



BENTLEY
UNIVERSITY

The Bentley Strategic Positioning Process

A toolkit for engaging with teams, departments and divisions



Dear Bentley Community,

Higher education is evolving, and the disruptions and competitive challenges that have defined our marketplace for so many years afford us myriad new opportunities to serve our students and support our most critical stakeholders more effectively. This is the time to seize those opportunities, and I believe that we are ready to do so.

As you know, over the 2021-2022 academic year, the university is engaging in a new strategic positioning process. I am confident that a process that synthesizes the ideas of our entire community will result in a compelling and forward-thinking strategic plan.

To help guide our community-driven process, we have created this strategic positioning guidebook with several optional exercises to assist individuals, units, departments and other groups of stakeholders in thinking about Bentley's future. We invite you to use this toolkit to contribute ideas to support our strategic positioning effort through the end of the fall semester.



As your submissions are compiled and reviewed by our strategic positioning committees, they will evaluate common themes and new opportunities for the university to advance its mission. In the spring, we look forward to socializing findings and the emerging strategic plan, ahead of finalization and adoption by the board of trustees in 2022.

Thank you for taking time this academic year to contribute to our strategic positioning effort and seizing this opportunity to define our future success. It is through our communal sense of ownership and contributions in this strategic positioning process that I know our future will be bright.

Most Sincerely,

E. LaBrent Chrite, Ph.D., President

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Key Ideas Form

This form will help you collect the results of your team’s exercise(s). The resulting ideas and additional comments will be shared with the Strategic Priority Committees. Please submit one form per completed exercise via [this online form](#) (also found on www.bentley.edu/about/strategic-positioning). You can complete any number of the example exercises in the pages that follow or conduct your own conversations. Most important is that we are getting feedback from you!

Individual/Dept/Unit/Group: _____ Date: _____

Contact name (in case committees have questions):

Name of exercise: _____

Ideas/themes/feedback from discussion:

Additional Comments: _____

Please submit details collected in this exercise at [our online form](#).

Optional Exercises for Bentley's Strategic Positioning Process

There are five optional exercises in the pages that follow. **You can choose to complete some, all, or create your own.** Remember, for each exercise completed, please submit **one form** (also found at www.bentley.edu/about/strategic-positioning) so the data can be shared with the relevant Strategic Priority Committee.

1. Discussion Prompts
2. SOAR Analysis
3. Start, Stop, Continue
4. Bentley's Purpose Today and in 2030
5. Department, Program or Unit Reviews

Exercise 1: Discussion Prompts

- 1) **Imagining Bentley:** If you had unlimited resources and were tasked with designing a brand-new Bentley from the ground up . . .
 - a. What kind of institution would you design?
 - b. What values or priorities would you ensure act as a foundation for the institution?
 - c. What would you include from the current university? What would you change?
 - d. How would you prepare for emerging trends and threats to higher education?

2. **Teaching and Learning at Bentley:** What will teaching and learning at Bentley look like in 2030?
 - a. In 2030, what current learning outcomes, skills and competencies will remain central to teaching and learning at Bentley? What will change?
 - b. What will the Bentley curriculum look like in 2030?
 - c. How will sustainability, technology, interdisciplinarity, STEM, artificial intelligence, data analytics, diversity, equity and inclusion or other topics influence teaching and learning?
 - d. In 2030, what will people say about a Bentley education?

3. **Bentley in 2030:** What do you imagine Bentley, or your department, will look like in 2030?
 - a. What will be our primary goals?
 - b. What will be markers of our success?
 - c. How will work be organized or prioritized?
 - d. What do you hope will stay the same as today?
 - e. What do you hope will change or evolve?

4. **The Bentley Experience:** Bentley is considered a national leader in business education combined with arts and sciences and is ranked #1 in the nation for career services by the *Princeton Review*. Students have typically participated in a selection of experiences - study abroad, service learning, undergraduate research, internships and leadership.
 - a. In 2030, will we have the same Bentley experiences for students?
 - b. Will we have additional experiences? Fewer experiences?
 - c. How will each of the existing experiences be advanced in the next strategic plan?
 - d. What is next for Bentley's mastery of business education combined with the arts and sciences?

5. **Partnerships:** In creating future leaders committed to making an impact that doesn't just move business forward, but that moves us all forward, new and enhanced partnerships

with external stakeholders can provide immeasurable lessons for our students, faculty staff and alumni.

