

# **The Strategic Kernel Diagnostic**

## ***A Higher Education Leadership Tool***

**Developed by Matthew D. Regele**

This diagnostic is based on the "Strategic Kernel" framework developed by [Richard Rumelt](#). It is designed to help higher education leaders, faculty, and trustees distinguish between a coordinated strategy and a bureaucratic "to-do list."

### **Section 1: The Diagnosis**

**Rate 1–5:** Does the strategic plan identify a specific, high-stakes institutional challenge (e.g., a looming demographic cliff, a failed revenue model, or administrative stagnation), or is it a generic "Vision" statement about excellence?

**Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Section 2: The Guiding Policy**

**Rate 1–5:** Is there a clear philosophy for overcoming that challenge (e.g., "Administrative Compression" or "Focus on Research Core"), or is it a collection of "Sunday words" and jargon that avoids taking a stance?

**Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Section 3: Coherent Action**

**Rate 1–5:** Does the plan outline 3–5 coordinated steps that build on each other to solve the diagnosed problem, or is it a "Dog's Dinner" of 100+ unlinked initiatives?

**Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Section 4: Resource Alignment**

**Rate 1–5:** Has funding been explicitly moved from legacy programs to these new actions, or are these "unfunded mandates" expected to be performed alongside existing duties?

**Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Total Score & Interpretation**

- **16–20: Good Strategy.** You have a focused kernel for change. Your institution has made the hard choices necessary for success.
- **10–15: Standard Planning.** You have a list of goals, but you lack a clear "why" and sufficient coordination to move the needle.
- **Below 10: A Dog's Dinner.** Your institution is suffering from the "Initiative Paradox." Activity is being substituted for achievement.

*For consulting inquiries and strategic advising, visit [www.matthewregele.com](http://www.matthewregele.com).  
© 2026 Matthew D. Regele. All Rights Reserved.*