

Muhlenberg College Strategic Planning Process
President's Planning Group Meeting
Monday, November 16, 2009 • 5:00 p.m.
Seegers Union 111

In Attendance

Ms. Cynthia Amaya '01, Dr. Bruce Anderson, Mr. Adam Bernstein '12, Rev. Peter Bredlau, Mr. Michael Bruckner, Mr. Ken Butler, Mr. Kent Dyer, Ms. Laura Eldon '11, Mr. Amze Emmons, Dr. Randy Helm, Ms. Karen Green, Dr. Kathleen Harring (guest), Mr. Chris Hooker-Haring '72, 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 '10, Dr. Carol Shiner Wilson (guest)

1. Review of S.W.O.T. Analysis

President Helm noted that the Group has received the S.W.O.T. analysis and hopes that the Group will refer to the analysis as the process continues. Ms. Connie Harris noted that it was interesting to her, as someone who is relatively new to the College, to compare the 2009 S.W.O.T. analysis with the 2003 analysis.

The President said that we need to start thinking about how we reach out to the community and engage them in dialogue about the process. We need to ask the community for their ideas, but we need to give them guidance about how their submissions will be evaluated. Some of that guidance will be explained in the Strategic Planning Principles. Another source of guidance will be the Strategic Planning Goals, which we have not yet developed. The first step will be to put out the revised planning documents, plus an interim report to the community that outlines our progress. He would like to appoint a subcommittee to write this progress summary for the community. He asked Dr. John Ramsay, Dr. Trevor Knox, Ms. Cindy Amaya, and Mr. Lauren Eldon to develop a draft summary for his review.

2. The Academic Program

Provost John Ramsay said he is responsible for the content of the next three PPG meeting. Tonight's focus will be on student learning and outcomes; the December 7 meeting will focus on the faculty; and the January 26 meeting will focus on the Academic Resource Center.

Dr. Ramsay directed the Group's attention to information adapted by Associate Dean for Institutional Assessment Kathleen Harring from the U.S. News and World Report's 2010 College Edition. A group of institutions similar to Muhlenberg were grouped according to average National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) scores for seniors. Discussion followed. The President asked Dr. Harring to develop similar information, using the College's NSSE scores for its freshmen.

Dr. Ramsay then asked the Group to review Academic Life's S.W.O.T. analysis. He does not feel there are any surprises on the list.

Dr. Ramsay asked Dr. Bruce Anderson and Dr. Elizabeth McCain for their presentation. Dr. Anderson pointed out that student research provides a rich educational experience that combines collaborative learning with academic rigor. Dr. McCain said that, as a result of the last Strategic Planning Process, we have increased the number of student research projects that can take place each year. A final piece of their presentation was the possibility of a faculty member serving as an administrative overseer of all student research. It was suggested that a staff member might be more effective in the position, due to the time demands placed on such a position.

Dr. Carol Shiner Wilson, Dean of the College for Academic Life, spoke about second possible initiative: strengthening the advising partnership beyond the first year. Though the College receives high praise for its advising of first year students, Dr. Wilson thinks we can be more intentional in our upper class advising. An initiative in this area could involve the coordination of all the areas where advising takes place: academic, prestigious awards, research, and Career Center.

Dr. Stefanie Sinno added that one of the strengths of this proposal is student empowerment in both advising and in the creation of a web-based portfolio of their work which can be shared on and off campus. Questions were asked about digital storage of student portfolios beyond commencement, and if students can take their material with them when they leave. Dr. Lisa Perfetti asked if a group of first-year students should be included in the Steering Committee for the pilot program. Dr. Kathleen Harring and Provost Ramsay responded.

Dr. Perfetti then gave a presentation on a proposal for a Center for Community Studies. Dr. Perfetti listed several examples of existing organizations that could combine their efforts, including the Polling Institute, LVAIC, Office of Community Service and Civic Engagement; currently, there is no structure where all these efforts can come together. This Center could serve as a liaison between the College and community.

Dr. Sinno spoke about a final initiative, Intergroup Dialogue, which would utilize faculty and staff to train students to become leaders for engaging other students in discussions about controversial issues between social groups.

Dr. Ramsay said in closing that we are still searching for the big all-inclusive concept that will crown the senior year experience.

The President said that other possible academic initiatives might include an emphasis on cross-divisional majors, the senior year capstone experience, adopting MILE houses as living learning communities of scholars, an option of a three-year degree program for qualified and motivated students, the development of an arts management major, and examples of blended learning.