

Whiddon College of Medicine Strategic Planning Framework 2027-2031

Executive Summary

This document establishes the planning framework that will guide development of the next Whiddon College of Medicine Strategic Plan from **July 2026 through June 2027**. It defines the leadership structure, governance committees, responsibilities, stakeholder-engagement approach, and operational support that will guide the planning process from mission and vision refinement through final approval and transition to implementation.

The governance framework centers on a 12-member Strategic Plan Steering Committee supported by Strategic Pillar Task Forces that broaden participation across faculty, staff, learners, alumni, institutional partners, and other stakeholders. Each Strategic Pillar Task Force will be led by a Dean-appointed Chair and Co-Chair and supported through stakeholder-engagement activities designed to gather broad perspectives, inform recommendations, and strengthen institutional participation throughout the planning process.

A four-member Mission and Vision Review Team will complete the foundational work of reviewing and refining the College's mission and vision and will continue to serve as non-voting ex officio members of the Steering Committee to ensure continuity throughout the planning process. Additional ex officio members provide alignment with University of South Alabama priorities, USA Health initiatives, alumni perspectives, and institutional planning expertise.

The framework defines the complementary roles of the Office of Accreditation and Planning and the Continuous Quality Improvement Committee. OAP will provide the operational infrastructure and project management needed to support the planning process, while the CQI Committee will provide oversight of implementation following approval of the strategic plan.

The planning process will begin with solicitation of stakeholder suggestions for Steering Committee membership. The Dean will appoint the 12 voting members based on balanced perspectives, complementary expertise, and the ability to contribute throughout the planning process. Following confirmation of the strategic pillars, stakeholder suggestions for Strategic Pillar Task Force Chairs and Co-Chairs will be solicited. The Dean will appoint each Task Force Chair and Co-Chair, who will recommend Task Force membership for the Dean's approval based on the expertise, perspectives, and stakeholder representation needed for the assigned pillar. The first Steering Committee meeting is anticipated in September 2026, and the new strategic plan will take effect on July 1, 2027.

Planning Framework Overview

This framework includes:

1. The Strategic Plan Steering Committee, including its purpose, authority, responsibilities, membership, and member expectations.
2. Strategic Pillar Task Forces, including their leadership structure, membership, responsibilities, and stakeholder-engagement approach.
3. The Mission and Vision Review Team and non-voting ex officio members who provide continuity, institutional alignment, and planning expertise.
4. The Office of Accreditation and Planning and the Continuous Quality Improvement Committee, including their complementary roles in supporting plan development and monitoring implementation.
5. The governance processes for committee appointments, stakeholder engagement, decision-making, and strategic plan development.
6. The planning timeline that guides development, approval, implementation, and ongoing monitoring of the 2027 Strategic Plan.

Resources Consulted

Association of American Medical Colleges. (2025). *Strategic planning toolkit*. Group on Institutional Planning.

Association of American Medical Colleges. Group on Institutional Planning. (n.d.). *Group on Institutional Planning (GIP) Strategic Planning and Management Subcommittee*

Hinton, K. E. (2023). *A practical guide to strategic planning in higher education* (2nd ed.). Society for College and University Planning.

Rationale for the Planning Framework

A strong strategic plan depends on an intentional process for developing it. Before the Whiddon College of Medicine begins broad information gathering, data collection, stakeholder engagement, and development of strategic priorities, the governance structure establishes:

- who will guide the process;
- how broader participation will occur;
- how information will be reviewed and synthesized; and
- how recommendations will move forward for approval.

This planning framework reflects recognized principles of strategic planning in academic medicine and higher education, emphasizing leadership support, intentional governance, broad stakeholder engagement, evidence-informed decision-making, and sustained organizational coordination. This framework ensures that the strategic planning process is collaborative, transparent, aligned with institutional priorities, and informed by the perspectives necessary to develop an actionable strategic plan.

