

TORCHSTAR CLIENT IMPACT CASE STUDY UPSIDE Planning



CLIENT SITUATION

- TorchStar Education, Inc. prepared a strategic plan for an academic unit that offers both undergraduate and graduate degrees that combine professional and research-oriented education.
- The unit had had significant declines in enrollment and also suffered from problems with faculty collegiality.
- A new leader sought to address these challenges and also create a unit-level strategic plan that aligned with university- and college-level plans.

PARENT INSIGHTS AND EXPERIENCES

- TorchStar Education began by conducting a survey of faculty to get their insights into their biggest challenges and opportunities
- Survey data provided the framework for a day-long planning session in which the faculty created a vision statement and six strategic priorities
- Faculty then worked in small groups to set specific goals and tactics for each priority area.
- TorchStar provided the department head with a completed planning document that included suggestions for delegating tasks and for setting benchmarks.

RESULTS

- With assistance from TorchStar, the head identified benchmarking data for each of the unit's six priority areas:
 - Undergraduate Education
 - Graduate Education
 - Research/scholarship and faculty development
 - Culture, communication, and collegiality
 - Resources and infrastructure
 - Diversity and inclusion
- In subsequent annual retreats, the head reported benchmarking data to faculty who used it to track progress and revise goals and tactics:
 - Undergraduate enrollments increased incrementally each year
 - Quality of graduate applications increased
 - Research outputs improved in quantity and quality
 - Collegiality improved as measured by co-authorship on research projects and implementation of mentoring programs
 - Transparency and accountability for use of resources was shared broadly by all faculty
 - Attention was placed on addressing concerns about diversity in student professional clubs

CLIENT TESTIMONY

“Faculty will never agree on everything. And they will always pursue research and teaching as largely individual activities. But TorchStar helped us realize that we DO have a broad vision that we can all agree on. Having a well-defined, measurable set of priorities has given us a common focus. Our meetings are now more productive as we work together to address common goals rather than administrative trivia.”