

The Strategic Role of the Third Mission in Universities: A Concrete Case Study

Dr. Rosamaria Rusciano

PhD in Business, State, and Market

Department of Business and Law, University of Calabria

Ponte P. Bucci, Arcavacata di Rende (Cs), Italy

[Doi:10.19044/esj.2024.v20n16p1](https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2024.v20n16p1)

Submitted: 27 March 2024

Accepted: 29 June 2024

Published: 30 June 2024

Copyright 2024 Author(s)

Under Creative Commons CC-BY 4.0

OPEN ACCESS

Cite As:

Rusciano R. (2024). *The Strategic Role of the Third Mission in Universities: A Concrete Case Study*. European Scientific Journal, ESJ, 20 (16), 1.

<https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2024.v20n16p1>

Abstract

In addition to teaching and research, the goal of universities is to contribute to the development of civil society by promoting the direct application, valorization, and use of knowledge. In reality, it is a widespread and shared opinion that is no longer enough to carry out research on campus and publish subsequent works in scientific journals. It is also difficult to be fully satisfied with teaching only young people in university courses. This paper focuses on highlighting how an applied example can be taken as the best practice for future implementations. The methodology used is qualitative. The research question that initiated the study was to concretely verify how the Third Mission (TM) was integrated into the strategic choices of universities. In light of the new methods of evaluating universities, how can we highlight what they have done in terms of the third mission? Are organizational solutions possible in the approach to the TM? The objective was to verify what the impact and future development of the Third Mission (TM) in the universities will be. In light of its inclusion among the evaluation criteria of universities and teachers, the Third Mission (TM) is the new future frontier in terms of local and national openness and development, as well as their economic and financial sustainability. To this end, a case analysis was proposed as a model/best practice, and in particular the case of the Department of Business and Law of the University of Calabria was also presented. The application and implementation of rules and regulations are always difficult in

any case and in any field. An example can be seen in public administration and universities, bureaucratically "plastered" and not very inclined to change and innovation, especially regarding performance evaluation. Therefore, seeing an application carried out relatively quickly allows the enhancement of the "DiScAG Model", which is to be taken as an application example in the implementation of the Third Mission (TM) in universities. The study will contribute to increasing the literature and starting a discussion and a reflection on what has been done and what still needs to be done in this direction.

Keywords: Third Mission, Evaluation, Strategic Planning, Performance, Development

Introduction

Over the past few years, the Italian University, as well as other countries, has been affected by profound transformations that have influenced the improvement of the more traditional functions, such as training and research, the introduction of new missions, and characteristics to respond more directly to the needs for research, innovative services, and training expressed externally, in particular, by the territorial systems in which it operates.

Historically, the university's first mission is to transmit knowledge to new generations with the aim of training highly qualified figures. As per consolidated practice, the institutional mandate of the university is to train the ruling class of a country. Thus, the second mission involves increasing certified knowledge to respond to the different needs of social well-being.

With the process of corporatization of public administration, all the mechanisms of private companies have been adapted to the public sector and, therefore, also to universities (Comite, 2020). Addressing the topic of planning and control by referring them to the university system, it presupposes on the one hand the consideration that the university takes, at least in part, the typical connotations of the company. On the other hand, there is the need to contextualize the concepts that must be inserted into the peculiarities "of the public university company". Universities constitute a completely peculiar reality in the state sphere, primarily due to the specificity of the products offered and the management circuits implemented. Secondly, it entails a particular legal regime of autonomy they enjoy in educational and scientific terms from an organizational, financial, and accounting point of view.

In addition to Teaching and Research (Deidda Gagliardo, 2020), the aim of the universities is to contribute to the development of civil society by promoting the direct application, valorization, and use of knowledge. In reality, it is a widespread and shared opinion that it is no longer enough to carry out research on campus and publish subsequent works in scientific

journals. Also, it is difficult to derive satisfaction only simply from teaching young people in university courses.

A historical measure of the impact factor of teachers is given by citations and patent registrations, which are not always precise indicators of all disciplines (Trombetti, 2017). Thus, there is a need to open up to the world and spread culture, disseminate knowledge, and transfer research results outside the academic environment, thereby contributing to the social growth and cultural direction of the territory (Chesbrough, 2013, 2021).

Concretely, universities must link up with the world of economy and industry to be considered both as a potential supplier of resources and as a source of demand for highly qualified labour. Furthermore, in this direction, there is a need to satisfy new requests from society, especially professional updates through continuous training.

Today, knowledge has taken on a central role in society both from an economic and political point of view and in life processes. Knowledge, research, and innovation are currently the pillars on which to leverage the growth and competitiveness of society.

The objective of this paper is to verify the impact and future development of the TM in universities. In the light of its inclusion among the evaluation criteria of universities and teachers (National Agency for the Evaluation of the University and Research System (ANVUR)), the third mission represents the new frontier of the future in terms of openness, local and national development, as well as their economic and financial sustainability. To this end, a case analysis is proposed and, in particular, the case of the Department of Business and Law of the University of Calabria was presented.

Methodology

The methodology used is qualitative in nature. Based on the theoretical framework, focused on the strategic planning process in universities, the following research question was generated: How was the Third Mission (TM) integrated into the strategic choices of universities? In light of the new methods of evaluating universities, how can one highlight what they have done in terms of the third mission? Are organizational solutions that are useful for achieving positive outcomes possible? However, the importance of the topic suggests that the study will contribute significantly to the existing literature and stimulate discussion and reflections on the future direction of third mission-related activities in universities.

