

Strategically Planning to Provide a Ministry to Young People

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In cooperation with the Unity Christian Board of Trustees and Van Lunen Faculty

In the 1950's the vision for a Christian High School was presented to the Hudsonville community. There were currently several K-8 Christian schools in the area but no Christian high school. To complete the vision for a high school there was a call to action from the community. So, in 1953 Unity Christian High School came into existence and has continued to flourish in the Hudsonville community to this current day. After 7 different expansions to the original high school in the fall of 2015 the community supported a \$23.1 million project which led to the building of a new high school and moving locations. Now that the facilities have been upgraded to support 21 century learning the time has come to think strategically about all areas of the school and where Christian education is going in the next 50 years.

Planning for the future is first about looking back and reflecting on how God has been faithful through the years. As we reviewed our past we discovered the many ways God guided our Christian school community through the years. God revealed himself to us and we were reminded as we moved forward to trust in Him and He will establish our plans.

Following a project of building a new high school and with myself going into my seventh year as Head of School I felt it necessary to look forward and once again provide a vision for the future.

The first item we examined was Unity's plan for ministry. We had constructed Unity's plan for ministry several years ago and it is our guiding principles for all decisions we make. The following is Unity's "Plan for Ministry":

PLAN FOR MINISTRY

OUR VISION – *Followers of Christ developing followers of Christ*

OUR MISSION – *Developing students with the faith, the knowledge, and the skills to be followers of Christ successfully pursuing their vocations at college and work.*

OUR MOTTO - *Educational Excellence in a Christian Community*

OUR BELIEFS...*The fundamental convictions we hold to be the basis of Unity Christian High School and its mission.*

- We believe God is Creator, Savior, and Lord.

- We believe the Bible is God’s Infallible Word and is the full Gospel of Creation-Fall-Redemption-Restoration.
- We believe our children belong to God and are to be instructed to know God, to enjoy Him, and to love Him and others.
- We believe Christian school education is essential for developing our Christian world view.
- We believe educational excellence is instruction which grows a student’s Christian faith while increasing knowledge and skills.
- We believe Christian community is essential for educational excellence to flourish
- We believe a Christian world view is the only world view that will benefit a person in this life and in eternity and seeks to restore the Kingdom of God on earth

OUR GUIDING VALUES...*The strategic parameters, within which we will accomplish our mission and which we will not compromise.*

- We will always achieve educational excellence in a Christian community.
- Educational excellence is defined by developing each student’s gifts and talents in his/her area in interest and vocation
- Christian community is defined by hospitality, serving, generosity, and student’s saying “I belong.”
- We will always use the best knowledge and best practices to achieve educational excellence in Christian community.
- We will always measure for success all aspects of Unity’s ministry ensuring strategic leveraging of resources.
- We will always pray and work relentlessly to successfully achieve our mission
- We will always have parents and guardians agree to Unity’s mission to enroll their students.
- We will only have Board members, faculty, administrators, and staff who articulate the full gospel (Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration) world view, who are passionate followers of Christ, and who are passionately committed to Unity’s vision, mission, motto, beliefs and guiding values.
- We will always operate Unity with a balanced operating budget free of debt payment.
- We will never deny a student’s enrollment for financial reasons.

