

UVI'S AGILE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS: A BOLD FUTURE VISION

The University of the Virgin Islands engages in a comprehensive strategic planning process every five years. *The Greatness Through Innovation* strategic plan covered the period 2018-2024, setting a strong foundation for UVI's growth and success. In September 2024, UVI embarked on developing its next strategic plan, *GRAND Momentum*, guided by an external consultant, who introduced the University's first-ever Agile planning process.

WHY AGILE STRATEGIC PLANNING

Agile strategic planning was selected not only because it works but because it is distinctly different from traditional strategic planning. Even though traditional plans look good on paper, they fail most of the time because their metrics are based on top-down assumptions. The use of top-down assumptions increases the likelihood of plan failure.

Agile planning is instead based on bottom-up questions inspired by collective vision of what everyone would love to be possible in 2 Decades, 2 Years, and 2 Quarters. These questions structure the 2 Quarter projects, which are then refreshed every 6 months. In this process, the groups project forward 2 Decades because the power of our strategy is equal to the length of our vision.

In this model, we translate what we would love to see possible over the next 2 Decades into what would indicate progress in the next 2 Years (goals) and then translate these indicators into 2 Quarter projects (objectives) that could make progress possible.

2 Quarter project teams take a question-based approach to their work. Progress metrics are an explicit part of their pathways forward because all their work is directed toward tangible and visible results.

In order to produce more results in any area of performance, additional projects are launched because each project can produce a defined scope of results. New projects are therefore launched every 2 Quarters.

Project teams do the doable with what they have. Doing the doable always includes some form of question-based research and small experiments. They succeed precisely because they are operating from bottom-up questions rather than top-down assumptions. People only authentically support what they co-create.

This is not to say that top-down assumption-based metrics are intrinsically bad. Teams simply translate any of these into bottom-up metrics-focused questions. Teams are productive to the degree that they remain disciplined in being question-based. While working from assumptions lowers the IQ of the

group, questions make people smarter together.

Project teams engage people who volunteer with their discretionary time for them. These can include faculty, staff, students, alumni, and members of the wider community, external to the University. Where top-down strategic planning features selective engagement, Agile features unlimited engagement. All team project success stories are communicated to everyone related to the University.

While teams work on the strategic plan, the rest of the University work on their respective operational plans as

departments, programs, and colleges. It is important that operational plans work in harmony with the strategic plan, and that the strategic plan works in harmony with the operational plans, i.e., in a complementary way toward shared purposes.

Most of the achievements in any area of the University in any year will come from operational plans and efforts. Some margin of gains will also be made from strategic plans and efforts. Any gains not made by strategic projects will be made by operational efforts. Together, both levels of plans make for a **GRAND University**.

COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIC PLANNING: CO-CREATING OUR FUTURE

This adaptive strategy positions UVI as a trailblazer in education and innovation, poised to address the evolving needs of its community and the broader region. It also fosters a collaborative environment where progress is continuously assessed and refined. This innovative agile strategic plan approach ensures UVI remains at the forefront of academic excellence, research, and community development, while positioning the institution for sustained growth and impact.

A dynamic Visioning and Strategic Planning Co-Design team was formulated, which exemplified inclusive leadership through representation from students, faculty, staff, administrators, and Board members. Guided by an experienced consultant with expertise in Agile strategic planning, this diverse group stewarded the planning process through coordinated stakeholder engagement, robust data gathering, assumption validation, and strategic theme development and prioritization. Their collaborative approach ensured that multiple perspectives shaped both the planning process and its outcomes.

Stakeholder engagement remained a cornerstone of the Agile strategic planning process, ensuring inclusivity and meaningful participation from students, alumni, faculty, staff, Board members, government officials, employers, educators, and community members. This inclusive framework fostered a shared vision for UVI's future and amplified the voices



of diverse stakeholders. Engagement sessions were held territory- and campus-wide, which fostered deep community engagement, creating forums for stakeholders to reimagine the future of UVI, explore ways to achieve meaningful progress and to be a part of exciting small projects launched in the strategic plan. These interactive sessions provided an opportunity for voices to be heard, while helping define the future of UVI in a way that is bold, innovative, and uniquely ours — fostering a shared vision for UVI's future that reflects our collective aspirations.

The Agile process ensures the plan remains alive, receiving bi-quarterly refreshes and updates to the University Community and Board members. Stakeholder sessions will be held every two years where the general community will be informed of progress, seeking input on additional ideas based on progress thus far, while remaining flexible to pivot and/or refocus, as needed.





Figure 1 - Agile Strategic Planning Process

This forward-thinking process centered on a bold 20-year vision, underpinned by actionable two-year projects and two-quarter milestones to track progress effectively. The agile process prioritizes collaboration, adaptability, and continuous community engagement, empowering UVI to pivot based on stakeholder feedback and emerging opportunities. Guided by a question-driven methodology, the process emphasized research and experimentation to identify and address UVI’s most critical areas for growth and innovation.

With actionable two-year progress indicators, UVI’s agile methodology emphasizes research, experimentation, and responsiveness, ensuring the plan remains dynamic and relevant. Central to this strategy is a focus on long-term visioning and actionable planning, which strengthens the University’s ability to address the diverse needs of students and future workforce demands. Metrics will be tracked using a Power BI dashboard. Additionally, the plan will undergo bi-quarterly refreshes to ensure its relevance and responsiveness.

This comprehensive approach generated close to 5,000 ideas and recommendations—marking the most participatory planning initiative in the University’s history. From the many suggestions received, focus areas were identified and ideas grouped for implementation.