After an examination of the strategic planning with a particular focus on the university context, a definition of the Third Mission (TM) was formulated in line with the strategic plan in force at the University of Calabria. Subsequently, the main aspects of the Third Mission (TM) of the University

of Calabria were identified, with particular attention to the Department of Business and Legal Sciences.

The intent was to start the research and third mission office activities as well as verify the state of the art in terms of implementation of the department's Third Mission (TM). An online questionnaire was sent to the teachers present in the department at the time of the establishment of the Research and Third Mission (TM) Office, which took place in 2019. The purpose is to perform initial mapping and start the third mission activity, monitor the progress and improve it, and strengthen areas where there are uncertainties. Over time, the indicators identified by both the university and the department governance were analyzed to encourage the third mission and verify that it was the best practice to define a "DiScAG model".

To answer the research questions, the university's strategic plans for 2020-2022 and the one currently in force for 2023-2025 were analyzed. Also, the strategic plans of the Department of Business Sciences and Legal Science and the documents of the reviews carried out by the governance bodies were also analyzed.

Strategic Planning in Universities

Through the planning process, objectives are established and the methods for achieving them are determined. Strategic planning is the systematic process aimed at defining the organization's strategy that allows it to optimize its performance, or the formulation of strategies that identify the actions to be taken to achieve the organization's objectives. The strategy is accompanied by the concept of programming, through which an order to things is assigned, thus foreseeing possible future scenarios and organizing behavior aimed at achieving pre-established objectives over an extended time horizon. This was done to make the action itself coherent compared to the expected results. Planning is a part of the organization through which governing body exercise its political-administrative direction function, after having identified the strategic objectives, the resources, and the times needed to achieve them. However, bureaucratic bodies are empowered to decide on the concrete methods of implementing the program.

The administrative planning activity becomes strategic when analysis are carried out regarding the role that the organization intends to play in the future and the basic choices that will shape the administrative actions. Furthermore, the ability to analyze work processes, define strategies, evaluate the results, and ultimately rectify imperfections has become a source of competitive advantage. Law 43/2005 states that universities (Nardo et al., 2017), in order to pursue objectives of efficiency and effectiveness of the services offered, adopt, every year, three-year programs connected with the general guidelines defined by the decree of the former Ministry of Education,

University and Research (MIUR), and today's Ministry of University and Research (MUR). The legislation also states that university programs are evaluated by the ministry and monitored periodically in accordance with parameters and criteria identified by the Minister, making use of the National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System (CNVSU). Furthermore, after consulting the Conference of Rectors of Italian Universities (CRUI), it was shown that university programs are taken into account in the distribution of the universities' Ordinary Financing Fund (FFO).

The three-year planning system for the activities and development of universities and the entire university system involve the following provisions:

1. The preparation of the general guidelines defined by Decree of the Minister.
2. The preparation of three-year programs by each university.
3. The evaluation of these programs by the Ministry.
4. Periodic monitoring of university programs based on parameters and criteria identified by the Minister.
5. The preparation of a three-yearly report on the results of the evaluation of the programs that the Minister presents to parliament.
6. The definition of the methods with which to take university programs into account in the distribution of the ordinary university funding fund.

With this legislation, strategic planning finds a concrete application within Italian universities (Rubino et al., 2017). Therefore, it is important to understand the phases and actions of the planning process, content of the documents, and their formalization as established by the legislation. Generally, by statute or regulation, universities require the Academic Senate to definitively approve the strategic plan, as it is the highest internal policy-making body.

Furthermore, it is essential to consider how the State Universities over the years have been affected by a regulatory overlap which has required them to draft numerous planning documents, including the three-year planning systems, the economic-financial plans, the personnel planning plans, the three-year construction plan, the performance plan, the plan for the prevention of corruption and transparency and, the integrated plan of activity and organization, which is a real novelty and concrete simplification of the bureaucracy of last year.

Provided for by Article 6 of Legislative Decree no. 80 of 2021, public administrations from 30 June 2022 must draw up a single planning and governance document called the Integrated Activity and Organization Plan (PIAO). It includes many of the plans that public administrations were

required to prepare annually, such as performance, staff needs, gender equality, flexible working, and anti-corruption.

One of the reasons that generated the preparation of a single document is the high number of rules that regulate the system. Although each of these regulations has objectives of high social and civil significance, their combination over time has shown strong limitations. This has generated an overload of obligations without producing the desired improvement effects or severely limiting them.

Definition of Third Mission (TM)

Historically, the first mission of universities is to transmit knowledge in order to train highly qualified figures. The institutional mission of universities is precisely to train the ruling class of the future. The second mission is aimed at increasing certified knowledge with the aim of responding to the needs of social well-being.

The TM is defined as the set of all the activities through which universities dialogue and interact with society, with variable content and form that is dependent on the context.

It is therefore necessary to distinguish, according to the definition given by ANVUR, two types of interaction:

- a) TM of economic valorization of knowledge.
- b) Third cultural and social mission.

