

**College of Arts and Sciences  
Dean's Council of Department Chairs  
Wednesday, December 11, 2013  
4:00-5:30  
Kelley Center Presentation Room**

**Approval of the Minutes**

Dr. Jocelyn Borycka moved to approve the November 6, 2013 minutes and Dr. Yohuru Williams seconded the motion. All were in favor of the minutes.

**Announcements and Routine Issues**

**Water Theme**—Dr. Jo Yarrington, Professor of Studio Arts, distributed a rationale, overview statement, and brainstorming ideas, initiatives, and structures for the upcoming *Water* focus planned for Fall 2014 through Spring 2016 to department chairs. An open invitation was extended by Dr. Yarrington to attend a department meeting to discuss ways in which departments/faculty could engage in these initiatives.

**Rationale for the “Water” Focus**—“Water” is an ideal match for the objectives of the biennial academic and events focus because:

- It follows logically from “Cities,” which are connected globally by water and maritime routes and are the focus of water resource and treatment issues
- It is broad enough to engage all disciplines (and, more extensively than perhaps ever before, the sciences) while specific enough to promote substantial dialogue and reflection and action
- Many faculty are actively engaged in research and service projects involving oceans, Atlantic and Pacific migrations, water conservation and access, hydraulic engineering, etc., while many program directors in the arts were among the top proponents of the “Water” topic.

**Overview Statement:**

Water covers over 70% of the Earth’s surface, and this fact is becoming increasingly salient to the vision and mission of the academy. As a site of travel, trade, precious resource, scientific study, and artistic imagination, water is a crucial focus for researchers across all disciplines. It is also the basis of many new global paradigms of study, as we shift from thinking about territory to thinking about the history of maritime travel, trade, and migrations that created the modern world. In the humanities, Oceanic Studies and studies of the Atlantic Rim and Pacific Rim are transforming how we categorize socio-economic life, as we move from thinking about nation and continent, farm and factory, urban and rural to thinking about the trade routes, sea-dependent immigration/emigration patterns, trade-linked port cities, and forced transoceanic migrations that created the modern world. Politically, control over water resources has become a source of geo-political power, as in disputes between Israel and Palestine or Argentina and Uruguay. In the sciences, “Water” presents a crucial, international focus on such issues as health and clean water access, sustainability, ecological and environmental study, and numerous emergent challenges in engineering. The biological and chemical sciences are, of course, central in the effort to think about human life as dependent on and defined by water and aquatic life. The possibilities in

fields from religion to communication, to business are exciting, too, as we begin to think about “fluidity” as a creative principle, organizational structure, natural/physical condition, communicational strategy, and spiritual disposition. Indeed, the possibilities are many, and the points of connection numerous.

### **Water Focus Curricular Sequence of classes for 2014 - 2015 (9 credit hours):**

- Call for classes involving/focused on Water theme, with **deadline submission of March 1, 2014**
- A list of water-related classes, marked as such, would be available to students for Fall 2014 registration (followed by another call in Fall 2014 for Spring 2015)
- From this listing students would embark on a two semester immersion involving 9 credit hours

#### **Fall 2014:**

- 3 credit course selected from Water list (3 Water events attended)

#### **Spring 2015:**

- 3 credit course selected from Water list (3 Water events attended)
  - \*\*3 credit interdisciplinary "Super" course (ID/TBD) with*
    - Discipline-based advising on a Water-focused research project
    - 4 seminar style meetings for the semester
    - Involving a 3 – person faculty "team" (course limited to 12 – 15 students).

