

Strategic Planning Steering Committee
Meeting July 1, 2015
Meeting summary

Present:

Diane Yu
Marvin Krislov
Kathryn Stuart
Carol Christ

Board Members

Chris Canavan
Meg Coward
Lillie Edwards
Michael Kamarck
Robert Lemle

Chesley Maddox-Dorsey

David Shapira

Alumni

Chuck Spitulnik

A&S Faculty

Bob Geitz

Chris Howell

David Kamitsuka

Maureen Peters

Conservatory Faculty

David Breitman

Lorraine Manz

Senior Staff

Tim Elgren

Andrea Kalyn

Mike Frandsen

A&PS

Deborah Campana

Andria Derstine

Students

Avalon McKee

Sarah Minion

Discussion about Mission Statement

- First and second sentences should be flipped to give it more force.
- Perhaps say distinguished faculty dedicated to teaching.
- Collaborative teacher-student relationship in the Arts and Sciences and Conservatory could be emphasized.

Mike Frandsen on financial context for strategic planning:

- Need to diversify revenue stream.
- More importantly, need real changes to cost structure (salaries, financial aid, facilities, student charges).
- Need to make decisions about the correct number of students and at what net price: perhaps decrease from 2961 to 2925 and perhaps reduce tuition increases from 3.9 to 2.9, but this may be optimistic.

Marvin Krislov on financial context for strategic planning:

- Would prefer more substantial reduction in tuition increase, perhaps 2%. Doing so would require shared sacrifices.
- Need to think about recommendations in terms of finance but also impact.

Responses to these comments:

- Endowment draw should be limited to a strict 5%. This year the payout was 5% for operations but with other items as well the total was slightly over 6%.
- This should be a goal even if we can't do it immediately; should be reflected in strategic plan.
- Concern that construction projects are taking funds that could be operating budget.
- As long as we have beds and accommodate students in classes, why consider taking fewer rather than more students?
 - If, at 2925, we're at our housing capacity, consider building more beds.
 - We would not want to the educational excellence at risk by increasing the number of students.

Discussion about Part A: Educational Excellence

- In terms of thinking about priorities, it is difficult to rank fiscal discipline v. vision as these interact with each other in important ways. Three important elements: 1) vision; 2) fiscal discipline; 3) governance (how we get there).
- Potential recommendations need to have costs developed; between now and next meeting (July 23), staff should produce estimates.
- Strategic directions 3 (Faculty and Staff Excellence), 4 (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion) not as fleshed out as 1 (Connected learning), 2 (Interdisciplinary innovation); perhaps consider white papers for more explanation; white papers should be written by members of the working groups who spent the most time thinking about the ideas.
- Should we identify the problem we're addressing with the strategic directions and recommendations? Strategic directions are intended to address specific question e.g., what will the career center do? Consider white papers as separate pop-up links.
 - The results of a strategic planning process are not always about solving problems, but may instead be about aspirations and opportunities.
 - A strategic vision is optimistic and forward-looking.
- How is plan specifically "Oberlin"? Need more about winter term and summer as times for educational opportunities.
- Technology is not adequately addressed in the document.
 - While experimenting with new technology is important, perhaps better to address specifics in implementation.
 - We want our graduates to have digital sophistication whether or not their career demands technology.
 - Two parts to technology challenge: 1) students need technological literacy to prosper; 2) the Oberlin educational experience needs to adopt technological innovations so we remain competitive.
 - Always consider what/how we use technology.
- Perhaps our nomenclature is the problem—make sure recommendations are action steps, not something else. Enhance and develop "directions."
- Consider removing Strategic direction 1, recommendation 4: "Promote high educational achievement through integrative culminating experiences for students" due to cost? Another voice proposed that the concept for this is not one-on-one, but students in groups.
- Move Part B, Strategic direction 5: Fiscal prudence, recommendation 4: Reach a level of faculty compensation at the median among the Sweet 16 to Strategic direction 3 (Faculty and Staff Excellence)
- Strategic direction 4: Equity, Diversity, Inclusion: concept of recruiting is missing.
- Strategic direction 1: Connected Learning; needs to have health/wellness back in.
- Diversity of political thought is missing. Our governance is self-perpetuating. In order to break unity of thought, we need to change our governance.
- Brief discussion about meaning of inclusion.

Discussion of Part B: Resources and Sustainability

- Strategic Direction 5: Fiscal Prudence: needs more written context.
- Strategic direction 5, recommendation 3: "Identify 10% of current expenditures that could be eliminated or reallocated to achieve institutional priorities (including

achievement of diversity and inclusion goals utilizing need-based financial aid) and funding strategic initiatives.” Much discussion about potential threats to academic program. Consider reframing and do not cite as a strategic direction. Prioritizing can be a goal. We may need reallocation and perhaps some elimination. White paper could help to explain in the context of advancing our missions.

- We can modify the language in these recommendations but the finances will still be the same. Need to look at expenditures strategically.
- Regarding reducing rate of increase in tuition, we should understand if this (reducing to 2%) is sustainable.
- Document should be more general and less specific to help gain support for it and to provide flexibility for administration.
- Strategic Directions 6 (Environmental leadership) and 8 (Community partnerships) need to reflect more thought/substance.

Calendar for completing the strategic planning process for March Board meeting

- Corrections to several dates: March 2016 Board meeting: March 3 (Thursday)-March 4 (Friday); June Board meeting plenary: June 3 (Friday).
- The reason for March completion (rather than December) is to allow adequate time to vet the final document, especially with faculty.

Concluding comments:

- New draft will be circulated a week before the next meeting on July 23.
- Consensus that the new organization of two main parts is acceptable.