

Minutes
December 3, 2014

Present: D. Beaman, C. Burke, R. Couch, P. Cuper (Co-Chair), W. Holden, R. Kostick, J. Lagace, D. Paley, E. Proshansky, P. Stevenson, P. Strifolino (Co-Chair), L. Ware, L. Wiley, K. Williams

Guests: Kyle Hutchison, Rich Keeling, Dottie Morris, Brock Thompson

1. Diversity Presentation/Discussion

Dottie Morris, the College's Chief Officer of Diversity and Multiculturalism, led a discussion on diversity and the importance of conducting the strategic planning process through a diversity lens. Important reasons for doing so include making sure the process is inclusive and that it benefits from multiple perspectives. Dottie pointed out that, while exciting, the inclusion of multiple perspectives can bring challenges and even conflict, which isn't necessarily a bad thing. She encouraged SPC members to take good practices that she models during the meeting and apply them throughout the strategic planning process, saying it's critical that the campus community and beyond understand the purpose and potential outcomes of strategic planning.

Dottie provided a formal definition for "diversification," which is the intentional incorporation of multiple perspectives into institutional processes. She contrasted this approach with "rankism," which advantages some individuals by giving them more of a voice by virtue of their status and position.

Dottie then discussed a number of good practices that will enhance the process and the likelihood of achieving positive outcomes. A very important factor is establishing and maintaining a climate of safety and respect, so that people will feel free to participate honestly, but she emphasized that this isn't the same thing as "comfortable." She then asked the group what their understanding of what will result from the planning process, and she received two responses: 1) a strategic plan to guide the College; and 2) an implementation plan.

Other good practices include the notion of "co-creating" a plan and being intentional in assuring that multiple voices are heard. She referred to Martin Luther King's vision for the Beloved Community, and encouraged the group to emulate this vision, endeavoring to build community with civility at the foundation. And, a shared purpose, rooted in the college mission, can help bring that about.

Dottie acknowledged the difficulty of the work that lies ahead for the SPC, pointing in particular to the fact that there are so many competing priorities in an institution such as

Keene State, especially at this point in time. Still, it is essential that the group create a plan in which all members of the campus community and beyond can see themselves – if that doesn't happen, the ultimate success of the plan will be jeopardized.

Opening the floor up to comments and concerns, Dottie addressed several issues that emerged, including the abstractness of the College Mission Statement, which can make it difficult for all individuals to see their place in it. There was also a reference to historical silo problems at the College, which hamper communication and collaboration toward common objectives.

The group then participated in an “I Am...” exercise, which was intended to help SPC members get better acquainted. During debriefing, individuals agreed that the activity demonstrated that everyone has a story, and that Keene State is part of that story, as are larger contextual factors (i.e., historical, social, economic, political). The exercise also reinforced the fact that everyone is multidimensional, although we tend to see and perceive people according to the position they hold. As Dottie concluded, no one is more/less important and everyone has value and something to contribute.

A final discussion point focused on specific actions SPC members can take in order to help maximize participation in the planning process. These include: arranging the physical environment for meetings that is comfortable for participants; varying meeting times and days to increase availability of attendees; addressing differences in communication style and coping with differences in conflict style; providing constant outreach; anticipate potential complications; and understanding the impact of power within higher education, which can determine who gets heard and listened to.

2. Keeling and Associates Report Out

SPC Co-Chairs Paul Striffolino and Pru Cuper invited Rich Keeling to provide a brief update on how the planning consultants' visit was going and to speak about next steps. Rich responded that their 3-day visit was going very well, and that they had already received a great deal of candid and value input from members of the campus community. He also commended the College for its emphasis on a participatory, engaged strategic planning process and stressed how important it is for people to feel included in it.

With respect to the topic of next steps, Rich told the group that the Keeling team was already prepping for the rest of the process, and that it would be important at the December 5 retreat to begin to determine what is on the table for strategic planning at Keene State College (i.e., what themes will emerge). He advised the group to focus on goals that stakeholders can buy into as opposed to not focus on “fixing things” but rather on goals in the first stages of strategic analysis. He also expressed some concern about the pending intersession and its

potential impact on the momentum of the planning process, but said that we were making good progress and should be able to meet our stated timeline.