

Strategic Planning Committee Meeting – October 26, 2011 (Library Conference Room)

Called to order @ 8:20am

Attending: Abbot Packard (COE); Cheryl Brown (RCOB); Hannes Gerhardt (COSM); Debra MacComb (English); Ebenezer Kolajo (IRP); Will Lloyd (COSM); Michael Horvath (VPAA); Scot Lingrell (Student Affairs); Jon Anderson (Provost's Office); Jim Sutherland (Business & Finance); Michael Ruffner (University Advancement); Tommy Cox (Theatre); Rob Sanders (Political Science); Carol Goodson (Library).

No corrections to minutes

Agenda today: overview of Mission & Visions for the University, and how it fits into UWG Strategic Plan. Decided at last meeting to invite VPs to see if they have ideas on adjustments or improvements to Mission before Committee starts working on revising it.

Lloyd reviewed the history of our Mission/Vision over the years, and asked VPs what needs to be changed, what do they see is important about UWG?

Horvath: we are currently stressing learning over teaching in higher education; strategic planning must be connected to budget. Higher education professionals need to be problem-solvers, are they getting the training they need to be that? We should be structuring our courses around the big problems of the world, including sustainability. These need to be part of our Mission.

Sutherland: educational environment is very important. UWG infrastructure is very good in terms of facilities... so the rest of it is us. Fostering a positive emotional environment is critical. If students feel good they will learn more. Do people want to be with us? If we are well-respected, then people will want to be here. This is not clear in the Mission currently.

Lingrell: there is only one thing we do, everything else is related to that: the growth and development of students. The things we want are the outcomes, such a retention and graduation. Our Mission needs to inspire us to actually do that, and not get side-tracked into things that don't focus on growth and development of students. Our current Mission does not inspire us. The Vision should say how we do it, and how we hold ourselves accountable. Need to be clear about what we are as a University. But do we really know who we are? --probably not yet.

Ruffner: agreed with everything that has been said; very impressed with facilities, what we have to offer to students, but have we leveraged it effectively—no. We are supposed to be a destination university... he would say we need to be a "first choice" university. Where are we going?

- Athletics... was a mess in the past but completely under control now, although we still have a Title IX issue. Athletics helps us to get attention from students
- we have good faculty, which attracts good students
- branding & image: we are not sure who we are. Came up with "Go West," because we could not come up with anything else! High school administrators told us they would

not consider recommending UWG to their good students, they recommend it to their C & D students. First step in branding is getting recognition, people barely know who we are, continually confuse us with West Georgia Technical. Stop pretending we are an elite university, but we do need to be in 1st Tier of U.S. News & World Report rankings. Our SAT scores are in the mid-900s, which is not good enough, need to be much higher. What comes after Go West? It gets us attention, but what is next? We put on a lot of events on campus, but few show up... we have an esprit de corps problem.

- fund-raising: we are making progress (doubled our fund-raising from last year). Problem: we only have about 48K alumni, concentrated in education so they are not wealthy. Last year, switched fund-raising emphasis from individuals to corporations, and that is working. However, we are not getting the athletic contributions expected to finish the Stadium... if teams were winning, we'd be getting more money. Also, don't have enough staff in fund-raising, plus we need the active support of the Deans. People give money to programs with which they have a connection. There is a lot of money in Washington, but earmarks have not been politically popular so we haven't been getting as much; faculty need to win more competitive grants (money from indirect costs goes back into the institution).

Horvath: we really don't have an identity, have not defined ourselves: we are all things to all people, but that's not sustainable. The Deans can help us to define who we are. People need to know what we are known for, and we don't have that nailed down. Do we have too many majors? Are we so diluted in what we offer, that we've slid into mediocrity? We can't serve everybody who comes here for any reason at all: we need to give people a good reason to come here.

Sanders: disagreed with Horvath—in his opinion, a quality university has a lot of choices, so he would be hesitant to cut things.

Horvath: but have we over-saturated ourselves? Some schools, if a new class is proposed, they have to say what will be cut. Many courses only exist because of the interests of specific professors... then they leave, but the class continues to exist even with low enrollment. Can we afford this? --probably not. We need enough money to function as a destination institution, and tuition can help to provide that. Do we have too many choices for an institution such as ours?

