

HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP SERIES

The Academic Affairs Success Framework

The Central Office
Workbook

WORKSHEET EXCERPT

Juline E. Mills, PhD.

A Four-Pillar Model for
Institutional Effectiveness in
Higher Education



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Citation Note: The concepts presented throughout this workbook are informed by established research and best practices in higher education leadership, accreditation, and organizational effectiveness. References are provided to acknowledge key works that align with these ideas; however, all narrative text, framework design, and interpretations are original to the author. No direct quotations from cited sources are used unless otherwise indicated.

A. Academic Affairs Budget Strategy & Financial Planning Checklist

SCORING SCALE:

☐ **Yes.** The budget practice is fully met, consistently implemented, documented, and functioning as intended across Academic Affairs. Formal policy or documented process exists. There is demonstrated, consistent practice. Data reports confirm this achievement, and clear alignment is shown with institutional goals, accreditation expectations, and risk controls.

☐ **Partially.** The budget practice is **partially met**. Some components are implemented, but gaps exist in consistency, documentation, resourcing, or execution. Implementation is uneven across colleges or programs. Documentation exists but is incomplete. Practice is informal or newly adopted. Additional investment, staffing, or planning is needed.

☐ **No.** The budget practice is **not in place**, not documented, or not consistently practiced. There is no clear evidence of implementation. No established process, policy, or supporting documentation. Practice varies widely with no standardization. Work is ad hoc or dependent on individual effort. Gaps may exist that pose financial, accreditation, or compliance risks.

CHECKLIST ITEM	STATUS
1. ALIGNMENT WITH ACADEMIC PRIORITIES & INSTITUTIONAL MISSION	
Academic budget allocations align with program quality, student success priorities, and institutional mission.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Funding decisions reflect workforce alignment, accreditation obligations, and community demand.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Academic Affairs uses a documented prioritization framework for investment, maintenance, or reduction.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Budget planning integrates enrollment planning, recruitment pipelines, and retention strategy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Opportunity costs for academic investments are clearly documented.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No

2. ACADEMIC REVENUE MIX, FORECASTING & SUSTAINABILITY	
Academic Affairs has multi-year revenue projections tied to student credit hours (SCH) trends, program mix, and modality.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Tuition revenue forecasts account for discounting, retention, yield, and stop-out patterns.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Scenario modeling is used for academic staffing and section planning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Revenue dependencies (undergraduate, graduate, online, dual enrollment) are monitored for volatility.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Academic Affairs participates in revenue diversification initiatives.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
3. ACADEMIC COST STRUCTURE, EFFICIENCY & LABOR MODELING	
Cost-per-student, cost-per-credit, and instructional cost are calculated by program.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Full-time, part-time, and overload instructional costs are modeled each term.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Faculty line planning includes retirements, sabbaticals, and tenure-track commitments.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Section fill and seat utilization rates inform workload optimization.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Labor cost modeling includes fringe, benefits, and long-term implications.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
4. PROGRAM-LEVEL FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE & PORTFOLIO HEALTH	
Contribution margin is calculated and reviewed for every program.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Low-margin programs have action plans, timelines, and required evidence for continuation.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No

High-demand programs receive prioritized investment for faculty, technology, and labs.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Break-even analysis is conducted for new and redesigned programs.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
A standard rubric evaluates program viability and sustainability.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
5. CAPITAL PLANNING, INSTRUCTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE & EQUIPMENT	
Academic Affairs maintains a multi-year capital and equipment plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Lifecycle plans exist for labs, simulation centers, and specialized equipment.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Total cost of ownership is evaluated before capital or equipment approval.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Deferred maintenance in academic spaces is tracked and prioritized.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Facilities and equipment investments align with accreditation and instructional standards.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
6. TECHNOLOGY ECOSYSTEM FOR TEACHING & LEARNING	
LMS, SIS, advising, and assessment platforms integrate effectively.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Classroom and hybrid technology standards are established and funded.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Academic software licensing is evaluated annually for ROI.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Faculty, staff, and students receive training aligned to academic technology needs.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No

Technology reliability and user experience data inform decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
7. ACADEMIC COMPLIANCE, ACCREDITATION & RISK MANAGEMENT	
Budget planning addresses accreditation requirements for faculty, labs, and facilities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Academic Affairs participates in federal/state compliance budgeting.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Audit and accreditation findings inform budget adjustments.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Contingency plans are in place for instructional and clinical disruptions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Risk indicators (adjunct dependency, single-faculty programs) inform planning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
8. EQUITY, STUDENT IMPACT & ACCESS-DRIVEN BUDGETING	
Budgeting addresses equity gaps in academic support services.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Course materials, lab fees, and technology costs are evaluated for affordability.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Resource parity exists across campuses, modalities, and student groups.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Investments tie directly to retention, progression, and completion outcomes.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Accessibility and UDL needs are funded and monitored.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
9. EXTERNAL FUNDING, GRANTS, PHILANTHROPY & PARTNERSHIPS	
Academic Affairs collaborates with Advancement on fundraising priorities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No

Grant pipeline data informs staffing and sustainability planning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Long-term sustainability of grant-funded programs is evaluated.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Partnerships contribute to instructional capacity and cost reduction.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Endowment earnings tied to academic programs are tracked.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
10. FORWARD-LOOKING ACADEMIC PLANNING, INNOVATION & AGILITY	
Predictive analytics guide hiring, scheduling, and space planning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Emerging technologies (AI, simulation, automation) are evaluated for impact.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Innovation funds support new programs and redesigns.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Demographic and workforce trends inform academic budget strategy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No
Academic Affairs evaluates long-term financial resilience annually.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No

SCORING GUIDE:**Maximum Score:** 100 points (50 items × 2 points each)

Yes = 2 points, Partially = 1 point, No = 0 points

Interpretation Guide

85–100 (Strong, Aligned, and Sustainable). Academic Affairs budgeting is strategically driven, data-informed, aligned with the mission, and well documented. Only minor refinements are needed.

70–84 (Stable but Needs Strengthening). Most core elements are in place, but several operational or documentation gaps require attention. Improvements will increase reliability and reduce risk.

50–69 (Developing / Inconsistent). Significant variability across units. Some practices exist but are informal or under-resourced. Academic Affairs needs targeted improvements in planning, forecasting, and financial controls.

0–49 (High Risk / Needs Immediate Intervention). The budget strategy lacks structure, consistency, and documentation. Significant gaps exist in forecasting, cost modeling, portfolio management, compliance, or resource alignment.

About the Author

Juline E. Mills, PhD is a higher education leader with more than two decades of experience in academic affairs, accreditation, and institutional strategy. She has served as a senior academic administrator guiding infrastructure, accreditation, curriculum, and student success initiatives. Her work has helped colleges and universities strengthen governance, ensure compliance, and build cultures of excellence that support both students and faculty.



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