

# THE ESSENTIALS of STRATEGIC PLANNING

The first decade of the 21st century will be remembered as a decade of change, profound change in national and international affairs, scientific and technological advances, and social and political movements. Alpha Kappa Alpha has also experienced profound change. As we conclude the first decade of the twenty first century and begin our own second century, we face many of the same problems and issues that our nation and the world face. Among the most important, how do we work together to synthesize our many diverse voices and opinions into one message of unity of purpose and commitment and an action plan to insure that the future will deliver on the promises of the past.

Strategic planning is one of the tools that we use to identify and define priorities for both individual participation and collective action as members of a dynamic organization that played such a vibrant role in advancing and enhancing the stature of women of color over the past 100 years. While strategic plans vary from organization to organization, the ingredients are fairly the same: simply, a strategic plan is the roadmap that allows us to assess where we are now, where we want to go, and what it will take to get us there. It is a critical tool that allows us to examine our weaknesses and improve them. It allows us to celebrate our strengths and build upon them. It allows for us to identify, prioritize, and unify under a common vision, common goals, guiding principles, and shared strategies. Strategic planning also positions Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. to capitalize upon the many emerging opportunities that exist. While we can never predict our future, strategic planning does allow us to shape it.

At the 2002 Boule in Orlando, Alpha Kappa Alpha's Strategic Planning Committee set forth a visionary plan for the next decade. The Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. 2002-2012 Strategic Plan outlines several goals based upon 14 guiding principles reflective of our mission statement and our vision to be the premier unique sisterhood of distinguished professional women united to serve humankind. The 14 guiding principles are: sisterhood, unity, high ethical standards, character, respect, communication, high scholastic achievement, leadership, education, health, family, the arts, technology, and economics. These principles became the basis for an action plan that included goals, strategies, and actions necessary to achieve and to ensure successful completion within a 10 year time period. That plan provided a valuable roadmap for the success of the international organization and the chapters during the first decade of the new century. Borne of the necessity for addressing critical needs to marshal the resources to

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support a growing, complex, and diverse membership as well as planning to meet the challenges of a new century marked by rapid change, the 2002-2012 Strategic Plan identified key areas such as membership, structure, and finance, set major goals within each area and identified both strategies and tasks for each area.

That 2002-2012 Action Plan had the following areas and strategic goals:

#### MEMBERSHIP:

1. Maintain a strong, diverse, actively-involved membership of distinguished women.
2. Implement programs and activities for preparing members of the organization to be effective leaders thus impacting the general public.
3. Undertake initiatives that encourage ethical behavior.
4. Undertake initiatives that encourage collaborative working relationships among the members and the community at large.

#### STRUCTURE GOALS:

1. Establish and maintain an efficient and effective Corporate Office structure and Corporate Office operations that support a volunteer membership.
2. Undertake ongoing program initiatives in support of the mission of the organization.
3. Implement and maintain an effective, ongoing process of evaluation of who we are, what we want, where we plan to go and how we will get there.

#### FINANCE GOALS:

1. Maintain a strong financial base for the organization.
2. Implement and maintain an effective, comprehensive program that promotes and presents the image of the organization.

In 2007, the Strategic Planning Committee met to review the 2002-2012 plan, to assess the extent to which the goals of the Strategic Plan had been met and to provide to the leadership an interim assessment of the progress each responsible body had made in successfully

completing the tasks assigned. A preliminary assessment was conducted consulting with the responsible units (corporate office, officers, regional directors, committee chairs, committee members). Strategic Planning Committee members collected additional information on each area and generated a report card for each area of the 2002-2012 Strategic Plan. The report card was presented to the Directorate and the International Committee chairmen for their review and feedback. The interim report on progress to date also allowed the Corporate Office, committees, chairmen and members of the Directorate to refocus their energies on tasks that needed attention.

In 2008, after review of the additional information and consideration of comments, the report card was finalized and the committee's attention turned to those issues and concerns where the membership's voice would be most constructive in drafting the new strategic plan. The report card and the assessment of needs provided the basis for the strategic planning survey.

In 2009 a survey was conducted internationally to review how well our strategic plan had been executed. The survey allowed an opportunity for sorors to examine our performance over the past 7 years and to identify the strengths and weaknesses in meeting the goals of the 2002-2012 plan. Most of all it allowed the members to comment on their sense of accomplishment and to identify opportunities for improvement that can be addressed in the new strategic plan.

Strategic planning is a continuous cycle. It doesn't stop with the production of a document or plan. Rather, strategic planning positions us to constantly measure our progress and challenge our ability to exceed the goals we've set for ourselves. Think about it, 102 years ago, our illustrious founders had a strategic vision for what they wanted Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. to be and stand for today. As we continue to forge ahead in this century and beyond, let us be stewards (and strategists) of that vision.



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