### **Brainstorming Ideas, initiatives, Structures for Water Focus**

- Fore-shadowing events to highlight *Water* focus that are already scheduled for Spring 2014 – Whistler and the Venice Printmakers/BMA/Walsh and Jason Peters exhibition at the Walsh (use of water symbol and water buckets)
- **Fall 2014**—Start with a Cross-disciplinary watershed event – seminar/panels? Convocation focus?
- **Spring 2016**—End with a cross-disciplinary assessment event – seminar/panel? Info gathered for NEASC report?
- Year I and Year II – change in structure or particular focus?
- Each of the four semesters highlighted a particular cohort of disciplines (i.e., Politics, Environmental Sciences and Business focusing from each perspective on the issue of fracking?)
- CAE Water Focus development workshops – summer 2014, summer 2015
- Core team
  - Staff support
  - Adjunct consultant
  - Student representative
- Faculty sub-committee
- Contact person in each of the Schools
- Co-ordination with incoming SVPA and Deans
- Off campus events – streaming info in all disciplines through website portal
- Front and center presence on University Website
- Promoting student engagement and student-oriented trips

***Advising checklist and C2C***—Dr. Jim Simon commented that he heard from eight department chairs and many students, expressing positive feedback relative to the change in advising procedures. Freshmen students were not familiar with how to utilize the information. Many students took their laptops to access the checklist electronically. Appreciation to the return of real advising was expressed. Dr. Simon mentioned that this procedure will be utilized again in the spring.

Dr. Nash noticed that it had a trickling down effect; many utilized and benefited from the advising checklist.

The Dean liked the idea of adding this to an FYE event. She found that some students do not know how to utilize the syllabus. Forming habits of reviewing the syllabus throughout the course would be helpful. We need to help students understand the true meaning of advising.

***Blackboard***—Dr. Aaron Perkus talked about Blackboard Outcomes, which is a comprehensive outcomes assessment package. The Associate Deans are part of an integration committee which meets monthly. Dr. Perkus asked if chairs had a small project around their major that they would be interested in using to demonstrate how helpful Blackboard could be for programmatic assessment. Blackboard is a package that seems to offer a greater level of integration. He encouraged chairs to contact the CAS Associate Deans if interested.

***Enrollment Management***—The Dean shared that Ms. Peterson expressed her appreciation for department chairs work around enrollment management. Their cooperation and good curriculum mapping resulted in positive outcomes.

***Rank & Tenure***—The Dean worked closely with chairs around evaluative letters relative to Rank and Tenure candidates. Chairs' letters are much more substantial, as well as faculty letters assessing colleagues.

***Provost Search Update***—The last candidate will be coming on campus this week.

***CAS Faculty Meeting***—The Dean encouraged faculty to attend the CAS Faculty meeting scheduled for December 13. It is important to have a good turnout. The Planning Committee would like to start a conversation about a Mission Statement in the College. The University Mission Statement strongly reflects the College, but it is not the College's Mission Statement. Having a good sense of what our mission is for our own planning purpose and for the University at large is helpful. A sub-committee will be formed to draft a mission statement, and they will bring it to the faculty for review and further conversation.

### **Conversation with Executive Vice President, Kevin Lawlor**

The Dean introduced VP Kevin Lawlor and department chairs and administrative staff introduced themselves indicating the department they are affiliated with.

VP Lawlor shared that he had a lot of small conversations with many faculty and acknowledged the talent and dedication across campus. He learned what Fairfield was all about, and the importance of the Core. His charge at Fairfield is to facilitate the Strategic Plan; and by doing so, he introduced the *Fairfield 2020 Building a Sustainable Future Strategic Plan Refresh*, mentioning that the next six years will be some of the most important years associated with this

initiative. He commented that this is a refresh of the current Strategic Plan and that there has been significant progress aligned with Fr. von Arx's inaugural. He has been becoming familiar with the previous work (the planning and action items handled by previous deans and Billy Weitzer, as well as others) to integrate some of these efforts moving forward. One critical step with any strategic plan is to have a common set of understanding about the context of the plan.

VP Lawlor mentioned that for the first time in history we have big forces impacting higher education simultaneously. He demonstrated the Strategic Plan with a PowerPoint Presentation, which focused on the following discussion points.

