process begins, your MIT addresses these questions within the context of the Characteristics of Marianist Education.

- What are the greatest areas of need in making our school more characteristically Marianist over the next four years?
- What are our areas of strength upon which we can build over the next four years?

How these questions are addressed is up to your MIT. Members of the team can draw on their own understandings of the broader school community, consult directly with others, consider what past reports of Mission Integration Visits have suggested, and gather additional data. All of these and, perhaps, additional methods will probably be necessary to form a reasonably complete picture. It is important to remember that the completed plan will be a plan for your school community, not only for the MIT.

Where Do We Want to be in Four Years?

Identifying Goals

As the needs and strengths of the school community become clear, some goals should begin to surface. As we are using the term, **Goals represent broad general results to be achieved over the term of the plan.** At the broadest level, your goal is to enhance the Marianist character of your school. However, for the purposes of the planning process,

it will be more helpful to be more specific. Some examples of the kind of language that goals could include:

- To deepen the faith of our school community
- To create a culture of caring among our students
- To expand our school's experience of Family Spirit

Goals should be included as part of your Four-Year Mission Integration Plan.

How Will We Get There?

Forming Strategies

After identifying some broad goals that address needs and/or build upon strengths, the MIT needs to decide how to address these goals. **The general approaches taken to achieve goals have been termed Strategies.** Each of your goals may give rise to one or more strategies.

For example, if your goal is to deepen the faith of your school community, you need to decide how you will attempt to do so. There may be many valid approaches to reaching this goal. One strategy may be to expand your student retreat program. Another may be to revise your religion curriculum. Others could include increasing opportunities for prayer during the school day, or enlisting parent support, or expanding your campus ministry resources. Which will you choose? Which will best help you attain your goal?

Perhaps following a single strategy will suffice; perhaps you will choose multiple strategies. Only your MIT, in consultation with your school community, can decide.

Strategies for meeting your goals should be included as part of your Four-Year Mission Integration Plan.

A frequently asked question ...

How many goals should you have in your Four-Year Mission Integration Plan?

There is no single best answer to this question, no magic number. Only by beginning with a thoughtful assessment of where you are now as a source of Marianist Education can you realistically decide where you want to be in four years. How your needs may be best addressed and how your strengths may be best utilized should determine both the content and number of your goals.

The Four-Year Plan: Making it Real

Determining broad goals and general strategies for meeting them are important steps in the process of developing a Four-Year Mission Integration Plan. They may be likened to deciding a destination and mode of travel when planning a trip.

Once these tasks are complete, however, it becomes necessary to focus on the details. For a trip, that means specific routes and schedules; for the planning process, it includes Objectives and Actions. This section addresses these parts of the plan.

Planning the Details

Developing Objectives

Once your Mission Integration Team (MIT) has identified one or more strategic approaches to reaching a goal, it is time to move from abstract and general ideas to the concrete and specific. What will you do to carry out your strategies? How will you know you have been successful? When do you expect to finish?

The answers to these questions are found in your Objectives. **Your Objectives should be what some have termed SMART, an acronym for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timed.**

Suppose you have chosen a strategy of expanding your student retreat program as a means of addressing your goal of deepening the faith of your school community. To do this, you could add one or more new retreats, lengthen or intensify existing retreats, or increase attendance or involve more staff, among other possibilities. Your MIT needs to choose from among these or other options.

Suppose your MIT decides to increase attendance at existing retreats. This objective then must be stated in a way that meets the SMART criteria. One possible example: Increase the number of students who attend the Sophomore Spring Retreat in 2012 by 10% as compared to 2011.

This objective is specific (the targeted retreat is named), measurable (you can count the number of students attending) and timed (when the objective will be met is stated). The objective must be reasonable and attainable as well. Your MIT will need to judge

whether a 10% increase in attendance for this particular retreat can reasonably be accomplished within the specified time frame.

Suppose your MIT instead, or in addition, decides to add a new retreat. Is this reasonable and attainable, given the resources and competing priorities of your school? Do those who will need to create the new retreat agree? Can the objective be reached during the span of the plan? The objective must also be specific. What does adding a new retreat mean? Will you consider the objective met if the new retreat experience is planned, or must it be offered, or must it actually take place? How these questions are answered is up to your MIT.

SMART is Not Enough

SMART objectives are commonly accepted as sufficient for many planning purposes. For the Four Year Mission Integration Plan, two additional criteria are also important.

Your objectives must meaningfully enhance the Marianist character of your school. Blessed William Joseph Chaminade used a fulcrum and a lever as a metaphor for the way his followers were to work. **It is appropriate, then, that your objectives have Leverage.** You may generate many objectives that meet the SMART criteria. With unlimited resources, you could adopt them all. In reality, your MIT must choose those that move you closest to your goal with the resources you do have.

In the example above, would increasing retreat attendance by 10% significantly advance your goal of deepening the faith of your school community? Does the gain warrant the amount of effort? Perhaps it does, alone or as one of several objectives supporting the strategy of expanding your retreat program; perhaps there are other objectives that would leverage greater effect. Only your MIT, in consultation with your school community, can answer these questions. The important thing is to not become so focused on attaining specific objectives that you lose sight of the overall goal.

One of the advantages of being part of a network of Marianist-sponsored schools is the opportunity to learn from one another, broadening your perspective and being exposed to new ideas. There can, however, be a temptation to try to adopt wholesale an idea that has been effective in another school simply because it has been effective there. **An additional criterion for your objectives is that they be yours.** Using another school's successes as inspiration is certainly appropriate, but your MIT should choose objectives that meet your school's needs, build on your school's strengths, and support your school's goals.

Assigning Actions

Actions are the steps you take to reach your objectives. They involve real people taking real responsibility and expending real resources.

For example, if your objective is to increase attendance at the 2013 Sophomore Spring Retreat by 10%, what will your school do to make this happen? Who will do it? What will they need to make it happen?

When schools submitted plans annually, actions comprised the bulk of those plans. Under the longer range approach now in place, the focus has shifted to Goals, Strategies, and Objectives. Actions are, of course, still important, for without them plans remain merely plans. However, for significant goals over a four-year time span, that may each involve multiple strategies, each of which in turn perhaps generating multiple objectives, listing all of the necessary action steps within a written plan would be a monumental undertaking. It is also likely that, over the four years covered by the plan, while goals, strategies, and objectives should remain fairly stable, at least some of the actions planned at the beginning of the cycle and/or the people responsible for them might change.

Actions are an important part of your Four-Year Plan. However, **only those key actions to be undertaken in Year One of the plan need to be included in the written version submitted to the Office of Sponsorship.** Information about additional key actions in later years can then be shared during the Office of Sponsorship Visits and conference calls. Of course, a record of all of these key actions should be maintained by your MIT, to aid in ongoing planning and implementation and to share with the Mission Integration Visiting Team during Year Four of the cycle.

A key reminder ...

Objectives that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Reasonable, and Timed and that have Leverage and are uniquely Yours should be included as part of your Four-Year Mission Integration Plan. In other words, your Objectives should be written SMARTLY.

Objectives may require many actions to complete, some of which may be more consequential than others. Only those key actions that begin the work of meeting your objectives need to be included in your written plan.