PROJECT
2024

Project 2024 Year 1 Report

May 12, 2022

From mid-November through mid-March, Project 2024 Steering Committee members led conversations addressing the questions "How can we do what we do better?" and "What challenges facing higher education most affect CC?"

Every student received an invitation to participate in one of four meetings; RAs met in groups; and the CCSGA and the President's Council discussed the questions. All staff and faculty had the opportunity to meet in groups of twenty-five with a follow up meeting to deepen their conversations. The FEC, Cabinet, Staff Council chairs, Alumni Council, Parents Council, and the Board of Trustees also participated.

In all, 578 students, staff, faculty, and alumni joined the conversations, and another 569 answered relevant questions on the Employee Engagement & Climate Survey.

During block 7, Steering Committee members reflected on what they heard. Individuals prepared syntheses and shared them in seven small groups. The whole committee then met to identify common themes in the discussions they led.

These gathering concepts and their components will serve as foci for year 2 of Project 2024: moving from talk to action. In this phase, too, the Committee seeks to involve the whole college community in thinking about what ifs and concrete initiatives in the areas for change the campus community identified this year.

Starting points.

Most participants in the campus-wide conversations understand what CC basically is and does.

It is a place of learning.

It provides a liberal arts education in a residential setting using the Block Plan.

The goal of liberal learning, as we understand it, is to promote knowledge useful for leading a meaningful life.

The Block Plan features small classes and an intensive one-course-at-a-time structure. It enhances student faculty collaboration and expands opportunities for experiential learning.

The residential setting builds sustained community and promotes learning beyond the classroom.

Question #1: How can we do what we do better?

Responses to this question reflected shared values, spoken and not. What people believed we could do better now and in the future revealed what we as a community care about.

These values include:

a. Supporting the health and well-being of the campus community.

b. Working on anti-racism.

c. Ensuring equity and access.

d. Protecting the environment.

e. Prioritizing clear, transparent, and effective communication.

Most participants spoke from their personal situations, and they expressed an abundance of personal concerns and hopes. In these disparate responses, we discern one common thread. It all seems to boil down to the desire for connection.

One common theme: Connection

People called for connecting different things, in different ways, but they sounded a similar refrain: bridge distances, come together around our shared goals.

They spoke of connecting blocks, people, spaces, places, and time, or of making connections

a. Across blocks.

b. Across constituencies (students, staff, faculty) and levels.

c. Across departments, divisions, and spaces (administrative and academic).

d. To city, region, and nation.

e. To post-graduate life.

Where participants most wanted to see change depended on the domains they knew best. From the targets for attention they described, we've identified three main areas for action.

Area for action #1: Learning in and beyond the classroom

How do we enhance the possibilities and communicate the benefits of the education we offer?

1. Clarify and convey the nature and value of liberal learning now and for the future.

2. Rethink the Block Plan.

a. Integrate learning across blocks.

b. Restore and maintain flexibility of formats.

c. Promote interdisciplinarity.

d. Strengthen student and faculty agency.

3. Reinforce learning outside the classroom.

4. Expand ties to city, region, and nation.

Area for action #2: Structures and interactions

How do we organize ourselves to encourage collaboration and build community?

a. Align power structures with priorities.

b. Foster ties across constituencies (students, staff, faculty) and levels.

c. Bridge departments, divisions, and spaces (administrative and academic).

Area for action #3: Policies, programs, and norms

How do we better align our norms and practices with what we are and what we value?

1. Manage resources to support our priorities (what CC is, does, and values).

a. Time

b. People

c. Money

d. Institutional knowledge

e. Space

2. Sustain our people (students, staff, faculty, alums).

3. Observe limits (enough may sometimes be enough).

Question #2: Which challenges facing higher education affect CC the most?

Studies of higher education emphasize these threats: **Finances, Demographics, Access, Digital Knowledge, Relevance, Capacity for Change**

People generally saw these challenges as intertwined. Correcting one may exacerbate another. For example, changing the financial model may adversely affect access. Or success in one area benefits another. Enhancing our relevance, for example, will likely diversify the student body.

Or participants identified one factor as the key threat to CC. For example, some groups emphasized that success on any front depends on the capacity for change.

Overall, participants in the discussions saw the (in)capacity to change as our most serious challenge. It would impede initiatives to handle the other threats they most commonly identified as serious--our financial model and access.