

Pursuing Operational Excellence Task Force Meeting Minutes

February 19, 2020

Provost Arden opened the meeting by thanking everyone for their time and commitment to serve. Co-chairs Katharine Stewart and Marie Williams started introductions.

Committee Members:

Nancy Welchel, Director, Survey Research, Office of Institutional Research and Planning

David Rainer, Associate Vice Chancellor, Environmental Health & Public Safety, Finance & Administration

Joyce Monroe, Assistant Dean for Business Operations, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Warren Jasper, Professor, Textile Engineering, Chemistry and Science, Wilson College of Textiles

Amira Hijazi, Graduate Student

Adrian Day, Assistant Vice Provost for Finance and Planning, Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost

Barry Olson, Associate Vice Chancellor, Division of Academic and Student Affairs

Kelly Wick, Director of Special Projects and Planning, Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost

Doug Morton, Associate Vice Chancellor, Facilities, Finance and Administration

Caroline Ortiz-Deaton, Director, Resource Analysis, Office of Institutional Research & Planning

Jeff Baynham, Interim Associate Vice Chancellor, Advancement Services, University Advancement

Barbara Moses, Associate Vice Chancellor, Budget and Resource Management, Finance and Administration

Rich Berlin, Associate Vice Chancellor, Campus Enterprises, Finance and Administration

Jason Painter, Director of the Science House, College of Sciences

Leda Lunardi, Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering, College of Engineering

Guest:

Dan Green, Director of Information Technology & Operations, Electrical and Computer Engineering, College of Engineering

Charlie Maimone, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration

Margery Overton, Co-Chair, University Strategic Plan, Interim Senior Vice Provost for Institutional Research and Planning, Vice Provost for Academic Strategy

Strategic Plan History-Provost Arden

Provost Arden shared some history on the 2011-2020 strategic plan; the organizational excellence goal was tweaked to operational excellence. From an institutional perspective some

changes may come from an organizational angle, however, the majority is likely to be achieved by looking at our processes and really ensuring that we have the appropriate steps to the process in place and the right oversight. No task force should think they have all the answers, we will look at operations asking the question how do we do the business that we do now. Some units within the university are already working hard asking questions about how we do our business and how can we do it more effectively. We need to think about how to be impactful and refine our processes.

Task Force Process-Provost Arden

The task force will meet over the next several months and submit a report by early June (if possible). The executive group will need most of the summer to combine the plan and build into a cohesive document to present to the Board of Trustees by their first fall meeting in September or the second meeting in November. One thing we'll do this time that worked well with the previous plan is to not put too many implementation steps in place; who's doing what with what money etc. We need to develop a 3 to 4 year implementation plan, what exactly will we tackle in the next 3-4 years, what resources are available and who is responsible for the action. We will also develop metrics as to how we will measure ourselves. We should try not to get too bogged down in the weeds, but focus on what is going to happen over the next 10 years. Think about where we are now, what progress have we made in last 9 years, what big gains have we made and what gaps do we still need to fill, and identify strategies and actions to move forward. Large universities are asked to continue to do what we do with the same resources so think about how to be more effective with what we have. Provost Arden asked Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration Charlie Maimone to share his thoughts on the goal for the task force.

Goal of the Task Force, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration Charlie Maimone

As the person ultimately responsible for Finance and Administration, a lot of operational effectiveness and efficiency resides at least partially in our division. I would like to share our commitment with you for the work you are about to do and to make ourselves available in all ways possible and to resist the idea to explain how and what we do. In the state of North Carolina, I am predicting resources will be limited as a public institution. As a result of student tuition and fees we will face challenges around research, and we need to take our sphere of influence and excellence in how we look at resource allocation across campus because it's our influence that will matter in the next five to ten years; and it's less likely that some external force will help us with our resource management. So when you think about operational excellence, think about that from a university effectiveness position; how do we make the university more effective and our commitment should be around teaching, research, and service. Think carefully about the mission of the institution because that is what we are trying to do is to improve the effectiveness of that initiative. Within our division we have established principles of work that can be shared with you, but what they are is a way within our division we will begin to communicate with each other to pursue university effectiveness as a team. The reason I bring this to you is because this is the framework we use to start to define what university

effectiveness is. We offer any services that we can provide to your group, and as you think about it if you want to know more about any particular strategy that we have in place or any operational detail that you think might be helpful to understand your work. The last thing I want to say is I am really making a full commitment to your work, and I mean that from a resource standpoint and from what you identify as what is most important for the institution. You are leading the institution in directing us to get to a more effective state, and we will commit now to the recommendations that you come up with and pursue them with vigor to be sure that we are lined up with the university's mission.

