



PROJECT MANAGEMENT
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE

A.J. CLARK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING
Civil & Environmental Engineering Department

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
2026 PROJECT MANAGEMENT SYMPOSIUM

From Ideas to Action: Embedding Project Management in Student Success Initiatives

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Operations and Strategic Initiatives
University of Texas at San Antonio

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Agenda

- Who We Are
- The Framework
- Case Study and Results
- Applying the Framework
- Closing Thoughts



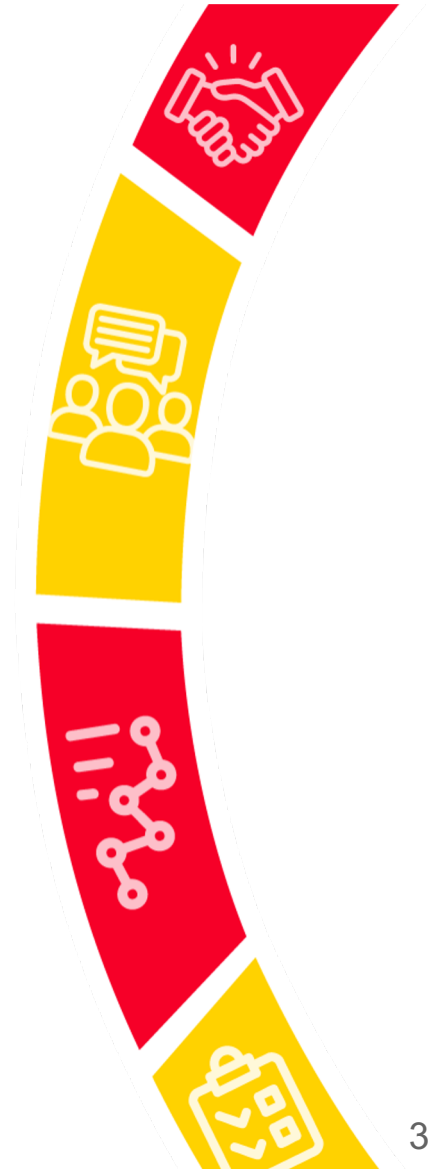
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Who We Are



The University

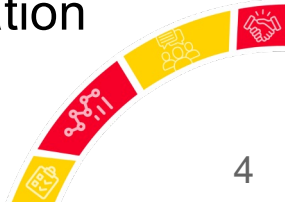


- Founded in 1969 as first four-year public university in San Antonio
- 82 students in first graduating class
- Today, enrollment over 42,000
- About 45% first-generation college students
- National leader in social mobility and innovation



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The Group

Positioned within Division of **Academic Affairs**, which is led by the University's Provost and includes Academic Colleges (Deans) and Academic Support Divisions (Vice Provosts)

