

## The Mobius Loop for Engaging in Strategic Planning

Joy Benson, University of Wisconsin-River Falls, River Falls, WI, USA  
Sally Dresdow, University of Wisconsin-Stout, Menomonie, WI, USA

The Mobius Loop can be used to provide creative space for dialogue that is both structured and fluid. It's easy to understand framework helps people generate strategies to address the opportunities that the changing nature of higher education provide. The structure provides space for inspiration, ideation, and implementation – and does so in a way that visualizes a holistic structure for continuous improvement

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

River Falls



### INSPIRATION

Research Changing Higher Education Context & Develop Strategic Themes

### IMPLEMENTATION

Develop Objectives/Actions for each Goal

### IDEATION

Establish Goals for Each Theme



*In conjunction with organization partners, college leadership and faculty will transform organizations, address societal changes, and re-envision our position as a thought leader and agent of change.*

**GOAL 1.** Craft a future oriented culture that responds to changes in higher education through innovation, cross-disciplinary approaches, & living in a globally connected world.

**OBJ. 1.1:** Develop a College leadership culture and competencies that balance near-term improvements with visionary goal-setting.

**OBJ. 1.2:** Design a process to regularly assess the evolving needs of students, faculty, alumni and industry for strategic planning and business model innovation.

**OBJ. 1.3:** Expand international partnerships and programming

**Abstract:** Higher education is at a pivotal point. Traditional strategic actions no longer help move faculty and programs in the direction that many stakeholders expect. What constitutes learning engagement is changing and how impact is understood has moved beyond graduation rates and publication numbers. These transformations are taking place in a complex system of multiple players, many interacting parts, a history that frequently challenges the changes required, and emotions that run from fear to exhilaration. The result of transformation attempts can be many plans that convey information but make it hard to see the key issues and interactions. The Mobius Loop Canvas ([mobiusloop.com](http://mobiusloop.com)) can be used to provide a creative space for dialogue that is both structured and fluid. This review considers the Mobius framework that helps people generate outcomes to address the opportunities that the changing nature of higher education provide. The structure provides space for inspiration, ideation, and implementation – and does so in a way that creates a holistic structure for continuous improvement.

The minor twist of the mobius loop serves as an impetus for developing numerous interpretation that can help reshape how strategy is envisioned.

As a metaphor for strategy its imagery focuses discussion on crafting strategy as a continuous, living process – one that informs short-term and long-term actions.

The Mobius Loop visualizes the seamless completion and addition of goals and objectives. And, it helps to keep the focus on outcomes. The fluid movement inherent in the mobius loop stresses transformation and helps to keep conversations flowing on migrating from the current to the future state of the organization.

The visual stacking of multiple loops helps to see the dynamics among the different themes & that they work together to make up the core of meaningful impact. This perspective encourages focusing on value creations – in fact, multiple value streams for different stakeholders across different time frames

- Fosters creation of long-term visionary themes
- Supports traditional 'how' questions to develop goals and objectives that align with the themes. And, moves beyond traditional strategic frameworks by crafting conversations that results in the following:
- Generating multiple spaces for full participation in transformation – engaging students, faculty, staff, internal departments, and external business & community partners; and ensuring that all can see how they contribute.
- Ability to see where actions for one goal impact other goals across the future oriented themes.
- To measure impact not just goal achievement. This requires ongoing engagement with multiple stakeholders across longer period of time and have outcome measures not a check list. Yes, expanding international partnerships is part of living in a globally connected world but what is the impact of this? The true value lies in being able to answer this question for learners, organizations, and society. Mobius helps to visualize the impact of current strategic actions – which in turn is the first step to a new future.