

Academic Planning Processes at UNB

The Association of University Teachers of New Brunswick

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This document represents a second AUNBT communication on academic planning. Here we explore the role of academic units (departments and faculties) in this process, an area of particular interest for AUNBT due to the overlap of academic units as key recommending bodies for hiring and assessment, and as sites for academic staffing and programming.

UNB is in the midst of an academic planning exercise that recently culminated in a draft UNB University Academic Plan (UNBUAP). Consistent with statements in the UNBUAP (page 10), universities typically articulate academic plans as a means to promote gradual and incremental changes in the direction of the academy in a way that is transparent, fair, and consistent. A part of the exercise at UNB has been a proposal for a planning “framework” (UNBUAP page 11), referred to in the Sept. 26 town hall as the “swim lane diagram”. Here we present two diagrams that build on the UNBUAP approach, but represent an alternative way to model such a framework so as to more clearly articulate appropriate roles and responsibilities, integrate pre-existing approaches to planning at UNB (e.g. staffing exercises, Quality Assurance Reviews, and curriculum planning, and Stage 1 Local Campus Committee, or “LCC” baselines), and contextualize the contribution of governance structures like faculty councils and senates (and their related planning committees). It also formalizes the iterative nature of the exercise. By reintroducing the idea of medium- to long-term planning in the form of 5-year plans, we suggest a cyclical, formalized approach that balances annual exercises with periodic evaluation and adjustment. Our diagrams situate the current exercise as one aimed at developing an additional planning tool to add to the toolbox that chairs and deans currently use in staffing exercises and budget development.

To this end, our diagrams clarify several issues:

- 1) As indicated by the current stage 1 and 2 analysis, the academic unit (the department in departmentalized faculties and the faculty in non-departmental faculties) should be the base unit for academic planning; consistent with decades of institutional practice, unit plans emanate from academic units, and both plans and resource allocations can be made more strategic through the use of carefully conceived principles and objectives (the proper goal of the University Academic Plan, highlighted on our diagrams as a gold box)¹.
- 2) When coupled with existing (or in the case of the strategic plan, pending) planning tools (in blue boxes, incorporating detailed unit context and baselines as used in the LCC process, curriculum planning and curriculum approval processes and QAR

¹ See the AUNBT Document: [Representative Sample of Academic Planning Processes and Principles in Canada](#), released October 31, 2017.