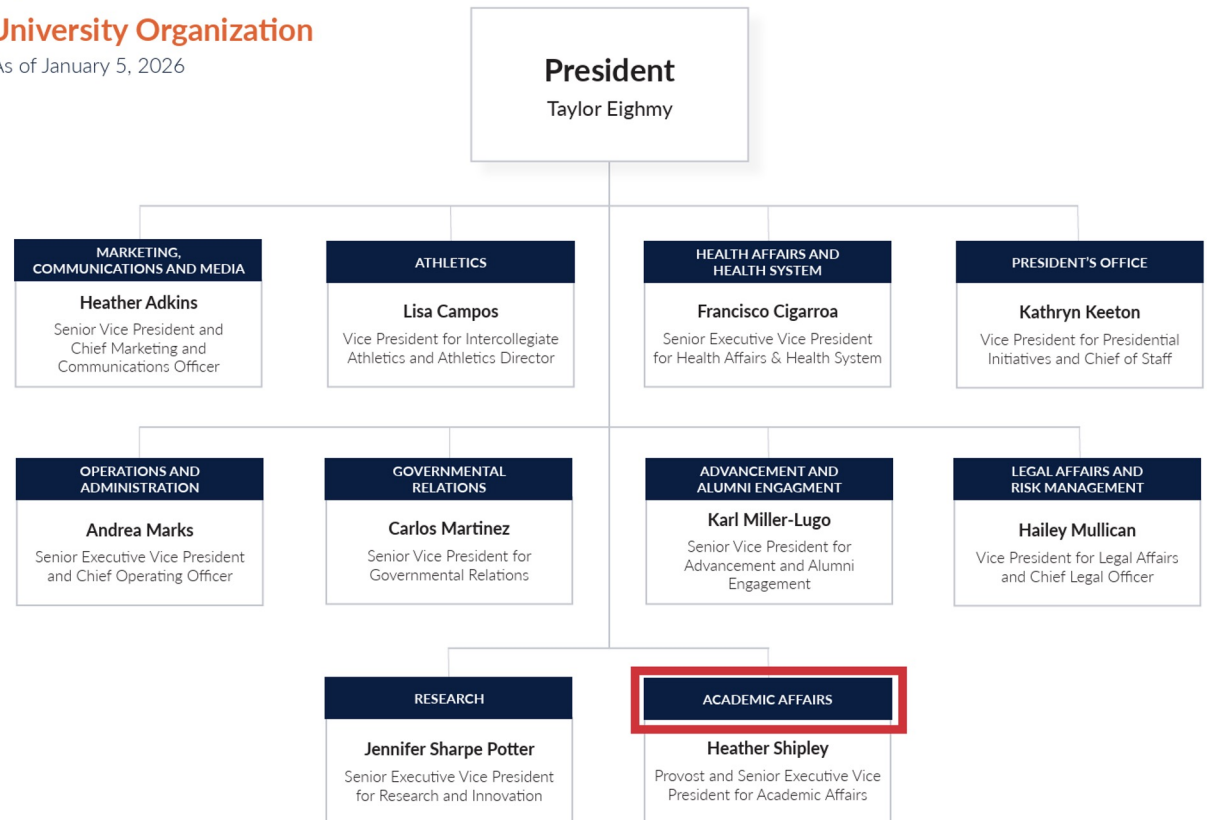


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University Organization

As of January 5, 2026



The Group



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Ruby Team created in 2018:

- Address student retention, completion, and scalability
- Encourage collaboration, foster shared accountability, and celebrate progress
- Meet weekly to review and prioritize strategies and tactics
- Proactive strategic planning and responding quickly to meet needs

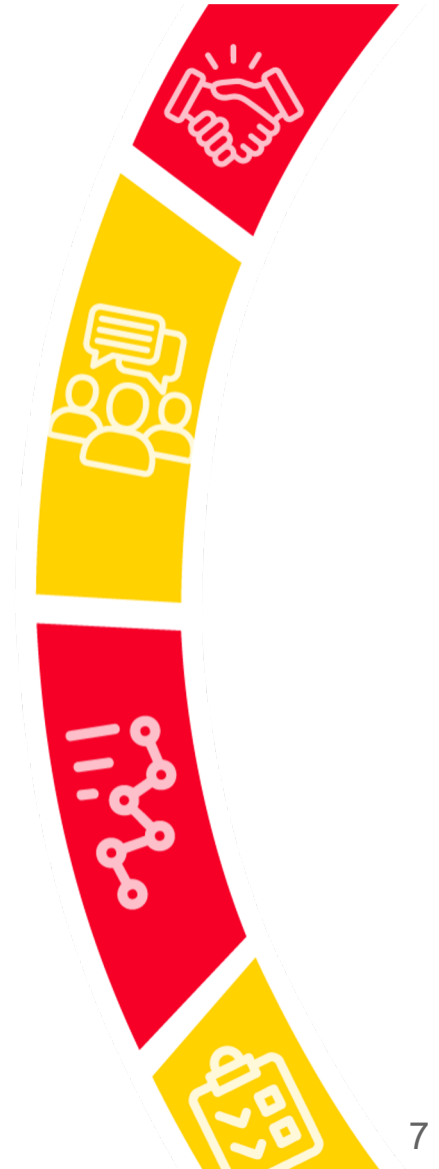
THE RUBY TEAM		Student Success
		Institutional Research
		Strategic Enrollment
		Academic Innovation
		Student Affairs
		Undergraduate & Graduate Studies
		Faculty Success
		Academic Strategic Comm
		Project Management



