

ERAC Committee Meeting February 2014 Minutes

Visit by Provost Farrell

Introductions were made. Tom explained the restructure of ERAC that has occurred during the past few months. ERAC has spent a lot of time over the past four to five months re-evaluating our complete structure. Each of our committees have strategic plans. We are much more focused and guided with what we are trying to achieve. Over the past few years, ERAC hit a bit of a lull and considering we have so many talented staff, many of who are at the top of their own fields, we thought we could do a much better job advocating the interests of staff.

Mountaintop: During the Town Hall meetings, the focus, and we think rightfully so, was on faculty and students and figuring out what that creative, collaborative culture might be up there. Much is undecided at this point. Moving forward, it is ERAC's intent to figure out how staff can become a more productive part of that conversation. Knowing that nothing is finite at this point, how can staff have a visible role and feel welcome. What is the status of Mountaintop now and what active role can we play to represent staff?

Pat Farrell spoke on where things stand today and where he sees things going in the next twelve months or so. The two things that are certain are that Lehigh received a gift which is a complex one - \$10M outright and then a matching requirement that Lehigh raises \$20M from other donors and then our donor will give us another \$10M. So we basically have \$10M to spend now with others in the future but we don't know exactly when that will occur. What we are trying to figure out is what we can do with \$10M and actually it's a little more than \$10M because Bethlehem Steel put aside a fund of \$5M many years ago for the day when Lehigh received those buildings on Mountaintop. We are focusing our remodeling effort on just building C. We want to bring one of the three bays up to reasonably good standard. Leave the third bay just as it is. Bring approximately a quarter of the front part up to a reasonable standard. That will start after the end of this summer. Goal is to have all that work done by May of 2015. By then we will have some chunk of labs and offices, a fairly nice first bay, still a pretty rustic second bay and then the third bay completely untouched, the rest of the building untouched except for the utilities.

The activity side...Monday, 2/10/2014, was the deadline for projects for this summer. A lot of proposals were received from both students and faculty. The proposal received showed a lot of interest in doing flexible, collaborative, student/team activities across the whole campus. For the summer of 2015, we should have more space ready to be used and by Fall 2015, we should be able to make this a year-round venture.

At this point, there are a lot of "I don't know's." To some that is troublesome, to others, it is welcome.

The Mountaintop theme is to get out of your comfort zone. The thought is to do something you don't normally do on lower campus. What looks exciting that isn't what we normally do? Likely to emerge will be "hubs" of interest. Students making documentaries; digital imaging process - some cluster of activity that involves certain equipment. Finding partners that will make that happen. Limitations shouldn't hold those people back. Proposals or at least finalists will be made public so we can see what the summer projects will be and how staff can help facilitate. Staff may serve as mentors for some of the ideas. We may need to wait for faculty to realize that staff can help. To date, students have not gotten credit for their projects. In the future, when the projects are year-round, they most certainly will get credit. The idea is that this area won't just be for Lehigh students and faculty. Professors and students from elsewhere may ask to come to do some project work.

Provost Farrell was asked that ERAC be kept in the loop and to include staff involvement. Ideas are welcome to be forwarded to the Mountaintop team via Pat Farrell.

Campus Culture: Tom Yenko apprised Pat Farrell of the steps ERAC has taken to partner with multicultural efforts and staff from across campus. This resulted from a lot of staff approaching ERAC – staff who don't necessarily work with students or really aren't entrenched in a lot of student affairs where they felt disconnected from what happened – whether it was communications or whatever it was, there was a lot of confusion about what was happening and what the next steps are. As we look at the campus climate and how staff can play a more assertive role, how can we advance a culture of respect? What might that entail? What do you (Pat Farrell) see staff being able to do? How can we communicate better with staff so that more people are on the same page moving forward?

Staff involvement in the broad campus climate is very important. Staff activity plays a pretty significant role. Needs must be identified from staff, students and faculty. No single group on campus can make the climate what it isn't currently. It must be a collective effort. We can't leave anyone out. What would be most helpful to help develop your "toolbox" around engagement – difficult situations – whether it's working with a difficult student, a challenging co-worker, etc. How do we control conversations to produce a constructive result? Provost Farrell asked for our help including the staff voice along with all the other voices that are heard on campus.

Presidential Search – ERAC wrote a letter to Chairman Scheller letting him know that ERAC represents the staff, we are supportive of the search committee and offering our assistance if there's anything we can do. We did not ask for any role in the search committee; however we would be appreciative if they could take into consideration the interests of staff. How can we make sure the interest of staff are taken into account? It is Provost Farrell's understanding that the search committee is looking to have several Town Halls for the campus – not so much about candidates themselves but what faculty and staff are looking for in their next president. Staff should crystalize what we are looking for - a few significant attributes that staff put on the table. What do we say so that people get it and is memorable enough that it sticks with the search committee. There most probably will be faculty on the search committee. We might want to speak with those faculty and remind them the roles that staff play on campus.

Membership and Election Update – Membership is going on right now. All ERAC members are required to nominate at least one person. Election ends 2/28/2014.

Committee and Liaison Update - the ad campaign. When we think about recognizing some staff members who go out of their way to do things or really take it upon themselves to really contribute. The idea is to come up with ads once a month that put one staff member up front and center. We would create 50 to 100 posters that we would send to different offices on campus for them to display.

We are looking to have everyone reach out to our campus liaison to find out what's coming up during this semester. How can we work together?

Day of Caring: Carla needs response by end of day. Timeslots can be broken up.

REACH: Recently held REACH networking session went very well.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:40 am. Lynn Takacs made the motion to adjourn the meeting and Catherine Headman seconded the motion.