Minutes from the Strategic Planning Steering Committee meeting
Friday, November 21, 2008

Attending: Gail Hackett, Crisanne Arnold, Karen Dace, Jennifer DeHaemers, Lawrence Dreyfus, Sandra Gault, Mary Lou Hines, Sarah Morris, Nancy Murdock, Bonnie Postlethwaite, John Purk, Walt Rychlewski, Bob Simmons, Lisen Tammeus, Kevin Truman, Gary Ebersole, Mel Tyler, Mary Pat Henry, Bridgett Johnson, James Sheppard, Michael Strait, Larry Bunce, Margaret Brommelsiek, Troy Lillebo, Hugh Zimmer (via phone), Joy Wheeler

Absent: Steve Stroud, Thad Wilson, Paul Cuddy, Adam Brown, Patricia Marken, Meghann Martens, Jeff Thomas

Ex-Officio absent: Leo Morton, John Readey

Recorder: Mary Allen

Welcome and Introductions – Gail Hackett/Joy Wheeler

Dr. Hackett convened the meeting at 7:34 a.m. and proceeded to turn the meeting over to Joy Wheeler. Ms. Wheeler expressed her excitement in working with UMKC and assisting with this project.

Review Meeting Minutes from October 31, 2008 - Joy Wheeler

Copies of the minutes from October 31 were distributed to the membership in advance of today’s meeting. Ms. Wheeler asked the committee if there were any changes to the minutes, or comments relative to the information recorded. The membership was advised that it is important to review the minutes prior to each meeting in order to make any necessary corrections.

Progress Review: Sub-committee Formation - Gail Hackett

Dr. Hackett stated that the real work of this group will be to provide oversight of the various sub-committees. Membership rosters were distributed at today’s meeting for the three sub-committees that have been formed: Undergraduate Education-Student Success (co-chaired by Mel Tyler and Cindy Pemberton); Visual Performing Arts (co-chaired by Peter Witte and Jeff Rydberg-Cox); and Life and Health Sciences Committee (chaired by Lawrence Dreyfus). Work is underway to finalize the membership of the following sub-committees: Urban Vision/Community Engagement (to be chaired by Joy Swallow); and Diversity/Campus Culture. Dr. Hackett stated that the work of the sub-committees already formed should proceed. Work will progress to complete the membership rosters of the remaining sub-committees. Dr. Hackett has solicited names of individuals to serve on the Science and Technology Committee, but more names need to be added. Also, a chair remains to be identified for the Economic Development sub-committee. All sub-committees will have representation from the Faculty Senate. Dr. Hackett expressed her desire to have all sub-committee rosters finalized by Thanksgiving, as well as assurances of those asked to serve. It is her hope that all of the sub-committees will have had a chance to meet once before the end of the year.

Further, we are looking into the possibility of bringing all sub-committee members together for a general discussion, and this topic will be discussed at a later date.

Troy Lillebo updated the committee on the status of the Trustees’ participation in the strategic planning process. At the last full Board of Trustees meeting, members were asked to volunteer to serve on one of the sub-committees. Doranne Hudson and Tom Bloch collected the names, and one Trustee has been appointed
to serve on each of the sub-committees. Mr. Zimmer stated that this is in line with the Trustees’ initiative to be more fully engaged with the work of the University.

Dr. Hackett again stated the importance of the sub-committees’ work, and how very important it is to get the rosters finalized as our timeframe for completion of the plan remains tight.

Michael Strait asked if representatives from the Staff Council will be seated on each of the sub-committees. Dr. Hackett stated that representatives from the Faculty Senate are serving on the sub-committees because the charge of each committee has implications relative to academics. However, she will work with Mr. Strait to ensure staff representation on each of the sub-committees.

**Presentation: US News and World Report “America’s Best Colleges” (Gail Hackett)**

Ms. Wheeler stated that the work of the committee will be to address the question “how do we define UMKC as an urban serving university. What does it mean to Kansas City? To answer that question, we need to look at benchmarks. At this point in the meeting, Gail Hackett gave a presentation with statistics generated from *US News and World Report*. This information will be used to assist this group to better identify our peer institutions, who in turn, can serve as models for UMKC as we proceed with our strategic plan. Dr. Hackett stated that the UMKC Strategic Planning Steering Committee website is populated with a large number of reports. She is uncertain whether any of this information is annotated, but her office will try to add text to help weigh through the reports. One report that everyone should be familiar with is the “Time to Get it Right” report, as well as its follow up report (“Time to Get Things Done”). These documents are key to our campus and to the community. Mr. Zimmer remarked that these reports have been read by many people, and prepared by the best academic minds in the country. These reports should be considered as something of “bible” in terms of their significance, and the fact that both are referred back to for important information.

Dr. Hackett proceeded with the presentation, advising that it is really important that we understand the national context of our university. It is helpful to look at benchmarks, and given that, it is also important to understand that as popular as the rankings are from *US News*, it is not without problems. Quite a few of the metrics are used as measuring tools for us, and are useful. But the problematic aspect is the misplaced precision in terms of the rankings, which are not very meaningful. Nevertheless, these are looked at widely and we need to pay attention to the data. Dr. Hackett recognized the efforts of Larry Bunce and his team in pulling together the information for today’s presentation. This is just a first look, and as we review other rankings and data, that information too, will be shared with this committee.