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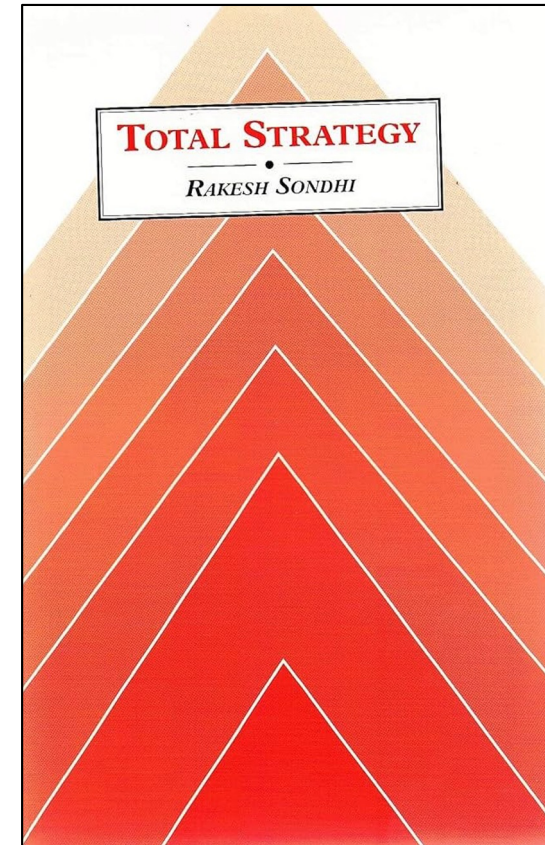
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The Framework



The Framework

- Strategic planning framework based on the “VMOST Framework” introduced by Sondhi Rakesh in *Total Strategy* (1999)
- Align long-term priorities with day-to-day work



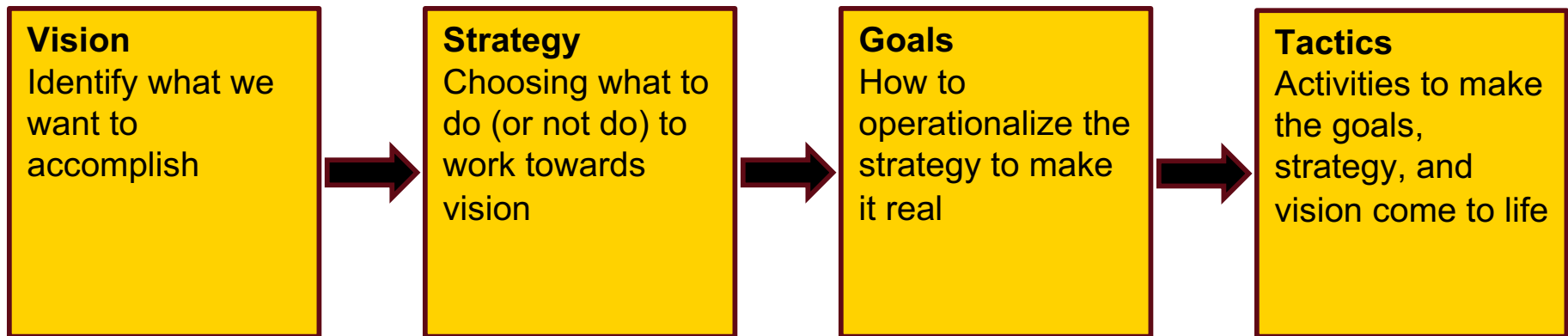
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The Framework