The framework balances two important needs. First, the planning process must engage a broad range of faculty, staff, learners, alumni, institutional partners, and other stakeholders. Second, the Whiddon College of Medicine needs a focused body capable of evaluating information, identifying patterns, resolving competing priorities, and developing a coherent plan. The Strategic Plan Steering Committee, Strategic Pillar Task Forces, and stakeholder-engagement activities are designed to address both needs.

Guiding Principles

Intentional Design

The governance structure is established before substantive strategic plan development begins. Each governance group has a clearly defined purpose, and responsibilities are distributed to support broad participation, effective collaboration, and efficient decision-making throughout the planning process.

Balanced Perspectives

The Strategic Plan Steering Committee includes individuals with varied experiences, organizational perspectives, and areas of expertise. Members are selected for the knowledge, perspectives, and experience they bring to the planning process rather than as representatives of individual departments, divisions, or organizational units.

The committee's composition is intended to provide balanced institutional perspectives rather than proportional representation. Members are expected to consider the long-term interests of the College as a whole when developing recommendations.

Similarly, Strategic Pillar Task Force membership is intentionally determined by the scope of each strategic pillar and the expertise, perspectives, and stakeholder representation needed to accomplish the Task Force's charge. This flexible approach allows each Task Force to engage the individuals best suited to inform its work while broadening participation across the College and its stakeholders.

Continuity from Mission and Vision to Strategic Priorities

The Mission and Vision Review Team was convened on July 24, 2026 to review and refine the College's mission and vision as the foundational step in development of the 2027 Strategic Plan. Following its initial review, the team reconvened on August 13, 2026 to consider stakeholder feedback and develop revised recommendations for presentation to the Strategic Plan Steering Committee.

Upon completion of its work, the team's continued participation as non-voting ex officio members of the Strategic Plan Steering Committee preserves continuity between the development of the College's mission and vision and the subsequent development of the strategic priorities, goals, actions, and measures. This continuity helps ensure that the strategic plan remains grounded in the institutional mission and vision established at the outset of the planning process.

Broad and Meaningful Engagement

Stakeholder engagement extends beyond gathering ideas. Faculty, staff, learners, alumni, University and health system partners, and other stakeholders have meaningful opportunities to help identify needs, review evidence, interpret information, explore opportunities, and provide feedback throughout the planning process.

Strategic Pillar Task Forces serve as the primary mechanism for this broader participation. Led by Dean-appointed Chairs and Co-Chairs, each Task Force engages stakeholders and develops recommendations within its assigned strategic pillar. Membership is determined by the scope of the pillar and the expertise, perspectives, and stakeholder representation needed to accomplish the Task Force's charge.

Evidence-Informed Planning

Strategic planning is informed by institutional data, environmental analyses, benchmarking, stakeholder feedback, existing initiatives, and other relevant evidence. The Strategic Plan Steering Committee is responsible for synthesizing this information to identify institutional priorities and develop strategic recommendations rather than relying on individual suggestions or isolated data points.

Institutional Alignment

The governance framework supports alignment with the broader priorities and planning environments of both the University of South Alabama and USA Health. This alignment is strengthened through intentional participation of non-voting ex officio members and ongoing collaboration with institutional leaders throughout the planning process.

Transparency and Communication

The planning process includes regular communication regarding the planning timeline, opportunities for participation, emerging priorities, decisions, and progress. Stakeholders are informed about how they can contribute and how their input informs development of the strategic plan.

Accountability and Continuous Improvement

The strategic plan includes clearly defined goals, actions, responsible parties, timelines, measures, and reporting expectations to support implementation and ongoing evaluation. Following approval of the strategic plan, the Continuous Quality Improvement Committee provides oversight of implementation and monitors progress toward the College's strategic priorities with operational support from the Office of Accreditation and Planning.

