

# OBERLIN

COLLEGE & CONSERVATORY

## The Oberlin College Strategic Plan Steering Committee Summary of Meeting

Meeting date: October 9, 2014, 4:00-6:00 p.m.

In attendance: Co-Chairs D. Yu, M. Krislov

### Members:

B. Alegant  
D. Campana  
C. Canavan\*  
T. Cooper  
M. Coward  
S. Davis  
R. Dearon  
A. Derstine  
L. Edwards  
T. Elgren  
M. Frandsen

M. Gadsby  
B. Geitz  
A. Hargrave  
C. Howell  
J. Howsmon  
E. Inglis  
A. Kalyn  
M. Kamarck  
D. Kamitsuka  
R. Lemle  
C. Maddox-Dorsey

M. Makhmudov  
L. Manz  
C. McGuire  
M. Peters  
C. Spitulnik  
E. Tallman  
L. Wagner  
A. Wurtzel

\*participated  
remotely

### Coordinator:

K. Stuart  
J. Min

### Guests:

C. Christ  
R. Peacock  
F. Protzman

## 1. Introduction

Diane Yu opened the meeting with a brief introduction, thank you to members, and a few humorous images about strategic planning. Kathryn Stuart gave a review of the student listening sessions held in late September. Notes from these sessions were distributed and are on the website. The first faculty listening sessions were not well attended. Sessions for A&PS will be held in the next couple weeks.

## 2. Scenario Planning

Carol Christ introduced the scenario planning exercise, saying that none of us has the luxury of living in a self-made world. Each table addressed the implications for Oberlin of positive and negative scenarios focusing on globalization, changes in the delivery of higher education, the explosion of information technology, and changes in the financial landscape. All the scenarios shared the assumption that the U.S. in the near future will be a minority-majority country with rising inequality.

In reflecting on the impact of the various scenarios, groups considered how Oberlin could flourish during the positive scenarios and be resilient during difficult times. Discussions addressed Oberlin's mission and identity, how to capitalize on the strengths of the College and Conservatory, and in what areas improvement is needed. Whether addressing the student population, pedagogy and curriculum, administrative structure, or Oberlin's relationship to other schools, the discussions raised new questions about financial trends, priorities, and how

Oberlin can distinguish itself. What does Oberlin do well? What trends are unsustainable? How might things be done differently? What makes Oberlin unique?

### **3. Brief primer on finances**

Vice President for Finance Mike Frandsen presented a broad overview of Oberlin's finances, listing a breakdown of revenues and expenses. The key variables in this equation include enrollment/tuition, financial aid, room and board, salaries and benefits, debt service, endowment returns and spending, capital investment, and philanthropy. An increasingly competitive market, coupled with a decreasing pool of students able to pay full tuition, and increasing costs of services and salaries, puts pressure on the current model. This overview was brief due to time constraints. Further discussions on finances will be held in a future session.

### **4. Initial meeting of the working groups**

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to the charge and initial convening of the working groups. The committee was divided into three working groups:

- Education Futures: Cultivating a New Learning Environment;
- The Students of the Bicentennial: Who We Teach; and
- Resources and Sustainability: How We Support Our Mission.

The Working Groups will:

- Address questions and ideas relevant to each Working Group's theme.
- Consider literature about the current and expected future landscape of higher education and draw on the expertise of people who are not members of the Working Groups to inform discussions.
- Identify, discuss, and develop recommendations for action in each area of focus.
- Report regularly to the Steering Committee on progress with the goal of producing draft recommendations from each group to the Steering Committee by mid-May 2015 and then final recommendations by October 2015. Recommendations should emerge by consensus among membership in the Working Groups and should support the goal of the Steering Committee to provide advice to the Board of Trustees on the strategic direction that Oberlin should take for the future to make Oberlin one of the most distinguished institutions of higher education in the world.
- Recommendations from the Working Groups should include both those that can be implemented during the next three to five years as well as those that envision an Oberlin future over the next two decades.

Each working group met for close to an hour, and was tasked with developing a work plan for the next seven months, reading material already posted online, identifying additional resources needed, considering if additional faculty/staff/alumni/trustee consultants or members should be added to the group, and proposing goals to be accomplished by the next meeting date.

### **5. Conclusion**

Diane Yu closed the meeting by encouraging the working groups to meet twice by December so that much of the background work will have been accomplished by the end of this year. The meeting was adjourned at 6pm.