

Muhlenberg College Strategic Planning Process
President's Planning Group Meeting
Tuesday, October 27, 2009 • 5:00 p.m.
Seegers Union 111

Meeting Summary

In Attendance

Ms. Cynthia Amaya, Dr. Bruce Anderson, Mr. Adam Bernstein, Rev. Peter Bredlau, Mr. Michael Bruckner, Mr. Ken Butler, Mr. Kent Dyer, Ms. Laura Eldon, Mr. Amze Emmons, Dr. Kathleen Harring (guest), Dr. Randy Helm, Ms. Karen Green, Mr. Chris Hooker-Haring, Ms. Connie Harris, Dr. Trevor Knox, Ms. Christine Lake, Dr. Elizabeth McCain, Dr. Lisa Perfetti, Dr. John Ramsay, Mr. Roberto Rivera, Dr. Stefanie Sinno, Mr. Jordan Sones

1. Environmental Scan – Internal

The President asked Mr. Chris Hooker-Haring to give the Group a quick review of his external scan from the previous meeting, then asked Dr. Kathleen Harring to her analysis of the results of several surveys that students complete for the College on a continuing basis, including the National Survey of Student Engagement, the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania's First Year Student Survey, and the Cooperative Institution Research Programs' College Senior Survey. Dr. Harring reported that our NSSE scores are significantly higher than the average for all NSSE institutions, ratings for our peer group show similar scores across the schools; however, patterns emerge that help us to understand areas of strength and weakness. The NSSE uses five benchmarks: Academic Challenge, Active and Collaborative Learning, Student Faculty Interaction, Enriching Educational Experiences, and Supportive Campus Environment. Dr. Harring discussed our scores in each area and took questions from the Group. Similar discussions followed with results from the AICUP and CSS surveys.

Dr. Trevor Knox briefly reported on the research from the question he'd asked about similarly resourced institutions which may outperform us. He stated that schools like us don't have the academic reputation and corresponding graduation rates we do, so on those factors alone, we seem to be unique.

The President asked for reaction to all the information the Group had learned, so far. After a long discussion, it seemed that there is the most energy around development and strengthening of culminating experiences for our students: capstone experiences; graduate school and job placement; deeper, richer advising experiences, including career path advising; a mentoring system, perhaps utilizing alumni and friends of the College, and perhaps coordinated through the Senior Year Experience program.

2. Budget Model

Mr. Kent Dyer led the Group through a detailed analysis of the College's budget model, including the assumptions that drive the Model. This model was developed during the original Strategic Planning Process and has been in constant use ever since. It is also continuously revisited, revised and refined, as the assumptions on which we base the Budget Model are in many cases quickly outmoded by external factors. The President said that an important distinction to draw is that we do not manage to our assumptions – we use the assumptions as a base to compare to reality. A short discussion followed.

3. "The Big Uglies"

Mr. Dyer led a discussion on "The Big Uglies" – those projects which, though not necessarily strategic in nature, are nevertheless large investments of College funds which cannot be avoided indefinitely. Other listings include projects that were considered in the first Strategic Plan but not yet implemented, and other projects that are desirable but not urgent in nature. Discussion followed.