Overview summary Co-chairs Marie Williams and Katharine Stewart, Co-Chair University Strategic Plan, Margery Overton, and Provost Arden

Marie shared she is very grateful for the time people are committing and for your participation, and would like to set ground rules. We want discussions to be as inclusive and open as possible coming from various lenses of thinking. As people are suggesting ideas, we ask that others stay open-minded. Marie and Katharine are facilitators, and will encourage participation, your voices matter, and we want people to feel they have been heard as well as the people that you represent.

Katharine stated the people on this task force were invited because of your unique perspective, and it is important to share as well from your units' perspective. Think now about how to gather that information and those perspectives to bring to the table so that not only your voice is heard but the voices of other people you represent.

Margery thanked Charlie for reminding us of the university's mission. As Katharine and Marie emphasized, committee members should bring your own experience to the table and be cognizant of who you represent. These are open meetings, each task force will have a web page which will be updated with meeting dates and times, and we will also post meeting minutes. Every task force web page has a feedback form which is open to the community for those who wish to provide comments. The comments will be available to co-chairs and committee members, and may provide additional substance for the conversation.

Provost Arden shared the strategic plan steering committee will help guide the overarching process. The task forces were designed to have some overlap, we will have regular meetings with co-chairs to discuss progress and overlapping issues. Some conversations may identify a lot in common with another task force, and I would encourage combined task force meetings if appropriate. The Provost and Charlie are available to attend future meetings if the committee thinks it would be helpful.

Marie suggested we move to some discussion about what we just heard and what we think operational excellence means.

Katharine stated most people have been involved with [goal 4](#) from the previous strategic plan so it might be helpful to talk about where we should spend our energy around the area of operational excellence and where we see potential for real movement. Katharine and Marie shared handouts as resources.

Discussion comments

- Strong interdependency is required for the university to be exceptional, a matter that often gets missed because of independent colleges. How do we capture the need for interdependency? How can we raise awareness that when making decentralized decisions for colleges we should consider how the decision affects everyone else?
- How different organizations across campus use and enter data in different ways makes it challenging to know how to use our data.
- The data governance committee that Margery chairs is working on getting a handle on this issue, but it will take an understanding of the impact of individual decisions and the way we enter and use data. Data governance on this campus is not well embraced, informed or developed, and yet it needs to be the more we talk about being a data driven university.
- Actionable intelligence is getting information you can “act on.” If we are to get to operational excellence, we need to receive information in a timely manner in order to act on it so that it will be impactful.
- It’s important that we have a connection with the student voice; sometimes decisions are made and we assume students will be okay with it. The earlier we can engage their feedback, the better.
- Staff voices are important as well, and the more we can get feedback from staff who are involved with processes the better.
- Any time we look at initiatives we need to keep in mind the various audiences and voices impacted. We may need to make a list of audiences, students, staff, etc, and consider what resistance they may have or if they would consider a suggestion as a great idea.
- We have received some pretty positive responses from the feedback forms so far on what we are trying to do with communication. We have another meeting scheduled to further think about how we can improve on communication and what we are doing to reach the university community and constantly remind others to give feedback.

- As we go forward, we will talk about things we know certain people will have thoughts about and/or be directly impacted by and we should take responsibility for encouraging them to use the feedback forms.
- We should look at these strategic planning processes in a very situational way based on the circumstances of the window we are covering; what are the situations occurring over the next ten year period the plan will cover? We hear resources will be tight, and should think about that when making recommendations considering employees retiring, student enrollment going up or down, and the economy during that period. It's important to understand that students will be different socially over the next 10 years.
- Marie and Katharine will put together information from this meeting and synthesize what we've heard to help move us forward. We should think about ideas and strategies as workforce and student demographics change.
- There are big areas we should think about; and one challenge of someone who is involved in policy and process creation and implementation is the tension between giving people as much flexibility as possible while managing institutional risk. How do we think about institutional effectiveness and operational strength as an institution? One of the things we will have to wrangle with in all of the major areas where we might deal with operational excellence is where is the best balancing point? Part of that is driven by the environment we are in, whether that's the legislative or legal environment; or other structures that are imposed from the outside.
- We have talked about scarcity of resources but there are pockets that have resources but don't have access to the information they need. One of the things to look at would be how the data system currently works. Right now there are a number of things that could be automated in my unit but I don't have access to the data that is required to do it. The way the system currently works is very informal, some requests are granted while other requests may be pending for over 2 years. Getting that data to the people who can actually make use of it would certainly help with the automation that's needed across campus.
- Some of us take an external perspective with the donor and alumni population, and we're looking at making it easier to do business with NC State, and how operational excellence impacts our donors and their engagement. We are trying to emulate that we are the best that we can be.
- It may be easy to implement complex things, but we have to think about making it easy for the audience.
- To piggyback on an earlier comment, there are a lot of different areas working on different things without access to data. Also, there are a lot of different areas working in

