

LOOKING FORWARD REPORT

PROJECT OVERVIEW

At the end of 2014 President Kristin Esterberg asked the Faculty Senate to survey campus community members regarding the strengths, weaknesses, and needs of the campus as well as to reflect on what SUNY Potsdam might look like in its third century. The Faculty Senate executive committee subsequently charged the Goals and Planning Committee to undertake this project with the stated goal of collecting information as part of the President's initiative to develop a campus strategic plan.

The Goals and Planning Committee sought input from multiple stakeholders (i.e., students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community) with the questions below:

1. What will our student body look like?
2. Who are we as an institution?
3. What must the campus do to exist or compete within higher education as we enter our third century?
4. What academic areas will be sustainable as we enter our third century?
5. Where can we leverage our core competencies to be the "first movers" in emerging areas?

MARKETING

In collaboration with Public Affairs, the Goals and Planning Committee designed a project logo. Posters were posted around campus and press releases promoted the project both on and off campus, and announcements were published in the *Reporter*. A dedicated website was created, including an appearance by President Esterberg. Social media and e-mail were also used to encourage participation of stakeholders.

PROCESS

The process of collecting information began in March of 2015 and concluded at the end of the summer of 2015. In general, discussions were held with numerous stakeholder groups at department, school wide, PACES Board, and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee meetings. Each of these groups agreed to encourage their constituents to participate in the study. A website with a link to respond to an anonymous survey remained open through this period. Efforts to reach stakeholders include specific measures outlined below:

Faculty/Staff:

1. Several e-mail announcements were sent.
2. Each member of the Goals and Planning committee announced the survey in meetings, including Faculty Senate, and A&S Council.
3. A Moodle site was created which included a discussion forum designed to foster open dialogue. Faculty/staff were encouraged to provide responses through an anonymous

online survey.

Students:

1. Several e-mail announcements were sent.
2. Tabling in high traffic areas where staff and students collected responses one question at a time. Students were invited to visit multiple times and to bring their classmates.
3. 8'x12' message boards were placed in the Student Union for several weeks. Students were invited to respond to questions by drawing pictures, writing poetry or with prose.
4. Announcements were made in several classes, and a few faculty members agreed to have students complete the survey in class and submit them to a committee member.
5. Presentations were made to two student governance bodies. G&P Committee student representatives presented in a variety of student forums.
6. Students contributed through the anonymous online survey.

Community:

1. Several press releases were published in local newspapers inviting participation.
2. A letter from President Esterberg was addressed to superintendents in each school district in St. Lawrence, Franklin, Jefferson, and Lewis Counties.

Alumni:

1. Several e-mail announcements were sent.
2. Published notes in several alumni e-newsletters and several social media posts.
3. Tabling on Friday and Saturday evenings during the alumni reunion weekend.

CONCLUSION

Though the members of Goals and Planning Committee went through great efforts to gather information strategically, the return was not what the Committee had hoped for due to low participation. Moreover, the range of responses did not result in enough commonality to identify dominant themes or to, methodically, inform a strategic plan; the nature of the questions allowed for, even guaranteed, a broad range of responses. Questions specifically crafted for more narrowly defined groups might yield more information.

If any conclusion were to be made, the responses were fundamental in the sense that they mention topics that would likely be central to thinking about strategic planning, such as “lower tuition” or “increase majors”. There were few, if any, truly innovative or revolutionary suggestions for change. Nonetheless, the efforts of the Goals and Planning Committee certainly inspired thinking and conversation regarding what SUNY Potsdam will look like in our third century.