Sanders: departments know what sells and what doesn't. For example, Public Administration is trying to get a Health Care Administration program started because they know it would be popular, and could probably even get an endowed Chair.

Ruffner: agrees that Health Care is a wide-open field, and believes that there is remote chance we could even get a medical school here. We need to go where the dollars are. The BOR wants another medical school in Georgia; if we don't move quickly, in the coming decade there is probably going to be a medical school in Rome instead of in Carrollton.

Anderson: would you trade growing enrollment for better quality? Which should be our primary focus? Who do you think we should be?

Sutherland: we are not-freestanding, we are owned by the State of Georgia. We have no big endowment, we are funded by tax dollars and tuition. Georgia is fortunate in not being a state people are leaving; BOR believes we could have an additional 100K students in the System over what we have today, but they are not going to build new colleges, thus we have a responsibility to the State to carry our fair share of these new students—so we can't stay at our current level and just take better students. It is a fact of life that we need more money and we should not be embarrassed about that; quality demands more money. Theoretically, we have the infrastructure to add more students (we are using our space at about 50% of what the System expects). We have to focus both on growth and improving quality.

Anderson: who is West Georgia and who should it become?

Lingrell: we have a statement in the Mission...

Anderson: we have several statements that don't coincide

Lingrell: you need to narrow it down. If you look at destination universities they are both growing AND improving quality. Our current method of paying for our needs is by increasing enrollment, plus we have to grow it enough to overcome the cuts the Legislature makes. The strategic planning role is to decide if we want to do something new, setting the conditions so that the rest of us can do what we do to accomplish that.

Anderson: how can we narrow that down? What should West Georgia be and do?

Sutherland: UWG has already defined it: we are NOT a destination university, but we want to be. We are a 2nd or 3rd choice institution. To be a 1st choice institution is determined by the attitude of the faculty and staff, and the high school guidance counselors. How do we get people to be inspired to want to be here?

Anderson: what the SPC is looking for from the VPs, is what's next? Describe that position, UWG 2020 or 2030, what does it look like?

Horvath: there are external factors that force us to think in certain ways: the community college system is rising to accomplish some of the things we have done in the past. Regional institutions are expected to respond to needs of the region, and so that has to be part of our plan. We want to define excellence based on the holistic experience we can provide students... integration of classroom experiences + experiences outside of class. Let's look at the outcomes: what do we want our students to be when they leave here? If we raise the level of discourse in our classes, that will create a ripple effect that will go out and influence guidance counselors, who are extremely important. We are not in a vacuum, we are in a K-16 environment, and how we project ourselves to that population has an effect. We need to be consistent and be who we say we are; send students who are not ready for us to the community colleges, and stop making exceptions. Look at the success of our graduates; in the past, for example, students were getting cutting-edge experiences on this campus... we think they still are, but people don't know about it.

Ruffner: we have serious funding problems and will continue to have them until we get our enrollment up. The identity issue is very perplexing. The VPs cannot answer that: the people who work here have to do that. To demonstrate the difficulty of coming to consensus on identity, Ruffner asked everyone to specify the one thing they would say about West Georgia. (The statements were collected and given to Will Lloyd).

MacComb: yesterday the top 5 majors in the University were announced, and English is one of them, against all odds in this economic environment. People decide to major in English even though they don't know what they will do with it. Thus, we need to recognize the importance of the humanities, which we seem to consistently overlook.

The group discussion was far from finished, but we ran out of time. Cox reiterated the value of this conversation, and suggested that we schedule another meeting before the next Senate meeting.

Lingrell: the SPC is lacking representation from several key areas of the campus, and we will never get an effective result that comes only from the faculty and not the entire campus.

Lloyd: the problem we have is that the President's statements about what West Georgia is are too diffuse, so VPs need to try to influence the President to stop doing that.

Lingrell: Sethna wants an alternative narrative to use and he will change when we give him an alternative narrative, but it needs to be something that will get peoples' attention.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m., no next meeting was set.

[notes by Carol Goodson]