Minutes of the ad Hoc Committee on Institutional Identity and Vision

Tues April 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2019

Present:

William Bares, Computer Science, Committee Chair
Melantha Ardrey, Director of Residence Life
Todd McNerney, Theatre
Robert (Bob) Podolsky, Biology
Pamela Riggs-Gelasco, Chemistry
Guest, Dr. Andrew Hsu, incoming President of the College

Dr. Hsu – What is the makeup and history of this committee?  (see addendum)

Todd – In the early 2000’s (2005?) faculty had broad conversations about identity, at end, they reaffirmed the commitment to liberal arts & science traditions. See Faculty Senate web page for statement. In 2017 some faculty became concerned about direction. This committee was formed to repeat this process. This committee was more broadly charged to speak to whole campus. We have not had a formal strategic planning process for some time. The faculty thought this process would be a good start to that.

Dr. Hsu – What were the concerns from 2017?

Todd – Several of us were involved in discussion with legislative push to merge us with MUSC and even push to R1 status. These may not have been favored by faculty, especially not involving consultation.

Dr. Hsu – Did President McConnel begin the push to merge with MUSC?

Bob – Near end of President Benson’s term, he began the shift of focus to R1 and MUSC merger.

William – They could have better pitched the idea of merger and invited more faculty and staff input. For example, people at both schools might have been interested in a Joint BS in nursing to meet high local demand that is now being filled by Charleston Southern and for-profit schools.

Todd – Pulls up Web page with faculty senate documents from 2017 he had mentioned before.

When McConnel started, focus was on SACS reaccreditation so there was no new strategic plan.

William – Pulls up executive summary text of 2017-18 survey results to begin discussion.

Dr. Hsu – How did your survey deal with the terminology of national university, liberal arts, etc. These definitions have different meanings to different people.

William – We phrased the questions to include examples of universities that represented each type, e.g. William & Mary.
Bob – The survey responses match the sense that there is a tension of being pulled in different directions…We have a business school, professional programs, master’s programs.

Dr. Hsu – We need to be clear about how we will be perceived by potential customers and be sure that we are using the same definition that they have in mind.

Pam – Not communicating our identity well goes back 20 years.

Dr. Hsu – Clarify through strategic planning. R1 – is clearly not what we can be in the next 20-30 years. R1 requires a lot of research. On the other hand, we talk about William & Mary, which is a national university. How do people feel about other inspirational peers that are listed on the CofC Website?

Bob – We don’t hear these other aspirational peer institutions discussed much.

Todd – I have heard some of these other aspirational peer institutions in some conversations…The list I recall was longer than 5 listed on our web site.

Dr. Hsu – If these other aspirational peer institutions are not widely agreed, let’s use William & Mary. They have some professional schools. They are public. The reason for the national ranking is you have to grant 20+ Ph.D.s per year according to the Carnegie classification. US News & World Report picked that up and calls R1, R2, R3 national universities, then masters-level schools are designated regional. US News has a separate category for national / regional liberal arts colleges. Do we define national as being that we attract students from the entire US? In speaking with parents/prospective students, using the term national university will be confusing. How are we defining the term national university?

Todd – Our survey respondents may not have fully understood what William & Mary being a national university entails – that it does include Ph.D. programs.

Dr. Hsu – My plan is to convene a strategic plan commission to start running in August. We must first clearly define terms such as liberal arts, national university, etc., then talk about what we want to be.

Bob – Did we ask questions about Ph.D. degree offerings?

William – Pulled up survey question and responses. Only 26% favored offering Ph.D. degrees.

Dr. Hsu – We can talk to ourselves all we want, but need to do it in a way that people outside the College can understand. The general public must understand the terms we use.

Bob – It depends on the audience. With President Benson there was an effort to attract students from outside the state. President McConnel seemed to reverse the focus to in state.

Todd – For example, the state of Georgia designated one campus as its public liberal arts college. We have no such designation for SC. People have tried to stake this claim that we play this role for SC.

