

Strategic Decision-Making at Clarkson College

Executive Overview

In March 2026, Clarkson College hosted a workshop led by Dr. Karalee Picard titled *Strategic Planning and Decision-Making*. The session was designed to teach participants how to connect their day-to-day work to the institution's strategic plan, strengthen the quality of their decisions, and communicate ideas in ways leadership could recognize as relevant and valuable.

The workshop produced clear practical outcomes. All six participants learned how to connect their work to the strategic plan, each delivered a 10–15 minute presentation on an idea they wanted to advance, and Clarkson's directors and president found value in what they briefed. Feedback from participants and leadership indicates utility across roles and industries.

This white paper summarizes the purpose, design, and outcomes of the Clarkson workshop and explains its ongoing relevance for other institutions and corporations seeking to strengthen strategic thinking and decision-making below the executive level.

Program Purpose

The Clarkson workshop addressed a common organizational challenge: many capable professionals are expected to contribute to strategy without being given a practical method for connecting their ideas, decisions, and daily work to the larger goals of the organization. In higher education, that problem often shows up among middle managers, non-supervisory experts, administrative professionals, and individual contributors who carry significant operational knowledge but are not always taught how to frame their work in strategic terms.

The workshop was not designed to create Clarkson College's strategic plan. Instead, it helped participants understand the existing plan, identify where their own work fit within it, and it helped participants develop the ability to communicate ideas upward in a way that aligned with institutional priorities.

Workshop Design

At Clarkson College, the workshop was titled *Strategic Planning and Decision-Making*. While that title reflected the workshop's connection to institutional strategy, the actual learning experience centered less on strategic planning as a formal organizational process and more on strategic decision-making as a practical professional skill.

Participants used structured tools to think through decisions, clarify roles, strengthen accountability, and prepare ideas for leadership review. In the current evolution of the workshop, those same functions are now integrated into Dr. Picard's *INTEL Framework™*, including the Execute phase, where role clarity and accountability remain an important part of turning ideas into action.

This shift makes the workshop easier to understand and describe. The new, shorter title *Strategic Decision-Making* better reflects the workshop's actual purpose: helping professionals connect their work to strategy and make stronger decisions inside an existing organizational direction.

Participant Outcomes

The most important result from the Clarkson workshop was not simply participant satisfaction but demonstrated application. All six participants were able to connect an idea of their own to the strategic plan and then deliver a 15-minute presentation explaining its value.

Those presentations were heard by Clarkson's president and directors, who found value in each participants' brief. That outcome suggests the workshop helped participants move beyond reflection and into credible, strategically aligned communication with senior leadership.

Additional feedback reinforced the utility of the program. The HR director who sponsored the workshop said she learned a great deal, and one participant later wrote a handwritten note explaining that she had learned a great deal and planned to keep the workbook for future use.

Why It Matters

The Clarkson workshop demonstrates that strategic decision-making can be taught in a way that is concrete, usable, and relevant to professionals who are not sitting in top executive roles. That matters because the people in the middle are often the ones who interpret priorities, connect functions, and move good ideas forward, and this program equips them with sharper strategic thinking to match the responsibilities they already carry.

Research on middle management consistently shows that these roles serve as a bridge between high-level strategy and day-to-day execution, and that organizations benefit when they invest in that layer's ability to think strategically, collaborate well, and make sound decisions. The Clarkson outcomes suggest that when participants are given a practical structure for doing that work, they can generate ideas leaders find worthwhile and communicate them more effectively.

Relevance Beyond Higher Education

Although the Clarkson workshop was delivered in a higher-education setting, the underlying need is not unique to colleges or universities. Corporations also rely on middle managers, technical experts, project leads, independent contributors, and administrative professionals to interpret strategic priorities, make aligned decisions, and communicate ideas upward across lines of authority.

For that reason, the workshop is also relevant in corporate environments where leaders want stronger execution, better cross-functional judgment, clearer accountability, and more strategic thinking below the executive level. The same core workshop promise applies: participants learn how to connect their work to strategy, shape ideas more effectively, and make decisions with greater clarity and organizational awareness.

In practice, that makes this approach valuable across sectors (higher education, corporate, nonprofit, healthcare, and public-sector organizations) anywhere people in the middle are expected to turn broad goals into thoughtful, well-aligned action.

Conclusion

The Clarkson College workshop offers a strong example of what practical strategic decision-making development can look like. In a single cohort, six participants learned how to connect their work to the strategic plan, brief ideas to senior leadership, and produce work that senior leaders found valuable.

As the workshop continues to evolve under the shorter title *Strategic Decision-Making* and within Dr. Picard's *INTEL Framework™*, the Clarkson experience remains a credible example of its core value: teaching professionals in the middle of organizations how to think more strategically, communicate more clearly, & contribute more effectively to organizational goals.

See the webpage for more info: www.InsightLC.org/strategic-decisionmaking

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