

Minutes
Faculty of Arts and Sciences
Special Meeting on Strategic Planning
Thursday, February 19, 2008
3:30 p.m.
Millington 150

Dean Carl Strikwerda called the meeting to order at 3:35 pm.

Discussion of the Draft Strategic Planning Grand Challenges

Dean Strikwerda began with opening remarks explaining the origins of the draft Grand Challenges that had been posted prior to the meeting. This draft was created by the university-wide Strategic Planning Steering Committee and has been distributed to the various units of the college and to sub-committees of the Steering Committee that are to focus on individual challenges. Units have to report back with comments and suggestions for changes to the Challenges by around March 1.

The proposed template of strategies and goals is biased toward things that have costs that can be estimated in dollars; initiatives that are without direct costs, such as curriculum reform, are not being ignored. The dean considers everything in the draft challenges subject to comment, change and deletion. We must be realistic in terms of funding, and consider how we can pay for new initiatives, but we are moving toward a new development campaign so our list of needs should to some extent be aspirational rather than limited to what is immediately achievable in the current economic climate.

The dean highlighted certain issues that he felt were important in strategic planning discussions:

- reviewing and revising the curriculum, including re-thinking GERs
- how to support an increased interdisciplinary focus
- how do these plans lead to new positions
- internationalization; there is a huge demand for this among students
- building plan: we need to think about the allocations of current space and future space needs
- investment in research; stipend funding for graduate students is especially lagging, while startup costs are growing ever more onerous; a stable way of funding them must be found.
- communication coordination: A&S must start asking for our priorities with a more unified voice, as do other units on campus

The dean also mentioned things that were missing in the current draft:

- we need to strengthen our focus on undergraduate liberal arts programs.
- SSRLs must be funded somehow other than IDC.
- we need new initiatives in sciences to fund startup creatively.

Discussion:

Debra Shulman (Government): it would be considerate for speakers to spell out acronyms like IDC for the benefit of relative newcomers

Exchange on Environmental Issues:

John Swaddle (Biology): While internationalization, community service, etc. are great, there is nothing in the plan about environmental performance and sustainability, despite the fact that it has proven to be a major concern among students, faculty, alumni and the BOV.

Dean Strikwerda asked Prof. Swaddle to spell out a few specific things that could serve as goals in this area.

Prof. Swaddle responded with some suggestions:

- target environmental sustainability in the area of faculty recruitment
- integrate sustainability into the curriculum better
- consider sustainability GER
- create more green-oriented professional and graduate programs

Joel Schwartz (Dean of Honors and Independent Studies/Charles Center): Grand Challenge I does not reflect accurately the balance we are trying to maintain between our missions as undergraduate liberal arts institution and research university. We should balance the current statement under the goals for Challenge I -- "Strengthen the infrastructure for success in graduate studies and research" -- with a similar statement as follows: "Strengthen the infrastructure necessary for a nationally distinguished liberal arts program." Dean Schwartz suggests using that phrase, "nationally distinguished liberal arts program", as often as possible in describing our aspirations.

Specific suggestions that Dean Schwartz would like to see added in line with that goal:

- 1) Maintain student-body size
- 2) Create new faculty positions to maintain student/faculty ratios
- 3) Support for undergraduate research
- 4) Review and updating of the curriculum

Anne Rasmussen (Music): would like to see "World Arts and Cultures" featured more prominently in the text of the challenges. The value of what we currently do in these areas is not fully appreciated and should be emphasized more.

Exchange on Interdisciplinary Studies:

Ron Rapoport (Government): Why is interdisciplinary studies privileged exclusively in subsection 3 of Grand Challenge I? We should be emphasizing disciplinary/departmental studies equally

Dean Strikwerda responds: It really should include intra- and multi-disciplinary studies.

Bill Cooke (Physics): We emphasize interdisciplinary studies here because it's what we have to work on the most.

Suzanne Raitt (English): Are we discussing creating new interdisciplinary centers or strengthening existing programs? Prof. Raitt thinks we should focus on strengthening the existing ones, particularly by creating joint positions.

Dean Strikwerda: He was thinking more of strengthening existing programs, but that could be clearer in the document.

Barbara Watkinson (Art and Art History): Wouldn't the \$200,000 item for interdisciplinary initiatives address that goal?

Dean Strikwerda: Was thinking of those funds as seed money for new interdisciplinary initiatives, not for the funding of new faculty lines.

Sarah Stafford (Economics): We are talking of two different issues: 1) fixing the current problems in interdisciplinary studies (e.g. problems of evaluating and compensating faculty who teach in interdisciplinary programs), 2) making interdisciplinary studies a central part of what makes W&M distinctive.

