Institutional Planning

**I. School Information**name of school: 21st Century Yoga on the Mat at Main Street Yoga Center

**Review of 2021 & 2022 IPD Goals & Strategy  
From 2021 & 2022 Institutional Planning Document – SWOT – Strategy for Leveraging Strengths and Mitigating Weaknesses:**

In its scaling back & contracting options, my training has needed to simplify to stay afloat. This will give me more flexibility to “pivot” on future circumstances that are unknown. In terms of Known, Unknowns…. I label a couple:

• If things go more “back to normal”, new studios may open in the area to partner with   
• If not, there will be additional COVID provisions issued by Yoga Alliance,   
 opening up more online trainings.

**Goals for 2022 & 2023:**

1. Make a strong pivot with the market. Due to circumstantial uncertainty, I make this goal to accomplish at least one of the following. This allows me to make a pivot depending upon how the market shifts. (a) is for the “back to normal” shift (b) for a more neutral shift, and (c) is for a backward shift:

a. Find a New Studio to Partner With: I will keep my ear to the ground and make a good bid should a “good fit” studio emerge. Should the market bounce back and there not be a good fit within a year, my plan is to partner with one of the studios that are currently run by former students of mine. These are fallbacks as all these studios are relatively small in their market reach. They include: (A) Wishing Tree Yoga in Oregon, WI (B) Orthodox Natural Fitness in Madison, WI North Side (C) It’s all about You Yoga in Baraboo, WI. I am also open to moving out of Madison if a quality partner presents itself.

b. Run Regular Destination Trainings: I will be investigating sites for destination trainings around Green Lake, WI. Either in conjunction with a lower performing home studio or by establishing a better regional / national presence to drive students to these locations, I will be establishing destination trainings. Two per year if none of the other goal options are met. One if I end up in a weak, but supplemental local/online position.

c. Establish Powerful Online Presence: Specifically, in addition to creating a website, I will be posting 2 yoga related YouTube Videos per month to bring people to my trainings whether online or not. This one will be the exclusive focus should the market shift backward into pandemic conditions again. The goal, like part (b) is to get outside of Madison in my presence.

2. Given the uncertain future of the market, if I accomplish two elements above (in a,b,c), I will consider that my second goal as that would indicate that the market does not go in a clear direction (hence goal two is a diversification goal). Should it go in a very clear direction (which means that I end up focusing on only one of the above goals), then my second goal will be more of a fortification goal. Therefore, in scenario (a,b,c above), my goal will be:

a. To build the training back up at the new studio location by creating a “free preview” class to it’s audience in an attempt to drum up YTT interest at a location that is not used to it.

b. (this goal is the “middle road” goal which infers that the market is unclear, thus it is N/A here)

c. To build a high caliber online presence, I will create at least two “Advanced Yoga Studies” online courses as a way to encourage those “on the fence” into a sales funnel that leads to Yoga Teacher Training.

As mentioned about the past couple year activities, marketing has been more focused internally (you can see numbers on increase in drops) and that has been successful (2019 has seen only one drop). The goal now is to focus more externally with the focus on increasing enrollment despite the incredible increase in competition.

One thing that is intimidating for new students is being able to picture themselves in the program when the program I run is so flexible and they get confused about prereqs and how to make the flexibility work in a definite schedule. Therefore, my primary goal is to produce some web software that allows potential students to get a feel for what their schedule would be and to have immediate clarity on what the practical schedule would look like.

This helps us get the most marketing good will from having a flexible program without all the downsides of it (confusion). I will be also paving the way to have sample pieces of the program accessible by smartphone in order to more easily and flexibly demonstrate what the “non-niche, niche” has to offer.

**Goals for 2019 & 2020:**

1. Use the intern program I’ve created in addition to hiring freelancers via websites like “upwork.com” to create web software that allows potential beginning & advanced students to play with their schedule as described above. I believe that 2 years should be enough time to accomplish this goal for all programs. Goal as follows:
   1. Finish the 200 hour basic scheduler program by February 15, 2020.
   2. Finish the 200 hour full version (that includes Immersion & Online Mods) to be completed by July 15, 2020.
   3. Finish the 300 hour advanced version by September 15, 2020.
   4. Finish the 500 hour full advanced version by March 15, 2021.
2. Convert reference material website to work with smartphones. 2 year project, paving the way for future marketing.