Based on the first point, this paper refers to the economic valorization of knowledge in the event that the TM is useful for productive purposes, including technological transfer activities aimed at evaluating, protecting, marketing, and commercializing technologies which are developed within academic research projects. It also includes the management of intellectual property in relation to these projects (such as patents, trademarks, etc.). In reference to the Third Cultural and Social Mission, the concept shows that "public goods are those that increase the wellbeing of society". Example includes cultural events, scientific dissemination, management of museum centers, public health, continuing education, public debates and controversies, scientific expertise, and adult education. Generally, there is no payment or market price for the use of these goods. In any case, these activities are numerous.

For this reason, the indicators that describe them cannot be standardized and consequently less comparable and, therefore, are less shared. ANVUR requests periodic monitoring of the **evaluation of the third mission** of a socio-cultural nature.

This second point includes all initiatives for the production and management of cultural heritage, research infrastructures, clinical trials and

medical training, and continuous training or public engagement. By “*Public Engagement, we mean the set of non-profit activities with educational, cultural, and social development value. The business and benefits of higher education and research can be communicated and shared with the public in numerous ways.*” (ANVUR, 2015)

Presently, a distinction has been established between public and social engagement. The word “engagement” here is understood as a psychological, individual, motivational, and context-dependent involvement.

The following are considered as Public Engagement initiatives:

- Informative publications signed by the teaching staff at a national or international level.
- Participation of the teaching staff in radio and television broadcasts at a national or international level.
- Active participation in public meetings organized by other entities (e.g., scientific cafés, festivals, science fairs, etc.).
- Organization of public events (e.g., Researchers' Night, Open Day).
- Publications (paper and digital) dedicated to the external public (e.g., university magazine).
- Organized communication training days (aimed at PTA or teachers).
- Interactive and/or informative websites, blogs.
- Use by the community of museums, hospitals, sports facilities, libraries, theatres, historic university buildings.
- Organization of concerts, exhibitions, and other public events open to the community.
- Participation in the formulation of programs of public interest (policy making).
- Participation in committees for the definition of standards and technical regulations.
- Health protection initiatives (e.g., information and prevention days).
- Initiatives in collaboration with entities for urban development or territorial enhancement projects.
- Orientation and interaction initiatives with high schools.
- Information initiatives aimed at children and young people.
- Participatory democracy initiatives (e.g., consensus conferences, citizen panels).

The University of Calabria

The University of Calabria was established 12 May 1968 with Legal Science Decree no. 422. It is a strategic resource for the development of

Calabria and is capable of creating prospects of cultural, social, and economic growth for its students and their families.

For about 10 years, the University of Calabria has started a process of improving strategic planning and operational programming processes.

The 2023-2025 strategic plans was adopted on 25 October 2022, and the first part highlighted the mission and vision of the university. Thereafter, the presentation of the university and its characterizing elements was introduced. Some peculiarities that allow Unical to be distinguished from other universities can essentially be summarized in its "Campus" University model, which introduced the Departmental Structure and the Residential Center in Italy for the first time. However, another characteristic distinctive feature was the creation of an environment, which is conducive for the promotion of close relationships among all the components of the institution (teachers, students, technical, and administrative staff). In fact, the current university's structure is characterized by an equipped "Bridge" axis, with buildings (called "Cubes") such as departments, administrative offices, laboratories, classrooms, libraries, cinemas, and theaters. The university residences, sports facilities, and canteens for student and staff catering are located in the surrounding hilly area.

Today, over 50 years after its establishment, 14 departments are active, which have employed around 800 teachers made up of professors, associate professors, and researchers. The administrative, financial, and technical activities are organized and managed by approximately 650 units of technical-administrative staff. Also, there are 5 common service centers active in the university: The Music and Entertainment Arts Center (CAMS), the Publishing and Book Center, the University ICT Center, the University Language Center (CLA), and the presence of 4 Museums, namely: the Museum of Paleontology, the Museum of Natural History and Botanical Garden (MuSNOB), the Museum of Zoology, and the Museum for the Environment/ RiMuseum, located outside the campus. The residential center, however, is responsible for the provision of services to students, providing approximately 1,800 beds and a canteen service that supplies approximately 2,377 meals a day.

At present, Unical boasts approximately 24,000 enrolled students, thus positioning itself among the main academic institutions in the country.

The University of Calabria has activated a guesthouse service with 168 apartments and a "Residenza Socrate Residence", which is a hotel structure equipped with 44 rooms ready to welcome visitors. Also, there are numerous sports facilities organized in a multifunctional university sports center (CUS) near the Youth Aggregation Centers. Interestingly, there are also spaces or centers available for students' ideas and initiatives.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight the activity of a health emergency operating station, known as a Medical Emergency Care Unit,

which is a significant example of conurbation of the university with the surrounding area. In addition, the University Chapel has always been entrusted to the Dehonian Fathers and was joined by the Dorotee Sisters in 2006. The University Chapel welcomes various university groups and organizes thematic reflection meetings. Students can freely access the library system made up of three large libraries: the technical-scientific area library, the humanities library, and the economic and social sciences library. Furthermore, within the university perimeter is situated a banking agency, a post office, two theaters, two cinemas, two amphitheatres for outdoor events, and a nursery that welcomes over 50 children from three months of age and above. Overall, over 5,000 parking lots spaces are available, and the various structures are accessible through a public transport system which guarantees daily mobility for over 25,000 users.

