

Strategic Planning Working Group Chairs Meeting

August 25, 2014

10:30-Noon

In attendance: Sean Goodlett, Meg Hoey, Christine Shane, Elizabeth (Beth) Walsh, Kisha G. Tracy, Randall Grometstein, Michael T. Greenwood, and Jane Fiske.

I. Review Mission, Vision, and Core Value

- Jane spoke gave a handout(attached) for the group to have a visual reference of how each sub-groups' plan(s) revolve around the Fitchburg State's mission, vision, and core values. Are there overlaps with what each group is discussing and Jane reminded the Chairs to focus on priorities in preparation for their 45 minute presentations on September 2nd. Jane reported that at the EPC meeting the members (which include trustees) agree that the mission, vision, and core values are broad enough that we *can* fit in to what we have (match this). Priorities across the sub-groups appear to be technology, a center-stone which hits on everything.
- Michael noted that the Admissions and Marketing group focuses on core values a lot. They are often asking if we are in line with universities' core values.
- Meg mentioned "brand" and how it pertains to all groups. How do we sell ourselves and are there themes which are consistent (example being community engagement appearing in several places).
- Kisha spoke of the importance of knowing what the future student is going to be and how we will meet these needs.
- Christine brought up career and work and the need to get students ready for employment. Are we serving our minority population as well as veteran population (these are big hurdles)? She also spoke of a more diverse workforce of faculty and staff. Do we look like the people we want to recruit? Chris sees this overlapping with academic values, student services, and marketing.
- Sean made note of the increase in Hispanic enrollment over the years. Hundreds have come and we can expect doubling. Sean showed the group a graph of increased (Hispanic) student enrollments. Christine asked about veteran data, but Sean didn't have that data.
- Jane spoke of veteran services and how at a recent conference she attended she learned that veterans have support services in the community. While they enjoy having a connection to the university, they don't want to be treated different. Beth mentioned how she has heard feedback from veterans who have had some issues coordinating financial aid (and logistical issues with financial aid).
- Michael asked about our web site and if it's in Spanish (as well as English). It is not.
- Christine noted that feedback from many students has been our web site is "boring" and

geared towards old people. Beth has also heard feedback about the web and how folks have a hard time finding things.

- Michael said that minority outreach is the right thing to do.

II. Identity overlap which may help us identify priorities

- Jane brought up the following questions for the Chairs to consider

-What do we value?

-Who are we?

Then, once we have these answers we need to plan for academically, provide services (technology impacts everywhere), tie in community service, pay for and market it.

- Sean brought up accessibility and how it relates to our core values. Diversity and how it can make or break us, and reiterated what Christine said regarding diversity and the university being reflective of our community we live in. Meg spoke of accessibility as well and how we may want to look at alternative delivery, flexibility, and offer other means to get a degree. Kisha said there are so many ways we can go with this if there is faculty who want to teach online. Sean said it's been hard to fill the online classes we currently offer as it is (this is has been our experience with history undergraduate classes). Jane noted that all the books she's been reading for strategic planning have emphasized technology moving forward.

- Randall shared with the group information she read about an 80/20 split in where students will attend (80% of students to attend vocational universities and 20% to true LA&S universities). Randall believes our students want face-to-face teaching.

- Christine mentioned the possibility of streamlining the curriculum with fewer based choices.

- Sean noted the importance of flexibility. Many students excel with face-to-face learning and there are limits to online education.

- Christine – regarding flexibility; she brought up the possible need for weekend business as well as having families involved in orientation (for the non-traditional students).

- Michael said to give our customers what they want. Randall then mentioned how a college student is not like other customers. They often are not sure what they want. Online learning is a huge financial risk for them. Mike adjunct teaches at Nichols where they have hybrid classes (half online and half in person). We have courses of this nature currently as well. Meg noted how faculty would need to buy into teaching online (“blended” and distance learning) classes. We'd have to make it convenient for them and provide the right resources. Randall noted there is no way to verify that the actual student signed up is the person who submitted the work (with regards to online classes).

