

Strategic Planning Steering Committee
Meeting December 3, 2015
Meeting summary

Present:

Diane Yu
Marvin Krislov
Kathryn Stuart
Brian Doan

Board Members

Chris Canavan
Tom Cooper
Meg Coward
Motoko Deane
Lillie Edwards
Robert Lemle
Chesley Maddox-Dorsey
David Shapira
Leanne Wagner
Alan Wurtzel

Alumni

Andrea Hargrave

A&S Faculty

Ron Cheung
Bob Geitz
Chris Howell
Eric Inglis
Maureen Peters
Sandy Zagarell

Conservatory Faculty

David Breitman
Lorraine Manz

Senior Staff

Tim Elgren
Mike Frandsen
Andrea Kalyn

A&PS

Deborah Campana
Andria Derstine

Students

Jasmine Anderson
Hayden Arp
Sophie Davis
Machmud Makhmudov
Avalon McKee
Sarah Minion
Umazi Mvurya

Guests

Joyce Babyak
Debra Chermonte
Ben Jones
Ross Peacock
Ferd Protzman
Meredith Raimondo

Introduction by Diane Yu and Marvin Krislov

- Welcome and thanks to the Steering Committee for hosting numerous feedback sessions about the draft strategic plan.
- We had hoped for a new draft strategic plan for this meeting. However, in light of events of recent weeks involving issues of race and diversity at colleges and universities across the country and at Oberlin, we decided that we need to be sure the strategic plan addresses our aspirations and commitments to inclusive excellence more directly and clearly before moving forward with a new draft.
- Congratulations to Arts and Sciences Dean and faculty for work on (and approving) learning outcomes (aspirational goals). Conservatory will also contribute to this document that will then go the General Faculty for approval.

Approval of November 6, 2015 Meeting Summary

Diane called for approval of the previous meeting summary. There was a “sense of the room” approval.

Themes of feedback sessions about the Draft Strategic Plan of October 26, 2015

- fair amount of frustration over lack of specificity, even though we have been clear about the difference between a strategic plan and implementation.
- a sense, especially from students, but some others as well, that our language about what is important at Oberlin e.g., a diverse student, faculty, and staff, is empty without stated goals.
- many calls for greater racial/ethnic diversity among students, faculty and staff, and a larger number of low-income students of color.
- requests for definitions, e.g., community, diversity.

- equity, diversity, and inclusion needs fuller integration into document.
- add importance of international students and their need for greater support.
- clarify commitment to supporting all students from admission to graduation and beyond so each may succeed at Oberlin to their fullest potential.
- calls for more information about the College's relationship with the community.
- more substantial explanations of stewardship and governance.
- call for greater frankness about decisions i.e., trade-offs we'll have to make.
- requests for renewed commitments to environmental sustainability.

Equity/Diversity/Inclusion Discussion

Marvin noted that this is THE big topic in higher education today, spurring unprecedented media coverage.

- COHFE presidents discussed this at length in a meeting yesterday; institutions need to think about how to respond in urgent and responsible way.
 - Black and Latino/a students at colleges and universities across the country have been leading protests against racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination on their campuses and in our society.
 - They are speaking out about the pain, the fear, and the injustices they are experiencing in their daily lives.
- Colleges and universities have been responding in a variety of ways.
- Some are creating new senior positions—Chief Diversity Officer or Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.
- Some schools are pledging to:
 - increase the number of Black and Latino/Latina students on their campuses.
 - give low-income students more financial support.
 - increase the number of Black and Latino/Latina faculty.
 - make race, ethnicity and social justice issues more central to the university or college's curriculum, teaching, and scholarship.
- Example: Brown University promised to spend \$100 million over the next 10 years to do all the things just mentioned.
 - Many institutions—Oberlin included—do not have the financial resources to emulate Brown.
- While our resources are not equal to Brown's, we are already doing a lot AND can do more.
- We are fortunate that many senior staff, faculty, and staff colleagues—as well as our students—have expertise in the area of inclusive excellence and a commitment to it.
- This is a good moment to hear about some of the excellent work-in-progress.
- Meredith Raimondo, Tim Elgren, and Andrea Kalyn will offer comments and lead discussion about the current concerns on our campus.

Meredith Raimondo comments:

- Issues of diversity that are challenging higher education—Title IX, ADA, Black Lives Matter—are a reflection of the ways higher education has already been transformed by work on diversity and inclusion, including changes in compositional diversity of the student population in the past 50 years.