Governance Framework

The governance framework includes five interconnected components:

1. Dean La Rochelle
2. Mission and Vision Review Team
3. Strategic Plan Steering Committee
4. Strategic Pillar Task Forces
5. CQI Committee monitoring implementation, with the Office of Accreditation and Planning providing structural support

Each component has a distinct role within the strategic planning process while working collaboratively to support the development of a comprehensive and actionable strategic plan. Together, these governance components establish clear leadership, broaden stakeholder engagement, facilitate evidence-informed decision-making, and provide continuity from strategic plan development through implementation and ongoing monitoring.

Dean

The Dean provides overall direction for the strategic planning process and serves as the final approval authority for the governance framework, Strategic Plan Steering Committee appointments, Strategic Pillar Task Force Chairs and Co-Chairs, Task Force membership, strategic priorities, and the completed strategic plan.

The Dean's leadership ensures that the strategic planning process reflects the College's mission, vision, institutional relationships, and long-term strategic direction. Throughout the planning process, the Dean provides guidance at key decision points, reviews recommendations developed by the Mission and Vision Review Team and Strategic Plan Steering Committee, and approves major planning milestones prior to advancement to subsequent phases.

The Dean also facilitates broad institutional engagement by soliciting stakeholder suggestions for Strategic Plan Steering Committee membership and, following confirmation of the strategic pillars, for Strategic Pillar Task Force Chairs and Co-Chairs. These suggestions inform the appointment process while preserving the Dean's authority to establish governance groups with

the balanced expertise, perspectives, and institutional knowledge needed to support successful strategic plan development.

Mission and Vision Review Team

The four-member Mission and Vision Review Team is responsible for reviewing and refining the Whiddon College of Medicine's mission and vision to ensure they reflect the college's identity, future direction, relationship with USA Health, and commitment to excellence in education, research, clinical care, and service.

The team convened on July 24, 2026 to begin this work and will reconvene on August 13, 2026 to consider stakeholder feedback and develop revised recommendations for presentation to the Strategic Plan Steering Committee. These recommendations will provide the foundation for the Steering Committee's development of the college's strategic priorities and subsequent strategic plan.

Upon completion of its work, all four members of the Mission and Vision Review Team will continue to serve as non-voting ex officio members of the Strategic Plan Steering Committee. Their continued participation preserves continuity between the refinement of the College's mission and vision and the development of the strategic priorities, goals, actions, and measures that follow.

Strategic Plan Steering Committee

The Strategic Plan Steering Committee serves as the primary leadership and integrative body responsible for guiding development of the strategic plan.

The Committee guides a collaborative planning process through which institutional evidence, stakeholder perspectives, Mission and Vision Review Team recommendations, Strategic Pillar Task Force recommendations, and leadership direction are synthesized into a comprehensive and actionable strategic plan.

The Steering Committee will be responsible for

reviewing the revised mission and vision recommendations provided by the Mission and Vision Review Team;

- reviewing the revised mission and vision recommendations provided by the Mission and Vision Review Team;
- reviewing institutional data, environmental analyses, benchmarking information, and other evidence relevant to the College's current environment and future direction;
- developing and refining strategic priorities, goals, actions, measures, and implementation recommendations.
- reviewing recommendations developed by the Strategic Pillar Task Forces;
- integrating recommendations across strategic pillars to promote institutional alignment and reduce duplication;
- identifying institutional strengths, opportunities, interdependencies, and areas requiring additional analysis;
- reviewing stakeholder feedback gathered through Strategic Pillar Task Force stakeholder-engagement activities;

- ensuring that Strategic Pillar Task Force recommendations collectively support a comprehensive and actionable strategic plan.
- recommending the completed strategic plan to the Dean for review and approval.

The Steering Committee's role is therefore both strategic and integrative. Its members will be expected to move beyond the interests of any individual area and consider the institution-wide implications, resource needs, and interdependencies associated with proposed priorities.

