WEST POINT ACADEMY ASSESSMENT

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Course: Decisions for Effective Strategic Management

Introduction

After visiting and personally been exposed to the historic and emblematic United States Military Academy West Point, the inspiration and the opportunity to observe and analyze many of its iconic monuments and symbols left a marked moment for my academic development. Out of the visit a few thoughts emerged and this outline will provide a description of the West Point Strategic Plan.

Strategic Analysis

United States Military Academy is a public institution that was founded in 1802. It has a total undergraduate enrollment of 4,389, its setting is suburban, and the campus size is 16,080 acres. The West Point Academic has historically maintained a very clear, compelling mission and vision.

Mission

The mission of the United States Military Academy is to educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate is a commissioned leader of character committed to the values of Duty, Honor, Country and prepared for a career of professional excellence and service to the Nation as an officer in the United States Army.

Vision

Within an Army in transition, West Point is the preeminent leader development and academic institution whose graduates thrive in tomorrow’s complex security environments and are inspired to a lifetime of service to our Army and the Nation as leaders of character.

As part of the outline, let us bring forth what Strategic Capabilities the academy possesses or has utilized to keep such strong history of academic and military achievements. The following are based on my personal observation and are not intended to change or replicate in an exact form the West Point Strategic Plan.

Location

The United States Military Academy is strategically located in West Point, N.Y., approximately 50 miles north of New York City on the Hudson River. The school, also known as USMA, West Point and Army, is the oldest of the country’s five federal service academies. General George Washington considered West Point to be the most important strategic position in America. General George Washington personally selected Thaddeus Kosciuszko, one of the heroes of Saratoga, to design the fortifications for West Point in 1778, and Washington transferred his headquarters to West Point in 1779.

Continental soldiers build forts, batteries and redoubts and extended a 150-ton iron chain across the Hudson to control river traffic. Fortress West Point was never captured by the British. West Point is the oldest continuously occupied military post in America. Students, referred to as cadets, are officers in training, and their tuitions are funded by the U.S. Army in return for an active-service duty obligation.

The significance of the location them, played a very important role. Since the access to the land was mainly via water and the Hudson River was the largest port of entry, Washington knew that because of the difficulties ships encountered while crossing the narrow and heavy current at west point, that location was the best to defeat the British soldiers.

The location was vital to deliver security and supplies to the rest of the colonies, they understood how the location was strategically positioned to be self-sustainable. It remains vital today in the current US Military Strategy by serving the country and its allies in providing the best military academic outcomes to the nation and the world.

Environmental Analysis

West Point’s strategic environment has two important components. First, the national security operating environment determines the organization’s development goals for each graduate. Second, the Academy operates in an education market as a unique institution with the dual nature of a military college. Understanding the factors that influence, support, or challenge our ability to develop leaders of character for the Nation will help us seize, retain, and exploit the initiative in the pursuit of our mission.

The military college model, positions West Point Academy as a stand-alone business with a product that no one else is offering in the region. Thus, setting a clear market strategy as such of a Blue Ocean, very difficult to imitate due to its military nature and its intentional dependability from the United States Government. Also, there is no clear competitors in this market, so much that out of the large yearly number of applicants, the academy selects a few hundreds to enter the program, and once the cadets are accepted in the program they are to demonstrate fitness and aptitudes to remain eligible.

SWOT Analysis Assessment of: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Understanding the opportunities available for the Academy Program provides fresh ideas and potentially new resources for capitalizing on strengths or ameliorating weaknesses. Addressing threats to the Academic Program is essential to continued success.

Strengths

West Point is highly regarded throughout the academic community and has been ranked as one of the top colleges in America. The quality of the incoming cadets, their academic performance while at the academy, and their contributions to the Army and the nation after graduation are evidence of the strengths of the Academic Program at USMA. Such strengths as: a diverse core curriculum, a wide variety of academic majors accredited and ranked amongst the best in their field, faculty members come from some of the best graduate programs in the world, high‐quality research and serving as subject‐matter experts in areas such as counterterrorism, personnel management, systems engineering, and ethics.

Weaknesses

The Academic Program must work to improve in areas to maintain its current status as a top-ranked learning institution and to adapt to the changing academic environment. West Point’s history, legacy, and traditions contribute to its appeal as an institution, but it must regularly update facilities, administrative systems, and the structure and delivery of education to provide a high‐quality learning environment and keep up with advances in technology. This will be difficult because the economic environment suggests future reductions in resources and faculty at West Point.

Increasing transparency for decisions on policies and resource allocation will be critical to maintaining the collegial environment and getting faculty support for necessary changes. Since military readiness is enhanced by diversity of all cultures and nationalities, there is a need for an appreciation of cultural differences. West Point should seek ways to diversify the faculty and the corps of cadets to create an environment where cadets can gain an increasing understanding of the multicultural aspects of the Army and world in which they are expected to succeed.

Opportunities

There are many opportunities that exist that will help the Academic program maintain excellence: the need to actively engage all stakeholders, outside organizations as potential funding sources, augment existing funds by showcasing the intellectual capital of its faculty and cadets, outside agencies have started to see the benefit of using West Point as a “think‐tank” for the Army. West Point’s faculty and cadets can significantly contribute to the service and to the Department of Defense by shaping major policy issues.

Threats

The worldwide financial crisis that has occurred over the last five years presents significant challenges to institutions of higher education. West Point is especially affected since the operating budget is entirely funded by the federal government. The costs of operation continue to rise, and the future federal funding stream is not predictable. In fact, the possibility of future financial resource constraints is very high. In addition, the end of the extended conflicts in the Middle East has resulted in the downsizing of the Army. As this downsizing occurs, the number of military faculty assigned to West Point is likely to decrease. There may also be impasses that demand revision to existing regulations and laws.

Industry Analysis

The Academy is established as a model to the government industry of military higher education. They are factors affecting the industry at large but the last change to fail due to lack of sustainability belongs to government industries.

Competitor Analysis, Market Segmentation and Strategy

The more we analyze West Point Military Academy the more to realize that the main competitor the Academy has, is themselves. The same can be say about it market segmentation, the academy does not need to compete in the open market, thousands of applicants each year are denied the awesome privilege to enter West Point and the numbers are not showing any signs of going down, instead there is an increased in the number each time around. From it early starting the academy enter into a Blue Ocean and it will continue to maintain the positioning in the market due to the industrial environment.