

*Attachment II*  
**ABOUT AKA|STRATEGY**

Established in 1990 as Anthony Knerr & Associates, [AKA|Strategy](#) is a New York City-based strategy consulting firm that assists institutions of higher education and other nonprofit organizations in the United States and around the world with complex strategic issues.

The firm specializes in transformative strategic work. Our particular interest is in assisting institutions to understand the dynamics and implications of the rapidly changing landscape of their worlds and to craft with them thoughtful and imaginative ways of taking best advantage of their strengths, situation and possibilities.

We have a strong track record of helping institutions to delineate bold visions; clarify their mission and identity; and prepare strong, clear and transformative strategic plans. We are highly experienced in working effectively with intellectually, racially and culturally diverse groups. We have demonstrated experience in designing and facilitating strategic planning process for large, complex, multi-campus institutions of higher education. We pride ourselves on keeping planning processes on track, on time and on budget. We are skilled at interviewing and facilitation.

AKA has considerable experience directly relevant to assisting the University of Illinois to prepare a strategic plan:

- We assisted the State University of New York (SUNY) to prepare *The Power of SUNY*, a system-wide strategic plan that includes a new vision and identity for SUNY and lays out key objectives and ideas for SUNY to of the University system.<sup>1</sup> We are thus highly familiar with the challenges and opportunities of a major public university system with quite different campuses.
- We are currently assisting the City University of New York (CUNY) to prepare a strategic framework and have previously assisted three senior CUNY colleges – Baruch, Hunter and Queens Colleges – to prepare strategic plans.<sup>2</sup> We are thus deeply familiar with the major urban public university in the country and relationships between a public university and its constituent campuses.
- We have assisted a wide range of other large leading universities, several of which have multiple campuses, with strategic planning and counsel, including (among others), University of Aberdeen, Cambridge University, Case Western Reserve University, Columbia University, Drexel University, Florida State University, Fordham University, INSEAD, Long Island University, University of Michigan, MIT, New York University,

---

<sup>1</sup> Total enrollment of SUNY is 465,000 students at its 64 campuses located throughout New York State.

<sup>2</sup> City University has approximately 250,000 degree-seeking students and 250,000 adult, continuing and professional education students at 24 campuses in New York City. Baruch, Hunter and Queens Colleges enroll some 17,000, 23,000 and 19,000 students, respectively.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Oxford University, Pace University, Princeton University, Southern Methodist University, Texas Tech University, Villanova University, and Yale University.<sup>3</sup> We are thus deeply experienced in and knowledgeable about key issues, challenges, trends, and drivers currently facing higher education, in general, and public universities, in particular.

The firm's website – [www.akastrategy.com](http://www.akastrategy.com) – provides considerable background information, including a description of client assignments and several case studies of client projects.

## CONSULTING TEAM

### *Anthony Knerr*

Anthony Knerr is Managing Director of the firm and has over twenty-five years of consulting experience assisting a wide variety of leading nonprofit institutions in the U.S. and around the world. He has led more than 120 strategic planning processes for clients of the firm. His higher education clients include University of Aberdeen, Bard College, Barnard College, Baruch College, Cambridge University, Case Western Reserve University, Columbia University, Cooper Union, Drexel University, FIT, Fordham University, Hunter College, INSEAD, Long Island University, Marymount Manhattan College, University of Michigan, MIT, New York University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Oxford University, Pace University, Polytechnic University, Queens College, Radcliffe College, Southern Methodist University, St. John's College (Cambridge), State University of New York (SUNY), Villanova University, and Yale University.

He was previously Executive Vice President for Finance and Treasurer of Columbia University and Vice Chancellor for Budget and Planning of the City University of New York. Earlier he was Special Assistant for Budget and Planning to the Acting President of Yale University; an Associate with the consulting firm of Booz, Allen & Hamilton; and a Program Officer with the International Exchange Program.

Dr. Knerr has taught English Literature at Columbia College, Public Policy and Nonprofit Management at Columbia University Graduate School of Business, English Literature at Indiana University, Philosophy at Yale University and Public Policy at the New School. He has written and published widely on strategy, non-profit organizations, public policy, higher education and literature. He is the author of *Shelley's Adonais: A Critical Edition* (Columbia University Press).

Dr. Knerr is currently Treasurer of Words Without Borders and a Board member of the Keats-Shelley Association and New York Society Library. He recently stepped down as Coordinating Director of the Delaware Group of Mutual Funds. In addition, he is President Emeritus of the Sea Turtle Conservancy and President Emeritus of United Neighborhood Houses of New York City. He has previously served on numerous other nonprofit and corporate boards. He is a member of the Foreign Policy Association, New York Economic Club and Phi Beta Kappa.

---

<sup>3</sup> A full listing of these and other clients can be found on our website.

He received his B.A. *magna cum laude* in mathematics and philosophy, his M.A. *cum laude* in English literature from Yale University and his Ph.D. in English literature from New York University.