Strategic Plan Steering Committee Membership

The Strategic Plan Steering Committee consists of 12 voting members appointed by the Dean following solicitation of stakeholder suggestions from across the college. Members are selected based on the expertise, perspectives, institutional knowledge, leadership experience, and ability to contribute meaningfully throughout the planning process.

Committee membership is intentionally designed to provide balanced institutional perspectives rather than proportional representation of departments, divisions, or stakeholder groups.

Members are expected to contribute their individual expertise while considering the long-term interests of the college and the successful development of the strategic plan.

The Dean determines the final composition of the Steering Committee to ensure an appropriate balance of expertise, perspectives, institutional knowledge, and continuity throughout the planning process.

Membership category	Number
Senior Faculty	2
Junior Faculty	2
Senior Leaders*	4
Administrative Staff	2
Medical Student	1
Graduate (PhD) Student	1
Total voting members	12

**Senior Leaders key leadership roles within the Whiddon COM. Members may include Department Chairs, Associate/Assistant Deans, Directors, or other senior administrative leaders whose expertise and institutional perspective support strategic planning.*

The categories are not intended to create constituencies within the committee. Members will not be charged with advocating exclusively for the group from which they were selected. Each member will be expected to contribute their experience while exercising institution-wide judgment.

Solicitation of Stakeholder Suggestions

In early August 2026, the Dean will solicit stakeholder suggestions for Strategic Plan Steering Committee membership from department chairs, associate and assistant deans, and division leaders across the college. The purpose of this process is to identify individuals whose expertise, perspectives, institutional knowledge, leadership experience, and ability to contribute would strengthen the planning process.

The solicitation process is intended to gather suggestions, not formal nominations or elections. Stakeholder suggestions are advisory and are intended to broaden consideration of qualified individuals while preserving the Dean's authority to appoint a Steering Committee with the balanced expertise, perspectives, institutional knowledge, and continuity needed to support successful strategic plan development.

Steering Committee Expectations

Service on the Steering Committee requires active engagement throughout the planning process. Members are expected to prepare for meetings, review supporting materials in advance, participate constructively in committee discussions, contribute to consensus-building, and exercise institution-wide judgment in developing recommendations.

The Steering Committee is anticipated to be appointed by early September 2026, with a kickoff meeting anticipated in late September. Members should expect to participate in committee meetings throughout the planning process, with the level of effort varying across planning phases. Meaningful work will also occur between meetings through review of institutional evidence, stakeholder feedback, collaboration with Strategic Pillar Task Forces, and preparation for committee deliberations.

Members should understand that service extends beyond attendance at scheduled meetings and includes preparation, review of materials, collaboration between meetings, and timely completion of assigned planning activities. Members should therefore be selected not only for their expertise and perspectives, but also for their willingness and capacity to contribute consistently throughout the planning process.

Strategic Pillar Task Forces

Strategic Pillar Task Forces serve as the primary working groups responsible for exploring strategic areas and developing recommendations to inform the college's strategic plan. Four Task Forces will support development of the strategic plan, with one Task Force established for each strategic pillar: Education, Research, Clinical Care, and Community Engagement. Each Task Force will review relevant evidence, engage stakeholders, identify opportunities and priorities, and develop recommendations for consideration by the Strategic Plan Steering Committee.

Each Strategic Pillar Task Force will receive a written charge from the Dean that defines its scope of work and establishes clear expectations for its contribution to the strategic planning process. The charge will identify the strategic pillar to be explored, key questions for consideration, relevant institutional evidence and stakeholder perspectives, expected deliverables, relationships to other Strategic Pillar Task Forces, and the anticipated timeline for reporting recommendations. The Strategic Plan Steering Committee will work collaboratively

with each Task Force throughout the planning process to facilitate coordination across strategic pillars and integrate recommendations into a comprehensive strategic plan.