The strategic areas of training and research are the two principles of the university system, which are spontaneously supported. In recent times, as stated by the TM and social commitment, it is seen as an area to systematically state one's initiatives aimed at strengthening ties with the territory and its social and cultural valorization. The University of Calabria aims to contribute to the planning of the cultural project aimed at bringing change to the social and economic growth of the regional territory, both nationally and internationally, and strengthening the international vocation and the area of student services.

The university acts as a driving force towards development and addresses the problems of the Calabria territory, particularly those connected to delay in growth compared to other areas of the country, global competition, and employment issues, especially for young people who have a high level of education. Therefore, the vision of quality of the TM sees a natural propensity to strongly support not only technological transfer initiatives and activities, but also knowledge transfer and public engagement initiatives, which is developed by adopting the principles of quality assurance as its own methodological reference.

The Department of Business and Law

The Department of Business and Law "is the structure responsible for carrying out scientific research, teaching and training activities, as well as activities related or ancillary to the previous ones which are externally directed and attributable to the scientific-disciplinary sectors of legal and business sciences within the department itself".

The Department of Business and Law was established in 2013, following the entry into force of the novel Unical Statute, pursuant to Law 240/2010, which provides for the reorganization of research and training activities previously delegated to departments and faculties, thereby relocating

them within the new departments. DiScAG, in particular, was established from the merger of the pre-existing Departments of Business Sciences and Legal Sciences and operates in continuity with the former Faculty of Economics of the University of Calabria. The initial project envisaged the development of scientific and cultural activities essentially in two areas (Business – SSD 13B and Legal – SSD 12). Over time, the department has been further enriched and the initial SSCs have also been joined by 13A (Economic area), SSD 13 (Statistical area), and SSD 14 (Sociological area).

The objectives of DiScAG started from the awareness that the context in which universities operate is complex and variable, both from a cultural and socio-economic point of view. Therefore, the objectives are influenced by continuous changes in the labor market which has a significant impact on the employability of graduates, the growing competition in attracting students, the needs of the territory in terms of motivating companies towards innovation, the evolution of the traditional reference professional figures (accountants, managers, lawyers), and the ever new scenarios of research, TM, and competitive projects. To face these challenges, adaptation and resilience skills are needed, as well as the ability to influence and stimulate change, without undergoing it.

Its mission, therefore, is to train excellent individuals with intelligence and professionalism capable of adapting to environmental changes and, in some way, guiding them.

All DiScAG operational activities developed by the technical and administrative staff are organized into four (4) sectors:

1. Administration and Accounting
2. Teaching
3. Research and TM
4. Higher education and Masters.

It should be specified that compared to the initial division (administration, teaching and research) dating back to 2012 - when the faculties were transformed into departments following the Gelmini Decree - at the beginning of 2019, the research sector of the department was divided into research and TM sector and higher education and masters sector. This subdivision has allowed the development of more specific skills, which is necessary in these areas, to achieve the expected objectives. Above all, it has helped in generating best practices that allow the department to consolidate the set objectives.

Subsequently, the staff is structured into 14 units, as well as other 13 units with collaboration contracts.

Starting from 2019, the Head of the Research and Third Mission (TM) Office (the author of this paper) begun mapping and monitoring the departmental research and the third mission activities carried out within the department. Nonetheless, an attempt was also made to start a process of diffusion of the culture of the Third Mission (TM). In the first instance, the Head of the Research and Third Mission (TM) sector initiated the mapping of the lines and research interests of all the teachers belonging to DiScAG (There were 57 active teachers in 2019). For the mapping or reconnaissance, which is a starting point, a questionnaire containing some questions relating to their research activity was sent to each teacher. It constitutes the description of their competition sector and the scientific disciplinary sector they belong to, the ERC (European Research Council) sector of membership, research products, and any collaborations with other departments and/or third parties, i.e., companies, public bodies, external financiers, or stakeholders.

On the basis of the information received and the legislation that establishes the scientific disciplinary sectors and the subjects included in them, 8 research groups have been outlined. The research groups are as follows:

1. Business Economy Area
2. Business and Management
3. Civil Law in Constitutional Legality
4. Commercial and Tax Law
5. Criminal Law
6. Public Law Disciplines
7. Financial Intermediaries and Corporate Finance
8. Territory, Environment, City and Tourism

Presently, there are 61 teachers in force (data updated in March 2024), and they have been added and/or eliminated as needed. The membership of the teachers is as follows:

1. Business Economics Area - 16 teachers
2. Business and Management - 10 teachers
3. Civil Law in Constitutional Legality - 5 teachers
4. Commercial and Tax Law - 6 teachers
5. Criminal Law - 2 teachers
6. Public Law Disciplines - 10 teachers
7. Financial Intermediaries and Corporate Finance - 5 teachers
8. Territory, Environment, City and Tourism - 7 teachers

By following this order, there was an understanding of what was done. Furthermore, the organizational chart of the existing organizational structure was reported in official documents, which is based among other things on a consistent and well-defined number of delegations granted to teachers. The

auspicious wish of the governance was to confer as many delegations as possible to ensure teachers are responsible for enhancing the education of young people and contribute significantly to local, regional, and national development.