2. Given the uncertain future of the market, if I accomplish two elements above (in a,b,c), I will consider that my second goal as that would indicate that the market does not go in a clear direction (hence goal two is a diversification goal). Should it go in a very clear direction (which means that I end up focusing on only one of the above goals), then my second goal will be more of a fortification goal. Therefore, in scenario (a,b,c above), my goal will be:

a. To build the training back up at the new studio location by creating a “free preview” class to it’s audience in an attempt to drum up YTT interest at a location that is not used to it.

b. (this goal is the “middle road” goal which infers that the market is unclear, thus it is N/A here)

c. To build a high caliber online presence, I will create at least two “Advanced Yoga Studies” online courses as a way to encourage those “on the fence” into a sales funnel that leads to Yoga Teacher Training.

As mentioned about the past couple year activities, marketing has been more focused internally (you can see numbers on increase in drops) and that has been successful (2019 has seen only one drop). The goal now is to focus more externally with the focus on increasing enrollment despite the incredible increase in competition.

One thing that is intimidating for new students is being able to picture themselves in the program when the program I run is so flexible and they get confused about prereqs and how to make the flexibility work in a definite schedule. Therefore, my primary goal is to produce some web software that allows potential students to get a feel for what their schedule would be and to have immediate clarity on what the practical schedule would look like.

This helps us get the most marketing good will from having a flexible program without all the downsides of it (confusion). I will be also paving the way to have sample pieces of the program accessible by smartphone in order to more easily and flexibly demonstrate what the “non-niche, niche” has to offer.

**Goals for 2019 & 2020:**

1. Use the intern program I’ve created in addition to hiring freelancers via websites like “upwork.com” to create web software that allows potential beginning & advanced students to play with their schedule as described above. I believe that 2 years should be enough time to accomplish this goal for all programs. Goal as follows:
   1. Finish the 200 hour basic scheduler program by February 15, 2020.
   2. Finish the 200 hour full version (that includes Immersion & Online Mods) to be completed by July 15, 2020.
   3. Finish the 300 hour advanced version by September 15, 2020.
   4. Finish the 500 hour full advanced version by March 15, 2021.
2. Convert reference material website to work with smartphones. 2 year project, paving the way for future marketing.

**Note Relevant to All Goals:** As COVID threw a wrench into the YTT industry, my previous goals were segmented based on scenarios of the pandemic lasting or ending. It went closer to “ending” and as such the (a) options above are my evaluations.

**Goal 1** : Find a New Studio to Partner With ***Goal Met***. I opened the studio to host the training. This divides my time, but it provides me with a locale. It has been slow starting the YTT back up and drumming up interest again, but the process is underway.

**Goal 2** : Create a free preview class ***Goal Met***. I’ve created the said preview class; however, I’ve not gotten to run it yet, so I cannot yet evaluate whether it’s had the intended impact.

**From 2021 & 2022 Institutional Planning Document - Strategy for taking advantage of Opportunities and Defending Against or Avoiding Threats:**

In its scaling back & contracting options, my training has needed to simplify to stay afloat. This will allow the pivot described above, in addition, it will frame my shift in goals below:

**Goals for 2021 & 2022:**

1. I will be launching a large-scale marketing plan in August to students who want their yoga integrated. This is a rare element of yoga training and since the COVID provision will fall in October/November, I will be marketing this as a “last chance” to study with me for people outside of Madison. The online training will commence.

2. To deal with the shrinking market that is due to the shift into “serious mindedness”, I will be creating a series of YouTube content where I talk about why yoga is still relevant even in serious times where it is easy to consider it a luxury or frivolous. This will be a major marketing pivot. Specifically, I will be producing at least two hours of content on this that I can direct students towards and then marketing that content.

**Goal 1 : *Goal Met – doesn’t matter.*** I did organize this but got no takers. A lot of people in 2022 were still not fully transitioned from COVID Habits.