Strategic Pillar Task Force Leadership, Membership, and Expectations

Each Strategic Pillar Task Force will be led by a Chair and Co-Chair appointed by the Dean. The Chair and Co-Chair, with support from the Strategic Plan Steering Committee Chair and the Office of Accreditation and Planning, will recommend Task Force membership for the Dean's approval based on the expertise, perspectives, institutional knowledge, leadership experience, and stakeholder representation needed to fulfill the Task Force's charge.

Task Force membership will be determined by the expertise and perspectives needed to support the work of each strategic pillar. While membership may vary based on the needs of each Task Force, an ideal size is approximately 6–12 members to promote broad representation while maintaining effective collaboration and decision-making.

Whenever feasible, at least one Strategic Plan Steering Committee member will serve as a liaison to each Task Force. The liaison will facilitate communication, coordination, and alignment between the Task Force and the Steering Committee throughout the planning process.

Service on a Strategic Pillar Task Force requires active engagement throughout the planning process. Members are expected to prepare for meetings, review supporting materials, participate constructively in discussions, engage stakeholders, complete assigned work between meetings, and contribute to the development of recommendations within their assigned strategic pillar.

Task Forces are expected to meet regularly throughout the planning process, with the frequency and level of effort varying across planning phases and the needs of each strategic pillar. Members should understand that service extends beyond attendance at scheduled meetings and includes preparation, collaboration between meetings, stakeholder-engagement activities, review of institutional evidence, and timely completion of assigned planning activities.

Each Strategic Pillar Task Force is responsible for:

- Reviewing institutional data, environmental analyses, benchmarking information, and other evidence relevant to its assigned strategic pillar.
- Conducting stakeholder-engagement activities to gather broad perspectives and inform strategic planning.
- Identifying strengths, opportunities, challenges, and emerging priorities related to its assigned strategic pillar.
- Synthesizing institutional evidence and stakeholder feedback into recommendations rather than simply compiling individual suggestions.
- Developing proposed goals, objectives, strategic actions, success measures, and implementation considerations for review by the Strategic Plan Steering Committee.
- Presenting recommendations and supporting rationale to the Strategic Plan Steering Committee and refining recommendations based on committee feedback.

Stakeholder-Engagement Activities

Strategic Pillar Task Forces will conduct stakeholder-engagement activities throughout the planning process to gather broad perspectives, identify opportunities and challenges, validate emerging priorities, and inform development of recommendations. These activities are intended to broaden participation in the planning process and are not standing committees or decision-making bodies.

Stakeholder-engagement activities may include focus groups, interviews, surveys, departmental meetings, town halls, and meetings with faculty, staff, students, alumni, community partners, health system representatives, and other stakeholders, as appropriate to the assigned strategic pillar.

Non-Voting Ex Officio Members of the Steering Committee

The ex officio structure is intended to provide continuity, institutional alignment, process support, and external perspective without changing the balance of the 12 voting members.

Ex officio role	Purpose
Strategic Planning Steering Committee Chair - Dr. David S. Williams	Chairs and facilitates the Strategic Plan Steering Committee and supports continuity across the Steering Committee, strategic pillar task forces, the Dean, and other governance participants. As a member of the Office of Accreditation and Planning, he will also coordinate the structural support OAP provides for meeting preparation, documentation, stakeholder engagement, data and information gathering, workflow management, synthesis, and plan development.
Mission and Vision Review Team - Dr. Mike Chang, Dr. Benjamin Estrada, Dr. Aishwarya Prakash, and Dr. Tiquera Hall	Provides continuity between the mission and vision review and development of strategic priorities. The team will help the Steering Committee understand the intent and context of the revised mission and vision.
Chair, CQI Committee - Dr. Natalie Bauer	Provides continuity between strategic planning and the college's continuous quality improvement processes. This role helps ensure the strategic plan incorporates meaningful measures, supports ongoing monitoring and evaluation.
Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness -Dr. Julie Estis	Supports alignment with University of South Alabama strategic priorities, institutional planning processes, and institutional effectiveness practices. This role also strengthens collaboration between the Whiddon College of Medicine and the University's Office of Institutional Effectiveness, providing additional expertise in strategic planning, implementation, assessment, data analysis, and continuous improvement. The collaboration also creates an opportunity to jointly develop and refine a collegiate strategic planning framework, governance processes, and supporting resources that may inform future strategic planning efforts across the University, as appropriate.