“Strategic Thinking” (LinkedIn Learning Course) by Dorie Clark, Professor and Author



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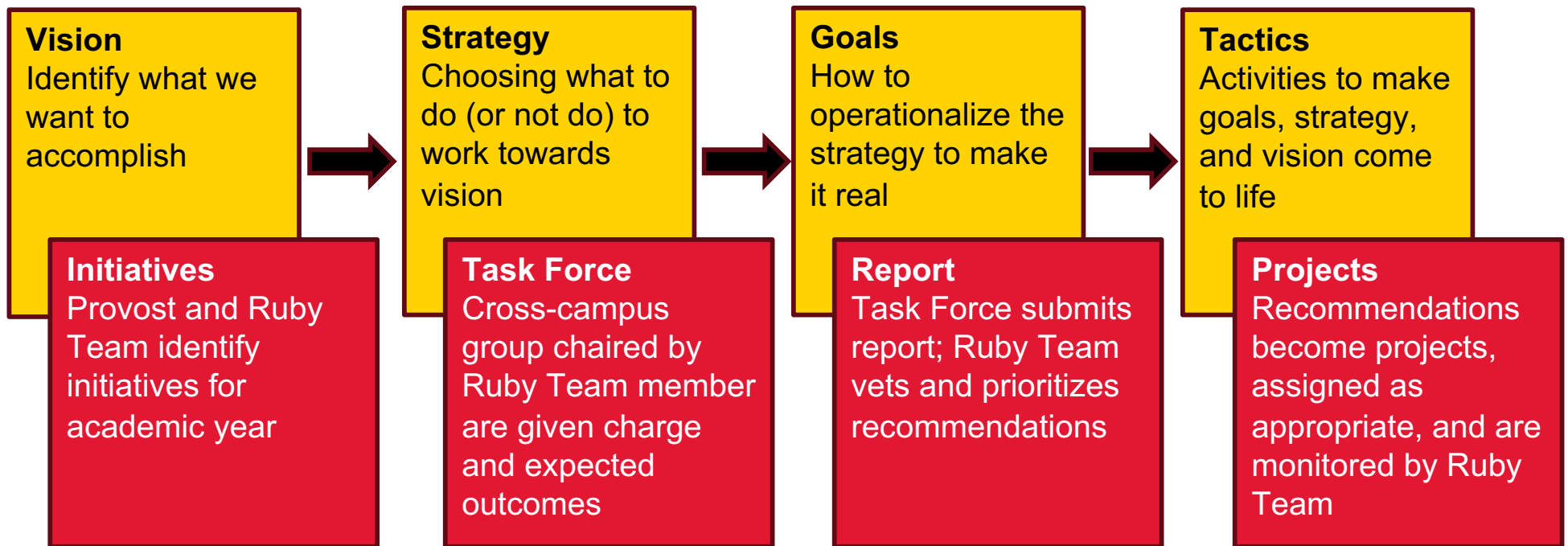


Mapping The Framework



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Framework Mapped to the Ruby Team Process