- Sean brought up affordability and how our costs are competitive with private colleges in the area such as Anna Maria and Assumption. Randall noted that those schools experiencing troubles and are discounting their costs. She also noted that we are having no trouble filling dorms, but are short on commuters. Christine said our population is about 50/50

(residents/commuters). Many of our students want “the college experience.” Michael made a point of saying “some” students (want the college experience) and how we need to be flexible with who we are. Randall read “Checklist for Change” where they speak of the current market being fairly traditional in (students) wanting the LA&S education. Randall asked if we can deliver what we do no more efficiently. Christine said many of their department’s majors already have their career choice in mind. Michael spoke to the Business degree and how having it without a LA&S core is an “empty suit.” Christine then went on to say how it would be nice if we can hone students to be career oriented. Jane noted how this can tie into the community, and Beth agreed (tying in local businesses for internships, placement sites, etc.). Beth sees how internship supervisors are impressed with Fitchburg State’s students and their ability to think and use fresh ideas. This goes back to the Liberal Arts core. Jane agreed that employers are looking for critical thinking and problem solvers.

- Sean noted that there is a trend in students graduating quicker (less than six years). There’s been a shift due to students needing/wanting jobs. Jane noted how the competency-based learning excels their path also.

- Sean brought up the idea of growth and how adding majors such as Game Design and Chemistry will help with revenue. Our costs are increasing at a rate better than inflation. Jane noted the “anatomy of tuition” and how college will always be expensive (the face-to-face experience).

- Randall on “Checklist for Change” and how higher education is an analogy to healthcare in that everyone’s costs are rising. There is a falling rate of 18 year old, and again no one institution can be all to all people. 40% of students don’t complete their degree in four years. Sean noted that retention is essential. Kisha mentioned the retention specialists some departments have (advisors identified).

- Sean said some programs are declining and/or shrinking. Jane said Game Design is the first new (undergraduate) major in the past ten years. Meg expects roughly 10-20 Chemistry graduates/year (in four years 80/100 students).

- Sean emphasized goals such as: creating new majors, doing better at what we do and retaining (will result in extra revenue). Meg mentioned enrich majors and thinking beyond the course schedule. Christine said it’s hard for some majors since there is no room for internships, etc. Jane shared an example of a course offering in languages for professions (example “Spanish for Nurses”). On the subject of languages, Kisha said it’s hard to require when our sister institutions do not. Randall also noted that graduate schools are no longer requiring the BA. Jane let the group know of software Steve (CIO) bought that offers a distance learning experience (specifically for languages and nursing courses at this time).

- Christine noted the importance of conducting cost/benefit analysis (regards to new programs), keeping our identity, as well as increasing diversity in our workforce (faculty and staff).

- Jane posed the question of what makes Fitchburg State unique. Randall noted that in North Central MA, Fitchburg State has enormous standing in the community. We need to consider where our students are coming from. Meg noted that majors such as

Communications Media and Nursing have enrollment caps. Randall made note of the fact that students are switching majors nationwide. Randall mentioned enrolling students and then figuring out where they want to be within their discipline. Christine mentioned the freshman cohort experience. Kisha noted how she gets transfer issues across her desk. Michael wondered about fair share with regards to community college transfers. Jane said we get MWCC's students where Worcester State gets QCC's transfers. Randall brought up international students as well.

- Jane had some final points to make:

- The seven Chairs are leaders in a position to guide their groups and university. She wants to know how she can help. Are these meetings helpful? Sean sees a direction in which the university offers new programs (program growth), increased retention (even by 5%), and doing better at what we offer, loop in market branding. Christine said how this also fits with student services, but emphasized the importance of diversity (faculty and staff). Michael reiterated that we have to have this (diversity). Randall also reiterated what Christine had spoken of with the importance of program development and cost/benefit analysis. Tuesday, September 2nd for Development Day each Chair will be asked to provide updates on their groups' summer work (I believe a 45 minute presentation for each Chair).

II. Share summer readings – this was a theme which came up often during the meeting.

Minutes by Karen Valeri