**AES Program Reflection – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis Guidance**

An analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) is a unit’s internal examination of what a unit does well, what a unit might be able to leverage to see further improvement and growth, and those things that could be potential barriers to be mindful of and actively mitigate against. This is an opportunity for a unit to dig deeper into what makes the unit unique, what makes it successful, and what could make it even more successful in achieving its goals.

Your unit team will discuss each component of the SWOT analysis, which will help form your overall assessment of your unit and inform your future activities. Below is a table that breaks down the focus of each component and guiding questions you can use for this part of your team’s discussions.

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| **Component** | **Focus** | **Guiding Questions for Team Discussion** |
| *Strengths* | **Internal** attributes of your unit that are **helpful** in achieving the unit’s goals | * What does your unit do particularly well? How has this helped your unit accomplish activities? * What would others outside of your unit see as a strength? * What unique resources does your unit have that you could further leverage? |
| *Weaknesses* | **Internal** attributes of your unit that are **not helpful** in achieving the unit’s goals | * What does your unit not do as well as you could? Has this hindered progress on goals or accomplishing activities? How so? * What would others outside of your unit say you could improve upon? * Do you think you have fewer resources than other units? If so, where and how has this impacted progress on your goals? |
| *Opportunities* | **External** attributes or conditions that **could be helpful** in achieving your unit’s goals | * What external opportunities are open and available to your unit? * What trends could your unit leverage to make on your goals? * Which of your unit’s strengths could be turned into an opportunity to help your unit achieve it’s goals? |
| *Threats* | **External** attributes or conditions that **could be harmful** and hinder progress on your unit’s goals | * What external conditions or challenges could hinder your unit’s progress? (*could be external to your unit or external to the college*) * Example:   + consider any new or pending regulations, rules, or policy shifts; other entities that might be competing to offer the same services as your unit; any broader shifts in attitudes or perspectives; etc. |

Tips for Engaging in SWOT Analysis Discussion

* Try to focus on one component of the SWOT Analysis at a time to ensure a careful examination of each.
* Be fair and honest in your discussion. This discussion need not be sugarcoated in any way; if there are real strengths or weaknesses within your unit, this is the opportunity to voice those.
* You will need to prioritize your unit’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This discussion may yield many items, but only a handful of them will be important in helping you determine next steps. As your unit wraps up the SWOT Analysis discussion collectively determine which are the most important in each component. Consider the guiding questions below to help you prioritize:
  + Strengths: *Which of your unit’s identified strengths can either be further leveraged or used to mitigate against a potential threat your unit might be facing?*
  + Weaknesses: *For which identified weakness(es) might your unit have a potential way of strengthening?*
  + Opportunities: *Are any of these opportunities ones that your unit can immediately act upon? Which ones?*
  + Threats: *Which of your unit’s identified threats is most pressing? Is there a threat that your unit might have a way of actively mitigating against?*
    - *The focus should be to lift up threats that you might be able to ward off in some way as this could have implications for activities your unit might want to engage in*.

SWOT Matrix

The matrix (below) shows a visual representation of where strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats fall in terms of their potential helpful/harmfulness and internal or external nature. You can use this matrix to capture your unit’s pared down SWOT analysis, which will ultimately be captured in the AES Program Reflection Template document.

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Helpful**  to achieving the mission/goals | **Harmful**  to achieving the mission/goals |
| **Internal origin**  (attributes of the unit) | ***Strengths*** | ***Weaknesses*** |
| **External origin** (attributes of the environment) | ***Opportunities*** | ***Threats*** |