

A Roadmap to Reinvention

How colleges can tackle modern challenges using the Embedded Advisor Model for rapid, high-impact strategic positioning.



A Success Story: Lake Erie College

Lake Erie College (LEC) transformed its academic and branding strategy in just **three months** by partnering with an embedded advisor. This infographic breaks down their successful 7-step process.



1. Clarify Context, Mission & Vision

College president defines the "Why Now?" and reaffirms the institution's core identity. Engages an external advisor who comes to campus and shares a data-driven, credible framing of the landscape and the project.



2. Assemble a Cross-Campus Planning Team

President assembles a diverse team of faculty, staff, students, and alumni. Advisor works with team to facilitate collaboration and ensure all viewpoints are heard and valued.

LEC In Action: Advisor engaged over **100 campus stakeholders** in **25+ structured sessions** to build trust and gather comprehensive, anonymized feedback.



3. Gather and Triangulate Stakeholder Feedback

Advisor tailors conversations to each group (students, faculty, trustees) and then triangulates recurring themes to identify deep, cross-campus patterns, not just isolated anecdotes.



4. Shape Emerging Recommendations with Institutional Data & Culture

Advisor immerses themselves in campus life to gather both quantitative and qualitative insights. These insights then inform the emerging recommendations that align with the campus culture.

LEC In Action: Advisor recommended that Lake Erie spotlight more brightly its distinctive assets— **its equestrian program, DII athletics,** and unique **geographic location** as key differentiators.



5. Identify and Rank 3-5 Strategic Priorities

Advisor focuses on high-impact priorities implementable in the short-to-mid term. Their neutrality helps rank the boldest ideas without internal bias.



6. Communicate Early, Often, and Openly

Advisor maintains momentum with open office hours, regular updates, and "report back" sessions. This continual loop validates community involvement and builds buy-in.



7. Implement, Monitor, and Adapt

Advisor and president turn strategy into reality by assigning clear ownership, setting realistic timelines, and creating adaptive review cycles (6–12-month pulse checks) to track progress.

Why the Embedded Advisor Model Works

Speed + Trust

An external advisor who spends time on campus earns trust, prevents stalls, and keeps the process moving forward efficiently.

Credibility + Neutrality

Unaffiliated with any department, the advisor can make objective recommendations for the whole institution.

Honesty + Experience

An honest, experienced advisor can draw on and share personal successes and failures that help the college avoid potential landmines.

Affordable + Collegial

Grounded in relationships built during the process, this model is likely to be more personalized and budget-friendly than those utilized by large, traditional consulting firms.