

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

Letter from the Dean

October 23, 2009

This week you received an email from Professor R. Allen Hays inviting you to attend the CSBS Strategic Planning sessions on November 2nd and 16th. Strategic planning sounds like one of those processes in which we invest time and effort, only to have the report filed away somewhere. Given past practices, there is some justification for this cynicism. But we cannot continue to address the serious challenges that face us, including the most difficult economic crisis to hit UNI in recent memory, through short term thinking and ad hoc policies. Among the things a strategic plan allows us to do:

1. Develop a mission and vision for the college that defines what we stand for, helping those outside the college better understand what it is we do in CSBS.
2. To make rational and objective decisions based on agreed upon priorities and goals, which are especially important as we talk about classes, reorganizations, budgets, research grants, etc...
3. Assess potential threats and opportunities, allowing us to make decisions that truly reflect the interests of the college.
4. Have a metric by which we can judge if we are making progress or falling behind on achieving our goals.

A strategic plan is a living document that informs decisions on a daily basis. Every department in the college currently has a strategic plan and should be taking this opportunity to revise it, once the college plan is in place. Departments should also make sure they are using their plans in an active way to guide decision making and prioritization. For strategic planning to succeed, there needs to be "buy-in" from everyone in the college. All voices need to be heard, which is why I am asking faculty to attend at least one of the sessions mentioned above.

If what we produce is to have a meaningful impact, we will have to "routinize" and thereby institutionalize the strategic planning process, ensuring that it begins to permeate all levels of decision making in the college. To this end, an annual assessment of progress has been developed based on the following:

1. The CSBS Strategic Planning Committee is a permanent committee charged with overseeing an annual assessment of progress made in realizing all goals and action steps as well as revising goals/action steps, at the end of every spring semester.
2. The annual revision of the strategic plan will be submitted to the Dean and College Senate in writing for approval and the updated version will be posted on the CSBS website and sent to all Heads & Directors by May 1.
3. In the fall, the Dean will review progress on goals and action steps, along with revisions, with members of the faculty at the annual state of the college speech.

As most of you know, the university is also beginning a strategic planning process which is to result in a new plan by March 1, 2010. Kent Sandstrom, Anne Woodrick and I were asked to be on that committee. We will work to ensure that the CSBS plan is "in sync" with the university plan. It was disconcerting at Wednesday's university strategic planning town hall to see far more people from the non-academic units than faculty. If the university plan is to reflect faculty priorities and interests it is essential that input be received from faculty. There will be future opportunities to do so, both in meetings as well as online, and I would urge all of you to make your voices heard.

As always, please feel free to share your thoughts with me.

Best Regards

Phil