Strategic Plan Connections Working Group Meeting
November 17, 2010
President’s Conference Room

9:00 a.m.

In attendance: Sylvia DeVault, Dennis Malfatti, Phil Plisky, Kyle Coulson, Cat Moore, Talitha Washington, Marge Soyugenc, Lynne Renne, Jerrilee Lamar, Joyce Stamm, Gene Wells

-Meeting began with introductions of members

-An update of the Strategic Plan timeline and deadlines was discussed followed by a discussion of future meeting dates and goals for the Connections working group. Our final recommendations are due January 12, 2011. The next meetings are scheduled for Tuesday, November 30 from 9 – 11 a.m. and Wednesday, December 8, from 9 – 11 a.m. Both meetings will be in room 70 of the Schroeder Family School of Business Administration Building.

-Results of the office surveys were presented, as they appear on the Sharepoint (completed surveys were projected on screen for group view)

-First survey discussed was Adult Education:

- The comment was made that the offerings of Adult Education should extend to children as well as adults. It was commented that in the past, this was the case (i.e. summer swim program, Evansville Children’s Choir, etc.). It was proposed that there should an office of “continuing education” or “community education” for all age groups (including whole families) such as an art and music camp, sports programs, engineering program, etc. It was suggested that these programs be centralized. It was also recommended by both the survey and members of the group that adults and other guests coming to campus must have easy access to parking (“concierge” service was the language used in the survey.) A comparison was made to USI which has easy access to parking for guests.

-It was recommended that Adult Education offers non-degree programs for current professionals to take courses on new technologies in their field, new teaching strategies, brush-up courses, and perhaps certificate programs.

-The Wednesday Morning program was discussed. Although it is an important component for Adult Education (as expressed in survey), it is not well publicized. This led to a general discussion about how well the university publicizes events, and the university’s approach to marketing, specifically the website:

There was consensus that both the look and the content of the university’s web site is not up to date. Good web exposure is key to effective community connections (including alumni, prospective students, etc.) Members of the group felt that every department needs a web master who is able to receive regular training on web site design and technology. There were also comments that communication is poor and difficult between individual departments and the
Office of University Relations and Office of Technology Services regarding web site updating, design, etc. Departments who do keep their web sites current do not have sufficient technological sophistication to be able to interface well with the university’s webmaster. Departments that do take the initiative to create their own websites do not receive sufficient support or timely responses to requests for assistance from University Relations. The survey noted that the Office of University Relations is very understaffed which may explain problems with the web site. There was a recommendation to team up with the Communications Department to use UE student interns to assist departments with web site design and upkeep as well as keeping social media updated.

- The discussion of the website led to a general discussion of the university’s overall marketing. The university needs an office that consolidates all marketing activity, specifically web site and social media. A comparison was made to other institutions which have a Vice President for Marketing. There was general consensus that there needed to be more centralization of all the university’s marketing efforts (including at the departmental level), that there needs to be regular training for members of each department for web and social media, and a regular commitment to keeping all information current and accurate.

- It was stated that faculty in academic departments have too heavy a workload and too many responsibilities to also have to keep their unit’s web sites current.

- The next survey discussed was Career Services:

- Gene Wells was on hand to talk the group through his survey responses. A significant challenge is attracting big name employers to University of Evansville. Currently, the office relies on an interconnected network of contacts that include UE faculty, alumni, employers, and the overall community.

- In two years, stipends from the Lilly Endowment for all UE students who participate in experiential learning will expire. From 2002-2010, the number of students who participated in experiential learning nearly doubled, affirming the value of this program. It was recommended that this endowment for stipends be extended.

- The next survey discussed was Religious Life:

- A comment was made that when discussing “community connections,” the religious community should be included in that. Members of the group noted that, based on the survey, there are a number of community connection activities happening through religious life that they had not known about.

- It was noted that the survey results stated a lack of sufficient and accurate web exposure. The earlier points about more professional assistance for departmental web pages was reiterated.

- The next survey discussed was Alumni Office and Parent Relations:
- Sylvia DeVault was on hand to talk the group through the survey responses. The UE-Magazine and electronic communications are successful in that people are reading them. Alumni surveys indicate that while students are pleased with their UE education and experience, they do not feel connected to the institution after graduation or to a wider UE alumni community. The Alumni Office is working on a survey to ascertain as to why this is the case. It was stated that there is a particular gap in alumni activity among those who graduated from 1970-1990 (older graduates and more recent graduates tend to stay more connected with the university.) It was suggested that the earlier items of offering more community education opportunity especially for families with young children could help fill this gap.

-Similar to Career Services, the operations of the Office of Alumni and Parent Relations will be impacted when the Lilly grant expires. Funding for one position and the annual fee for the online community are covered by this grant.

-A recommendation was made that invitations to UE events from the Alumni Office be targeted so that events in a specific department or college target alumni from those areas when inviting to events or announcing special events, news, etc. Currently the Alumni Office contacts department chairs twice a year for updates on activities in their departments to be sent to alumni. The recommendation was made that the Alumni Office query the entire faculty for updates since department chairs often do not have the time to respond.

-There followed a discussion of what is meant by “community.” It was suggested that community have four components:

1) The Campus Community
2) The local (Evansville) and regional (Tri-State) community
3) Alumni (which could expand to an international base)
4) The United Methodist Church on a state-wide level.

The Meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Minutes: Dennis Malfatti