

2018-19 Community by Design Strategic Memo

August 1, 2018

Campus Community,

As we conclude the second year of implementing *Community by Design*, we continue to make progress with key initiatives that will serve our future college community. There were seven initiatives in play for the fiscal year. The *Community by Design* documents can be found at: www.mcpherson.edu/strategicplan. The following is a summary of our 2017-18 progress:

1. Grow academic programs modeled after recent program successes.

2017-18 Action: Year two of implementation will be focused on supporting academic areas with strategic planning; aligning our admissions operations with academic department planning; and defining the relationship between academic strategic planning and program reviews. **2017-18 Goal:** At least two additional academic programs complete strategic plans; documented relationship between academic strategic planning and program reviews.

Progress: There was a lot of activity in the area focused on growth through entrepreneurial faculty. Business and Education completed strategic plans, while Auto Restoration got an update. Visual Arts persisted to meet their general recruiting goal for fall 2018 through the addition of the digital media program. Natural Sciences exceeded expectations for the year and already has more applications for fall 2019 than the previous year. Admissions partnered with several faculty departments to create the Partners Across Campus (PAC) program. PAC connects the academic departmental plans with admissions and recruiting. Some form of the PAC system will drive future enrollment growth as new programs are added to increase general student enrollment. It was a difficult year of learning with good progress toward increasing general student enrollment. Plans are already being modified for the upcoming year to leverage PAC.

A major point of learning from the last year was the opportunity to build the MC brand. Leadership across campus has been working with industry experts in admissions, marketing and sales to develop a re-branding campaign provide better visibility for our programs and student experience. The campaign will include new messaging, website and digital media efforts as well as improved strategies to position McPherson College in the Kansas market and beyond.

In addition, the faculty drafted a policy to outline how departmental strategic and growth planning will connect to the program review process. This policy should be approved in the 2018-19 academic year.

2. Create experiences that support career success and are connected with curriculum.

2017-18 Action: The Enterprising MC Student model will be used with students and refined with feedback from faculty. The model will focus on engaging students who are not currently involved in some type of career experience and keeping our involved students focused on preparation to ensure career placement. Feedback through next year will be used to improve the model in 2018. **2017-18 Goal:** 95% job/graduate school placement; 50% internship placement; and new data reporting from the Enterprising MC Student Model.

Progress: The Enterprising MC Student Model was implemented in spring 2018 and activity is being tracked in a new report format. The new model will help us understand where each student fits on the model—explore, experience or engage—as well as see patterns and trends associated with activities like retention and academic performance. (Example: Will this new model help us understand if career can impact retention or improve academic performance?) Career services was an important strategy with this year's retention efforts, and we hope to continue utilizing it as a way to engage more students as well as ensure students are successful after graduation. Nearly 70% of the class of 2018 were placed in their field (nearly three times the national average), which is on target for a six-month 95% placement rate.



Based on conversations across campus we are elevating the position to Executive Director of Career and Experiential Learning. The new position will become broader to integrate other experiential services (including service learning, global travel, entrepreneurship and the debt project) that are vital to career support. The new position will work systematically to bring these other areas together over the next year. In addition, the new position will focus on not only ensuring our graduates are placed in their field, but that career becomes an adaptive engagement tool for the campus to utilize in retaining students. New leadership will temporarily report to the president's office as the new operation develops. The new job description is posted and we will be interviewing candidates in the next several weeks. Finally, we are gathering data from all our students this fall around where they are on the Enterprising MC Student Model. The data will help us move forward better understanding student's career progression and give the new Executive Director a nice start for the upcoming year.

3. Redefine the tuition revenue model to ensure affordability and institutional revenue.

2017-18 Action: Planning is in place and six students have been selected for fall 2017. The one-hour financial planning workshop has been created and other coordination is in place with the career services office. Year one of the project will include students in six different economic situations and academic levels. Data collected will be used to inform the next year's program, which will include 30 students. If the project gets off the ground as projected this fall, this initiative should be back on track for successful completion in the next four years. **2017-18**

Goal: Six students enrolled in the Student Debt Project; five of six students successfully complete year one; new data to inform 2018-19 Student Debt Project.

Progress: We completed our first year with the student debt project. Although there were only six students, we collected important data to help expand the project for 2018-19. Five of six students persisted with an average expected graduation debt of less than \$10,000. We learned the following this year that will support our plans for expanding the program:

- Students are willing to work. All students worked to contribute toward reducing their expected student loan debt.
- Working with students on financial literacy is time consuming. Finding an efficient system to scale our mentoring approach is critical. Next year students will likely work in small groups with one mentor per group. Mentors will come from local retired members of the McPherson community.
- Financial literacy occurs over time and not just during one workshop, so mentor check-ins will be more structured with important personal finance topics.
- Students can learn budgeting techniques and become disciplined at managing their finances. Three of six students spent time researching budgeting applications and are currently using a budget tool to track spending.

Thirty students are signed up for the upcoming academic year. Students will be grouped into cohorts with mentors hosting them each month and facilitating conversation around key financial literacy topics. The debt project will be a feature selling point in McPherson College's new marketing campaign. As mentioned above leadership for the debt project will come from our new Executive Director of Career and Experiential Learning.