### ***John M. Braunstein***

John Braunstein, a Director of the firm, has extensive experience in education strategy and planning. With AKA, he has led engagements for a wide variety of education clients, including Baruch College, Case Western Reserve University, Drexel University, Fashion Institute of Technology, Florida State University, Fordham University, Hunter College, Pace University, State University of New York (SUNY), UKA Teacher U., University of Akron, University of Sciences in Philadelphia, and Villanova University.

He was previously a Senior Associate in the Higher Education Consulting Group of Coopers & Lybrand, a Senior Consultant in Higher Education at KPMG Peat Marwick, and a Principal in the higher education practice of The Stillwater Group. His clients in these positions included the Archdiocese of Philadelphia Secondary School System, Brooklyn College, Columbia University, Educational Testing Service, University of Maryland System, University of Missouri, MIT, Stanford University School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania and Yale University.

Mr. Braunstein has also served as Associate Provost for Enrollment and Planning at Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion; Interim Associate Provost for Enrollment Management and Dean of Admission at Franklin and Marshall College; Vice Provost for Enrollment Management at Iona College; Associate Director of Admission at Oberlin College; and Assistant Director of Admission at Brown University. In addition, he directed the college counseling program for the Philips Academy Summer Session, served as an alumni admission representative for Brown University, lectured on American graduate education to students and faculty at Shanxi Agricultural University (People’s Republic of China), and has served on the International Parents Advisory Committee of Spence-Chapin Services to Families and Children.

He received his B.A. degree in Semiotics (now the Department of Modern Culture and Media) from Brown University and his M.B.A. in Management of Organizations and Marketing from Columbia University. In addition, he holds a certificate from Harvard University’s Management Development Program.

## **KEY PRINCIPLES GUIDING AKA’S CONSULTING PRACTICE**

AKA’s consulting practice is grounded in a number of fundamental principles:

- We believe that each of our clients has its own history, situation, culture, values, program focus and strategic positioning. Consequently, we ensure that our work is hand tailored to meet our clients’ needs, and we consistently strive to exceed our clients’ expectations with respect to the value we provide. We are not a commodity provider of strategic counsel.
- We assist only educational and other nonprofit organizations and thus bring to each assignment an unusual breadth and depth of experience and understanding of the culture, values and dynamics of these sectors.

- We are more interested in transformative strategic work that creatively grapples with complex issues than incremental approaches that do not seek to successfully take advantage of an institution's strengths, opportunities and position – particularly in view of the complexity of the rapidly changing contemporary world and the unexpected suddenness of significant challenges and unforeseen impacts.
- Our team prides itself on the quality, thoroughness and insightfulness of its work, not just with respect to identifying, delineating and articulating key issues, but also in taking account of a host of other matters – including communications, engagement and outreach – that have a direct bearing on successful coordination, management and oversight of a business or strategic planning process.
- We are highly familiar and exceptionally comfortable with the ambiguities that typically exist in the strategic planning process at complex institutions. We believe that rather than sidestepping ambiguity, those involved in planning should welcome it as a potentially rich source of new ideas.

We seek to understand as fully as we can the nature of the issues, the reasons the prospective client is thinking about engaging professional counsel and how we can be most helpful.

- Our goal is to ensure that we understand the backdrop to the present situation and that the objectives of the proposed assignment have been well thought through.
- We customarily meet with both board leadership and principal staff in order to ensure that these preliminary discussions are comprehensive and thorough.
- We also want to make certain there is excellent chemistry and superb communication between the prospective client and ourselves.

We seek to gain as full an understanding of the client's culture, situation and needs as possible in the early stages of an assignment.

- As our analyses proceed, we develop “working hypotheses” in order to summarize the work and enable the client to gain immediate access to our findings.
- Working closely with the client, we revise the “working hypotheses” until we have developed the best set of conclusions and recommendations.
- A project may involve interviews with key individuals within the organization; interviews with informed individuals outside the organization; focus groups; compilation and analysis of data from various sources; and analyses of best practices from other peer organizations.
- We maintain strict confidentiality throughout all phases of a project and in all aspects of our work.

We maintain regular communication with our clients, providing interim progress reports and frequent informal briefings and, as appropriate, modifying the work as initially conceived.

- We give careful attention to adhering to the agreed-upon timeframe for the assignment.
- We are keen on ensuring that there is full transparency between the client and ourselves; that the client is fully and continuously informed of our work; and that the client does not experience surprises or unforeseen complications at any stage of the planning process.
- Further, we believe that the best consulting assignments engage key stakeholders – in thoughtful and appropriate ways – so that it is clear that everyone has had multiple opportunities to contribute to the consulting process in appropriate ways.

Our goal is to develop a solid partnership with the client, defined by strong mutual trust and regard, so that the combination of our strategic skills and the client's institutional knowledge produce accurate, compelling and high value-added results.

- We participate in brainstorming and are experienced troubleshooters. We try to see the forest *and* the trees.
- We seek to strengthen organizations through constructive change. We actively think through with the client what is required within the institution to carry forward the results of our strategic analyses and effectively execute our recommendations.
- We often assist with implementation planning and monitoring in a separate phase of an engagement.