Steering Committee Meeting
Saturday, March 14, 10 a.m.-noon, Oberlin Inn Aspen/Birch
Summary revised as of 03.31.16

In attendance: Co-Chairs D. Yu, M. Krislov

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Guests: C. Christ, R. Peacock

Diane Introduced; Marvin introduced Ron Cheung and mentioned Ellis Tallman’s resignation from the Steering Committee

Carol Christ led discussion of emerging strategic directives by Working Group:

**Education futures**
Topics discussed included:

- Making improvements in the advising system.
- Identifying opportunities that contribute to interactional diversity.
- Finding ways to deepen collaboration among College/Conservatory/Museum.
- Creating senior capstone experiences or independent projects to help students bring together their 4- or 5-year Oberlin experience.
- Tapping more effectively into the strengths of Oberlin alumni, in order to find ways of connecting Oberlin students to post-collegiate experiences via alumni networks and creating two-way traffic across these bridges.

**Students of the bicentennial**
Topics discussed included:

- Replacing “inclusive excellence” and “interactional diversity,” with Oberlin language to define/describe.
- Student pipelines and recruitment goals.
- Designing a “4+4 Model,” with a commitment to build a more coherent model of advising and career support services here and link new grads with these services.
• Recruiting more diverse faculty.
• Assessing, reorganizing and linking career and student advising and alumni engagement.

Resources and sustainability
Topics discussed included:
• Educating ourselves about the higher education marketplace.
• Streamlining the governance structure.
• Exploring new ways to align and grow resources to provide a sustainable academic experience and to provide for an uncertain future.
• Transparency and growing diversity.
• Creating a mechanism outside of normal governance processes to generate new revenue streams.
• Funding an “innovation zone” to pilot programs that would fall into any future such investments.
• Reaffirming commitment to and maintaining leadership in environmental sustainability.
• Developing a plan for “year-round Oberlin” including Winter Term and summer use of facilities for purposes of diversity and revenue from high school students, alumni, seniors, and others.

Student health and well-being and diversity
Carol Christ introduced issues from yesterday’s student meetings:
• Two students said the double-degree program drew them here, and three noted central commitment to social justice and diversity.
• Diversity should be important in the strategic plan.
• Other issues of importance to students include sufficient health and wellness services, academic support, and confidence that students will be heard when they have needs.
• Surveys suggest there is an unusually high amount of stress here among students in both academics and extra-curricular pursuits.
• Explore idea of intentionally creating cohorts of students from the time they arrive.
• Student well-being should be part of the strategic plan.

Reflections: SWOT analysis, conversations, speakers—what’s missing from strategic directions/core principles as of now?
• Technology-enhanced education:
  o How to counter perception Oberlin is not embracing tech, even if it is?
  o Does it need to be asserted, made explicit in the principles?
  o Hard to predict next tech innovation, and what could be adopted by Oberlin.
  o Tech disruption takes us by surprise—how to alter the way the College operates, so those surprises can be taken advantage of?
  o Questions of transparency: using tech to make demographics, cosmology, etc. of Oberlin more transparent. “Deconfidentializing” what we can.
• Impact of globalization.
• “Umbrella ideas”: Not specific action items, but things that range over everything e.g., technology, health and wellness.
• City of Oberlin, and being intentional that the College/City relationship is part of the strategic plan.
• Being clear about College and Conservatory, and what does/doesn't apply to both.
• Staff development/staff needs to be remembered along with students and faculty.
• Making explicit references to African-American education/history at Oberlin.
• Issues of admissions and financial aid should be explicit.
• Faculty: Not what, but HOW to do things that may emerge as recommendations: time, space, money, advising, investments in tech/classrooms/training, incentivizing.
• Difficulty of sustaining Oberlin’s commitments to socioeconomic and racial diversity in age of shrinking revenue.
  o Relationship between Oberlin’s ideals and self-image, and the finances.
  o Relationship of this to questions of global community.
  o Competitive Landscape.
• Managing expectations: How “visionary” are we?
  o Being intentional and efficient about quality of what we’re already doing.
  o Having principles permeate everything.
  o Exciting metrics to concentrate on. Work from demographic data.
  o Transparency and inclusion in the way we do business.
• Transparency: Openly acknowledging flaws of last plan’s narrative, and where we have fallen short.
  o Don’t step over deferred issues; reaffirm unfulfilled commitments.
  o We can do better, we can do more.

Next Steps and Scheduling
• Carol Christ will work to create consolidated list of strategic directions that have emerged to generate a skeleton of a core document.
  o Core Principles
  o Strategic Directions
  o Missing Factors from Working Groups (and WG’s will send notes to Carol and Kathryn for synthesis and refinement into one document).
• Outreach phase and substantial input from community important.
• Revisiting Mission Statement? What is overarching mission and big goals? Way of guiding “what’s missing”? (Use part of time on April 9?).
• Mid-April draft of Core Principles (and possibly strategic directions) to community for responses. What’s missing? What’s unclear? What do you like?
• What are tactics/actual action steps? (May 1 and/or 2 times to be determined).