4. Create a long-term vision for residential life.

2017-18 Action: A student experience framework will be developed by the campus to provide a guide for creating the long-term vision for our residential campus. Next year's focus will be on applying the student experience framework to living and community spaces, as well as student life programming that encourages deeper engagement. **2017-18 Goal:** Student Experience Framework in place; new initiatives created to impact living space and student life programming.

Progress: The McPherson College Student Experience Framework was completed in spring of 2018 after feedback from the board, faculty and staff. The framework provides a series of questions to guide decision making.

- How will this build community?
- Does this support deep and inclusive student engagement in and out of the classroom while supporting academic freedom?
- How does this support student learning and career success?

- Will this generate a sense of pride?
- Does the community understand the expectations, costs and benefits?

The framework was used to enhance Student Government Association, Student Activities Board and other sponsored clubs and organizations this spring. A new program to train student leaders and integrate the framework into club operations will be tested in 2018-19. New tracking and reporting will also be implemented to understand the impact of changes. Other areas are also using the framework as they develop and retool student programming.

This initiative will be integrated with the master planning process moving forward.

5. Create a phased master plan that will accommodate growth.

2017-18 Action: A comprehensive campus entry plan will be developed (including a new student center), as well as an updated campus master plan. The campus will work together to provide some initial feedback on modifications to the existing campus plan, including the new student center. **2017-18 Goal:** Campus master plan approved by the board of trustees, including a master entrance and student center plan.

Progress: A new campus entrance is in place and a campaign feasibility study is complete, with a recommendation to solicit gifts for a new student center adjacent to the campus entrance. The campus master planning process is nearly complete and the board will review it at their November 2018 meeting. Board feedback and campus feedback on the plan were in alignment. The process was productive and feedback was applied to the plan. Once the plan is approved the campus will begin work applying the McPherson College Student Experience Framework in conjunction with the new campus master plan to create a template for the future of our residential campus. The campus will be engaged in a broader community planning effort the final three years of our strategic plan considering future use of space and student programming.

6. Create a plan to build a \$1 billion endowment through extensive planned-giving efforts.

2017-18 Action: Interviews with constituents will start in late summer/early fall. Progress will be reported to the campus and a new strategy for planned giving implemented in July 2018. **2017-18 Goal:** Complete 20 interviews; over \$100M in estate commitments.

Progress: Our initiative to build a \$1 billion endowment moved forward this year with more personal visits and over \$150M of non-binding endowment commitments. The campaign feasibility study provided support for this bold goal with over a 70% approval rating. First-year conversations with constituents on planned giving were positive. Donors were motivated to share plans and commitments, but one or two public commitments will be needed to create legitimacy for this initiative. Securing a large public commitment is a priority for the next year.

7. Engage young alumni and new friends in the tradition of "Bulldog Pride."

2017-18 Action: A comprehensive plan is in place to utilize social media, a student ambassador program, prospective student referral program, affinity areas like teacher education, expanded personal visits, targeted events, and enhanced Power Day to engage alumni. **2017-18 Goal:** Execute comprehensive plan; 100 new young alumni donors.

Progress: A plan is in place to engage the future of our fundraising base. Young alumni and new gifts to MC exceeded our goal with 270 new donors. Young alumni-focused engagement (like internship and prospective student referrals) will be key to acquiring new alumni donors. Social media and digital communications will be important elements to our strategy. In addition, a new indicator report will track incremental progress on this initiative. Engaging young alumni and new friends will be a key element to our new comprehensive fundraising campaign that will be launched publicly in fall 2019.

Next Steps...

Driving growth through entrepreneurial faculty and our new PAC recruiting system proves to be our biggest challenge. We will be dependent on new academic programs and better brand recognition. Investment in both over the next few years will be critical to progress. Next year will be focused on PAC improvements, new program planning and significant brand investment.

One of the key elements of *Community by Design* is learning as we develop initiatives through experimentation. We see this in our Enterprising MC Student Model, McPherson College Student Experience Framework and Debt Project. Each of these is a pilot project that allows us to try out a new approach and adjust strategy for better results. We will build off the previous two years in each of these areas to engage more students in career preparation, align decision making with clear student experience expectations and drive more students to manage debt.

Our campus master planning process exceeded expectations this year as did our progress on the \$1B endowment. The new campus plan will be integrated over the next year with our work to create a new vision for the future of a residential campus. Feedback from the board and campus was invaluable in campus planning, while some of our key planned giving conversations have led to over \$150M in non-binding endowment commitments. Both are big pieces of our future.

The Chronicle of Higher Education recognized us for the fourth year in a row as a "Great College to Work For." And for the third year in a row, no other college was recognized in more categories than McPherson College. The campus is ready to take on the challenges ahead in our third year of *Community by Design* implementation. Next year, we will start connecting the initiatives to design our community. As we find ourselves in a position of strength, this is our year to bring the plan to life.

Thanks to each of you for making the decision to serve McPherson College.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael P. Schneider". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "S".

Michael Schneider
President