

# A Culture of Strategy: Rollins College



“When I discovered StrategyBlocks, our Strategy Team was working from a 26-page, legal-size, Excel® spreadsheet and attempting to manage the activities of 13 separate task forces who oversee 65 strategic initiatives and upwards of 600 milestone activities. Using StrategyBlocks now allows our Team, senior leadership, and members of the campus community to see our strategic initiatives across highly visual dashboards, seamlessly tracking progress and making real-time decisions for moving forward.”

— Toni Strollo Holbrook, *Assistant Provost, Institutional Effectiveness, Rollins College*

## The Organization

Rollins College is a private, comprehensive liberal arts college. The award-winning campus is located along the banks of Lake Virginia in Winter Park, Florida, just minutes from Orlando, one of the top tourist destinations in the world. Considered one of the best liberal arts schools in the South, Rollins was established in 1885 and today serves more than 3,000 students seeking both undergraduate and graduate degrees. The College offers undergraduate degrees in the full-time, residential College of Liberal Arts and in the part-time evening program of the Hamilton Holt School. Master’s and doctoral degrees in business are offered through the Crummer Graduate School of Business, and the Holt School offers eight master’s-degree programs.

The Rollins College mission is to educate students for global citizenship and responsible leadership, empowering graduates to pursue meaningful lives and productive careers.

### Snapshot: Rollins College, Fall 2017

- Nearly 3,200 undergraduate and graduate students
- Nearly 2,000 residential undergraduates
- 232 full-time faculty and 510 staff members
- Ranked among the top two regional universities in the South for 20 years running by U.S. News & World Report

## The Problem

Strategic planning is a vital part of any educational institution’s efforts. With the appointment of President Grant Cornwell in 2015 came a new approach to strategy. His goal was for the College community to embrace a highly energized, well-championed strategic planning agenda – one that would move beyond project mode and instead define the College, becoming part of its culture and legacy.

As a first step in cultivating strategic planning as a mindset, the Rollins community undertook a process of rigorous research and honest appraisal of the College’s strengths and weaknesses. Then, guided by a list of 12 strategic questions posited by President Cornwell, the Strategy Team set about populating 13 unique task forces to garner feedback from focus groups, engage in creative problem solving, and elicit collaborative debate about courses of action. By early December 2016, reports and recommendations had been gathered, and the Strategy Team tackled the task of constructing a targeted plan of action based on 65 identified initiatives.

The resulting strategic framework assigned each initiative to one of three core themes: Deepen Student Engagement with the College’s Mission, Deliver on Promises of Student Success, and Steward Strategic Assets to Strengthen Competitive Advantage. In May 2017, the College’s Board of Trustees officially approved the framework and implementation plans.

“Once the Board approved our strategic plan, I knew that we needed a sophisticated, visually appealing tracking solution to bring our strategy to life,” said President Grant Cornwell. “We needed something cost-effective, easy to implement, and user friendly; but most importantly, we needed a solution that would allow us to successfully manage a very rigorous and comprehensive strategic plan while maintaining our momentum and strategic focus.”

## The Solution

” *We evaluated dozens of options to determine what could best fit the unique needs of our academic institution. StrategyBlocks was the undisputed frontrunner for its easy integration, simple interface, and highly visual displays that give all of our stakeholders a clear view into our plan, progress, and success.*”

— Toni Strollo Holbrook, *Assistant Provost, Institutional Effectiveness, Rollins College*

StrategyBlocks is an intuitive SaaS solution, designed for strategic planning, management and execution, that allows organizations to become more agile across the entire strategic lifecycle.

StrategyBlocks connects an institution to its ideas in a highly visual way, increasing overall agility and allowing much greater and more powerful insight into success metrics and growth opportunities than ever before.

Its proprietary 'Cascading Metric' system simplifies Key Performance Indicator (KPI) reporting and metrics, removing redundancies and inefficiencies and giving an organization an unprecedented, top down and bottom up view into business intelligence and operations.

StrategyBlocks enables a more dynamic organization, updating data in real time and ensuring complex executive reports are immediately accessible. The flexible nature of the solution allows users to customize any number of dashboards, tailor the platform's functionality and manually input their own metrics, all to fit within an organization's unique requirements.

For Rollins College, StrategyBlocks met the visual needs of the president, the Strategy Team, and the Board of Trustees. The solution's intuitive architecture made it easy to navigate, and Rollins' users were especially pleased by the level of personal attention and responsiveness from the StrategyBlocks team.

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*At Rollins, we do a great deal of hard copy reporting, and the need to print various reports and dashboards presented a challenge. The StrategyBlocks team worked with us and quickly developed a way for us to visually represent the data in the way we needed and to print and share those data easily. It's those little personal touches that have made working with StrategyBlocks so effective and enjoyable”*

— **Toni Strollo Holbrook**, Assistant Provost, Institutional Effectiveness, Rollins College

## The Result

Rollins College uses StrategyBlocks to track 65 initiatives that all feed back to three main themes. Each of these 65 initiatives is further subcategorized by anywhere from four to 10 milestones that track various stages of achievement. StrategyBlocks makes it easy for Rollins to measure start and end dates for actions associated with each initiative as well as track the percentage of progress for each milestone.

StrategyBlocks' flexible nature has allowed Rollins to easily create individual dashboards for each of the Strategic Task Force Chairs, allowing them to drill down on the progress of the initiatives they own. In addition, the College's Vice Presidents are each assigned to strategies that align with their areas of responsibility, and their personal dashboards reflect their areas of ownership.

The individual dashboards make it easy to drill down on specific reporting, as Strollo Holbrook is responsible for creating briefing books to highlight progress both for the Board of Trustees and the community at large.

“In less than six months' time we were able to present status updates and reports to the Trustees, and they were very happy with the visual representation of our strategic initiatives and execution,” said Strollo Holbrook. “StrategyBlocks has allowed

us to more seamlessly manage the volume of initiatives we are undertaking and to quickly see and address those areas we may need to adjust or work harder to achieve.”

## The Future

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*The overarching purpose in strategic planning for Rollins College is to make us better at delivering on our mission: to educate students to be responsible leaders and productive citizens. As we implement effective strategies to meet this mission, we will be better as an institution and as a resource for the future leaders of the world who start their journey on our campus”*

— **Grant Cornwell**, President of Rollins College

Moving forward, Rollins would like to incorporate more metrics for its initiatives and milestones, tying them to KPIs to assess institutional progress. In addition, the Strategy Team hopes to assign more ownership and autonomy to individual Task Force Chairs and Vice Presidents through the StrategyBlocks platform, enabling them to update their own milestones and initiatives.

“Strategic planning is fast becoming part of our institutional DNA, and we will continue to approach our progress through a collaborative, transparent, strategic lens,” said Strollo Holbrook. “We are excited to grow with StrategyBlocks and to take advantage of the various tools and features it offers as we build on our strategic planning and continue to strive to meet the needs of our students and the learning community we represent.”



## StrategyBlocks

For more information on StrategyBlocks, please visit [www.strategyblocks.com](http://www.strategyblocks.com) or email [info@strategyblocks.com](mailto:info@strategyblocks.com). If you would like an online demonstration please click the “Request an online demo” link from the website and we would be delighted to show you how StrategyBlocks can have a positive effect on your business.

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