

Strategic Planning Steering Committee
Meeting November 6, 2015, 4:30-6:30 p.m., Mudd basement CIT

Meeting summary

Present:

Marvin Krislov
Diane Yu
Kathryn Stuart
Brian Doan

Board Members

Tom Cooper
Meg Coward
Motoko Deane
Lillie Edwards
Michael Kamarck
Chesley Maddox-Dorsey
Leanne Wagner

A&S Faculty

Ron Cheung
Bob Geitz
Erik Inglis
Maureen Peters
Conservatory Faculty
David Breitman
James Howsmon
Lorraine Manz
Senior Staff
Tim Elgren
Mike Frandsen
Andrea Kalyn

A&PS

Andria Derstine
David Kamitsuka
Students
Jasmine Anderson
Hayden Arp
Guests
Joyce Babyak
Debra Chermonte
Ben Jones
Ross Peacock
Ferd Protzman
Meredith Raimondo

Introduction

Marvin welcomed everyone, thanked members for their work, and asked for approval of the meeting summary from October 8, 2015. Approval granted.

Diane reviewed the agenda for the day. She thanked Mike Frandsen and Tom Cooper for their work on the financial review and thanked everyone for their work on the draft, and for focusing on the larger themes and goals that it is meant to explore. She asked the Committee to think about the draft in three ways:

- 1) What does it get right?
- 2) What's still missing?
- 3) What's here, but needs more detail, better explanations, more context, etc.?

Discussion of Draft Strategic Plan Directions in reverse order: 3, 2, 1; significant points included:

Direction 3: Resources and Sustainability:

- Request for more frankness, even if we express it in general terms, about difficult financial decisions. Recommendations do not convey this adequately.
- Concerns: should there be a comparison between Oberlin and peer schools on student diversity, Pell grants, etc.? Showing such information would offer the kind specificity students are seeking, would show Oberlin's aspirational goals, and illustrate possible difficult decisions that will need to be made.
- Recommendation 6 addresses increased diversity, so that part of 13 could be removed, leaving the portion that proposes slowing the rate of tuition increases.

Direction 2: Strengthen Oberlin's educational community:

- Consider renaming the section to emphasize fostering educational engagement; agreement on this change.
- Was "engagement" and "community" operationalized as a term in the document? Need a sense of how engagement builds; how it relates to mission and what steps are needed to achieve it?

- Strengthen recommendation about structural barriers and consider which other recommendations squarely address these.
- If stewardship is to have a broad meaning in the document, reconsider the language we're using to describe it and its placement in the document.

Direction 1: Foster excellence throughout our students' educational experience, within and beyond the classroom

- Discussion of equity and inclusion in Direction 1 needs to be more explicit; could be read as not helpful enough for students from marginalized communities but rather about helping privileged students get experience from these communities; consider how Direction 1 would look to a student who has to work 20 hours a week compared with a student who doesn't work at all.
- Course clusters: clarify that development of these are for faculty interested in this kind of collaboration; agreement to remove "under discussion."
- Consider more development of the global/study abroad section and clarify support for our international students.
- Concern about the draft language being too self-congratulatory; but we should keep in mind that it is both an external and internal document.

Reponses to draft strategic plan:

Review of the status breakdown (students, faculty, alums, staff) of responses and topics mentioned frequently:

The total number of responses (as of 11.06.15) is 110. The breakdown is as follows:

- Alumni: 91
- Faculty: 6
- Students: 11
- Staff: 2

Frequently mentioned topics:

Direction 1

- Oberlin 4+4
- Course Clusters

Direction 2

- Recruit students and faculty from diverse backgrounds
- Hire and retain outstanding faculty and staff
- Strive for greater diversity of political backgrounds

Direction 3

- Slow the rate of tuition increases
- Make Oberlin College financial sustainable
- Grow endowment
- Use campus year round

Financial framework:

- Discussion about financial framework led by Mike Frandsen. Always looking for ways to be more efficient and reduce costs. Under consideration: benefits e.g., health care; careful consideration of replacements when people depart; voluntary separation programs; revenue enhancements. Board will look at areas such as enrollment, endowment payout, i.e., guidance on major parameters; this will give us a better sense of cost structure.
- Other considerations: rate of tuition increases not sustainable; number of Pell-eligible students; changes will not happen immediately.
- Request to share comparative data?
- Next steps:
 - Discussion at General Faculty meeting November 11; should give a sense of how people are responding to draft plan.
 - Incorporating edits from this meeting and from feedback sessions.
 - Recirculating the draft to steering committee and then to Board.
 - Discussion about adding “placeholder” meetings in February in addition to the scheduled GF meeting February 17. Responses to the idea of additional meeting at the end of the first semester not positive.

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.