**Goal 2 : *Goal Quarter Met – doesn’t matter.*** I launched a YouTube Channel that had some of the content listed in the goal. Only about 25% of the plan though. My time was spent on opening a yoga studio instead which given my inability to find a yoga studio to take on the training is a tradeoff that I’m good with.

**II. Institutional Plan Elements**

**A. Mission.**  *Describe your school's mission and vision, which identifies its purpose and its core values.*

It is the mission of this school to spread the teachings of yoga, as they are helpful to human beings in the 21st century, by creating teachers that larger portions of the population will connect to.

It is the recognition of this school that most yoga students pick up the important parts of yoga by resonating with the personality of the teacher. Thus...

This teacher training aims to foster a more dynamic field of yoga teachers through 2 means:

(1) Contributing to a greater diversity of life experiences in the yoga teacher field by giving individuals who would normally not be able to attend a teacher training the opportunity to do a training. This opportunity is given through a curriculum format that is *modular rather than sequential*, and also afforded by providing a pay-as-you-go option.

(2) Promote the creativity of the individual teacher by training each teacher for full competence in the fundamentals of yoga as a whole rather than a particular style of yoga.

This school values the uniqueness of each trainee and uses mastery of fundamentals as opposed to a recipe approach so that each individual may find his or her distinctive contribution to others. This makes for a process that relies on more creativity in the student than a program taking a more recipe approach and we are always sure to screen for potential students who display traits (or at least desire for the traits) of creativity, intuition development, openness, willingness to experiment, and/or playfulness.

**B. Market**

In the business of training new yoga teachers, potential and existing customers fall into 3 general camps:

1. Individuals who wish to become a yoga teacher. (vocational)
2. Individuals who wish to learn & do more with yoga practice than what is available in a typical class or public workshop. (study)
3. Individuals who wish to understand how to take what yoga means to them "on the mat" and apply that wisdom & state of being to an entire lifestyle. (life)

Most are motivated to enroll in this training because they have experienced me (Alex) teaching to these 3 points with more clarity & strength of results than they've heard from other teachers. Currently, they find out of this school being in business by email, facebook, and my classes that I run online and outdoors.

Competitors fall into 2 Groups:

1. Teacher Training Retreats/Bootcamps that run 4 week Immersions to train new teachers, usually in beautiful / exotic locations, such as Central America, Mountains, or Retreat Centers.
2. Madison Area Located Teacher Training Programs
   1. Inner Fire Yoga
   2. Jewel in the Lotus
   3. Alignment Yoga
   4. Perennial Yoga
   5. Tantra Madison
   6. Dragonfly Hot Yoga
   7. Sol Yoga (Sun Prairie, Yin Yoga)
   8. Capital Fitness Yoga Sangha

This training is different from its competitors in four primary ways and offers the following which the competitors do not:

1. This training is modular rather than sequential. Trainees may complete the course in one year, one-and-a-half years, or two years, depending on what fits into their schedule. While the training has scaled itself back in response to COVID and has lost a lot of flexibility, it is still flexible beyond any other competitor, perhaps tied with Inner Fire Yoga.
2. This training has a pay-as-you-go option, so trainees may schedule their training in a way that fits their finances. (Note: While this market advantage is weaker than it used to be, Inner Fire Yoga has something close to this, but not as versatile. )
3. This training is yoga style independent. It is foundational to include the common ingredients of all styles.
4. This training has a couple options per year. This means that potential students looking for a yoga teacher training are likely to find me as a training that will have an opportunity to start soon. (Note: Inner Fire Yoga also has this advantage)

*All these market components are similar to historical market forces, which is why I’d like to make distinguishable,*

**Post-COVID Related Market Forces**

1. **COVID Habits Die Hard.** Despite many being excited to get back to something close to a life like 2019, we humans are creatures of habit and a lot of people despite having financial means and interest haven’t gotten themselves back into the yoga fold.
2. **Seriousness is in the Air.**  Whether it is the seriousness of the illness itself, the impact of shutdowns on folks expendable income, or simply the state of anxiety brought on by more time online, uncertain future, and a confusing and polarized information landscape – something like a yoga teacher training program seems more frivolous than it would have been in the 2010’s. The consequence is lowered demand, and I cannot blame the market for this reaction. It is an honest signal that must be respected.

