

Minutes
February 24, 2015

Present: P. Cuper (Co-Chair), T. Garland, R. Kostick, J. Lagace, D. Paley, P. Stevenson, P. Striffolino (Co-Chair), L. Ware, M. Welsh, L. Wiley, K. Williams

Guests: D. Cannon, J. Donnelly, W. Erlandson, K. Hutchison, R. Keeling, B. Thompson

Keeling & Associates Report Out

Rich Keeling provided an overview of the team visit to campus, which began February 23 and was scheduled through February 25. He recounted all the meetings that had taken place to that point, with groups including the President's Cabinet, PAT staff, the Student Learning Outcomes sub-committee, Finance and Planning directors, KSCEA, adjunct faculty, student organizations, KEA, the Parents' Association, and UNICCO/Sodexo. Rich also acknowledged the presence of Dick Cannon and Jennifer Donnelly, both of whom are engaged in activities intended to inform the strategic planning process. Their ability to meet with Keeling and Associates during this visit should help assure that these various efforts are coordinated and integrated.

According to Rich, scheduled meetings had proceeded smoothly, and information obtained was starting to converge, with few totally new ideas emerging. Rich added that this "saturation point" was normal for this stage of the process, and in fact desirable since it validates the strategic themes identified to this point. Other impressions Rich emphasized included the fact that an evolving view is that we need a cohesive vision for the residential liberal arts institution we aspire to be; that we have to refocus intentionally and sharply on our core mission; that we need to attract students who will succeed here; and that diversity must play a strong role in whatever plan we develop.

In detailing the team's meetings with students, Rich and other team members talked about feedback received from two multicultural organizations, noting that these students' experiences at Keene had not been positive for the most part. In fact, when asked whether group members would recommend Keene to prospective students of color, the response was overwhelmingly negative. Still, these students were able to enumerate a number of concrete steps the College could take to improve the climate for students of color, which could be a start. Rich stated that, if we really want to be the kind of institution we describe ourselves as, we must take on these challenges related to diversity and inclusion.

Rich then discussed next steps, announcing that the campus-wide survey will be launched next week, with data collection to continue up until spring break. Keeling & Associates will collect, analyze, and compile all survey data and comments for use by SPC. He then announced that the campus-wide retreat will take place all day Wednesday, March 25 and the morning of Thursday, March 26, at the College Camp. Retreat participants will include the SPC and the President's Cabinet and perhaps a few other invitees. Activities for the retreat will include a review of strategic themes, consideration of the survey data and comments, a discussion of the vision statement, and movement from planning goals to more specific objectives. Following the retreat,

Rich expects President Huot to announce the formation of an implementation team that will have responsibility for developing action plans for the goals and objectives.

There was some discussion about how we make the transition from strategic goals to objectives, and Rich suggested that a starting point might be the listing of activities that have been identified to this point under the general goal statements. He reminded the group that it will not be possible to do everything, especially in the first five years, and that an important component of what we do at the retreat will be to prioritize objectives. There was also discussion about the long-term monitoring of the strategic plan, and Rich described a number of possible models, saying that it would be appropriate for SPC to make recommendations to President Huot regarding this issue.

Pru then asked Rich what his advice would be with respect to immediate next steps by the SPC, to make sure we're ready for the retreat. Rich responded that the group should make a decision about whether it wants to go forward with three or four themes, since there seems to be the sense that there are too many disparate activities and objectives included in the third theme. He also suggested that SPC could use its time prior to the retreat reviewing the themes closely and developing preliminary priorities, which could then be more finely honed at the retreat working with the Cabinet.

SPC Next Steps

At Pru's request, the group agreed that we should go back to having four themes, and Kyle offered to divide the third theme (Community, Renewal and Sustainability) into two distinct themes (Institutional Renewal and Sustainability; Campus Culture and Community). In terms of moving forward, the group agreed that we would spend the next two meetings prior to Spring Break focusing on four themes, two on 3/3 and the other two on 3/10. Our focus will be refining the themes, adapting them as necessary, and prioritizing them.