

## Frequently asked questions about the Strategic Planning process

February 10, 2016

Why did Oberlin College decide to do strategic planning?

Since Oberlin last completed a strategic planning process with the 2005 Strategic Plan, the landscape of higher education has changed dramatically, with renewed focus on questions of mission, value, and cost. Thus, Oberlin College's Board of Trustees decided it was both urgent and timely for Oberlin to consider its future now, in keeping with the typical practice of most colleges to embark upon a strategic planning process every five to ten years.

What were the goals for this strategic planning process?

The Board of Trustees charged an inclusive Strategic Planning Steering Committee, drawn from constituencies on campus and beyond, with the following: reviewing the current state of higher education and the trends that dominate today and will affect liberal arts colleges and conservatories in the next two decades; advising the Board on the strategic direction Oberlin should take for the future; and making recommendations that reflect a shared vision of Oberlin and specific recommendations for the next three to five years that are consistent with this vision.

Who was on the Strategic Planning Steering Committee? How did we seek to give voice to all our constituencies?

Co-chaired by Marvin Krislov, president, and Diane C. Yu, member of the Board of Trustees, it included 12 Trustees, 11 Faculty Members, 3 Members of the Senior Staff: the Deans of the Conservatory and the College of Arts and Sciences and the Vice President for Finance, 2 Members of the Administrative and Professional Staff, 3 Students (plus 6 additional students who joined the Steering Committee based on community feedback in March 2015, bringing the total number of students to 9), and 2 Alumni. Spanning the breadth of Oberlin's community, the Committee's members were charged with devising recommendations for the benefit of Oberlin as a whole. The Committee was staffed by the Vice President for Strategic Initiatives.

What were the opportunities for feedback from the community?

The Steering Committee took seriously its charge to create an open process where everyone could present their ideas and suggestions. Many opportunities were offered including four invitations (to all constituencies) to respond electronically to a prompt or document and over 40 in-person, on-campus meetings. The Committee was very pleased to have the feedback and incorporated many of the ideas into subsequent drafts.

Here is a brief timeline:

- April 2014: Draft Framework for the Strategic Visioning Process was posted on the Strategic Planning website with a request for responses.
- August 2014: Students, staff, and faculty were asked to respond to the following two questions: 1) What current or future challenge is most important for Oberlin? 2) In light of this challenge, what is the most important opportunity for us to explore? Over 60 responses received.
- October 2014: Listening sessions and presentations about the process began and continued monthly.
- May 2015: Preliminary Report posted with request for feedback. 164 responses received.
- May 2015: Listening sessions for students, faculty, and administrative and professional staff.
- October 2015: Draft Strategic Plan was posted with a request for responses. 110 online responses and additional emails received.
- November-December 2015: In addition to the online feedback, by early December, on-campus members of the steering committee offered in-person feedback sessions for 20 groups including faculty, administrative and professional staff, students, Alumni Leadership Council, numerous campus committees, and representatives from the Oberlin City Schools and government.

Where is the strategic planning process now?

The Oberlin College Strategic Plan 2016-2021: *Institutional transformation through an inclusive approach to academic and musical excellence* is posted on the Strategic Planning website [<http://new.oberlin.edu/strategic-plan/findings/index.dot>] and will be considered by the General Faculty on February 17 and, if necessary, on February 24. After it is approved by the General Faculty, it will go to the Board of Trustees for their consideration. When the Board has approved the Strategic Plan, the work of implementation will begin. As described below, task forces will be formed to work on specific portions of the Plan.

How will implementation take place?

Once the Strategic Plan is approved by the General Faculty and the Board of Trustees, it will be implemented by the administration, led by the president, in collaboration with the General Faculty Council (acting in its planning capacity), the Board, and Oberlin's faculty, staff, students, and alumni. Task force structure, mandates, and calendars will be determined by the administration working with those stakeholders, and will be finalized with the Board's approval by the end of the Spring 2016 semester. Implementation groups will be established through existing governance structures. In particular, the Board, advised by the administration, will set broad financial parameters for the president and senior staff's consideration. The Board will also determine a set of indicators or means of measuring the overall health of the College and Conservatory, and request an annual assessment of progress in achieving the Strategic Plan's objectives.