Analysis and Results

To optimally conduct a planning, monitoring, and evaluation action to guarantee development with a view to continuous improvement, it is necessary to focus on three key macro-dimensions:

- ❖ **Strategy** – This is the vertical dimension of planning, monitoring, and evaluation from which the indications that define the path to follow for the next few years derive. It goes from the strategic plan to management performance, and from the academic to the technical-administrative sphere;
- ❖ **Transparency** – This is the external dimension (or depth), which opens the organization to stakeholders with a view of real accountability;
- ❖ **Quality** – This is the horizontal dimension, which permeates all university processes, roles, resources, and structures.

Universities must, therefore, adopt internal methodologies for monitoring the achievement of the planned strategic objectives. This also involves the development of autonomous indicators, adequately harmonized with the indicators defined by ANVUR, which measures the degree of achievement of the objectives in teaching, research and organization, and individual performances.

Furthermore, the identification of indicators is an extremely complex aspect since these may not always be exhaustive or sufficiently represent the complexity of an organizational structure. Based on the upstream and downstream of this moment, it is necessary to pay attention to equally important aspects, such as the definition of the information needs that the indicators must satisfy, the possible ways to allow their real use within the decision-making process, the dangers of behavioral distortions which the use of indicators can lead to, and the identification of adequate standards and terms of comparison within organizations. Therefore, the path through which the indicator is defined (and its labelling) is certainly more important than the indicator itself as the methodological analysis activated will allow us to identify the factors that will help the healthcare company to improve and grow. According to the Department of Business and Law, the actions envisaged for the implementation of the activities contained in the third departmental mission, which is included in the strategic plan, are as follows:

Table 1. Strategic actions to achieve the objectives included in the strategic plan (Source: Strategic Plan 23-25 of the Department of Business and Law)

Strategic actions	TM.1 - A.1	Incentivation of the valorization of the results of the company research
	TM.1 - A.2	Promotion of the corporate culture
	TM.1 - A.3	Reinforcement of incubation and support programs for businesses

Thus, the indicators used to achieve these strategic actions include:

- **TM.1-I.2** Number of people involved in training courses for the promotion of corporate culture
- **TM.1-I.4** Income from commissioned research, technology transfer and competitive financing
- **TM.2-I.1** Number of initiatives for the promotion and support of the civil and educational mission

Based on the reports in the DiScAG strategic plan:

TM.1- indicator I.2 Number of people involved in training courses for the promotion of corporate culture

Table 2. Indicator TM.1- I.2- Number of people involved in training courses for the promotion of business culture (Source: Strategic Plan 23-25 of the Department of Business and Law)

Weight 25%	Baselines	Detection	Current	Target	
	Dec. 31, 2019	Dec. 31, 2020	Jun. 30, 2021	Dec. 31, 2021	Dec. 31, 2022
Department	3.3	7.7	12.3	4.0	4.3
University	24.3	61.7	100.7	29.2	31.6

The data refers to the last useful survey carried out before the adoption of the strategic plan.

Table 3. Initiatives planned for the next three years (Source: Strategic Plan 23-25 of the Department of Business and Law)

Initiatives indicated in the Departmental Strategic Plan DiScAG	Any Changes or Planning of the Initiatives Scheduled for 2023-2024-2025
Advertising the three-year courses and master's degree courses, based on the DiScAG of the UnicaLab path, as an elective course (6 CFU), including other available initiatives, such as the StartCup Calabria.	Communication about UnicalLab and StartCup has already begun by hosting staff from the University's Innovation and Social Impact Research Area (ARIIS) as part of classroom and/or online lessons. The trial will continue in 2023-2024-2025

Organization of corporate culture development paths through collaborations with many local, national, and international companies that already collaborate with DiScAG for internships, Masters and post-graduate higher education courses, also involving the PTA.

DiScAG currently has 565 agreements in place with companies, bodies, and organizations that host over 300 students a year for internships and training and extra-curricular internships, in Italy and abroad. Furthermore, numerous collaborations are active with credit institutions and companies for the financing of scholarships and for the support of post-graduate training courses. For 2023, there are plans to further increase the pool of collaborations until 2025, which has been constant for many years

The department takes the social, cultural, and economic development of the territory into great consideration through continuous collaboration with other university departments. This is in accordance with the educational, productive, and innovative ecosystem.

Strategic Action TM.1-A.1 - Based on the incentive for the valorization of research results, it can be seen that the indicator **TM.1-I.4** proceeds from commissioned research, technological transfer, and competitive financing as shown in the table below:

Table 4. Indicator TM.1-I.4 (Source: Strategic Plan 23-25 of the Department of Business and Law)

Weight 25%	Baselines	Detection	Current	Target	
	Dec. 31,2019	Dec. 31,2020	Jun. 30, 2021	Dec.31,2021	Dec. 31,2022
Department	€52,538	€40,000	€170,566	€54,114	€55,165
University	€12,269,488	€12,487,690	€3,490,143	€12,637,573	€12,882,962

DiScAG has already achieved excellent results in terms of the TM. In fact, when compared to the other departments, it has the most existing activities due to the vocation and specificity of the research groups. For example, in the legal field, there are several lawyers and it is normal to involve the forensic associations or in the economic accounting field, the associations of accountants and accounting experts are consulted. Thus, the department has the objective of strengthening certain activities, which are outlined below:

- Developing multidisciplinary collaboration involving transversal research areas and promoting applied research projects;
- Cooperation with the local entrepreneurial fabric and non-profit associations;
- Spreading the culture of technology transfer and active citizenship among teachers, researchers, PhD students, research fellows and the PTA;
- Organizing professional courses for researchers, businesses and, above all, public administrations such as local authorities, given that the

PNRR is in charge of planning, organization, management, and reporting of simple and complex projects. As a result, there is a lack of suitable professionalism, especially in small local authorities. For this reason, one aspect for future intervention is the training of public administration employees. Indeed, for over 6 years, DiScAG has participated, winning an average of two/three activated courses every year, in the INPS Valore PA project¹.