Role of the Office of Accreditation and Planning

The Office of Accreditation and Planning (OAP) will serve as the administrative and operational support office for the strategic planning process, providing the organizational infrastructure necessary for the Dean, Mission and Vision Review Team, Strategic Plan Steering Committee, Strategic Pillar Task Forces, ex officio members, and CQI Committee to carry out their respective responsibilities. OAP's responsibilities will include:

- coordinating Steering Committee and task force meeting schedules, decisions, and recommendations;
- preparing agendas, background materials, templates, and decision documents;
- in collaboration with the Dean, developing written charges and expectations for the Steering Committee and task forces;
- coordinating stakeholder-engagement activities;
- designing and administering surveys, forms, and other data-collection mechanisms;
- compiling institutional data, environmental information, and stakeholder feedback;
- coordinating development and revision of the strategic plan document;
- maintaining project-management and workflow systems using Asana project management software;
- coordinating communication regarding planning opportunities and progress;
- ensuring that planning documentation is retained and accessible; and
- supporting the transition from plan development to implementation, reporting, and CQI monitoring.

The sustained coordination required for strategic planning should not be treated as an intermittent administrative assignment. Higher education guidance emphasizes that the time-intensive work of organizing, documenting, integrating, and maintaining visibility of the planning process requires consistent stewardship. OAP will provide that continuity throughout the process.

OAP provides the infrastructure, coordination, documentation, and continuity needed for the governance groups to perform their responsibilities effectively. OAP supports the strategic planning process but does not replace the Strategic Plan Steering Committee's responsibility for strategic deliberation and recommendations or the CQI Committee's responsibility for implementation monitoring and continuous quality improvement.

Decision-Making and Approval

The Strategic Plan Steering Committee will strive to achieve consensus when developing recommendations. Consensus does not require unanimous agreement on every detail but reflects a deliberative process in which differing perspectives are considered, recommendations are supported by available evidence and stakeholder input, and the rationale for decisions is clearly articulated.

The Strategic Plan Steering Committee is responsible for recommending the final strategic plan to the Dean but does not have final approval authority. The Dean retains final decision-making and approval authority for the strategic plan.

The strategic planning process will include structured opportunities for:

- review of institutional data, environmental analyses, and initial findings;
- feedback on strategic pillars, priorities, and emerging themes;
- review of proposed goals, objectives, strategic actions, and success measures;
- broader stakeholder review and comment on a draft strategic plan; and
- revision of the strategic plan before final approval by the Dean.

Operational and Data Infrastructure

OAP will establish and maintain the systems needed to support communication, project management, data collection, analysis, documentation, and future monitoring.

The infrastructure includes:

- **Asana** for plan development, task assignments, milestones, timelines, accountability, and implementation tracking;
- **Qualtrics** for standardized stakeholder feedback, surveys, and data collection;
- **Tableau** for reporting, analytics, and data visualization aligned with institutional systems and guiding principles to support decision-making, implementation monitoring, and continuous quality improvement.

The operational and data infrastructure is intended to support the strategic planning process without directing it. Tools will be selected, configured, and maintained based on the information needs of the Dean, Strategic Plan Steering Committee, Strategic Pillar Task Forces, Whiddon College of Medicine leadership, and the CQI Committee.

The goal is to establish a consistent data and reporting infrastructure that supports the strategic planning process from stakeholder engagement and evidence collection through strategic plan development, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and continuous quality improvement.

Transition to Implementation and Monitoring

Development of the strategic plan will incorporate implementation planning throughout the planning process. Strategic priorities, goals, and strategic actions will be developed with implementation considerations to support effective execution following approval of the strategic plan.

