

**PRESIDENT'S PLANNING GROUP**  
**Tuesday, September 18, 2007**  
**5:00 p.m. • Hoffman House**

**In Attendance**

|                               |                      |                    |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Dr. Bruce Anderson            | Mr. Michael Bruckner | Mr. Ken Butler     |
| Dr. Don Dale                  | Ms. Karen Dearborn   | Mr. Kent Dyer      |
| Dr. Giacomo Gambino           | Ms. Audrey Fernald   | Dr. Lawrence Hass  |
| Dr. Marjorie Hass             | Dr. Randy Helm       | Mr. Adam Hirsh '09 |
| Mr. Christopher Hooker-Haring | Ms. Heather Mill '10 | Mr. Tilghman Moyer |
| Ms. Allison Schnall '08       | Ms. Lauren Shanahan  | Mr. Joseph Spirko  |

The President welcomed Ms. Audrey Fernald, who was elected by her peers to represent Staff Associates on the PPG. He also welcomed back Mr. Joseph Spirko, who served on the PPG in 2003-2004 but was unable to attend the first meeting on September 4.

**1. Continuation of Planning Documents Discussion**

- a. The group discussed additional comments received from community members since the last meeting (see below for final collation).
  
- b. Completion of Planning Principles discussion  
President Helm asked for comments on the third Strategic Planning Principle, which contains the sentence, "That is, we do not intend to launch new schools, or graduate degree programs, or reinvent the College as a technology-based distance-learning institution, etc." The possibility of graduate programs was briefly discussed but considered inappropriate for Muhlenberg at this time. After more discussion, it was decided not to make any changes to the principle.

In a discussion of the fourth Strategic Planning Principle, it was decided to change "...and will seek to improve the advantages of this location through cooperative relations with the community." to "... relations with this diverse community." The President then asked the group to consider the language in one of the Fundamental Institutional Values, "We acknowledge our obligation to be good neighbors and good citizens, and to improve the lives of those inside and outside our community who have less access to education and political power, fewer privileges and resources, and who bear the burden of discrimination." A member of the community had commented that the language seemed unsuitable and asked if we could reconsider it. After discussion, the President asked Ken Butler to draft a new version of the sentence for review at the next meeting.

**2. Review of Benchmark Group**

The President noted that, during our original planning process, we developed a list of twelve institutions with whom we compete for prospective students (see below). Chris Hooker-Haring said that Villanova was almost included in the original planning process, but was excluded because the differences in the institutional profile. Since 2003, Villanova has continued to rise in our overlaps and now consistently ranks in our top twelve overlap schools. Primary growth in our applicant pool has been students from New Jersey and New York and, as our overlap with Wheaton has been Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, and Connecticut, that group has not been growing for us the way New Jersey and New York have, so Wheaton is drifting downward in our overlaps. A long discussion of how and why we win students who apply at very different kinds of schools followed.

**3. Performance Against Budget Model, 2004-2007**

The President reminded the group that all information shared at this meeting should be considered confidential. Kent Dyer spoke at length about the College's performance against the budget model utilized in the Strategic Plan, noting variations in performance and changes administration made to the budget model during the last three years. In response to a question of how the budget is developed each year, Mr. Dyer explained the workings of the Budget Advisory Committee. More discussion followed.

**4. Changes to Budget Model, 2007-forward**

Mr. Dyer distributed the revised budget model and guided the Committee through the Assumptions. Discussion followed.

**5. Fundraising Review**

Deferred to our next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ken Butler