Other activities to be strengthened involves supporting teachers, researchers, PhD students, and research fellows in scouting regional, national, and European opportunities and in carrying out the administrative and partnership creation aspects. Also, it aims to intensify participation in competitive funding calls, including multidisciplinary research activities that allow access to various types of calls traditionally but not central to the DiScAG.

Table 5. Initiatives planned for the next three years (Source: Strategic Plan 23-25 of the Department of Business and Law)

Initiatives Indicated in the PSD DiScAG	Any changes or planning of the initiatives scheduled for 2023-2024-2025
Increase in opportunities for collaboration with other Unical departments by encouraging teaching staff and researchers to participate in competitive funding calls, including multidisciplinary research activities that allow access to various types of calls traditionally but not central to DiScAG.	The process which started a few years ago will continue in 2023, until 2025, in order to increase the share of financial resources acquired.
Strengthening of personnel resources dedicated to the research and Third Mission (TM) sector of the department.	A request has been made for the university to be assigned at least one additional unit in addition to the structured PTA unit already dedicated. For now, temporary contracts are in operation. However, the requested allocation will hopefully be obtained on or before 2025.
Greater interaction with the university's Innovation and Social Impact Research Area (ISIRAARIIS) to provide support to teachers	Contacts with ARIIS staff are constant and will be intensified over the next three years.

¹The INPS PA Value Project is dedicated to the training of public employees by issuing an annual call consisting of 3 steps: The first step is aimed at public administrations which must report their training needs. The second step is dedicated to universities which, based on the training needs expressed by public administrations, must offer training courses constructed according to INPS indications. The last step is addressed to public administration employees who have been accredited for their selection. It should be noted that the institution itself bears the per capita cost of those admitted to take the courses.

and researchers (e.g., timely news on tenders, support in drafting projects, etc.).

However, with regard to indicator TM.2-I.1, which indicates the number of initiatives for the promotion and support of the civil and educational mission, the strategic plan shows that the department is more focused on the following activities: consolidating and intensifying the relations with educational institutions and institutional subjects in the area, increasing public engagement initiatives aimed at student placement (due to the involvement of local economic operators and companies), orientation and interaction initiatives with schools of all levels, and proposing a large number of hackathons, bootcamps, and co-design with companies and institutions for the development of innovations.

The table below shows the values of the indicators for the year that just ended and the target for the year 2024.

Table 6. Indicator values for 2023 and proposed objectives for 2024 (Data source: Monitoring, quality and evaluation service - Statistics and reporting sector of the University of Calabria)

Indicator Values						
Indicator	Weight	Value Dec.31,2023	TARGET Dec. 31,2023	Badger Achievement Indicator	Achievement normalized weighted	TARGET Dec. 31,2024
TM.1-I.2	25%	14	4	100%	25%	4.3
TM.1-I.4	25%	260,816 €	54,114 €	100%	25%	55,165 €
TM.2-I.1	50%	155	52	100%	50%	141

Discussion of Results: Review Report for the DiScAG

A review is an activity carried out to verify the suitability, adequacy, and effectiveness of something to achieve the established objectives (UNI ISO 9000 standard).

According to the review report for the revision of the strategic plan, it was found that DiScAG is expressed as TM_DiScAG. This indicates that the third mission had a score of 100%.

Two of the three indicators (Number of people involved in training courses for the promotion of business culture - TM.1-I.2 - Elaborated by the university (TM-20), Proceeds from commissioned research, technological transfer, and competitive financing - TM.1-I.4 - PSD (TM-21)) significantly exceeds the previous year's target.

The indicator number of initiatives for the promotion and support of the civil and educational mission - TM.1-I.2 - PSD (TM-20) reaches a value slightly below the target (91.26%). In fact, this started from 2019, with the organization of 48 activities. In 2020, 41 initiatives were registered. However, 42 initiatives were registered in 2021, while 120 activities were registered in 2022. Lastly, in 2023, a sprint was recorded with 155 valid activities, which is attributable to the TM, and it includes public engagement initiatives, social engagement, conferences, seminars, workshops, etc. Therefore, this demonstrates the growing trend of activities, despite the health emergency in those years, with the involvement of all teachers and technical-administrative staff. This provides a great sense of belonging to the university. As shown in Table 7, a particular piece of data was detected immediately after the end of the health emergency. Thus, this denotes the exponential increase in activities that were carried out.