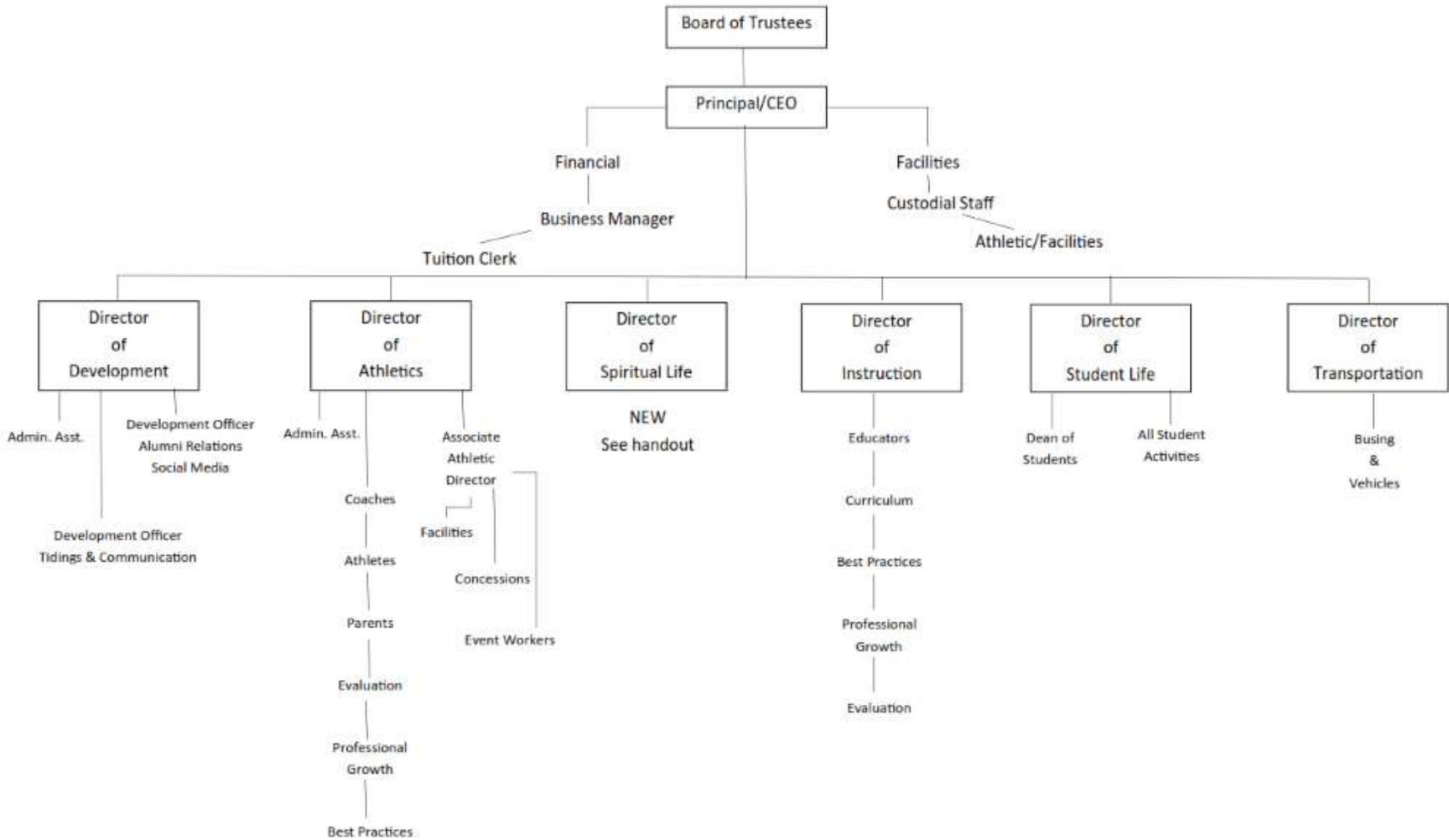
OUR MISSION MEASUREMENTS...*The results we believe God is leading us to achieve through a Unity education.*

- Every graduate is prepared for additional education or employment in his/her area of interest and vocation.
- Every graduate can articulate what it means to believe in Jesus as God’s Son and to be a follower of Jesus Christ.
- Every student is confident in his/her faith, i.e. the student is able to say “God is real. Jesus is real. God has a plan for me.”
- Every student is able to say, “I belong to the Unity community.”
- Unity’s curricular external test scores (SAT, ACT, etc.) are in the top 10% of Ottawa and Kent county schools.
- Unity’s co-curricular programs (music, theater, athletics, etc.) are in the top 10% of Ottawa and Kent County schools.

OUR STRATEGIES...*The means by which we believe God is leading us to accomplish our mission.*

- We will provide Bible-based, Faith-increasing, Standards-focused instruction in all curricular and co-curricular programs.
- We will provide a Unity community defined by hospitality, generosity, and serving God and others.
- We will develop staff who have the faith, the knowledge, and the skills essential to achieve the educational excellence for each student.
- We will develop staff who have nurturing relationships with students, parents, and colleagues.
- We will develop metrics and measure-for-success all Unity curricular and co-curricular programs
- We will lead the Eastern Ottawa Christian Schools K-8 curricular and co-curricular programs.
- We will provide need-based tuition assistance ensuring that students are not denied enrollment for financial reasons.
- We will provide the needed up-to-date facilities and equipment to achieve educational excellence.
- We will fundraise to fully fund annual operations, tuition assistance, and capital outlay.
- We will grow the Unity community to include alumni, parents, friends, elementary schools, and the local community.