## Collation of Responses from the Muhlenberg Community Concerning Strategic Planning Documents

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### General Comments

- This all looks good to me! Thanks for sharing it with us.
- In your own words, “I think they are still fine.” I see nothing wrong with the Mission Statement, Fundamental Institutional Values, and the Strategic Planning Goals.
- In regards to the strategic plan, the values, and goals, everything seems to be looking toward a brighter Muhlenberg. There is one thing I'd like you to consider, I'm not sure if its a large enough issue to be of strategic goal status, but I think its worth me saying. I sometimes feel the school remains torn between academia and social interactions. I walk by students and sometimes am disheartened to pick up bits of a conversation on the topic of something seemingly mindless. On the days I pass students in Seeger's having a debate on the views of a good book, I think to myself, “That is college”: a casual social interaction about intellectual entities. Granted that on occasion everyone must enjoy their free time and escape the often tiring rigors of thinking, I still feel there is not enough integration. I sometimes return from class excited to talk about what I learned, but sometimes no one will listen. And to be blunt, I think that is sad. One can learn a lot just from listening to someone talk about a movie or painting they saw in a “Film and Art of the 60's” class. I know I certainly did. My friend told me all about Andy Warhol, a topic I never thought would engage me. To put it simply, I just feel there could be more intellectual overflow out of the classroom into the social atmosphere. I think that's important. Other than that, the plan sounds strong to me!
- I like it. It's pretty much all the stuff that made me want to go to school here in the first place. I unfortunately haven't met many people genuinely concerned with and interested in their intellectual lives: a disappointingly large amount seem to be going to class because they must in order get their credits so they can keep playing football. Hmm. But I hope and expect, as I ascend to greater academic heights, that their ranks shall quickly thin.
- They all still sound good.
- I think the three documents you mentioned are fine.
- This all sounds fine to me!
- I received your email pertaining to the Strategic Plan. I am not sure if I was meant to receive the email, but I did have just one comment. Overall, the message was very positive, but in the last goal, “strengthening the financial position of Muhlenberg” was mentioned. After some thought, I realize that that particular goal is in fact wonderful as it will provide for more financial aid, but superficially, I felt the message to portray Muhlenberg as more of a business. Just a thought.

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### **General Comments (cont'd)**

- Everything looks good to me!
- I have reviewed the Basic Planning documents and feel comfortable with our assumptions but would like to ask that we again affirm some of the foundation for our economic thoughts, since recent turmoil of the stock market, mortgages, interest rates, etc. have caused many to rethink their plans. Questions to review might be, should our plans change regarding: level of giving, order and affordability of capital projects, and tuition pricing
- I thought that the goals seemed reasonable, but will we get an email with how you plan to carry out these goals? I think it would be interesting to read!
- These fundamental planning documents sound great to me. It is a little difficult to reflect given that we freshmen have been here only a few days. But, so far, I feel like I am being challenged and growing intellectually and academically as a result. Thank you for the email; I hope to see you about campus!
- I read all three of the attached documents.
- I am very pleased with the mission and values, largely what has already been in place.
- I am very glad for the strategic planning goals.
- In particular, I am very glad to see the list begin and end with investment in the faculty and endowment building. These, I think are the most important of the many valuable goals stated.
- I was glad to see the goal of further promotion of international education (no.4 of plan) and I am wondering what you have in mind for that.
- In regards to The Mission Statement, The Fundamental Institutional Values, and The Strategic Planning Goals, believe that overall they are good goals and are definitely what the college should be striving to be and accomplish.
- This is the first time I have actually read through all of the documents outlining Muhlenberg's goals. I am very surprised to see how much progress has been made and it is very encouraging to see that many of the goals that were outlined in years past have been put into action. The plans sound great to me. They truly embody the character and community Muhlenberg has been established upon.

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### General Comments (cont'd)

- I'm just writing to say these items "still ring true."
- I agree that these three statements are still adequate and up to date.
- They look fine.
- I've gone to all the links, read them, and still concur.
- They look terrific and I thank you for redirecting us to them once again.
- They look fine.
- I strongly endorse the vision for the college, including the rejection of ambitions like becoming a university with graduate departments and such.
- Thank you for providing us the opportunity to offer our thoughts about the documents outlining key principles related to the Strategic Plan. Our Fundamental Institutional Values document in particular resonates with me; I really like how the ideas are articulated in these statements and feel proud to work at an institution that holds these values. I also noted with interest the idea of better integrating the extra- and co-curricular experiences with curricular ones (as outlined in Planning Goal #2): I will look forward to Dean Green sharing her views and plans with the faculty as she suggested at the first Faculty Meeting.
- Over the three years covered by the report a number of new courses and majors were initiated, including; public health, film studies, dance and finance. I don't think I've ever heard a discussion on how the subjects are selected and what criteria is used. Is there a grand plan or some other way you decide where to allocate our resources? I reviewed Muhlenberg's Mission Statement, Fundamental Institutional Values and Strategic Planning Goals and believe we are living up to these standards. I note, though, that no where can I find any reference to cost or expense control and it seems to me that some where we should support this concept.
- I have reviewed the strategic plan and the August 2007 update. Much has been accomplished, with more to follow! Although I know from previous discussions that Wescoe is inherent in all of the goals, I still wonder if there is some way to specifically mention the value of non-traditional students and their contributions to the life of The College. For example, Wescoe does contribute to the diversity of the campus in many ways and certainly enhances the lifelong learning of many adults. Just a thought.