UMKC is in the third tier of schools, and the presentation reflected the schools comparable to us. We are ahead of some fourth tier schools that we would think as being ahead of us. The peer assessment is a subjective rating, basically built on academic reputation. UMKC's metric drags down in the rating under six year graduation rates. This is an important classification. Freshmen retention in degree programs takes into consideration only first-time, full-time students. Transfer students are not included in this category. The metric indicates whether students return for a second year. This is the single best indicator as to whether a student will graduate. Six years is now the indicator used to measure graduation rather than four years. In terms of our demographic, we underperform in this category, coming in at 43%, -18% in comparison to the other schools in our peer group. Dr. Hackett advised that all of these metrics are skewed to the elite schools, which is one of the problems with *US News* reporting. Mr. Zimmer mentioned that Forbes magazine is looking to correct this problem with its own rankings, but even with that, it does not help UMKC. Dr. Hackett stated she did not think it corrected *US News*, and will bring data to support that conclusion.

One aspect affecting our retention numbers is that our selectivity is so high. Additionally, we also have a much higher part-time student enrollment. Traditionally, these students graduate at a lower rate. Data is available concerning this and it will be made available to the committee. There is also a financial loss to the institution when these students don’t graduate, adding to the human costs.
Under Faculty Resources, US News assumes that institutions are committed to instruction and will put money into smaller classes, etc. UMKC is situated in the first tier in this category. This is something that is a big advantage to our institution because of the faculty to student ratio with smaller class sizes. However, we don’t exploit this advantage in a positive way. This information should be the leading talking point when making our case to prospective students.

When benchmarking, we look at our peers as MU, KU, and K-State, when in fact these schools are not really our peers. Our peers are other urban-serving institutions. We have a list of those institutions, which number ca. 24, all of which are urban institutions. The peers are categorized under two headings: aspirational peers and operational peers. As it implies, aspirational peers are those schools we wish to be like. More in line as our aspirational peers are Temple, UIC, and Cincinnati, whereby we can set benchmarks to reach comparative status with these institutions within a five- to ten-year window. Operational peers are those institutions in approximately the same place as UMKC, but not entirely equivalent.

Graduate retention is an area that remains our challenge. In order to address this, we will need to be creative as we seek solutions. Perhaps work experience would be incorporated as part of the curriculum. Another possibility is to figure out ways for students to obtain internship credit. Mr. Tyler stated that ample opportunities exists for internships, but that UMKC does not have a central clearinghouse where students can go to see what is available. It is advantageous for students to be employed on campus while attending school. As we look at ways to support students while they are working, we should also encourage them to enroll as full-time students. The likelihood that students will graduate is increased when they commit to full-time enrollment status.

Action:
Dr. Hackett advised that she will place on the website a copy of the Boyer Commission Report on Higher Education. In the late 90’s, the commission looked at undergraduate enrollment in research universities and established a set of principles for best practices citing the advantages of research opportunities for undergraduates. Undergraduates can benefit greatly in a research university.

As for UMKC, we don’t always talk about what we do that sets us apart, i.e.:
- Access to research as an undergraduate;
- International experience;
- Small class sizes; and
- Access to faculty.

Apart from those items listed above, we need to advertise what it is that does distinguish us as a liberal arts institution. This is something that we need to discuss as we lay out our strategic plan. We need to get to the point where we all have the same elevator speech.

Ms. Morris noted that materials sent to prospective students do include these talking points, but what is missing is integration of marketing efforts. The message is not resonating and we need to be pervasive in communicating to the community who we are and what we offer.

Dr. Hackett recommended that we consider the possibility of establishing an honors college, which will be beneficial to us in generating scholars and recruiting students in arts and sciences versus professional schools. We need to recruit National Merit Scholars in the Kansas City region, particularly students of color. Hopefully, they would transition from an undergraduate curriculum to graduate/professional programs at UMKC. Mr. Zimmer stated that we are half-way there if we look at what we have done in terms of our Trustee Scholars. We need more diversity in our scholarly ranks to include national Hispanic scholars and other top scholars. By doing so, we create an intellectual atmosphere on campus. Most public research
universities have an honors college in order to create a small liberal arts college feel, in addition to recruiting top students.

**Action:**
Ms. Wheeler asked if there is interest in establishing an internship credit exchange effort at UMKC. Mr. Zimmer explained that this has been done to some degree in the past, and it may be worthwhile to discuss with the Trustees as a starting point. This may present an opportunity to increase graduation rates and further trustee engagement. Mr. Zimmer and Ms. Wheeler will discuss this further.

**Action:**
Alumni Giving Rate – One other deficiency communicated in *US News Report* is that of alumni giving. UMKC ranks low in this category, and this will need to be addressed as we set into motion our plans for the Foundation. Dr. Hackett will discuss this further with representatives from the UMKC Advancement Division.

**Next Steps – (Joy Wheeler)**

**Action:**
We will continue to explore the possibility of a launch meeting for all the sub-committees. The subgroups need to get started. They will receive the same materials that the steering committee has received.

Today’s Presentation will be placed on the Strategic Planning Steering Committee website.

The next meeting of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee will take place on December 5. At that time, the group will discuss the Strategic Planning template. Again, the steering committee will oversee the work of the sub-committees and those groups will report back to this group. The template will serve as a guide for the strategic plan, enabling continuity for reporting back to the larger committee. If members have seen anything comparable, please share with this group.

Dr. Hackett asked for assistance in identifying a chair for the Economic Development sub-committee.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 8:55 a.m.