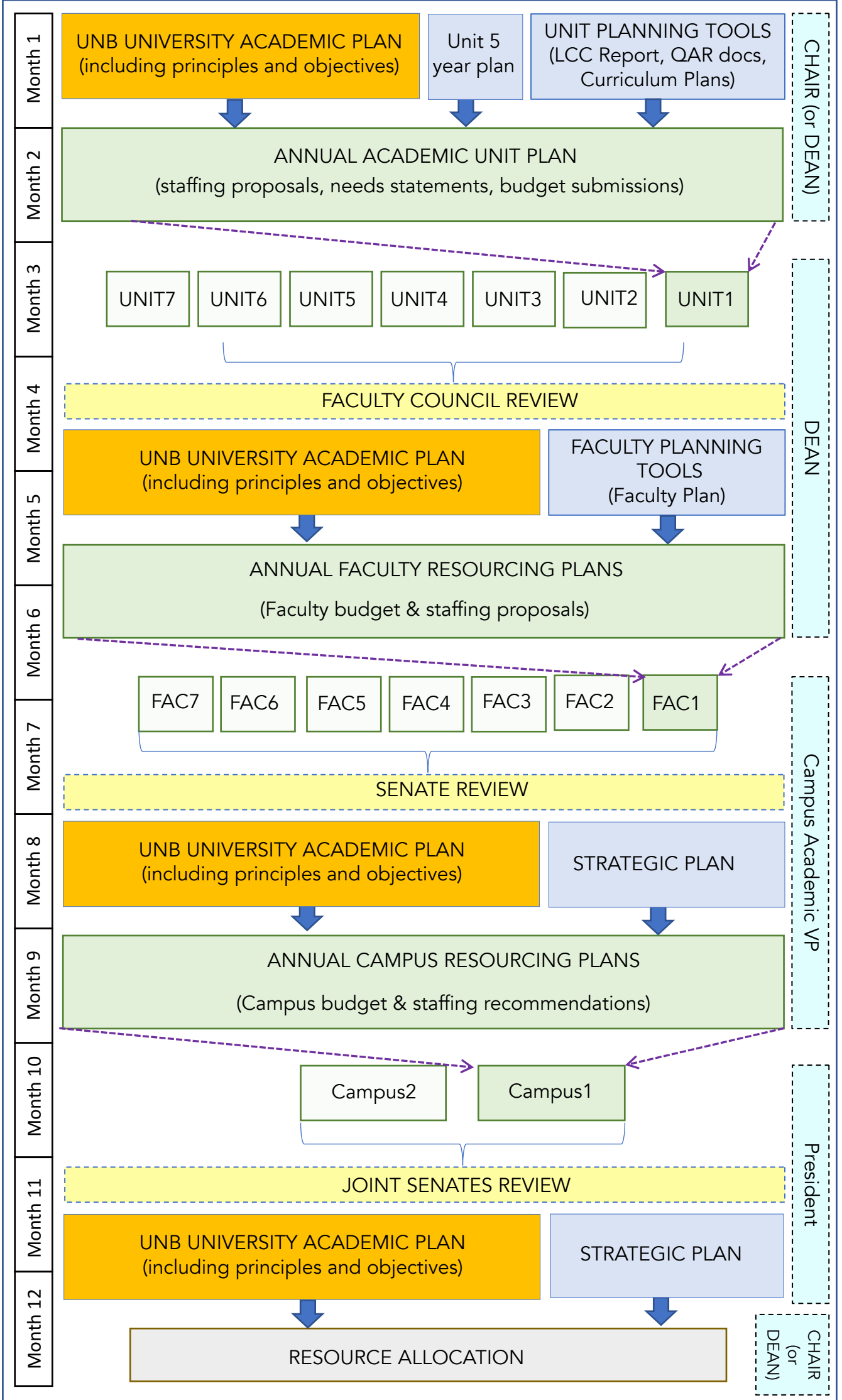
documents²), and flowing through departmental and faculty budget and staffing submissions (green boxes), a university-wide planning document (gold boxes) that articulates principles and objectives would be an important part of a solid framework to guide academic unit-based strategic academic plans (both at department and faculty levels).

- 3) Faculty councils and senates should have key roles in planning (pale yellow boxes). However, the current process has placed a great deal of responsibility onto the respective senate planning committees (APC and AP&R), with those committees being given the task of selecting programs and units for resourcing and academic direction. This gives the appearance of diminishing the role of key administrative positions (Chairs, Deans, Academic Vice-Presidents, and the President, pale blue boxes), who can be held accountable for recommendations and decision-making in a way that regularly reconstituted committees cannot. Our diagrams also indicate the need for a parallel governance structure to review and integrate campus plans, as recently discussed in meetings with the Fredericton APC, Chairs and Deans (here conceived of as a joint committee of the two senates, consistent with previous constituted joint senate committees as indicated in the minutes of the September 2010 Senate meetings).

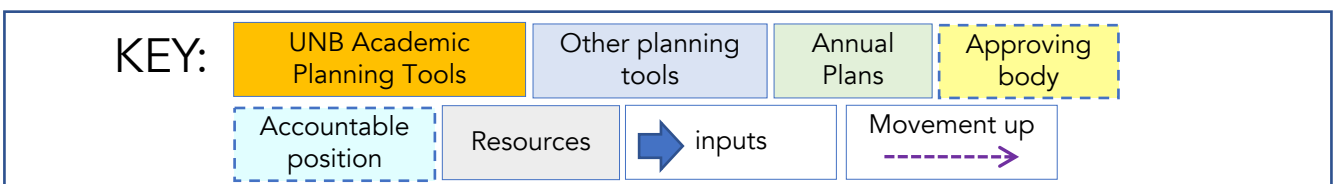
There has been widespread concern about the draft UNBUAP. The stated purpose of the draft plan was to report on the bi-campus activities of the Fredericton Senate Academic Planning Committee (APC) and the Saint John Senate Academic Planning & Resources Committee (AP&R), and to “provide analysis of academic programming for use by University leadership and the Board of Governors in assessing how best to resource programs” (UNBUAP page 2). Through the process of its development, there has been a lack of clarity about whether the groups who have engaged with it at various stages are developing a plan, a planning process, or some kind of a “living document”; in any case, given the link to resources and complement, the UNBUAP has the potential to be a document of great consequence.

