

Treatment of Areas of Focus

Provided below are excerpts from our letter of interest, and a more detailed treatment.

➔ From Letter of Interest Dated March 19, 2019

Areas of Interest for PRT Assistance

The purpose for requesting a PRT is to assist with key components of our newly established **Plan for Engagement**, and to consider re-structuring and streamlining the governance system to focus more strategically on the collaborative work of the College. Developed by a sub-group of our College Planning Council (CPC), and subsequently approved by the CPC, this Plan is especially relevant as the College prepares to launch its 5-year Strategic Plan (2019-2024), and transitions into its second full year of **college redesign** – Hartnell’s approach to the Chancellor’s Office’s guided pathways initiative.

The first year of college redesign (2018-19) focused primarily on inquiry. In the second year (2019-20), we will begin vetting and potentially implementing designs for change. While we specifically desire to engage increasingly larger numbers of folks in the college redesign process into the next several years, we more fundamentally view employee engagement in governance and the workplace as a critical driver to more fully transitioning to a high performance organization.

Rationale for Areas of Focus

The perceived need to deepen institutional dialogue and engagement was partly an outgrowth of concerns about appropriate constituent group representation in participatory governance initially discussed at the CPC in AY 2018-19. These and related conversations resulted in the decision to establish a small but diverse work group of faculty, staff, and students in spring 2019, toward the aim of developing and forwarding recommendations on this topic to the CPC. The group convened through a series of six meetings, including small constituent group convenings held in Fall 2018 with an external consultant. The robust discussion that ensued among work group members culminated in a set of six recommended strategies, with associated action items, for improving employee engagement.

Whereas the effectiveness of all councils and the governance system overall are evaluated every two years, and improvements have regularly been considered and instituted, the confluence of the imminent launch of a new strategic plan, including the alignment of goals and metrics with the **Vision for Success**, and the expanded efforts of college re-design, provide an opportune juncture to consider alternative governance structures that may additionally contribute to greater collaboration and ensuring a high performance organization.

We therefore seek assistance from team members who can advise us how we might best implement the strategies in the **Plan for Engagement**, which may relatedly entail re-structuring and streamlining the largely divisionally-based governance councils, and/or embedding the ongoing work of college re-design and other strategic priorities into a more effective governance system.

Relationship of Areas of Focus to Core Commitments in Vision for Success

The governing board adopted four goals for the strategic planning period from 2019-2024, namely, to increase student completion, increase student completion efficiency, increase student transfer to 4-year institutions, and improve student employment opportunities subsequent to completion or training. These goals are aligned with goals in the system-wide **Vision for Success**. Expanding and deepening employee engagement in college re-design, through the governance system, and more generally in the strategic work of the College, will bring about a heightened commitment to mission and vision, and allow for enhanced collaborative and synergistic efforts directed to improving student achievement across all four goals.

→ Detailed Treatment

Questions for PRT to Consider Concerning Employee Engagement & Status of Recent Efforts:

Jill Christensen, employee engagement consultant, refers to three types of employees: those who are “engaged,” who feel a “profound emotional connection” to the organization; those who are “disengaged,” who are “sleepwalking through the day,” “putting time but not creativity, energy, or passion into their work”; and those who are “actively disengaged,” who are “busy acting out their lack of engagement” by “undermining what their engaged co-workers accomplished.”

- ***Given Hartnell’s strategic priorities moving forward focused on markedly increasing student success, how can we maximize the number of employees in the “engaged” category and minimize or eliminate those in the “actively disengaged” category?*** It would be most helpful for the PRT to identify which issues are at play with respect to this important strategic question. Suggested alternative or complementary explanations for a sub-optimal level of fully engaged employees focus on the following: issues of organizational culture; distrust across constituent groups or with the governing board, including an “us vs. them” philosophy; loose coupling of employees, their work, and priorities, with institutional level priorities; the roles that inspiration, college pride, orientation, mentorship, cohesive team-building, and validation could play in grounding and motivating employees; and factors that contribute to employee burnout. ***How do we build trust and motivate employees to reach their fullest potential toward the aim of markedly increasing student success?***