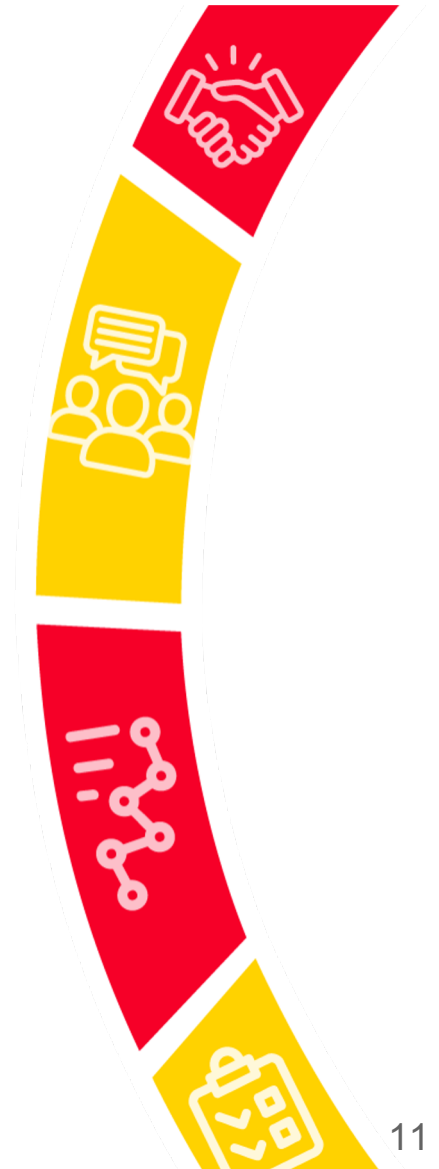


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Case Study

Well-being Task Force
2024–2025



Case Study: Well-being Task Force



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Framework Stage: Vision (Initiative)

- Ruby Team identified student well-being as a priority initiative for AY 2024–2025
- Established the Enhancing Well-being Task Force
- Co-led by two Ruby Team members representing Student Success and Student Affairs

Role of Project Manager

- Project Manager from Ruby Team assigned to support Task Force
- Active role in writing the charge and identifying members

Case Study: Well-being Task Force



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Framework Stage: Strategy (Task Force)

- Faculty, students, and staff all represented
- Broad authority to organize themselves and determine how to best carry out work (SMEs)
- In this case, established subgroups with focus area; carried out benchmarking and student listening sessions
- Submitted report

Role of Project Manager

- Facilitates work of the task force and serves as thought partner to co-chairs, ensuring progress is being made according to timeline
- Along with co-chairs, shares progress updates to full Ruby Team

Case Study: Well-being Task Force



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Framework Stage: Goals (Report)

- Report recommendations reviewed by Ruby Team
- Group identified priority recommendations to implement based on factors such as urgency, complexity, resource needs

Role of Project Manager

- Part of the team reviewing and prioritizing
- Along with co-chairs, has context from participating in Task Force meetings throughout; positioned to identify and document factors affecting implementation

Case Study: Well-being Task Force



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Framework Stage: Tactics (Projects)

- Converted priorities to projects
- Drafted plans and timelines
- Identified accountable team member
- Identified appropriate project manager/teams to lead
- Monitor via Ruby Team project tracker

Role of Project Manager

- Leads efforts at this stage
- Either carries out project work directly or coordinates with other project managers
- Coordinates communication when cross-team effort required for implementation
- Reports progress to Ruby Team

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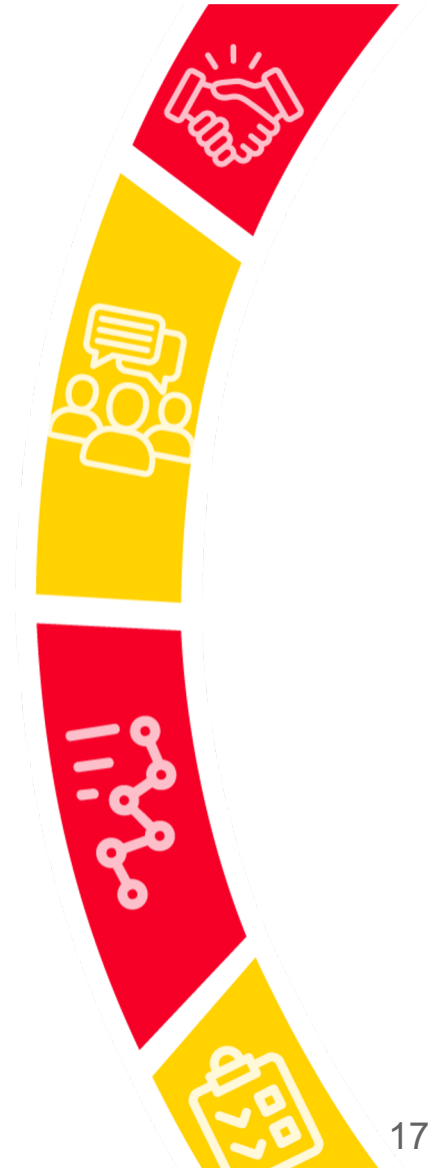