#### Forces Impacting Higher Education

- ***Tuition Costs***—We have a combined price between tuition and room and board of \$56,000, so how much higher could the tuition rates increase? It seems to be reaching its peak and we are losing our ability to raise tuition cost, because of economic conditions, weakening value proposition, and significant competition. As a community we generally set revenue equal to expenses, because revenue and expense were at one time fairly predictable. This is largely non-existent. Most universities plan a cost structure, so that when you take revenue and subtract expenses there is a percent left marginally. We generally want margin to buffer volatility.
- ***Disruptive Technology***—There seems to be a lot of parallels between our industry and other industries. Disruptive technology has taken its business model and started it from scratch, using models such as the following:
  - Distance Learning (for e.g. Georgia Tech has an on-line program for Master's Degree for \$8,000).
  - Competency Based Programs—Not all students begin as a first semester freshmen. There are different ways of translating life lessons and other valuable insights, where students receive credit for competency base experiences. This shortens the duration of time a student needs to spend on campus and lowers the cost based on that. These competency based programs are becoming more appealing.
- ***Shrinking Demographics***
  - Number of HS Students in the northeast is declining faster than other areas in the country. We have more competing institutions in the northeast, so demographics have a higher consideration for Fairfield than some of our peers in the mid-west.
- ***Increased "clock speed"***
  - Higher Education market is changing at a pace faster than the institutional decision making process. How fast could we adjust to the market? There is an exploding interest in data programs and all of the applications associated with data. The University is aware of these changes and have been contemplating and shaping changes around these innovations, but our peer groups are already offering these programs. Our institution needs to be acutely aware of these opportunities and accelerate in our processes.

With a highly competitive market, it places a premium on Universities who engage in the following:

- Understand their market & its needs
- Have a limited defined mission
- Articulate a strong value proposition
- Leverage pedagogical innovation
- Measure success based on outcomes
- React quickly to changing conditions; have a “change capable culture”
- Are sufficiently disciplined to jettison extraneous costs and programs—Once we decide what our limited defined mission is, can we jettison extraneous costs, so the cost and resources migrate into the initiatives we want to focus on and away from those that we do not?

Our institution is not dissimilar to many corporations who have product lines that are not all that central to the needs, but involve a number of people, assets, and resources. It is hard to decide what happens to the initiatives that fall to the bottom of the priority list. VP Lawlor shared that he will essentially create a framework to harness the huge responsibility that resides across campus and find ways to reconcile different views.

The President is in the process of generating a new inaugural, setting the framework for the new Strategic Plan. The anticipation is that the Steering Committee will develop many mini-taskforces that will observe on-campus elements, examining them on a detailed level and coming up with a set of recommendations to revitalize and bring these elements into the next context. The Steering Committee will be a multi-disciplined committee that will be the ultimate architect, while the taskforce will largely be populated by faculty members. This process has approximately a fifteen month timeline engaging in comprehensive work, involving research, benchmarking, and findings of what is going on in the industry and how Fairfield could reinvest and re-position ourselves. This will involve a lot of data analysis in hopes to receive a data driven solution.

Leading to the launch, the following will occur:

- Forge agreement among the VPs,
- Consult & dialogue with Academic Council
- Discuss with Deans and school leadership teams
- Finalize the Steering Committee members and topics for the task forces
- Work with AC and Handbook Committees on faculty representation
- Generate staff and student representation
- Finalize timeline
- Build communication plan.

The timeline for Fairfield 2020 is as follows:

- Launch our initiative in January and have our task-force teams provide the Steering Committee with a preliminary report on their work before we break for the summer.
- In September the focus will be on incorporating the recommended changes and any integration that needs to take place on the teams. The hope is to turn over the final reports from each of the working teams by December 2014.

- December to March—The Steering Committee will work with each task-force to produce the final document. The Steering Committee and each team will continue to work together, engaging in a great level of cooperation among teams, public forums, and interviews.
- A common website will be, sharing the preliminary conclusion and inviting commentary, in an attempt to engage as many participants as possible and make it as transparent as possible. With the goal of sustainability there are certain fundamentals that need to be changed.