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### General Comments (cont'd)

- Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I think all three of the documents still look great, with two exceptions.
  1. I wonder if "diversity" could be characterized as more than representation on campus and being "knowledgeable about the achievements and traditions of diverse civilizations and cultures." I think, as a college community, we are slowly moving to a more sophisticated perspective on diversity which has as its centerpiece a person's understanding of his or her own social identity and contribution to a diverse social world. We all need to question our own identity in order to understand and contribute to conversations about diversity. And, we all also need to understand that social identity or diversity issues typically play a role in most conversations whether acknowledged or not.
  2. I wonder if it would be possible to include a more direct statement about enhancing the computing/technology resources at the college. I understand that OIT has been working exceptionally hard, and the improvements are fantastic (e.g, on-line registration, GroupWise). However, from my perspective, it all feels a bit like we are patching holes in the boat. I hoped to see a direct statement in our strategic plan which presented a more overarching/organized focus on computing resources. In particular, I think staffing is a major concern.

For example, I think Muhlenberg is in dire need of one or two "educational technologists" (my invented title for this position). These people would be dedicated to finding, testing, installing, maintaining and writing computer programs directly related to the research and pedagogical needs of the college. (For example, individual faculty members' web needs – such as online research studies, or small computer programs for use during research studies – are not supported by OIT.) In our department, we have called repeatedly upon a generous but very busy Clif Kussmaul for help filling this function.

Second, I think OIT needs to find true "academic computing" professionals who have unique training and knowledge about the needs of an \*academic\* community. It seems to me that we have excellent technology/computing knowledge within OIT, but I have seen some holes in an understanding of academic computing (e.g., not supporting individual faculty, communication in general between OIT and faculty, miscommunication or disagreement about security measures).

Last, I am not privy to the inner workings of OIT, but as an outsider there seems to be a need for more staff in general. To me, this need is revealed by (my impression of) OIT's understandable lack of enthusiasm for change. With sufficient staffing, an IT department would ideally be able to take on new projects and do everything possible to meet the needs of the academic community. Rather than seeming to be an impediment to progress, an ideal IT department would be part of the vigorous intellectual life and growth of the college (in addition to basic tasks of maintenance and repair of existing systems).

I would guess that the faculty members of CCIT would have detailed information concerning the faculty's perspective on these issues. Thank you for letting me put my 2 cents in.

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### Comments on Mission Statement

- Muhlenberg College aims to develop independent critical thinkers who are intellectually agile, characterized by a zest for reasoned and civil debate, knowledgeable about the achievements and traditions of diverse civilizations and cultures, **appreciative of the arts and literature, versed in the character and contributions of science**, able to express ideas with clarity and grace, committed to life-long learning, equipped **[engaged]** with ethical and civic values, and prepared for lives of leadership and service. The College is committed to providing an intellectually rigorous undergraduate education within the context of a supportive, diverse residential community. We are also committed to educating the whole person through experiences within and beyond the classroom. Our curriculum integrates the traditional liberal arts with selected pre-professional studies. Our faculty are passionate about teaching, value close relationships with students, and are committed to the pedagogical and intellectual importance of research. Honoring its historical heritage from the Lutheran Church and its continuing connection with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Muhlenberg welcomes and celebrates a variety of faith traditions on campus and encourages **[welcomes]** members of the College community to value **[perhaps, 'celebrate' here and 'values' in its place above?]** spiritual life.

*My thoughts:*

*1) APC has discovered that our Mission Statement says nothing about scientific literacy, aesthetic appreciation, or the study of literature. Nonetheless, the great majority of faculty believe these are important goals'*

*2) I'm not sure we can 'equip' any person with values.*

*3) I, personally, do not care to be 'encouraged' to value spiritual life. I'm already somewhat annoyed at being constantly asked to keep people in my prayers.*

- I appreciate you have given the campus community an opportunity to review these documents as you prepare to look at the College's Strategic Plan. There is an area of the mission statement that still concerns me. This is something I brought up at a Manager's meeting when the mission statement was first drafted. It is the sentence that starts with 'Our faculty.' I agree with the part about the faculty is passionate about their teaching and are committed to the pedagogical and intellectual importance of research. What I think is an oversight is the section about value close relationships with students. I still feel that it excludes or doesn't acknowledge the other members of the campus community who value positive relationships with our students. I know it's unlikely that this will change but I thought since you were giving me the chance to speak up, I would.