- intended outcomes;
- responsible individuals or offices;
- anticipated timelines;
- necessary resources;
- success measures or indicators of progress; and
- reporting expectations.

Strategic planning guidance emphasizes that implementation requires clearly documented responsibility, completion dates, and measures for assessing progress. It also recognizes that resources include people, time, space, technology, and funding.

CQI Committee Monitoring of Implementation

Following approval and launch of the strategic plan, the Continuous Quality Improvement Committee will monitor implementation and evaluate progress.

The CQI Committee will:

- review progress toward strategic goals and actions;
- monitor agreed-upon measures, timelines, and deliverables;
- identify barriers, delays, or areas requiring additional attention;
- review proposed adjustments when circumstances or institutional priorities change;
- support accountability for implementation;
- ensure that progress is communicated back to the college community; and
- use implementation findings to support continuous quality improvement of both the strategic plan and future strategic planning processes.

The Office of Accreditation and Planning will continue to provide structural support for this work by coordinating reporting, maintaining documentation, organizing data, supporting dashboards and analyses, and preparing information for CQI Committee review as it has done for previous strategic planning cycles.

Monitoring will enable the Whiddon College of Medicine to evaluate progress, respond to changing circumstances, identify opportunities for improvement, and make informed adjustments while maintaining the overall strategic direction established by the strategic plan.

Proposed Timeline

Timeframe	Activity
Week of July 20, 2026	Dean reviews and approves the Strategic Planning Governance Framework.
August 3–14, 2026	Stakeholder suggestion process opens for Steering Committee membership. Communication describes the purpose, responsibilities, time commitment, and task force expectations.
August 19, 2026	CQI Committee receives an informational update on the approved governance framework, selection process, and anticipated planning timeline.
Late August 2026	Stakeholder suggestions are reviewed, and the Dean appoints the 12 voting members of the Strategic Plan Steering Committee.
September 2026	First Strategic Plan Steering Committee meeting. The inaugural meeting includes orientation to the governance framework, committee charge, planning timeline, expectations, available foundational information, and the strategic planning process.
September–October 2026	Steering Committee begins its work; mission and vision recommendations are connected to the planning process; initial strategic pillars, stakeholder-engagement plans, task force structure, and data needs are refined.
October 2026	Approved governance framework, committee structure, planning timeline, and early implementation activities are available as evidence of the college's systematic planning process.
Fall 2026	Strategic pillar task forces are formed and charged. Initial data collection, environmental review, and stakeholder engagement begin.
Fall 2026–Spring 2027	The Strategic Plan Steering Committee and Strategic Pillar Task Forces meet regularly throughout the planning process.
Spring 2027	Steering Committee integrates task force recommendations, develops strategic priorities and goals, and seeks broader stakeholder feedback.
By June 2027	Draft plan, implementation expectations, measures, responsibilities, and monitoring approach are refined and submitted for final review and approval.
July 1, 2027	The new Whiddon COM Strategic Plan takes effect.

Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

Component	Primary Purpose	Key Responsibilities	Authority
Dean	Executive leadership and approval	Approves the governance framework, appoints members, provides strategic direction, and approves the final strategic plan	Final approval authority
Strategic Plan Steering Committee	Integrates input and develops the strategic plan	Reviews evidence and stakeholder input, coordinates and integrates Strategic Pillar Task Force recommendations, develops strategic priorities, reconciles recommendations, and submits the proposed strategic plan	Recommends the strategic plan to the Dean
Mission and Vision Review Team	Reviews and refines the college mission and vision	Reviews and refines the college mission and vision and remains engaged as non-voting ex officio members to preserve continuity	Recommends revised mission and vision
Strategic Pillar Task Forces	Develop substantive recommendations for each pillar	Develop goals, objectives, actions, measures, timelines, and proposed responsibilities; gather broader stakeholder input	Recommends pillar content to the Steering Committee
Ex Officio Members	Provide continuity, alignment, and specialized perspective	Connect the process with University priorities, USA Health priorities, mission and vision work, alumni perspectives, and relevant institutional resources	Advisory, non-voting
CQI Committee	Monitors implementation of the approved plan	Monitors implementation and recommends adjustments and continuous quality improvement as needed	Monitors implementation and recommends adjustments and continuous quality improvement as needed
Office of Accreditation and Planning	Provides structural support for the planning process	Coordinates project management, communications, stakeholder engagement, data collection/analysis, dashboards, & implementation support	No independent approval authority