The College Planning Council-approved ***Plan for Engagement*** includes six strategies for engaging employees in the work of the College. The following questions are based on these strategies (**please refer to the Plan for specific action items within each strategy**):

- **How can we most effectively improve communication and communication flow?** We have recently made improvements to our website design and features, which provide additional options for online communication. Interactive communications in person or otherwise are however felt to be particularly important relative to deepening institutional dialogue on key issues and challenges. More fully embracing technology tools to allow for virtual participation in meetings—i.e., to accommodate folks who otherwise find it challenging at best to attend meetings in person—may be an important way to improve communication and expand participation.
- **How can we boost participation in institutional dialogue about strategic priorities?** We plan to conduct an employee engagement survey in September 2019 to gauge employee engagement levels; this will provide baseline data to the PRT and the College for review and action-taking.
- **How can we strengthen cooperative interactions?** In order to achieve the strategic plan goals and for the college redesign process to succeed, it is essential that work transcend the unit and committee levels, ensuring that collaborative efforts and activities are expanded across the institution. The College has added some positions to councils in recent history for greater representation and balance among constituent groups; some folks continue to perceive that unequal power dynamics remain among groups. The College has over the past several years implemented an employee recognition program, although it was largely focused on one annual event, and these recognitions have not been done since late Fall 2017. Discussion is underway concerning additional ways to recognize employees for their work.

- **How can we increase employee responsiveness?** There's a sense that effective provision of student customer service differs across units, and that customer service training would be useful for all service providers at the College. Various types of operational inefficiencies are notable, such as those related to manual paperwork processing; a task force formed in AY 2018-19 is starting to deal with these issues. Judging anecdotally by the length of time it sometimes takes to get tasks done, accountability for follow-through appears to be loosely monitored. This calls into question whether clear expectations exist for employees with respect to their responsiveness at the task level, and more fundamentally leads to the conclusion that a greater sense of urgency needs to be communicated and understood about institutional priorities.
- **How can we align activities with institutional goals and strategic priorities?** It is critical that employees appreciate the need for change and the urgency for making change. Starting from the time that employees begin work at the College through the undertaking of their individual job responsibilities and performance evaluation, there appears to be a lack of clarity with respect to how their role and work at the unit level is linked, directed, and contributes to institutional level priorities. A related issue is that succession planning is infrequently done at best. A vexing issue concerns how as an institution we can stop doing things in view of strategic priorities: many if not most employees perceive that their plate of work is filled if not overflowing; how can tasks be strategically re-prioritized as low on the work to-do list and/or moved off the list?
- **How can we best expand shared leadership?** The College has followed a model whereby important committees are typically co-chaired by a faculty member and an administrator. More recently, tri-leads – faculty, staff, and administrators – have been established for the college redesign teams. A leadership institute for all managers was implemented in AY 2018-19; an expanded institute to include faculty and staff is planned for AY 2019-20.

Questions for PRT to Consider Concerning the Governance System & Status of Recent Efforts:

- **To what extent is the current governance and decision-making model, including its structures, processes, and interrelationships, most effectively and efficiently focused on making concerted headway on strategic institutional priorities and student success issues?** Based on participant surveys, recent evaluations of governance effectiveness indicate that the overall governance structure and individual councils are effective. Review and reconsideration of the governance structure is however desired in view of the new strategic planning horizon (2019-2024), the strategic plan goals, and college redesign work.
- **Are governance bodies—including but not limited to councils and committees—structured to most effectively contribute to the work of the College? Is a strategic governance agenda needed to guide yearly governance activities?** Agendas for governance meetings are typically established separately for each committee and, but for information items that become action items in second readings, tend to be established independently for each scheduled meeting of any specific group.
- **Are agenda items and time spent at governance and operational meetings proportional to the priority of issues facing the College? How can meetings best be planned and facilitated to both encourage engagement and allow for productive outcomes, that is, to ensure that the voices of participants are welcomed and heard, and that agenda items and deliberations are action-oriented?** There's a question as to whether we need to hold so many governance and operational meetings. Meetings should be sufficiently important relative to the time and resources consumed.