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### Comment on Mission Statement (cont'd)

- Most of the Strategic plan seems fine to me. My only other comment is that the Mission Statement seems too long. Often times I have seen Mission Statements that are one to two sentences in length. Maybe the sentence, “We are also committed to educating the whole person.....” could be deleted. Also, maybe combining two sentences into one. “The College is committed to providing an intellectually rigorous undergraduate education through our curriculum which integrates the traditional liberal arts with selected pre-professional studies within the context of a supportive, diverse residential community.”
- Just a short note to reiterate my commitment to the College Mission Statement, Institutional Values and the Planning Goals. I request that consideration be given to amending the Mission statement to include "and staff" to the statement: "Our faculty are passionate about teaching, value close relationships with students, and are committed to the pedagogical and intellectual importance of research." I believe that there are many individuals across divisional lines that feel excluded when the term "faculty" is used to encompass all of us as educators. I think that we stand to gain a greater level of commitment (as opposed to merely compliance) to the mission and the pride individuals take in their roles on campus.

### Comments on Fundamental Institutional Values

- I would like to add, within the Fundamental Institutional Values section "Commitment to the Life of the Community -- On Campus and Beyond" a point that acknowledges our membership (choose a better word) in and respect for the global community of all living things, an awareness of our impact on the environment, and a commitment to lessen that impact through academic study and positive action. My personal interests aside, I think this reflects a commitment already in place at Muhlenberg and is timely given the increased global focus on the environment.
- We acknowledge the value and power of spiritual life, as well as our individual limitations in achieving absolute understanding of truth. Accordingly, we respect and show active interest in and concern for both our own and other faith traditions, **and we respect the views of those who do not identify with any faith.**
- We demonstrate **mutual** respect for differing ideas, perspectives, experiences, and personal identities. *(what does this term add to meaning?)*

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### Comments on Fundamental Institutional Values (cont'd)

- I find the fundamental institutional values helpful especially as the Student Affairs/Dean of Students group explores our role as educators on campus and developing learning outcomes for our programs. I think the goals are still on track for moving Muhlenberg forward. Thank you again for the time to review these materials. I appreciate all the time you and the planning group put into this process.
- I had a chance to read over the documents you sent and I have a small piece of input regarding the final point of the Fundamental Institutional Values document under “Commitment to the Life of the Community - On Campus and Beyond.”

The point states: We acknowledge our obligation to be good neighbors and good citizens, and to improve the lives of those inside and outside our community who have less access to education and political power, fewer privileges and resources, and who bear the burden of discrimination.

I think the addition of the word "privileges" is unnecessary and reinforces the notion of noblesse oblige. I appreciate the use of access and resources as those seem to be the very essence of inequality in our society; but want to avoid reinforcing the power imbalances already evident in our community. Perhaps instead of saying "bear the burden of discrimination" something like "face inequality" would better address being a good citizen while placing responsibility in the hands of those with unearned privilege.

### Comments on Strategic Planning Goals

- Just a thought in rereading the Strategic Plan page ... I'm wondering if the ULTIMATE GOAL, might be renamed VISION? It seems to me in talking about the future and where we see ourselves, that statement is, in fact, a VISION STATEMENT. Perhaps no more than semantics but it is what came to my mind when I read it.

Further develop Muhlenberg's distinctive identity as a caring community focused on the development of character, individual potential, and engaged citizenship. *You must know how much the faculty hate the 'caring community' language. Can't we find a way to make the point without this language?*

## **Benchmark Institutions – List**

Bucknell University

Dickinson College

Drew University

Franklin and Marshall College

Gettysburg College

Ithaca College

Lafayette College

Lehigh University

Skidmore College

Susquehanna University

Ursinus College

Villanova University\*

Wheaton College

\*Not included in the original 2003-2004 Benchmarking