Appendix A: Selection and Appointment Process

The proposed process is designed to gather informed suggestions while preserving the Dean's authority to appoint a balanced and effective Steering Committee.

Step 1: Dean Approval of the Planning Framework (completed July 2026)

In July 2026, Dean La Rochelle reviewed and approved the Strategic Planning Framework for the Whiddon College of Medicine. The approved framework established the structure for the strategic planning process, including the Strategic Plan Steering Committee, Mission and Vision Review Team, Strategic Pillar Task Forces, ex officio members, the role of the Office of Accreditation and Planning, committee expectations, selection and appointment processes, and the overall implementation approach.

Approval of the framework established the planning structure and process. It did not constitute appointment of individual Steering Committee members.

Step 2: Solicitation of Suggestions

Following approval, a communication will be distributed inviting suggested individuals for the Steering Committee membership categories.

The process will request **suggestions**, not formal nominations or elections. Individuals may suggest themselves or others who they believe could contribute effectively.

The communication and suggestion form will clearly describe:

- the purpose of the Steering Committee;
- membership categories established in the governance framework.
- the responsibilities of members;
- the anticipated meeting commitments through June 2027;
- the expectation that members will work with strategic pillar task forces between Steering Committee meetings;
- the expectation that members will help gather and interpret information and bring task force findings back to the Steering Committee; and
- the fact that submitting or receiving a suggestion does not guarantee appointment.

Step 3: Review of Suggested Individuals

Suggested individuals will be reviewed based on:

- relevant experience and expertise;
- ability to contribute a broader institutional perspective;
- familiarity with the Whiddon COM mission and vision
- ability to engage constructively in group deliberation;
- willingness and availability to meet the time and work expectations;
- potential to contribute to pillar task force activities; and
- the need to achieve balance across the full committee.

The review should consider the committee as a whole rather than evaluating each category in isolation.

Step 4: Dean's Appointments

The Dean will appoint the 12 voting members after reviewing the suggested individuals and the recommended overall balance of the committee. Appointment decisions are intended to create a committee that reflects balanced perspectives, complementary expertise, and the capacity to contribute throughout the planning process.

Individuals not appointed to the Steering Committee may still be invited to participate in strategic pillar task forces or other stakeholder-engagement activities.

Appendix B: Anticipated Outcomes Supporting Approval of the Strategic Planning Framework

The following anticipated outcomes accompanied the recommendation for Dean approval of the Strategic Planning Framework in July 2026. They are retained as part of the historical record supporting adoption of the framework.

Expected Outcomes

Approval and implementation of the proposed framework will provide:

- a clearly defined leadership and decision-making structure;
- continuity between mission and vision review and development of the strategic plan;
- a balanced and appropriately sized Steering Committee;
- transparent expectations for member participation and time commitment;
- meaningful opportunities for broader stakeholder engagement through strategic pillar task forces;
- deliberate alignment with the University of South Alabama and USA Health;
- alumni and external physician perspectives;
- coordinated process support through the Office of Accreditation and Planning;
- an opportunity to collaborate with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness on a collegiate strategic planning framework that may support other University colleges;
- a documented process for moving from evidence and stakeholder input to strategic decisions;
- a clear transition from plan development to implementation and CQI monitoring; and
- a strategic plan that is focused, measurable, actionable, and sustainable.