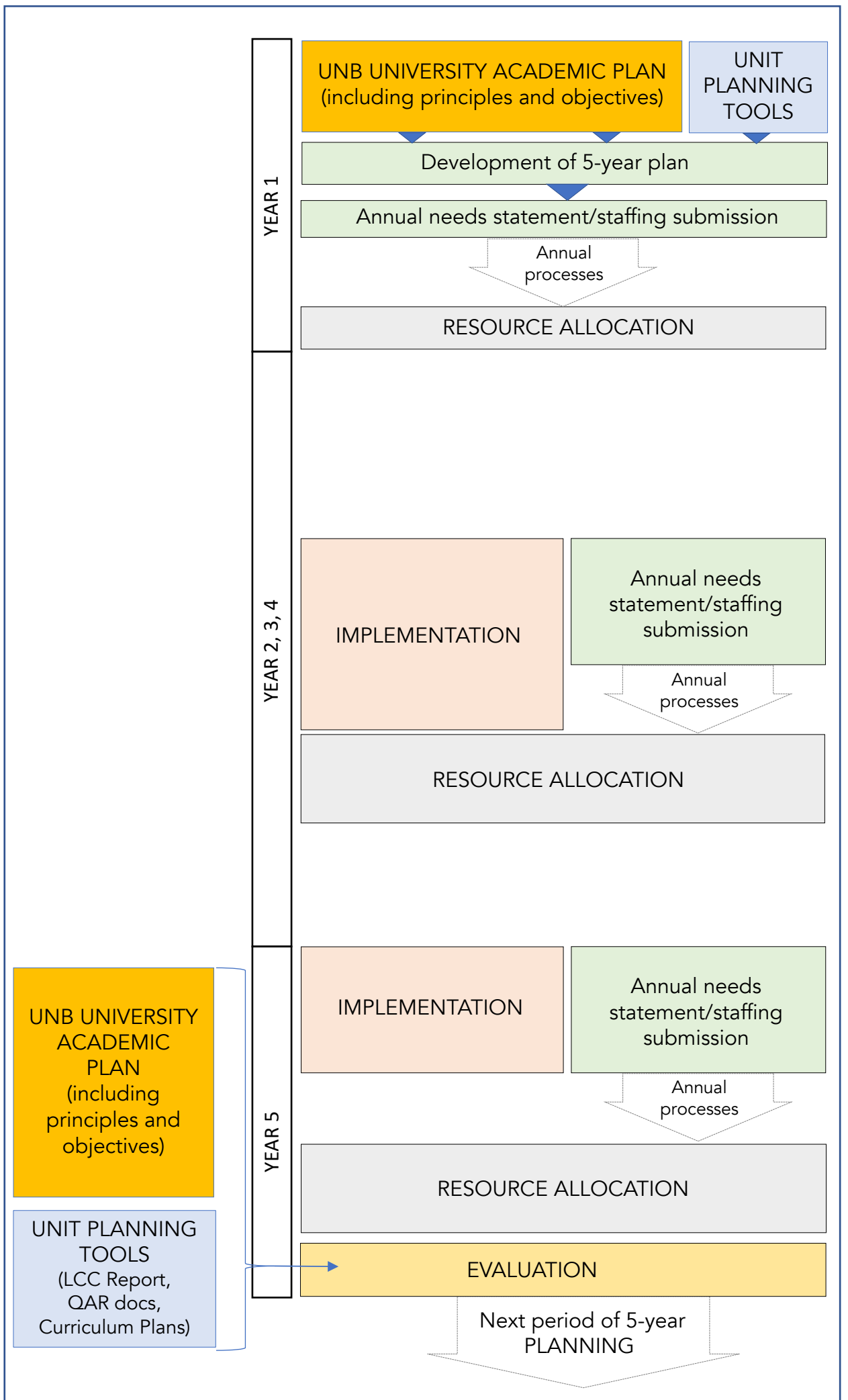
It is critically important that all members of the academic community continue to engage with this process to create a meaningful, manageable and visionary approach to academic planning at UNB. We ask members of the APC and AP&R committees to consider our analysis, and we encourage AUNBT members, in all of their roles in the collegium, to evaluate these statements on process and either add to them or comment on them as the academic planning exercise continues to unfold.

² As mandated in a manner consistent with guidelines set by the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission.



Model for annual planning





Model for unit-based (department or faculty) five-year planning cycle