- Diversification of higher education creates a critical mass to take on underlying problems of institutions—moment of change is reflective of moments of success.
- There are also larger historical and consistent undercurrents to all these issues.
- An effective draft strategy requires not responding to each individual point raised about an approach to diversity, but listening to feedback and synthesizing into an overall vision.
- Strategic plan should guide future planning around principles, not offer specific tactical strategies.
- Creating consensus—a position that we as community can embrace and support—means embracing some points, challenging others.
- Link diversity to excellence and inclusion—all three need to work together.
- Oberlin’s core investment in diversity is around issues of social justice.
- Diversity is central to core mission of academic excellence.
- Inclusive excellence moves away from focus on student deficits, and toward instructional and institutional structures and practices that meet students where they are, to moves them to success on uneven playing field.
- How can document most effectively relate principles of inclusive excellence, and reflect Oberlin principles:
 - Structure and organization of the College
 - Composition of and climate for faculty and staff
 - Composition of and climate for students
 - Capacity for participating in and providing inclusive experiences
- Central achievements of institution can only be reached by reflecting equity, diversity and inclusion.

Tim Elgren comments:

- Inclusive excellence is central to how Oberlin thinks of itself. This concept needs to permeate document in a different way.
- What comes from this conversation should be an investment to explore, build a model, implement a plan around diversity and inclusion.
- Tenure-track hires in the last five years have been 35 percent faculty of color. In 2014-15, seven of 12 faculty hires were faculty of color (58 percent).

Andrea Kalyn comments:

- Need to be clear about commitment to addressing challenges—diversity as mode (or process) rather than a checklist.
- There are specific things Oberlin has worked on in last three years—lines, support structures and programming, areas we want to increase going forward—we can articulate deep values in the strategic plan.

Discussion about diversity, equity and inclusion in the draft plan.

- Making equity/diversity/inclusion the point of departure from which everything else flows is something we can do in way no other institution can.
- *Diversity* is a term that describes a range of differences; sometimes those differences are invested with differential social power in very complex ways.

- *Equity* as distinct from equality—about access to success, and that not everybody brings the same resources to College because of social inequality and different styles of learning.
- Assumptions currently built into system don't acknowledge those differences—money, time, class scheduling, etc.
- *Inclusion*—peoples' experience of being valued. Students—especially students of color—don't always feel their experiences are valued here—are asked to provide different 'explanations' of selves which results in invisible labor for students.
- Resentment is created due to the gap between the legacy of including black students, and the legacy of how those students were actually treated while they were here.
- “Small” things have huge impact e.g., for students of color to see faculty of color.
- Oberlin's legacy puts us ahead of the American curve, but respecting that legacy needs to acknowledge this moment (2015) in racial history, and how we can help to shape it as a powerful message.
- Compared with our peer schools, Oberlin's percentage of full-pay students, 15-16 percent is low. We're already living the vision/mission that people are trying to articulate, but doing so without a big endowment.
- Three strands:
 - Who's here? What are their backgrounds and struggles, etc.?
 - What kind of education do students get given these differences?
 - How to deal with creating an environment in which people with different backgrounds can come together and learn from one another? Not necessarily agreement, but respect?
- If you want educational excellence and engaged community, then you must create an educational and personal environment of diversity, inclusion, and justice. Would add sustainability, too: academic, students as whole people, rest of the world, finances, environment—all connected.
- Labor and class also important. Low-income, white, working-class, first-generation students lack a support network, and do not feel part of the campus community, either in classes we teach or in the social activism prevalent on campus. Income inequality rising among that group.
- A lot of students ask who diversity really benefits—feels it benefits upper-middle-class white kids more than anyone—make language clear about intentionality about who it benefits.
- We're making a deep, fundamental statement when we have large percentage of students who are not full pay. Strong foundation for equity, especially among peer groups.
- Clarify what “full pay” means—yes, educating broader section of middle and low-middle section of students, but it does reflect use of leveraging model in financial aid. Other piece is that we are different from other selective liberal arts colleges in that we have the Conservatory, and merit aid is needed to attract world-class musicians. So, a lot is hidden in comparative statistics.

Mike Frandsen on Finances

- This diversity conversation captures Oberlin’s DNA—but we ultimately have to make decisions on how we get there within budget constraints and within the strategic planning process.
- Plan sets broad course of aspirations for Oberlin, Board sets financial constraints, then it is incumbent upon us as community to say how we can achieve aspirations and cost structures within these constraints—number of students, tuition revenue, endowment payout.
- Process to be led by President and senior staff, but with whole community contributing. Need framework of plan to inform conversation.
- Need to make big and hard decisions. But that is an implementation issue that plan will help us frame.

Discussion about finances

- Financial sustainability and equity/diversity/inclusion are linked. It only works if we can afford to continue to do it.
- Low faculty response reflects “unreality” of plan to faculty. New draft should reflect that we are developing a strategic plan in an environment of reduced financial resources. Current plan undersells that.
- Look critically at governance structures and access. Having more student input throughout the process builds trust in the long run.
- Think again about selective forgetting; what can we stop doing?
- Role of steering committee is to set vision at high level.

Revised schedule

- In December/early January—gather best thinking—get materials to outside writer—combination of email exchanges, zoom, phone meetings with smaller groups (of committee and board groups)—to make minor adjustments.
- Proposed meeting schedule should still allow the final strategic plan to go to Board in March. Feel free to send any materials, new ideas to Kathryn.

Diane thanked everyone for contributions today, and the meeting adjourned at 6:30.