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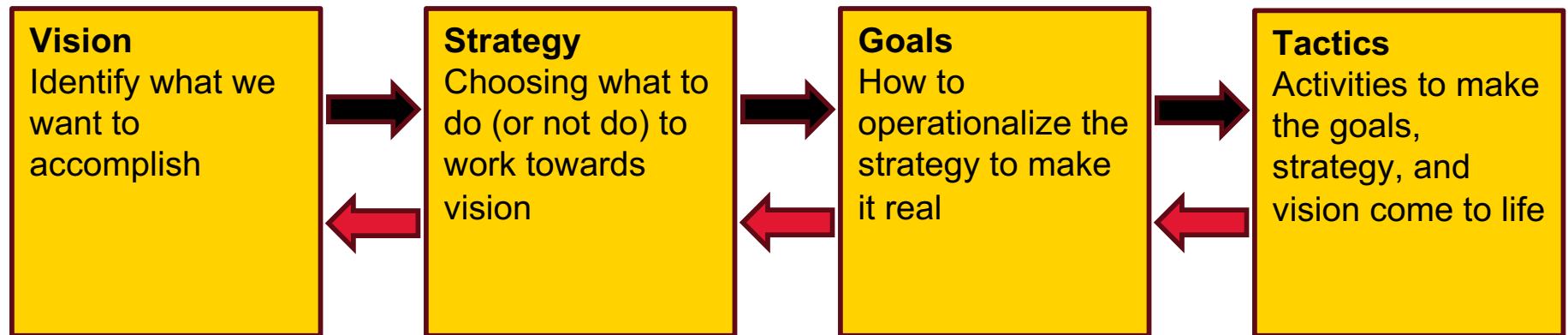
Applying the Framework



Applying the Framework: Strategy



- Take a bold, nebulous idea and break it down into achievable projects
- Ensure alignment between day-to-day work and your institution's mission or vision



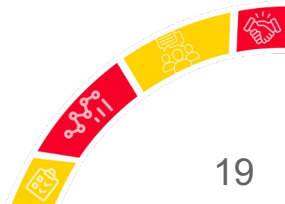
Applying the Framework: Projects

- Role of the project manager evolves through stages
- Being involved early = success later
 - Understand the “why?”
 - Shape the “how?”
 - Explain, motivate others
- **Empowered throughout**



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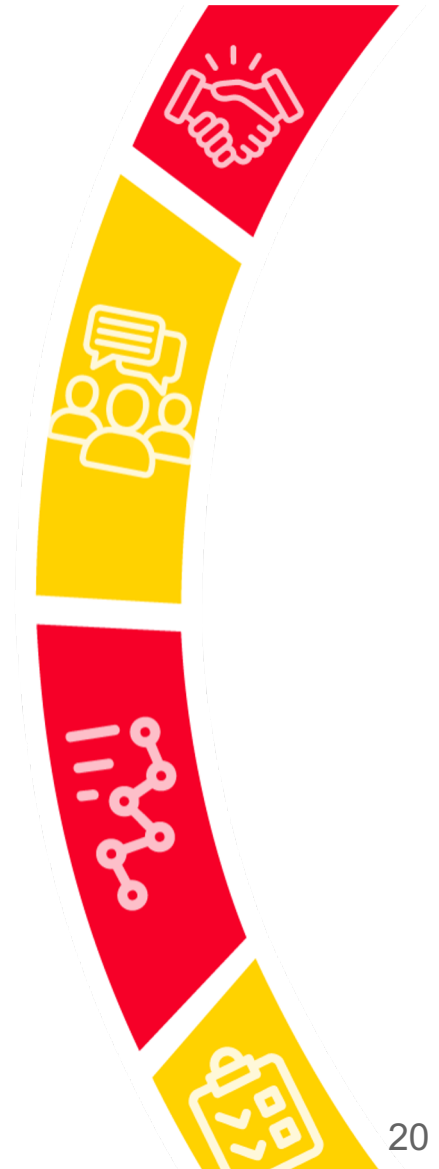