Each team will have some cross cutting affirmations with the focus on the following:

- Centered on teaching, mentoring, and learning
- Guided by mission, identity, and core values
- Improving our competitiveness and sustainability
- Lead in transformational learning models
- Leverage technology
- Know our unique value proposition
- Provide a powerful student experience
- Encourage and support community engagement
- Foster collegial and collaborative communities
- Be guided by outcomes and competency-based metrics

The hope is that this opportunity will bring members of faculty and other constituents together, who would otherwise engage in conversations. It is important that folks participating on the task-force think about sustainability of the University in a great way.

The outcomes identified as being essential are:

- A new, more broadly-based business model
- A more flexible and focused cost structure where our resources flow to our priorities. Currently 84% of our revenue comes from undergraduate tuition and room and board.
- Real competence and infrastructure to support online learning is needed. We have to reconcile where on-line learning fits in Fairfield and get efficient at these offerings fast to keep up with other institutions and the market.
- A reconstituted and revitalized part-time learning emphasis is important, adding to the revenue stream.
- A recognition system that rewards innovative learning models allows us to capture the best ideas that will differentiate us from other institutions.
- Strong and distinct school identities

VP Lawlor opened the floor for comments/discussion:

- Dr. Im mentioned that he did not notice the idea of looking at an alternative basis for students. There is demographic data that demonstrates a decline in our traditional base, but the largest growing sectors are 2<sup>nd</sup> generation and largely Hispanic and Asian combinations. Strategically we should try to compare the University to be an institution that appeals to these populations, as opposed to our traditional base. VP Lawlor commented that one idea for a taskforce was *Attracting, Enrolling and Maintaining the Classes of the Future*, which will not only focus on different demographics within the

United States but focus on obtaining meaningful representation at a national level. Although we have some constraints, such as capacity with classroom space, housing, or eating facilities, there will be a focus on growing the institution. VP Lawlor commented that if Fairfield was a larger institution it would be a healthier one.

- Dr. Jocelyn Boryczka had several questions for VP Lawlor:
  - What are VP Lawlor's thoughts on post-tenure reviews and what are the prospects of moving to a three year model? Dr. Boryczka commented that Rank and Tenure is a process where chairs are involved in discussing post-tenure reviews, which are important to all chairs/faculty. A lot of chairs talk about the challenges that come up around a continuous contract process. Dr. Yohuru Williams added that part of the long-term decisions will be decided based on what will be sustained and what will not; therefore tenure should be a part of these discussions. Dr. Primavera mentioned that if folks are seeking faculty buy-in, questions around three year contracts are important, because there is a lot of time spent on these processes. If buy-in is needed for a long-term Strategic Plan, one way to get this is to think about ways to free up faculty time so they could devote their energy to the strategic process.

VP Lawlor mentioned that he is a big supporter of a three-year contract, because negotiations consume too much time. He is working on simplifying the process, so folks could pay attention to other initiatives. He is aware of the time and energy placed into annual reviews and feels that faculty input is important, so when developing a post-tenure process they will be invited to engage in conversations, along with consultation with the deans and the SVPAA's. It is important to have some process to maintain excellent teachers and advisors. He acknowledged that faculty work hard to achieve tenure.

VP Lawlor mentioned to the Faculty Salary Committee that whatever plan is agreed upon it has to fit the plan moving forward. We anticipate that the tuition will rise in the 2.5 to 3% increase. Another important element is that the rate healthcare is escalating every year is disproportionate. Last year vs. this year, we had a 13% increase.

- Who is determining those who will be on the Steering Committee, what are the selection process, and the criteria? VP Lawlor is still in conversation with the Academic Council to make these determinations. Proposals were made but decisions have not yet been made. There will be broad faculty participation on both the Steering Committee and the taskforces. In addition there will be administration, deans, alumni and students.
- Could you clarify what you mean by strong and distinct school identities? Do you mean within each school or the University at large? Strong interdisciplinary focus was cultivated over a long period of time and is unique to Fairfield. VP Lawlor mentioned that he does not necessarily agree that a strong school identity is countered to interdisciplinary initiatives. To a certain extent they lend discreteness to strong schools, such as courses in ethics, world languages, mediation and negotiations. Some of interdisciplinary initiatives we embarked on and some we

have not thought of yet will be differentiated between schools. They will help to identify them as having a unique value.