Following Unity's plan for ministry our next order of business was to lay out our organizational structure:



Our next item of business was to examine the large goals that were shared among the board. The following was the information that flowed out of conversation.

Large Goals:

Tuition/Affordability (finance)

At home electronic courses (academic)

Growth – Christian school no growth (finance)

Employees of the future (staffing/academic) – high school preparation

What do we need to go away (academic)

Educational hybrids (academic)

Different learners – varied programs (Academic)

Unity accessible to all (financial)

Leadership in students (academic/financial)

Staff compensation (financial) – keeping/recruiting quality educators

Attract the top educators – what programs

Staying Christ-focused

College credit ideas – dual enrollment/middle collage

Vocational internships

Big tent

Admissions/marketing staff

EOCS

Deeper meaningful service

International outreach partnerships – multicultural

Focus on the arts - auditorium

Minister to parents

Evening coffee

Continuity of leadership

We then put together what "Pillars" we were going to focus on as we determined our strategic planning model. The following were the six Pillars that were decided to focus in as we planned strategically for the future.

Academic

Faith

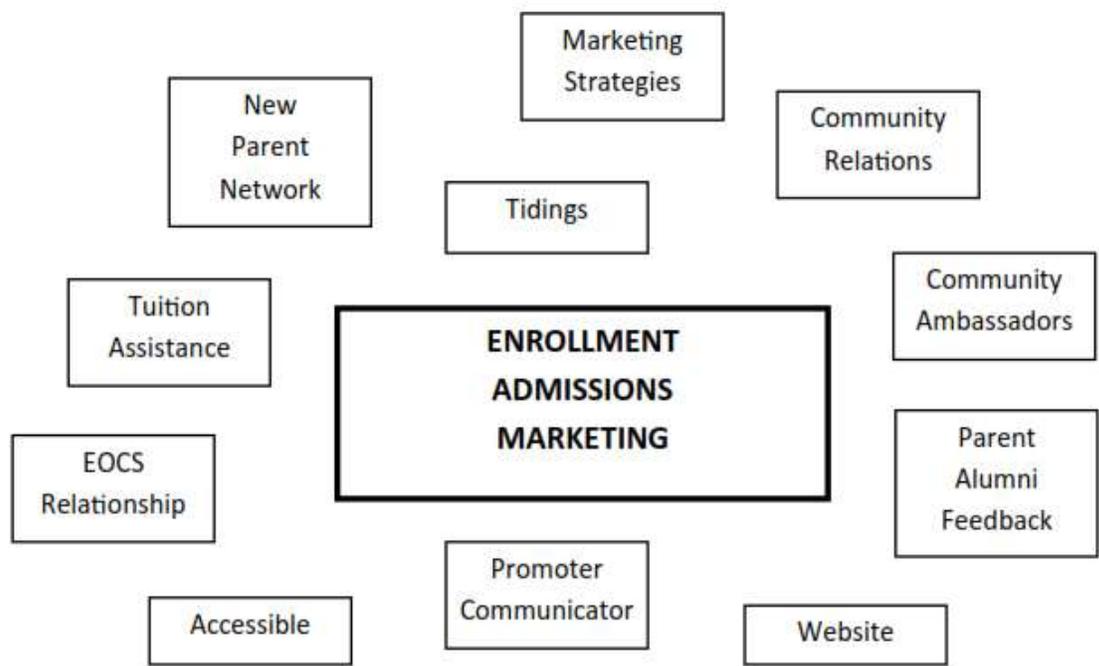
Development

Facilities

Staffing

Transportation

As we discussed we began to put the above Pillars into writing and develop an action plan for our strategies to guide us in the future.



ENROLLMENT/ADMISSIONS

Initiative:

- Engage EOCS into the life of Unity Christian

Action Plan

- Regular meetings with administrators
 - Align curriculum
 - Align fine arts
 - Align athletics
 - Create combined activities
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- Expand opportunities for EOCS parents to experience Unity

Action Plan

- Increase use of online surveys to receive feedback from parents
 - Develop an orientation program for parents
 - Create “Community Nights” for EOCS parents/families
 - Affordable tuition transition from EOCS to Unity
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- Develop a position for an Admissions Coordinator

