

2017 Community by Design Strategic Memo

August 15, 2016

Campus Community,

A year ago the McPherson College Board of Trustees affirmed our mission, “to develop whole persons through scholarship, participation and service.” In addition to affirming our mission they gave the campus four big goals that would put us on a trajectory of being considered one of America’s great small colleges. The goals were simple:

1. **Growth.** Based on data, a college of fewer than 1000 students is not a viable option to eighteen-year-old high school seniors. “Small” over the next few decades will mean at least 1500 students.
2. **Entrepreneurial Faculty.** Our future hinges on faculty creating attractive academic programs.
3. **Facilities.** We need to care for what we have and be thoughtful about what we need.
4. **\$1 Billion.** It is a big number, but given our constituency we need to stretch and build our endowment.

Adopting a community centered implementation process

This past fall we started a conversation on campus about turning these big goals into a strategic plan. I challenged us to think about our future differently. We decided that strategic planning was the work of our community rather than just a committee. Although planning by community versus committee was a new concept, it was quickly accepted by the campus. In addition, the campus agreed that developing a plan for our future would mean integrating the planning into our day-to-day work. Faculty allocated several full faculty meetings and divisional meetings, while staff incorporated the work into their weekly meetings. We hosted campus wide sessions and discussed our planning at every campus huddle as well as in smaller settings like coffees and lunches. You shared your ideas on our dedicated intranet strategic planning website and informally with me on the sidewalk. This yearlong dialogue, which started with our four big goals, ended in the plan—*Community by Design 2021*. The campus approved *Community by Design 2021* in May and the Board of Trustees recently approved the plan at their July meeting. At times it was an incremental grind as we thought critically about our future, but in the end the best ideas became clear leading to a focused and articulate plan. I hope many of you will find some part of yourself in this plan.

So now we are left with the question, how do we operationalize the plan? How do we take the big ideas and act? Based on feedback generated during the process and conversations with many of you since the plan was approved the attached was created—“Community by Design 2021” Implementation Plan. The plan is focused on outlining our approach to implementation and key areas of focus as well as important milestones for 2017. The community based approach to planning created momentum across campus and the plan is suggesting that we continue working as a community. This approach means that the work will be integrated into our day-to-day operations and we will be systematic about communications as well as soliciting feedback. In addition, implementation will be focused on incremental progress. Each initiative will start with an experiment or series of experiments. Experimentation allows us to spend important time asking questions, doing some research, creating space for discussion and ultimately acting through pilot projects or experiments.

A look at our 2017 priorities

You will also notice in the implementation document that we are not focused on all plan initiatives in 2017. During the planning process we talked about the importance of giving the campus time to focus on specific initiatives rather than attempting to launch them all at once. The following summary of our focal areas for 2017 attempts to address our interest in implementation based on priorities and gives us structure to take the first step in turning our big ideas into action:

Nurture entrepreneurial faculty and develop attractive academic programs:

The entrepreneurial faculty and growth initiatives are so closely connected that (based on feedback from faculty) the work done at the department level to create plans for growth will shape expectations and space for entrepreneurial faculty. So the 2017 focus for these two initiatives will be on growth.

Design and articulate the McPherson College community:

During 2017 we will focus on developing the framework for career-centered experiences starting with those experiences that are either related to Career Connections (internships and field experiences for credit) or outside the curriculum like service learning. Admissions will experiment with a debt reduction project to help us understand how best to focus energy on working with students to limit student loan debt. The entire campus will be engaged in a discussion on the future of residential life in partnership with the Kansas Leadership Center as part of our continued adaptive leadership efforts.

Two initiatives in this area will be started in later years. Creating a common theme within the general education curriculum will be a focal area starting in 2020 after we get approval from HLC for our general education assessment. The initiative centered on a

campus education program will be addressed in 2018 giving our marketing team time this year to coordinate our efforts around promoting the introduction of the *Community by Design 2021* plan.

Plan and build facilities that nurture, welcome and sustain a growing community:

It was clear during the strategic planning process that the campus along with the board thought we needed to improve our current campus entry. So, the focus of 2017 in this initiative will be to improve the campus entry while being aware of our aesthetic brand. A phased master capital plan will follow in 2018.

Engage the McPherson College constituency to build a \$1 billion endowment:

The advancement team will be focused on launching a campaign as part of a plan to build a \$1 billion endowment. As our comprehensive campaign "Power the Future" concludes in 2017, the team will be focused on integrating young alumni and new friend engagement into the next campaign in 2018.

Next Steps...

This fall leaders in the appropriate areas will work with campus to create more detailed plans for each of this year's focal initiatives. Each plan will include key milestones. Also, regular updates will be given to campus within our current meeting structure.

I am excited to spend time with the campus introducing next steps for *Community by Design 2021*. You have all probably heard the good news that *The Chronicle of Higher Education* recognized us for the second year in a row as a "Great College to Work For." We are the only college in Kansas to receive this recognition and no other liberal arts college was recognized in more categories than McPherson College. There is no question that you are ready to take on the big goals outlined in our *Community by Design 2021* plan.

Sincerely,

Michael Schneider
President