- Dr. Rick DeWitt commented on the portion of the PowerPoint relative to losing ability to raising prices, commenting that he felt the most basic reason was missing. We are becoming increasingly desirable to students. If we look at the US News and World report, Fairfield University is ranked #3. The report indicates that Villa Nova is #1 by a large margin, but the schools ranked 2 through 10 are essentially very close. Looking at the report more closely, it is clearer that we ranked high because we are SAT optional. Roughly 40% of our students no longer submit SATs in comparison to schools that typically have 100% of their students submitting SAT scores. We only report 60% of our SATs scores, so once rating systems take that into account, Fairfield may plummet between 8 or 10. For a number of years, our key trends seemed to be going in the wrong direction—our mid-rate, yield rate, and the amount spent on our core educational mission are declining. Our core educational mission should be our focus. Dr. DeWitt commented that the President’s communication on rebranding did not mention education. The cosmetics do not appear to focus on issues relative to our core education mission. A few years ago, Dr. DeWitt and a number of faculty constructed a memo demonstrating a number of these trends, encouraging a dialogue; but unfortunately, there was not much progress. Since this time the number of administrators (particularly VPs), continued to increase. This is one place where there could be cuts. DeWitt would like to spend more time focusing on core. Williams added that the demonstration of the Strategic Plan refresh lacked a connection to our Jesuit identity.
- VP Lawlor reiterated the first two suggested items for the taskforce, which addressed being centered on teaching, mentoring, and learning, as well as being guided by mission, identity and core values.
- Dr. Williams commented that there is a way in which Jesuit teaching, mentoring and learning and Jesuit mission, identity and core values are unique. If we are looking at this in terms of a business model, Williams would agree with DeWitt that it looks more substantive and would have to be a much deeper conversation to avoid loss of our Jesuit identity. What are we if we get rid of our liberal arts focus and tinker with the things that makes Fairfield unique? Dr. Lawlor commented that we not signaling abandonment of our Jesuit Identity. The one thing that is unique about our institution is the teaching of the core. VP Lawlor asked chairs to keep an open mind; their intent is and will continue to engage in things that enhance the University.
- Dr. Dewitt felt we were moving closer to a business and have been for years. VP Lawlor commented that he did not feel we were in a position where we could exempt ourselves from the business structure. At the end of the day, the market will define the future.
- The Dean asked if we could assume that the President’s charter will articulate a vision. From a branding perspective, her sense is that if we defer the Jesuit Higher Education Mission a lot of higher education institution will fail in this coming generation. Jesuit Higher Ed is a great brand. We want to ensure it is resilient going forward, and we want to ensure we are inspired by Ignatian principals. VP Lawlor commented that mission and identity is essential in everything we do at the University. Mission and identity is something we have to be mindful of as we think about redesign but becoming more sustainable or more competitive is important too.
- Dr. Primavera added that she has been at the University for over twenty years and she



sees an increasing reliance on adjunct faculty, which has a great impact on the quality education we are offering to our students and their learning outcomes. Our students are taught by adjuncts for many of their courses. One of the strongest teaching moments we experience with our students is mentoring them as they engage in research projects, giving them an opportunity to become published authors. This is not something that larger institutions like Boston College or Villa Nova offer. These opportunities have to be in the mix.

- VP Lawlor reiterated that this initiative is not going to be imposed on anyone. If faculty are interested in participating in the refresh initiative, he encourages them to be involved on the taskforce.
- Dr. Kathy Nantz commented that in the past we have been in a situation where we tried a variety of different initiatives since others institutions were trying them. The idea was to engage in more of many things. Dr. Nantz shared her frustration with these practices. She would prefer folks to identify and talk about the mission, how we could define ourselves in the smaller context, so we are not always seeking to do more of all. VP Lawlor agreed by saying we cannot be all things to all people.

The Dean's Council meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m. to a dinner at Mancuso's Restaurant.