Table 7. The processing (Data source: Monitoring, quality, and evaluation service - Statistics and reporting sector of the University of Calabria)

Year	No of third mission activity recorded on Dec. 31 of each year
2019	48
2020	41
2021	42
2022	120
2023	155

The trend of the first indicator has grown over time. Nonetheless, it is underlined that in the two-year period 2020-2021, it slightly decreased when compared to the first year of monitoring in 2019². For obvious reasons, this is linked to the health emergency caused by COVID-19.

²Monitoring began in 2019 in conjunction with the official adoption of the University Strategic Plan for the three-year period 2019-2021. A quick overview shows that, in terms of drafting strategic plans and performance **evaluation, it is certainly necessary to mention the following standards:**

1. L. 370/99: establishment of the CNVSU, or the National Committee for the evaluation of the university system.
2. L. 204/98: establishment of the CIVR, Steering Committee for Research Evaluation,
3. Legislative Decree 150/2009: performance and transparency, Brunetta decree entitled "Optimization of the productivity of public work and efficiency and transparency of public administrations". With the introduction of this decree, for the first time, the moment of measurement is distinguished from that of evaluation, establishing the CIVIT (Independent Commission for the Evaluation, Transparency and Integrity of Public Administration), which no longer exists today. The basic function of this authority was to guarantee, independently of the Italian government, the optimization of the productivity of public work, and the efficiency and transparency of Italian public administrations.
4. L. 240/2010 ANVUR quality assessment in universities.

This, however, demonstrates that the objectives set and the actions implemented to achieve them have largely worked. The result was achieved due to the collaboration and involvement of the technical-administrative staff with the teaching staff. This has made it possible to obtain a significant competitive advantage given by the assembly of several people, who are nevertheless bearers of different knowledge, rationality, and experiences.

The most important actions that gave an immediate and tangible result include:

- Encouragement of the valorization of research results through dissemination workshops and seminars;
- Promotion of business culture through scheduled invitations to local and, sometimes, national entrepreneurs to hold seminars and spread their story among university classrooms;
- Strengthening and enhancing business support programs through training courses aimed primarily at entrepreneurs. A significant innovative experience to report and reproduce is undoubtedly the establishment of a dedicated research and training center aimed at entrepreneurs. In fact, the Department of Business and Legal Sciences has inaugurated the Training and Research Center for Small and Medium Enterprises, a sort of incubator within the department.

Conclusion

In the context of the economy and management of private companies, the perspective of "looking to the future" constitutes, without any shadow of doubt, one of the indispensable strength that allow the company to continue to live and thrive over time. This concept must also and above all be the perspective for public administrations.

Generally speaking, what is required today is an efficient and effective organization, even if this involves a necessary change of vision, primarily on the part of public administration operators, including those in the university

-
5. L. 98/13 ANVUR evaluation of the performance of administrative activities in universities.
 6. Legislative Decree 25 May 2017, no. 74, hereinafter Legislative Decree 74/2017, made changes to Legislative Decree 150/2009 regarding the optimization of public labor productivity and the efficiency and transparency of public administrations, implementing the provisions of article 17, paragraph 1, letter r), of Law 7 August 2015, no. 124 (so-called "Madia reform"). Legislative Decree 74/2017 provides, among other things, that "public administrations annually evaluate organizational and individual performance. To this end, they adopt and update annually, subject to the binding opinion of the independent evaluation body, the Performance Measurement and Evaluation System (SMVP).
 7. Worth mentioning is the implementing decree of Law 43/2005, or Ministerial Decree 216/2007, which defines the methods for drawing up three-year strategic plans.

sector, called to work with greater order and with the awareness that every organizational-management choice is related to the need to achieve pre-ordained objectives.

In truth, it was necessary to introduce Legislative Decree 150/2009 (Brunetta Decree). However, the subsequent modification was introduced by means of Decree no. 74/2017, implementing the Madia law no. 124/2015. After a long period, characterized by waste and inefficiencies, it was necessary to introduce a rule that required public administrations to measure their work, thereby allowing the user/student grasp the transparency of the processes managed by public administrations and universities in a more efficient reallocation of available resources.

From this perspective, based on the opinion of the author, the direction in which the "**DiScAG model**" and the University of Calabria are headed is considered positive. This is especially in terms of performance measurement with the introduction of participation for technical-administrative staff in the operational processes that take place within the department at all levels. The involvement of multiple individuals who do not work together results in diverse views, rationality, and experiences, and this constitutes a source of competitive advantage. Therefore, it is important to consider these 5 objectives:

- plan better;
- measure better;
- evaluate better;
- reward better;
- report better.

Evidently, a structure works better if it is based on good activity planning. Also, without everyone's cooperation and a valid reward system, things cannot effectively work. Therefore, this paper hopes to contribute actively and materially to the construction of a TM as the point of reference for DiScAG in the present and for the coming years.

Conflict of Interest: The author reported no conflict of interest.

Data Availability: All of the data are included in the content of the paper.

Funding Statement: The author did not obtain any funding for this research.

Declaration for Human Participants: This study has been approved by the Research Office and Third Mission - Department of Business and Law, University of Calabria, and the principles of the Helsinki Declaration were

followed. This research was carried out according to the guidelines of the ethical code of the University of Calabria.