silos and working on something that could potentially help the whole campus. Someone else could be working on the exact same thing and we just don't know so the communication piece would be really important to avoid duplication of efforts because that is inefficient.

- I am appreciative of all the reflections that people have shared, and I felt a great deal of alignment and shared interest in many of the issues raised. I'm actually very encouraged and particularly pleased to hear about doing an environmental scan and think it would be very instructive. The ability to think strategically about what's happening in the environment from a resource perspective as well as an enrollment view and the potential decrease in college age students in the next ten years is crucial.
- How are we going to know if we implement certain strategies that we will improve? Do we have metrics on turnaround service and times? How will we know if we have improved? How do we know if we are making a difference, impact or change? How did we improve from the last 10 years?
- The university has lots of levels of data, but we're still immature collectively to create baseline metrics and measures in customer service. We need to create a baseline to determine how to improve, how to measure our data to determine if we have or still need to improve.
- There are metrics posted on the previous strategic plan website, not measuring single actions but more of a high level view.
- What gets measured gets done, and we've already heard about things that are extremely hard to measure such as collaboration and interdisciplinary work. We may need to urge units to take metrics and to think about how to move forward when there are no metrics and things are more qualitative.
- Some of what we do have is a great deal of survey data and measurements around this topic. The employee engagement survey specifically identified operational excellence as one of the goals that we are working towards improving so we have measures of self assessment, opinions, and perceptions about things like interdisciplinary work.
- What they see in development is pockets of development activities without accountability, which creates a poor public face for the institution and a challenge for management. I would love to see a process to address some issues around authority, structure, and accountability.
- We are often working on the same problem in different areas, coming up with completely different solutions. Some solutions might be particularly effective and some may be actionable, and that is an effectiveness issue that is a fundamental issue.

- There are so many different systems that could be used and we're often not collecting the same data.
- We have a lot of intractable problems, how to make a list of what those problems are and whether they can be articulated so we can act on them, how to frame the discussion so we can develop lists of things that we want to work on.

Closing thoughts and plans

We will be posting things to our task force folder on Google drive. We distributed paper handouts today and in the future will post information directly to our Google folder. We encourage everyone to use our [Google folder](#). There may be ways to reflect on what we've already done in the sphere of operational excellence and where we'd like to build on the work of the existing strategic plan. We don't have to think about what we are going to do to continue the work of the previous plan, and we may need to pay more attention to new things, the handouts might be useful for thinking about where we are now.

Kelly will provide each task force with a list of questions from the initial planning meeting in September and how the questions were used to create each task force.

If there are any other resources anyone thinks would be helpful, please share with the co-chairs, anything that can inform our work we can populate for the group to share. The co-chairs are also open to suggestions on how to frame the next stage of work; monthly meetings may not be enough, and we will likely need to meet more frequently; thoughts?

Since we have to finish our work in a hurry, by June, we may not have enough time to allow things to percolate, and we don't want to just produce a plan to say we finished, the university deserves more and we want to do it right.

How can we best maximize our time as a group, trying to think about the work that needs to be done by April to write a report in May to deliver in June.

Margery stated the reports are documents to help inform the larger strategic plan, not the implementation plan. There will be five working groups charged with creating the implementation plan which is part of phase two.

Provost Arden pointed out we should not get lost in the weeds which will be a big challenge for each of us. Perhaps we can use the charge memo to help keep us focused and out of weeds.

If there are challenging ideas proposed, how can we present them without individualizing to a specific person and still be transparent? One suggestion is for members to email the co-chairs and they will decide how to use the information.

If we're going to be honest, we may have to be critical about how we're doing things and speak truth, but consider how to frame the information.

How should we schedule meetings to allow us to continue moving forward? Each of us have spent days doing this in our unit, why wouldn't we commit to doing the same for the university?

We will try to find full day meeting times and ask that we all stay flexible as we try to keep moving forward. Also, please consider sending a designee if you can't attend one of the scheduled meetings and we plan to always allow remote participation.