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Closing Thoughts



Critical Success Factors

- **Buy-in across all levels:** Leadership to departments
- **Data Literacy:** Beyond collection, towards actionable insights
- **Customization:** No “one-size-fits-all” approach
- **Progress Monitoring:** Celebrate small wins, adjust based on data
- **Innovation Culture:** Embrace failure as a learning tool



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Meet the Team



Heather Shipley
Provost and Senior Executive
Vice President for Academic
Affairs



Lynn Barnes Jr.
Senior Vice Provost for Strategic
Enrollment



Sondra Cooper
Assistant Director of Strategic
Initiatives



Debra Del Toro
Senior Director of Strategic
Messaging and Academic
Support



KC Gonzalez
Director of Academic
Communications & Creative
Services



Rebecca Luther
Senior Director of Academic
Strategic Communications and
Marketing



Katie Meersman
Chief of Staff and Associate Vice
Provost for Academic Operations
and Strategic Initiatives



Kelly Nash
Vice Provost for Faculty Success



LT Robinson
Senior Vice Provost for Student
Affairs and Dean of Students



Heather Trepal
Vice Provost for Graduate and
Postdoctoral Studies and Dean
of the Graduate School



Melissa Vito
Vice Provost for Academic
Innovation



Steve Wilkerson
Senior Vice Provost, Strategic
Analytics and Integrated
Systems



Tammy J. Wyatt
Senior Vice Provost for Student
Success

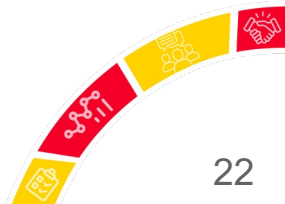
Bold Results

- **Reduced time to degree** from 5.2 to 4.2 years (\$4.9M in student savings)
- **Reduced student loan debt** by \$5K over last decade
- **Improved first-year retention** rate from 56% to 82%
- **Commitment to San Antonio and Texas:** 90% of students who graduated in last three years live and work in Texas



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"Great things are done
by a
series of small things
brought together"



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Questions & Evaluation

Evaluate Session:



Contact Information:

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<https://provost.utsa.edu/about/ruby/>



References



Slide 4

Information about UT San Antonio:

- <https://www.utsa.edu/about/history-development/>
- https://www.utsa.edu/ir/content/dashboards_unified/
- <https://www.utsa.edu/firstgen/>
- <https://news.utsa.edu/2025/09/u-s-news-world-report-recognizes-ut-san-antonio-as-a-leader-in-social-mobility-and-innovation/>

Slide 8

Sondhi, Rakesh K. *Total Strategy*. Airworthy Publications International Ltd., 1999.

Slide 9

Clark, Dorie. *Strategic Thinking*. LinkedIn Learning. Accessed March 22, 2026.

<https://www.linkedin.com/learning/strategic-thinking-22616141>.

About Dorie Clark: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/doriec>

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Well-being Initiative information

- <https://provost.utsa.edu/initiatives/wellbeing/>
- <https://provost.utsa.edu/initiatives/wellbeing/docs/2025-enhancing-well-being-task-force-final-report-final.pdf>