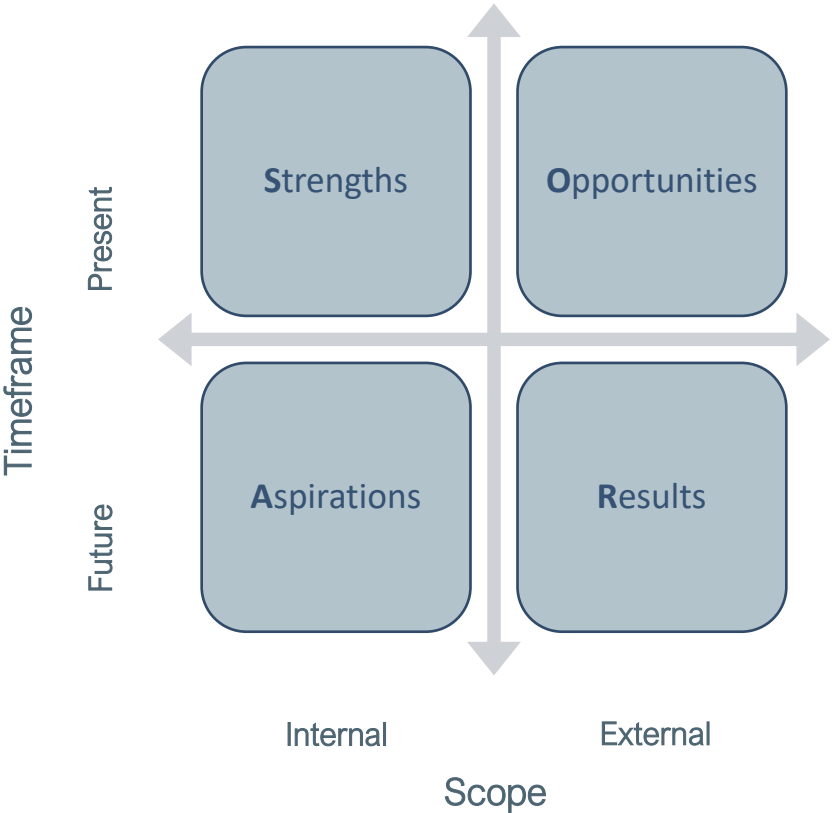
- a. What current partnerships should we further invest in? How have they been impactful so far?
- b. What new partnerships should we seek? Why are they critical to our future success?
- c. What partnerships should we avoid?

6. Professional Development:

- a. What would most improve your experience as a faculty or staff member?
- b. What would most enhance your professional development as a faculty or staff member?
- c. Demographers tell us the American workforce will soon host five generations simultaneously. How can we better meet the needs of five generations working at Bentley and how can we help those generations to work well together?
- d. What additional benefits would be worth considering for faculty and staff? If new benefits could only be added by trading off with existing benefits, what current benefits would you consider trading away?

Exercise 2: SOAR Analysis

A SOAR analysis (strengths – opportunities – aspirations – results) is a strategic planning tool used by organizations to identify current strengths and opportunities that achieve future aspirations and desired results. To begin this exercise, review each section along with its brief definition and question prompts. Next, either individually or as a group begin to list ideas within each bucket. Then, collate and prioritize ideas within each bucket arriving at a **top two to three ideas per bucket**. Share the resulting key ideas by bucket.



Strengths

- Capabilities and resources that enable your department to perform well
- Tangible and intangible assets or abilities
- Core competencies or central features

What do we excel at?
What makes us unique?

What strengths are most valuable in our marketplace?

Opportunities

- Emerging trends, issues, or changes that your department could act on or engage
- Broad national or international opportunities or more singular issues or needs that impact your department

What are our stakeholders asking for?

What changes and trends in the market align with our strengths?

What partnerships would lead to greater success?

What needs and wants are we currently not fulfilling for our internal and external stakeholders?

Aspirations

- Expressions of what we want to be and achieve in the future

What do we want to achieve in the future?

How can we make a difference?

What are we passionate about?

What strategies and actions support our perfect future self?

Results

- Tangible outcomes and measures that demonstrate achievement of goals and aspirations

How will we know when we have achieved our aspirations?

What measures will tell us we are on track to achieve success?

Exercise 3: Start, Stop, Continue

Effectively balancing all the initiatives and priorities of a university is an evolving process. This simple exercise to evaluate progress, effectiveness and changing priorities can provide a fresh perspective on the vision for our future.

