Strengthening University-Wide Interdisciplinarity
University Strategic Planning Task Force
Second Meeting

February 28, 2020
Winslow Hall

In Attendance: Paul Lunn, Fred Wright, Jenny Evans, Kelly Wick, Kevin FitzGerald, Jason Delborne, Amy Grunden, Peter Harries, David Hawley, Jonathan Horowitz, Blair Kelley, Bob Kelly, Jennifer Kuzma, Jane Lubischer, Chris McGahan, Ross Meentemeyer, Jorge Piedrahita, Joshua Pierce and Rob Smart.

Not in Attendance: John Begeny, Owen Duckworth, Sarah Desmarais, Mostakima Lubna, and Bret Smith.

Approval of February 21 Meeting Minutes

1. **General Discussion**

The scope of the task force was discussed, and it was agreed that it should be the broad application of interdisciplinarity to university activity. This means education, engagement and outreach in addition to research. As per the original charge, this focus must be on bold thinking. One of the barriers to implementing and supporting interdisciplinarity is the lack of specific structures for this purpose, compared to disciplinary work, which is frequently supported by departments and other organizational college platforms.

2. **Definition of Interdisciplinarity (ID)**

Piedrahita said it is not just the merging of fields, but it is also the collaboration of more than one discipline. It is common to use the term incorrectly. Lubischer said it'll be important to establish a common language. Comments were made that is means more than research, and ID needs to fit the needs of NC State as well. Delborne said it might be good to have a definition for ID research and ID education/studies. Lunn suggested creating a group that would focus on defining a working definition for this task force. Wright did a search for ID on NC State's website. The term came up 23 times in a Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure (RPT) policy document. Kelley said the definition might need to vary based on its context. A sub-group was assigned to work as follows:

Kelley, Harries, Delborne, Smart and Lubischer. Their charge is to provide a suggested definition(s) of ID.

Note: First draft to be done in 10 days and in advance of the meetings every two weeks. This way everyone can review documents prior to the meetings rather than at the meetings.

3. **Why do we want and need ID? What advantages does an ID approach bring?**

Kelly said ID helps attract top faculty. He was on the task force last time on ID. Lubischer mentioned inclusivity is an important component of ID. Grunden said it is important to focus on this. Kuzma commented it can still be a challenge to come to NC State as an ID researcher as opposed to a discipline-based researcher. Delborne and Piedrahita echoed Kuzma. Wright said he sees this point being a main focus of the first few pages of the report – providing a strong

justification for the initiative and the opportunity it represents. Lubischer suggests starting a Google Doc bullet list to develop these arguments. Lunn said this will be a working document for this committee. Everyone will need to contribute between meetings. The updates will be reviewed during the meetings.

Google Doc → Task Force Input Documents → Advantages of Interdisciplinarity

4. **Models of success, internal or external**

Wright said to look for bold initiatives at other institutions. This will be another Google Doc containing bullet lists of examples; Lubischer suggested creating buckets (e.g., graduate education, undergraduate education, research, etc.). Both successes and failures in ID at other institutions should be considered.

Google Doc → Task Force Input Documents → Models of Success

5. **What is here now, and what have we accomplished in 2011-2020?**

    a. **Overview of previous strategic plan (white paper attached)**

There was a general discussion of the previous report.

    b. **How can interdisciplinarity and its successes be measured?**

Piedrahita said this is difficult to measure. Meentemeyer said his group uses number of publications, number of fellows, successful launch of a Ph.D. program and a new undergraduate minor (from dozens of majors across campus) as ways to measure success. Kelley's group is focused on undergraduates, and they look at the students' successes as measurements. She said some of the proposed surveys could be helpful in how groups measure ID. Kuzma said a hard measure to quantify is the "magnet and tentacle" parts of people collaborating. Piedrahita mentioned the CMI model is "virtual" and noted multiple models can be successful. Another Google Doc bullet list was created for task force input to list strategies for measurement of success.

Google Doc → Task Force Input Documents → Measurements of success

    c. **Assessment possible strategies**
        i. **Poll CFEP Clusters & Focus Groups with Cluster Leads**
        ii. **Poll Centers/Institutes & Focus Groups with Center/Institute Leads**
        iii. **Poll Graduate and Undergraduate Programs/Students**

Lunn asked, "should we poll these groups?" in regards to their experiences with interdisciplinarity, successes, challenges etc. The task force agreed. Horowitz said there are 45 centers and institutes. It might be good to highlight successes and failures. For failures, why did this happen? Wright said it is important to have contact and engage with the university community. Lubischer asked, "what would we assess?" Lunn said questions would focus on the charge of the task force. Grunden said including department heads who have CFEP faculty is important. Smart said formulating the right questions will be important. Horowitz said including the question, "Do you have suggestions for changes?", then those individuals can be invited to the focus groups and/or Town Hall discussions. Lubischer suggested adding a fourth group

(faculty senators) to the groups to poll. Hawley suggested adding a fifth group (staff senators) so staff are not excluded. Harries suggested the survey links can be published on the website. Wick said the overall strategic plan group is also meeting with all communication directors/units to make sure messaging is consistent across campus. Another Google Doc bullet list was created for task force input to list strategies.

Google Doc → Task Force Input Documents → Potential survey questions

6. **Proposed agenda for the next meeting**

The next meeting will be Friday, March 13 from 3-5 p.m.