References:

1. Agasisti, T., Catalano, G., Di Carlo, F., & Erbacci, A. (2015). *La contabilità per competenza nelle università italiane: una prospettiva tecnica*. Giornale internazionale di gestione del settore pubblico, 28 (6).
2. Agasisti, T. & Modugno, G. (2017). “Il bilancio degli Atenei: criteri di analisi e prime evidenze”. *Azienda Pubblica*, 30 (2).
3. Anessi Pessina, E. (2007). *Contabilità e Bilancio negli Enti Locali*. Cantù, Italia.
4. Anessi Pessina, E. (2008). *Accounting reforms: determinants of local governments' choices*.
5. Anselmi, L. (2014). *Modelli economico-patrimoniali per il bilancio e la contabilità di Stato*, Milano, Italia: Giuffrè.
6. Anselmi, L. (a cura di) (2006). *Modelli economico-patrimoniali per il bilancio e la contabilità di Stato* . Milano, Italia: Giuffrè.
7. ANVUR (2015). *Manuale di valutazione della Terza Missione*, 2015.
8. Baccini, A. (2010). *Valutare la ricerca scientifica: Uso e abuso degli indicatori bibliometrici*. Bologna, Italia: Il Mulino.
9. Banfi, A. & Viesti, G. (2020). *Il finanziamento delle università italiane*. Scuola Democratica, 2.
10. Bartlett, MS. (1937). *Properties of sufficiency and statistical test*. in Atti della Royal Society.
11. Biondi, L. (2013). *L'Università in cambiamento: Riflessioni in tema di contabilità e bilancio*. Torino, Italia: Giappichelli.
12. Carrà, L., Milazzo, N., Cima, S., Bianchi, M., & Mori, M. (2022). *Sostenibilità, diritti, innovazione sociale*. Unimi Connect - Universo Terza Missione.
13. Carrà, L., Milazzo, N., & Bianchi, M. (2023). *Nuovi modi di condividere il sapere*. Milano, Italia: University Press.
14. Chesbrough, H. (2003). *Open Innovation: The New Imperative for Creating and Profiting from Technology*, Harvard Business School Press.
15. Chesbrough, H. (2013). *Open. Modelli di business per l'innovazione*, Milano, Italia: EGEA.
16. Chesbrough, H. (2021). *Il futuro della Open Innovation. Creare valore dall'innovazione aperta nell'era della tecnologia esponenziale*. Luiss University Press.
17. Comite, U. e Rubino, FE (2020). *Il processo di aziendalizzazione nelle università: criticità e prospettive future* . Milano, Italia: Franco Angeli.

18. Deidda Gagliardo, E. & Paoloni, M. (2020). *Il performance management nelle università statali. stato dell'arte e nuove sfide*, Milano, Italia: Franco Angeli.
19. Frondizi, R. (2021). *La terza missione delle Università. Strategia, valutazione e performance*. Torino, Italia: Giappichelli.
20. Magali, F. (2023). *L'evoluzione degli assetti istituzionali delle università italiane: mission, governance e accountability*. Milano, Italia: Franco Angeli.
21. Mussari, R., D'Alessio, L., & Sosterò, U. (2015). Il nuovo sistema contabile delle università. *Azienda Pubblica*, 28 (3).
22. Mussari, R., & Sosterò, U. (2014). "Il processo di cambiamento del sistema contabile nelle università: Aspettative, difficoltà e contraddizioni". *Azienda Pubblica*, 2 .
23. Nardo, MT, Sangiorgi, D., & Siboni, B. (2017). "Un'indagine qualitativa dei piani della performance nelle Università Statali italiane: Quali prospettive per il futuro?" *Economiaaziendaleonline*, 8 (1).
24. Pallot, J. (1992). *Accrual Accounting and Efficiency of the Core Public Sector*.
25. Paulsson, G. (2006). *Accrual Accounting in the Public Sector: Experiences from the Central Government in Sweden*.
26. Puntillo, P. & Florio, MT. (2019). *Modelli economico-patrimoniali per la contabilità e il bilancio delle università*. Luigi Pellegrini Editore.
27. Raco, F. (2023). *Innovazione e trasferimento tecnologico: Traiettorie della rappresentazione per la Terza Missione*. Maggioli Editore.
28. Reale, E. & Pennisi, C. (2010). "Valutare nella crisi: Effetti sull'Università e la ricerca". Franco Angeli, *RIV Rassegna Italiana di Valutazione*, 48 (2010), 7-14.
29. Ricci, F. & Scafarto, V. (2023). *L'università tra capitale intellettuale e terza missione: Profili teorici, stato dell'arte e possibili direzioni di ricerca*. Torino, Italia: Giappichelli Editore.
30. Rubino, F., Puntillo, P., & Veltri, S. (2017). *Il ruolo dei manager universitari in un'ottica di performance integrata: Analisi di un caso studio*. Management Control Franco Angeli, N. 3.
31. Salvatore, C. & Del Gesso, C. (2017). "La sfida e il futuro della contabilità economico-patrimoniale nelle università statali: evidenze dall'esperienza italiana". *Azienda Pubblica*, 1, 73-91.
32. Trequattrini, R., Nappo, F., & Lardo, A. (2017). "L'introduzione della contabilità-economico patrimoniale nelle università tra adeguamento alle norme e nuovi paradigmi emergenti: il caso Uniclam". *Azienda Pubblica*, 1.
33. Trombetti, AL. & Stanchi, A. (2017). *L'università italiana e l'Europa*. Catanzaro, Italia: Rubettino Editore.