IMPORTANT NOTE: While it is easy to become focused on specific actions or tasks, this exercise is designed for thinking about higher level university or unit-level initiatives or goals. At these early stages of the strategic positioning process, thinking from an elevated “bird’s-eye” view about larger goals and vision is most productive.

1. Set up three marker boards, flip charts, or Jamboard pages (Start, Stop and Continue). Participants take 5-10 minutes to brainstorm and then write their ideas on each page to answer the following questions.

Start	Stop	Continue
<p>What should we start doing?</p> <p>List initiatives or ideas that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unit or university is not doing, but you think should be done. • New ideas that have or have not been considered before. • Ideas to address emerging trends, achieve 	<p>What should we stop doing?</p> <p>List initiatives or ideas that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are not working or achieving desired outcomes for the unit or university. • No longer align with unit or university mission or goals. • Are no longer effective or valued. 	<p>What should we continue doing?</p> <p>List initiatives or ideas that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are working well for the unit or university. • Are successful or effective. • Align well with mission and values of the unit or university.

3. Each participant receives three dots or markers to act as votes and places their votes next to the ideas they like best on the flip charts. Participants can put all three dots on one idea or distribute their dots across different ideas.
4. Discuss which ideas receive the most and least votes. Consider, as a group, the ideas with the most votes, the implications of those ideas for Bentley’s next strategic plan and how to proceed with those ideas.

Exercise 4: Bentley's Purpose Today and in 2030

In describing the purpose of the institution, the Bentley University mission statement and values both imply certain commitments.

Mission Statement: Bentley University changes the world with a transformative business education, integrated with arts and sciences, that inspires and prepares ethical leaders who will confront the challenges of today and shape the opportunities of tomorrow.

Values: To fulfill this mission and create the best environment for learning to occur, Bentley as a community embraces the following core values:

Caring: We practice understanding, compassion and kindness. We recognize the whole person and their well-being, and we think beyond ourselves and our immediate goals to consider the impact our actions have on other people.

Collaboration: We welcome new perspectives as we work with others toward a common goal. We seek out opportunities for partnership and teamwork, readily sharing our knowledge and expertise with others.

Diversity: We are all different and that makes our community stronger. We embrace and seek to understand those with different beliefs, backgrounds and life experiences. We celebrate those differences as opportunities to learn and grow. We protect and affirm the right of all people to be themselves.

Honesty: We act with honesty and integrity in our academic, personal and professional affairs. We are dedicated to ethical and transparent behavior, and we hold ourselves accountable for our words and actions.

Impact: We recognize our potential to make a difference. We use the power of business and innovation to positively impact individuals, organizations and the communities we serve at home and abroad.

Learning: We are here to learn and develop. We are passionate about knowledge and want to continue to learn throughout our lives. We are eager and willing to try new experiences and ways of thinking. We appreciate that much of our learning will occur by interacting with others, inside and outside of the classroom.

Respect: We treat others as they would like to be treated. We recognize the inherent dignity and worth of all members of our community and strive to better understand and appreciate everyone. We are committed to keeping our community free of vandalism, hate speech, violence and harassment.

Instructions: Use the examples in the chart on the next page to determine and discuss the following questions:

1. What does each of these commitments look like or include currently?
2. What might each of these commitments look like in 2030?
3. How or why will the commitments be different in 2030?

Commitment	Describe Currently	Describe in 2030	Difference
Excellence in Business education integrated with arts and sciences.			
Honesty, integrity and respect across academic, personal and professional affairs.			
Preparing students to be leaders.			
Preparing students to be global citizens.			
Valuing diversity and fostering an inclusive community.			
Mobilizing sustainable leadership in business.			
Continuous dedication to learning and developing.			

Exercise 5: Department, Program or Unit Reviews

Discussion questions for departments, units or groups

1. How well has our unit met departmental strategic goals?
2. What are the emerging areas and best practices in our discipline/area? How might we engage those practices to advance Bentley?
3. How can we advance the overall mission of the university?



BENTLEY UNIVERSITY

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BENTLEY UNIVERSITY is more than just one of the nation's top business schools. It is a lifelong-learning community that creates successful leaders who make business a force for positive change. With a combination of business and the arts and sciences and a flexible, personalized approach to education, Bentley provides students with critical thinking and practical skills that prepare them to lead successful, rewarding careers. Founded in 1917, the university enrolls 4,000 undergraduate and 1,000 graduate and PhD students and is set on 163 acres in Waltham, Massachusetts, 10 miles west of Boston. For more information, visit bentley.edu.