Dr. Hsu – nothing wrong with trying to be that. Miami U in Ohio -vs Miami U in Cincinnati (similar to us – USC). Miami U in Ohio is national and has a small number of Ph.D. A lot of
these descriptors are appropriate and can be kept if we want to be like Miami in OH or William & Mary. Bottom line – do we want to be a national university as all our aspirational schools are? That will be the key question. If we want to be a national, there will be things we need to do. Otherwise, our peers should be Elon, Citadel in same category. This would bring clarity since this is how people outside the college perceive us.

Dr. Hsu – Has the board discussed these issues? Ultimately the board has the responsibility.

Bob – Given what you know so far, what direction do you see for the College of Charleston?

Dr. Hsu – I see our focus to be on the undergrad experience, but to be a national university known for this undergrad focus is my initial reading of this identity and vision survey given what I understand today.

Dr. Hsu – If we wanted to be like pure liberal arts college – Williams, Colby…we would need to drop professional programs…we rely on revenue from professional to subsidize liberal arts.

Bob – One more school came to mind – Truman State…aspire to national masters level.

William – On the topic of resources, our survey suggested that we direct resources and incentives to support those things that we claim as our mission in particular the quality undergrad experience.

Dr. Hsu – We are already at the national masters level. We could offer one or two Ph.D. programs which would be enough to get the numbers to reach the national level. We would maintain our quality undergraduate focus by having all other departments focus their resources on the undergraduate experience. Faculty would be promoted based on how well they fulfill this undergraduate mission. I am familiar with Miami OH, they focus on quality undergrad education. Teaching is still the #1 most important mission.

Dr. Hsu – I heard a comment in my interview about the concern that a Ph.D. program will draw resources away from the undergraduate mission. We may need to subsidize the cost of a Ph.D. program. But some Ph.D. programs such as in Education can be largely self-sustaining. Toledo typically has a cohort of 15 education Ph.D. students completing over 3 years. In our case, for example, we could offer a marine biology PhD., which we could do very well with our unique situation. But this Ph.D. program would require more financial support.

William – In looking for Ph.D. programs that could attract funding, we could offer technology Ph.D. programs jointly with Clemson and could tap into company interest from Boeing or Bosch. We have heard that these local companies would like to see Ph.D. programs offered in the area.

Dr. Hsu – Some Cal campuses are now national universities that used joint Ph.D. with neighbors. For example, San Diego State – paired with UC San Diego. They had joint advisors and each institution could counts the Ph.D. graduates. We could partner with MUSC in areas we overlap. We could partner with Clemson in engineering. Co-advising shouldn’t draw too much resources as both MUSC and Clemson have their own labs facilities.

William – What do you see as the next step?
Dr. Hsu – We had a strategic plan in 2011 that was abandoned in 2013. What would have made it effective? There needs to be buy in from faculty and staff – without their buy-in, any strategic plan will collect dust. I would like to have an iterative process, gather input from faculty staff, alum, local business, Board of Trustees, parents, etc. Find consensus in their input, draft a document to send back to all including the Board of Trustees, then get a second round of feedback. Typically, I would iterate this process at least three times so that people can see what others have said and get chance to respond. We come back and revise. We must be careful not to make a document that aims to please everyone. If everything is your priority, you don’t have any priority. This is where leadership of the president and Board of Trustees comes in. We need to distill the document into no more than five focus areas and handful of measurable initiatives for each focus area.

The membership thanked Dr. Hsu and the meeting was adjourned at 11 am.

Addendum

Membership of Ad hoc Committee on Institutional Identity and Vision 2018-19

William Bares, Computer Science, Committee Chair
Melantha Ardrey, Director of Residence Life
Todd McNerney, Theatre
Robert Podolsky, Biology
Pamela Riggs-Gelasco, Chemistry
Jeri Cabot, Dean of Students
Jen Wright, Psychology

Membership of Ad hoc Committee on Institutional Identity and Vision 2017-18

William Bares, Computer Science, Chair
Mike Braswell, Accounting
Jeri Cabot, Dean of Students
Alex Kasman, Mathematics
Irina Gigova, History
Jen Wright, Psychology