Bill Cooke (Physics): The benefits of our small size are maximized when we emphasize interdisciplinary efforts.

Exchange on Funding amounts:

Mike Tierney (Government/International Relations):

- Agrees with Joel Schwartz
- We must be open to the idea of reallocating resources: not just supporting good programs but cutting ones that aren't working
- The dollar amounts requested are much too small: we should increase our funding aspirations five- or ten-fold.

Dean Strikwerda responds: The extent that we can realistically inflate the amounts is limited, given a yield of 4-5% on an A&S share of the College endowment pie that has optimistically been estimated as being somewhat larger than it currently is.

Exchange on Library Funding:

Barbette Spaeth (Classical Studies): We should add to the language of the Challenges the need to increase library funding if we are serious about becoming a premier research institution.

Bill Cooke: Doesn't think this is necessarily a high priority; students in his department have access to what they need on-line, and that is the wave of the future. Library needs should be carefully evaluated before we devote more funds.

Dean Strikwerda: W&M's library funding has fallen behind that of peer institutions

Ron Rapoport: Library funding includes not just stacks and books, but costs of on-line resources such as those used by Prof. Cooke's students.

Gene Tracy (Physics/Applied Sciences): Agrees with Prof. Spaeth, but notes that library funding should be sought and allocated in a manner directed by faculty-set priorities.

Exchange on Development:

Bill Cooke: On the topic of adding development staff: Do we have any hard evidence that spending more on development actually pays off in terms of increased giving?

Dean Strikwerda: Sean Pieri (VP for development) is keeping close tabs on the performance of his personnel, and has used their effectiveness as a criterion for personnel decisions.

Ron Rapoport: Private fundraisers have their personnel work on commission. While we probably couldn't do that, could we perhaps set benchmarks and give out bonuses to those that exceed them?

Exchange on SSRL funding:

Dean Strikwerda brings up a suggestion he received by e-mail: we should add to our goals finding a way to make SSRL funding stable, instead of finding creative ways (such as IDC) to fund the SSRL program every year.

Sarah Stafford (Economics): We should fund SSRLs by increasing faculty lines to the point where the absence of faculty on SSRL could be covered internally. This would also allow us to move away from hiring adjuncts and fixed-term instructors.

Dean Strikwerda: This would cost about 5 million a year, and as recent cases in the departments of Geography and Music show, the addition of new faculty lines does not prevent departments from requesting replacement people to deal with specific gaps in the curriculum caused by faculty going on SSRL.

Prof. Stafford: Perhaps in those programs where it is necessary emphasis should be placed on hiring generalists who could fill in in more areas.

Bill Cooke: In curriculum review, we should focus on reforming the curriculum so that unbridgeable gaps aren't created when faculty go on leave.

Keith Griffioen (Physics): In a liberal arts institution shouldn't we be expecting our faculty to have sufficient breadth to teach a wide range of lower-level courses.

Ron Rapoport: That is not always possible, particularly in multi-disciplinary departments.

Anne Rasmussen: We should really try to make our curriculum more flexible. There is a lot of rigidity in the current curriculum.

Dean Strikwerda: That should include re-thinking the GERs, which reduce the flexibility in a lot of departments.

Dean Schwartz: A more achievable goal would be to move away from adjuncts to full-time instructors to replace SSRLs. There is abundant research showing that hiring of full-time replacements does much less damage to the curriculum than using adjuncts.

Prof. Stafford: But we should aim high and push for more permanent faculty.

Exchange on Diversity:

Suzanne Raitt: Grand Challenge 2 only mentions increasing diversity in graduate studies. It should also be emphasized on the undergraduate level.

Dean Strikwerda: Some of the items under GC 2 pertain to undergraduates.

Prof. Raitt: But the wording of the challenge itself only mentions graduate studies

Dean Strikwerda: The wording needs to be changed.

Exchange on Faculty Club:

Dean Strikwerda reads an e-mail question: Should we make the establishment of a Faculty Club a priority?

Ron Rapoport: A better thing would be to have a Senior Commons Room in every building

Bill Cooke: Agrees with Prof. Rapoport

Laurie Koloski (Reves Center) Won't the new business school building have a room that can be used as a faculty club?

Barbette Spaeth: A faculty club would not necessarily mean building a separate new building. The faculty club could meet in an existing facility or part of one.

Dean Strikwerda adjourned the meeting at 4:52 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
William Hutton, Secretary
Associate Professor of Classical Studies
wehutt@wm.edu