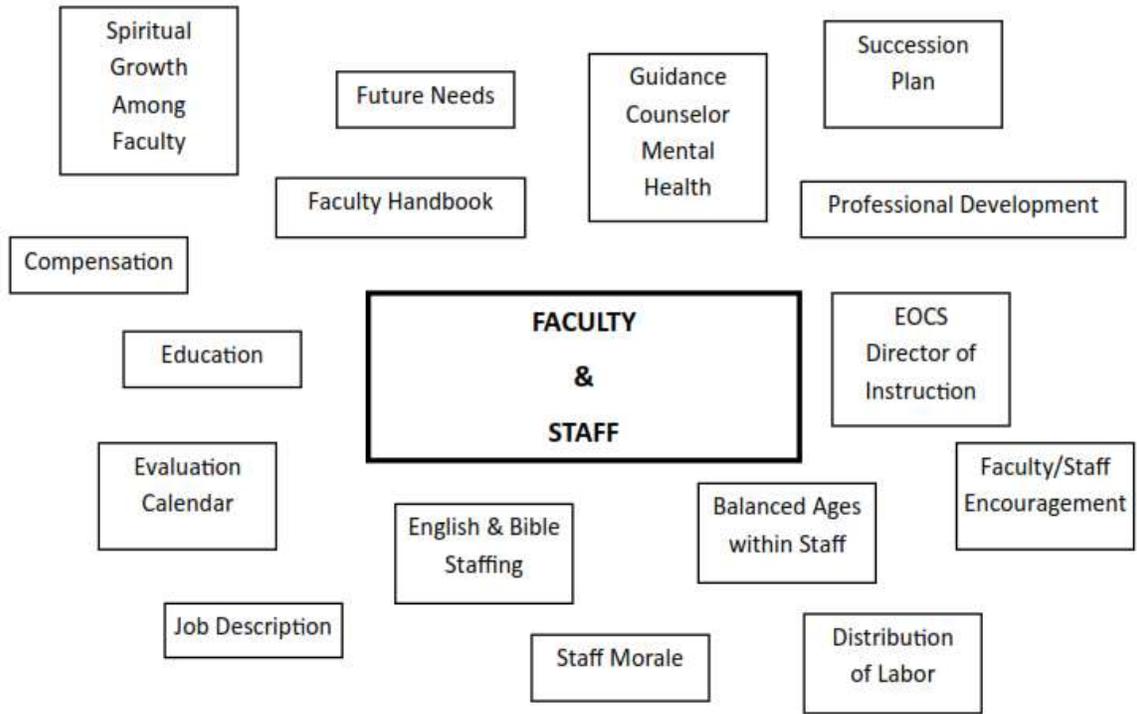
MARKETING

Initiative:

- Telling the Unity story

Action Plan

- Continue to develop & financially support the position of Marketing Officer
 - Use all forms of social media to tell story of Unity
 - Develop a plan to keep alumni informed & connected to school
- Develop a new to Unity plan
 - Publish & supply a new to Unity school profile
 - Enhance new Unity orientation evenings



FACULTY & STAFF

Strategies

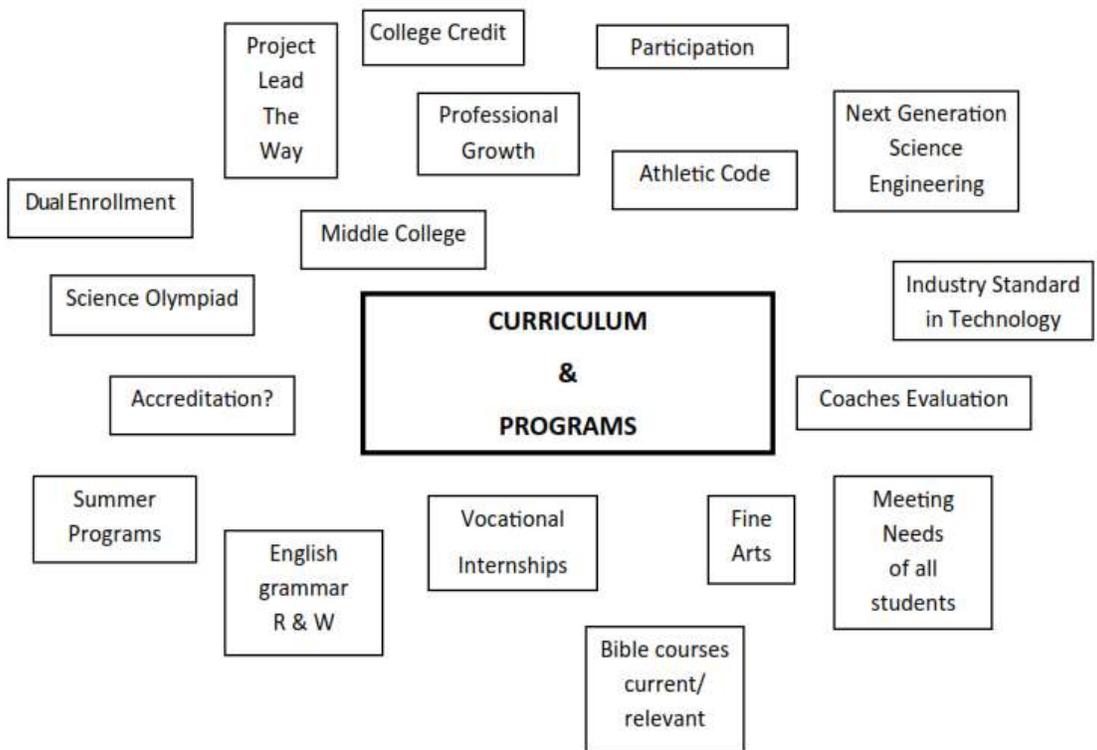
Identify – Recruit – Retain passionate Christian teachers and staff who are highly qualified, motivated and focused on achieving Unity's mission

