

Strategic Priorities Planning Committee Meeting Minutes

Friday, February 12, 2021

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Zoom Video Conference

Attending: Melinda Lowe, Kimberly Dorsey, Tammie McCoy, Kendall Dunkelberg, Kelly Bennett, Hillary Richardson, Mea Ashley, Nicole Patrick, Iika McCarter, Amanda Dahl, Brooke Carter, David Brooking, Scott Tollison, Jess Harpole, Chad Murphy, Lyndsay Cumberland, Andrew Garner, Margaret Hayward, Melissa Buxton, Glen Halbert, Mark Ellard, Vic Jones, Shawn Dickey, President Nora Miller.

Melinda Lowe called the meeting to order. Kimberly Dorsey welcomed and thanked everyone for their willingness to serve on the committee. The purpose today is to get data regarding the university that will help drive us forward in setting up priorities, goals and objectives for the next five years.

President Miller indicated that priorities do not change much over the years and most strategic plans are broad enough to fit any university. However, we need to see where our strengths are. Any plan will have to be flexible, as we have seen this past year. The only area that was not addressed in our current plan that we need to pay special attention to is diversity, equity and inclusion. We had outside consultants come in for the last plan and had several meetings with community and alumni. However, we will be unable to do that this year, but it will help us to be able to move quicker. We would like to have the goals outlined by April 1. The appropriations bills should be passed by that time and the PIE council will recommend our budget planning priorities to fit these goals.

Dr Scott Tollison

Academic Affairs - We have been working on professional development for faculty and staff. We have looked at different initiatives like software platform, such as an extension to Canvas, so this could be pushed out to the community and to campus. We have had two leadership academies and looked at ways to expand instructional technology, which has been very successful. We have been able to push faculty specific solutions.

Sponsored Programs - We streamlined processes to make them less cumbersome and that needs to continue. The micro grant program has been maintained and extended. We continue to look at ways to build faculty and staff that are representative of our campus and the communities we serve; looking at how we craft job descriptions, and how we promote them. The library and the diversity, equity and inclusion committee have worked on a number of programs as well. We should probably look at our curriculum in how courses are promoted, particularly general electives. This might come from academic affairs or strategic planning.

Growth and Access – We completed a strategic enrollment plan and are continuing to implement as much as we can considering Covid. Hopefully, as things open up, we will be able to start growing the number of partnerships that we build and having faculty going to the community colleges. We need to expand our existing markets, such as MGCCC. This

multiprogram partnership takes a community college transfer all the way through a four year degree and sometimes to a master's degree. We have a community college navigator now through a grant. We have a single rate tuition, so students do not pay out of state tuition. We have some targeted discount tuition programs and we can possibly expand these program. We have courses that can be built and put together into new packaged specialty areas, and we can find new markets and students without putting resources at risk to build new courses. In addition, the need to explore additional markets, such as Alabama, is important.

Degree Completion - We have a favorable transfer policy, students can transfer 90 hours. Students can share hours between majors and minors, which is helpful to high school students. We need to continue looking at policies to ensure quality. Our Title III program allows us to tackle issues of student retention; advising, academic and technology perspective as well as counseling perspective. We have some 4+1 opportunities so students can get into their graduate coursework during their graduating semester, and this is critical to retain students for a graduate pathway.

High Impact Practices – undergraduate research is going well, we will have our third undergraduate research conference this spring, including students not just in the honors college. We need to look for interdisciplinary minors, taking existing courses and repackaging in a new way. We have a digital studies minor, which includes courses from different areas, which should be very popular; as well as nonprofit management and nonprofit advocacy have minors, and should be very appealing to a number of students. We need to continue to leverage our liberal arts mission. Academic council passed a motion to pursue membership in COPLAC. We could be the 31st member of this organization. This allows us to build bridges to universities with similar missions as well as having undergraduate regional conferences that our students can attend, as well as summer institutes. This also gives us branding and marketing opportunities as well.

Carla Lowery – Carla Lowery created and presented a PowerPoint presentation regarding university data (which is attached) The numbers presented were based on this past fall.

Dr. David Brooking - Our freshman population retention rate has averaged about 74% over the past 10 years, international students were taken out of that number. Students that are coming in full Pell are about 3% below that of the average freshman class, they make up about 42% of our freshman population. We usually have about 200 or less freshman each year. With students coming in with 18 or below composite on ACT, they retain at about 7% below the class average and make up 28% of our freshman class. The IHL loosened the admission standards and we had 10 or 11 students who had an ACT below normal or no ACT at all. This has been extended to the class this fall. We may not be using ACT for admission in the future, indicating the freshmen may be coming in less academically prepared. This may cause our retention rate to go down as well.

Buddy Foster – The main focus right now is to look at processes and culture and improve on some of the things we are doing. The policy and mission statement of the athletic department was read. This past semester, the GPA overall was 3.18 for athletes. The student athletes have performed at a slightly higher rate than the general population. 12 of the 15 teams had a team

GPA of 3.0 or higher. We want that trend to continue. We have plans in place with the Oasis program which monitors first year students at the W, this monitors them with grade checks and making sure they are adjusting to our classroom life. It allows us to identify any students who are struggling and get them the assistance they need to become more successful. Our rosters stand at 196 student athletes. We should have 27 graduating seniors this year. Our projected incoming class stands at 79 right now, we are hoping to get to a goal of 100. That would put our roster sizes at 221, which is an increase. If we can sustain between 80 to 100 athletes yearly, that should put us over a four year time period 320 student athletes. We did go through the process to petition for membership the St. Louis Intercollegiate Athletic Association this past fall. We were informed we narrowly missed the vote for membership. However, they have reached out to us to continue the process. The commissioner of that league really wants us to be a member, but with some of the struggles the smaller universities were having, they want to table bringing other schools in at this time. He has asked us to go before their president's council, and give an update and he believes we will gain membership into that conference. This will be a huge benefit to our student athletes. We would be on the schedule for them in the fall 2022, which is the first year we would be eligible for NCAA championships. This would be a large draw for enrollment of student athletes. We need to continue to assess the growth of our facilities; four of our teams are playing on different facilities throughout town. There is a plan to get baseball on campus, but we need to increase our facility footprint on campus. We have talked about adding more sports, as well as continuing to find ways to better service our athletes and maintain retention. We are getting closer to having the pool open, and have started the process of hiring lifeguards. We are hoping to add more programming back to the campus, which is a boost to campus as well as the community.

Melinda said there would be more presenters on board next week. Carla Lowery will talk about technology priorities. Mark Ellard will talk about appropriations, funding formulas, budgets, and the master plan. Melinda will provide an update on regional stewardship. The budget process will start across campus probably the first week of April. Since the budget is tied to the priorities of campus, so we will have to expedite the process of developing a new strategic priorities plan. We will meet 9 to 11 every Friday morning until March 26. A Canvas shell has been created and we will upload documents here. Our current plan evolved around advancement excellence, regional stewardship, 21st century university and degree completion. We need to make diversity, equity and inclusion more prevalent in our priorities. Kimberly encouraged everyone to check notifications for the Canvas course and check there periodically. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.