

**Minutes**  
**November 5, 2014**

Present: D. Beaman, C. Burke, R. Couch, P. Cuper (Co-Chair), P. Francis, T. Garland, W. Holden, J. Lagace, D. Paley, E. Proshansky, P. Stevenson, P. Striffolino (Co-Chair), L. Ware, M. Welsh, L. Wiley, K. Williams

**1. President's Charge**

President Anne Huot distributed the formal charge to the Council, and thanked everyone for their willingness to serve. She stated that it was critical that we have a strategic plan and that we are able to invest resources into its implementation. Noting that we are in the most competitive space of the higher education landscape (i.e., liberal arts, traditional, highly residential), the president referred to the challenges we are bound to face, and said that the strategic plan must address these challenges. She urged members to focus on Keene State's commitment to student success, with respect to both academic and personal development, and to providing a transformative educational experience to its students.

President Huot added that the plan must be long-term in its vision, ultimately asking what it means to be a liberal arts college for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In that regard, the plan should take the college out 15 years, with a focus on concrete goals, objectives and action plans for the next five years. Still, strategic plans are always living documents, and inevitably the plan created by the Council will change to some extent over time.

Addressing Council member responsibilities, President Huot said that members will serve as the primary ambassadors for the plan and as a conduit to the stakeholders they represent. Without significant engagement by all stakeholder groups, the plan will be difficult to implement. It is also important that the process take place in the spirit of civil discourse, resembling a dialog as opposed to a debate. While total consensus is unlikely, it will be possible and important to have a plan that is supported by a solid majority of stakeholders. Equally important is a process that is transparent, so she encouraged the Council to communicate frequently and clearly with the campus and external constituents – nothing should be a secret.

The president concluded by noting that an external consultant, Keeling and Associates, has been hired to help facilitate the strategic planning process. According to President Huot, the consultant's primary role is to do much of the data collection and analysis needed to support the Council, but that it is important to remember that this firm works for the College, and that its representatives should be expected and able to accommodate our needs and the direction we decide to take in the process.

In response to questions, President Huot said that the life of the Council is somewhat open, and that it is a part of the group's charge to recommend what happens at the end of the Spring 2015 semester in terms of monitoring plan implementation and providing ongoing oversight. She also agreed that the timeline was aggressive, but that it could be met. Conducting the process well, however, is more important than meeting a designated deadline.

## **2. Introduction of Council Members**

Council members introduced themselves, identifying their position and motivation for joining the group. Chief of Staff Patty Francis explained that she was not a member of the Council, but that she would be providing administrative support to the group throughout the process and that members should feel free at any time to offer suggestions as to how to make their work easier.

## **3. Leadership Styles**

Council Co-Chairs Pru Cuper and Paul Strifolino briefly described the leadership styles they will bring to the strategic planning process. Pru described herself as collaborative and a listener, reiterating President Huot's emphasis on civil discourse. Paul said how important it is that everyone on the Council has the opportunity to participate fully in the Council's deliberations, and that part of his and Pru's role is to help assure that happens. He added that Pru and he will try to stay a little ahead of the group in order to anticipate what might be needed and how we might operate as efficiently and in as timely a manner as possible.

## **4. Membership Expectations**

Above and beyond the responsibilities included in the formal charge provided by President Huot, Pru and Paul emphasized the importance of members' making the Council's work a priority, especially from a scheduling perspective. They also encouraged the group to be full participants, serve as a bridge to the community, and be an advocate for the process generally. Paul stated it might be necessary to form sub-committees to take on specific tasks, and he asked members to be willing to step up if that is the case.

## **5. Time Frame**

For the fall semester, the Council will hold its regular meetings on Wednesday from 2:00 – 3:30 in Room 309 of the Student Center. Specific agenda items for the next two meetings are as follows:

- November 12 – Keeling and Associates will be calling in as part of a conference call to discuss its role working with the Council

- November 19 – Cathy Turrentine, Director of Institutional Research and Assessment, will lead a discussion on how to most effectively use data in support of strategic planning
- December 3 – Keeling and Associates will be on campus and will attend the meeting

There will also be a day-long retreat on Friday, December 5 in the Mountain View room. More details about the beginning and ending times and the agenda will be provided in the near future.

## **6. Consultant**

Pru and Paul discussed the process of selecting Keeling and Associates to serve as facilitators for the strategic planning process. Key factors included their deep and strong experience shepherding this process at similar institutions. Further, this firm has sufficient staff to commit to Keene State so as to help assure we can meet the timeline that has been established.

## **7. Methods of Communication**

Kathleen Williams demonstrated the use of Basecamp, which is the project management system Council members will use to communicate among themselves and upload key documents and information throughout the process. Questions or problems with this system should be directed to Kathleen. She also said that she and her staff were developing a website dedicated to strategic planning, and that members should send input to her about what should be included on that site.

## **8. Mission Statement**

Council members briefly reviewed the College Mission Statement, from which the strategic plan's vision statement and values will be derived. Pru and Paul reported that President Huot indicated it will not be necessary for the Council to revisit or modify the Mission Statement. They also encouraged members to study the statement for the next meeting and think about how it might be useful in guiding the strategic planning process. Pru also said that the Cronin article she uploaded on Basecamp might be helpful in this regard.

## **9. Other Business**

Prior to closing the meeting Paul and Pru asked Council members if there was anything they would like to say or concerns they wanted to raise. There were concerns voiced about the open-endedness of the process and the timeline for doing this work. Others talked about their

previous experience with strategic planning at Keene State and other institutions, expressing different views about its meaningfulness. Paul and Pru acknowledged these concerns, stating that participation in this process will allow us to have a voice, and that we should take advantage of that. In addition, frequent and clear communication about Council activities to stakeholders will help assure the Council's own accountability.

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