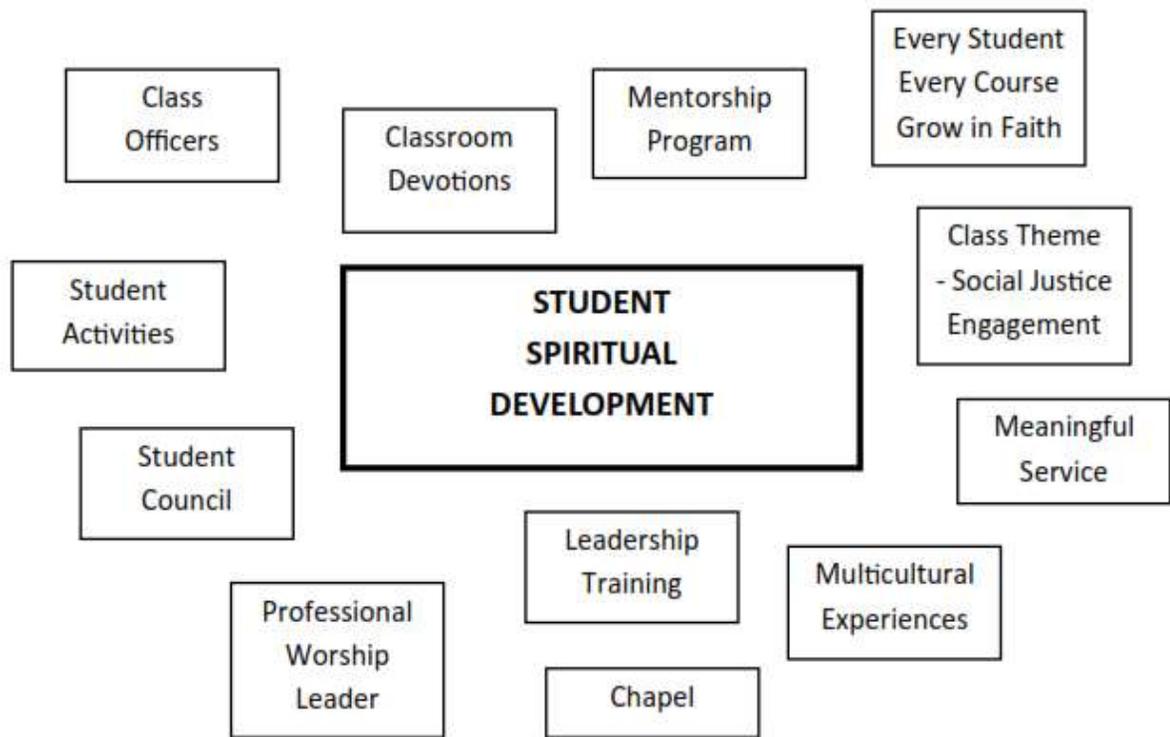
Initiative:

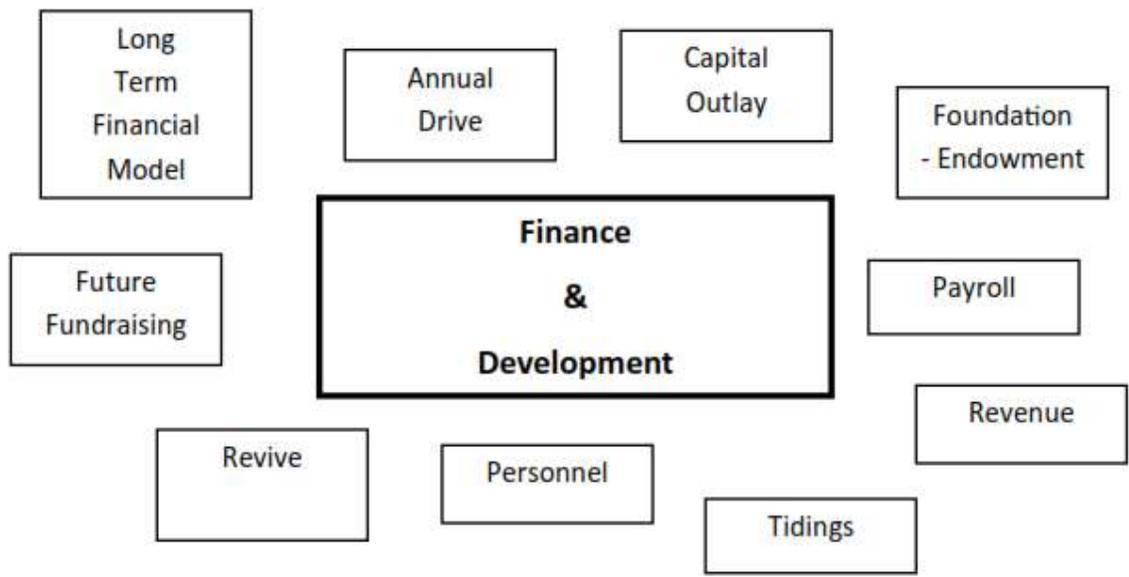
- Evaluate all staff to provide consistent feedback

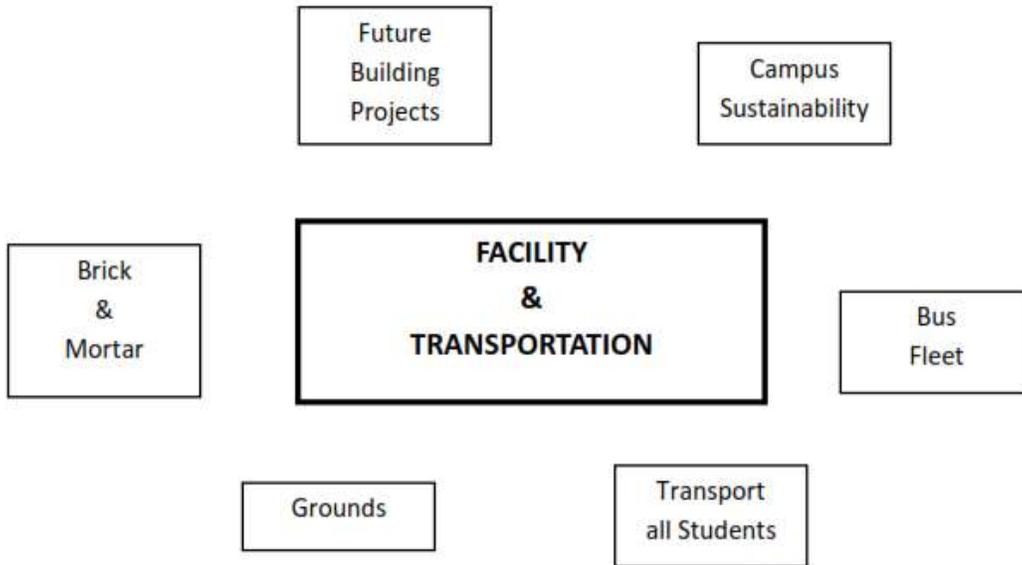
Action Plan

- Maintain, review and adjust faculty evaluation system for teachers in order to improve instruction and focus on professional growth
- Create a non-faculty evaluation system









Finally we examined all areas of Unity Christian by listing the strengths of Unity, our weaknesses and some of the goals that were shared among our board. We then put together a big board of ideas that allowed us to flow information from.