**C. Management**

I lead, administer, position, and direct the improvement cycle myself. The program is very small at this time and has no need for more positions.

The improvement cycle is applied through the feedback of anonymous surveys given to students throughout the duration of the program (particularly focused on those who are teaching yoga classes while in the program) to graduates after graduating and have had the opportunity to apply their knowledge in the "real world."

**D. SWOT Analysis**

**Strengths** - Flexible & Versatile Program used to be a strength, but during this “restart” period, it is a little trickier to create a flexible but stable program because flexibility depends on having enough students in the program at any given time. To walk this tightrope, I will need to have people start in a more rigid program (for stability with small numbers) and then migrate it towards flexibility in their back half so that I can keep this market strength while having fewer people. Hopefully, as the program builds in size over the next couple of years, I can eventually scrap this and use the old format.

**Weaknesses** - As stated above, I do not have enough people to leverage my market advantage if I keep anything close to my 2019 training format.

**Opportunities** - Yoga styles continue to specialize, diversify, and fractionate mostly due to the pressures of businesses to niche their brand. The more this occurs, I project, the more potential customers (who tend to like things that are "holistic" and "integrated" by their nature of being into yoga) will be desiring yoga training that is able to integrate these differences.

**Threats** - (1) Yoga is generally purchased with disposable income. The market has shrunk due to post-pandemic behavior including economic factors. There is less disposable income and future certainty. (2) Although total yoga studios have shrunk, the number of yoga teacher trainings has not, but we are all vulnerable to market uncertainty and the more serious mindedness for what takes up most people’s attention in this historical moment.

**Strategy for Leveraging Strengths & Mitigating Weaknesses:**

I can keep my market strength despite low numbers by banking on accumulating more people over time. Hence, the training will put off it’s flexible component until late 2024 (when the recent sign ups are near the end of their training and future sign ups all come together… the training may need to then contract again to only basics and go through windows of “flex” time until there’s a steady stream of students enrolled).

**Goals for 2024 & 2025:**

1. Finalize Plan to create expanding and contracting windows of “flexibility” over the next three years as the training builds up its total head count.
2. Hire a coder to create a YTT scheduling app to interactively highlight this training strength.

**Strategy for taking advantage of Opportunities and Defending Against or Avoiding Threats:**

I now have some former students who have opened yoga studios outside of Madison. I plan to work out a deal with them to make them a “satellite” for the training where I can market through them to channel their students to my YTT. These studios are: Wishing Tree (Oregon), Twisted Grit (Cottage Grove), and Ease/MSY (Stoughton). This cashing in on my past success will hopefully counteract the contracted market.

**Goals for 2024 & 2025:**

1. Work out an agreement with the three studios listed above and create strong marketing channels through them to attract students from 4 studios towards the training.
2. Execute two free trial weekends of YTT to encourage those on the financial fence.

**E. Future Think**

Five years from now the school will reestablish in its Advanced Training Program (3rd one in Madison by current competitor status). The school will also be known by many yoga practitioners as *the place* to go for those:

* wanting style independent and integrated understanding of yoga (which gives each trainee creative freedom to develop their own style)
* who wish to learn to use and teach yoga creatively
* needing schedule and monetary flexibility for their training
* wanting an evolutionary Point of View on yoga, (the 50,000 foot view) and a sense of where its currently headed. (most trainings/styles adopt a philosophical foundation from one period of yoga history & isolate their philosophical base from there. This one presents each philosophical period in the context of its own historical conditions so that students may choose the parts from each period that fits for them into a coherent whole that is relevant to life today.).
* I would also like to expand my offerings to “non-training” options. This doesn’t really fall under the prevue of this document as the EAP is regulating trainings, but an integrated platform of certification training and other study options is in the Future Think.

This will be accomplished through my goals above which are designed to make the training more robust to shocks in the economy which served as a significant set back post COVID.