In Attendance:
Cathy Archer                Jerry Scoby
Mike Berghoef               Dan Tuuri
Dave Eisler                 Deb Tyson
Fritz Erickson              John Urbanick
Dorothy Hart                Michael Vasicek
Jackie Hughes               Byron Williams
Leonard Johnson             Helen Woodman
Michelle Johnston

Guests:
Sandy Balkema, Mindy Baumgartner, Ann Breitenwischer, Susan Jones, Dave Nicol, Jim Powell, Marc Sheehan, Robbie Teahen, Matt Wagenheim,

I. Action: Approval of the meeting notes.
SPARC members approved the December 11, 2012 meeting summary.

II. Ferris First: Next Steps
Chair Leonard Johnson shared the history and charge of the Ferris First committee.

Susan Jones, co-chair of Ferris First, provided background of the group, as well as, some accomplishments and ideas still in the incubation stage. The lunch meetings have offered a fostering atmosphere and safe place for ideas and discussion. She recommended a change of leadership as the group moves forward: Jim Powell (administrator) and Dan Tuuri (faculty) as co-chairs, replacing Don Green (administrator) and Susan Jones (faculty). Green and Jones will remain on the committee for continuity.

Chair Johnson led discussion to review the charge. The new leadership will provide a report on successes and bring a proposal (to add metrics and possible basic funding to the description) to the SPARC summer retreat.

SPARC members voted to reaffirm the Ferris First charge and voted to approve the leadership change to Jim Powell and Dan Tuuri.

On behalf of SPARC, President Eisler expressed thanks to Don Green and Susan Jones for their leadership and asked that they would share with Ferris First the university’s appreciation for their committee’s work. Chair Johnson will send a formal letter of thanks from SPARC.
III. Strategic Planning for 2014-2019

Provost Fritz Erickson and Sandy Balkema, co-chairing the Strategic Plan project, shared a proposed approach for drafting a new plan; including, the plan, the overall process, tentative / preliminary steps / schedule, co-champions and their role, Core Value teams, and setting targets based on core values and the HLC criteria.

This approach to strategic planning places the university’s core values at the center of the planning process; “strategic thinking” will focus less on specific outcomes in favor of connecting our core values to achieving excellence. As defined by the Higher Learning Commission, these are

- Mission
- Integrity
- Teaching and Learning, including quality, resources, support, evaluation and improvement
- Resources, planning and institutional effectiveness

Driving this process will be faculty and staff members from across the university, who will represent, or “champion,” how each of our core values – Collaboration, Diversity, Ethical Community, Excellence, Learning and Opportunity – will shape the future of Ferris State University. There will be two “Co-Champions” per core value. These people will take on the responsibility of establishing work groups of perhaps 8-10 participants who will establish a central goal for their area and define a focus that can be used for planning, action and evaluation.

These groups will endeavor to build upon the goals of the most recent Strategic Plan. These goals are fostering

- Excellence in educational quality and student learning
- Communities where all are valued, welcomed, informed and engaged
- State-of-the-art, sustainable and safe learning, living and working environments
- Collaborative internal and external working relationships
- Innovation and improved processes

Much of the initial focus of this strategic thinking will be to create innovative and creative “what if” scenarios to envision ways the university can best embody its core values to create the best possible learning environment for our students. The impetus for these might come from identifying problems stemming from a current practice, from recommendations identified in the HLC self-study, or from new ideas developed within the teams. A fourth source of ideas will come from outreach to some of the university’s many stakeholder groups. These include, among others, getting input from Alumni and Foundation Board members and constituents, current and future students and parents, members of communities – including Big Rapids – where Ferris has a presence, and college-wide meetings bringing together faculty and staff.

To give just one example of putting a core value into practice, a team focused on the core value of Excellence operating under the guiding question, “How can we provide a university that is committed to innovation and creativity,” might ask, “What if we recognized and rewarded excellence differently than we do now?” Too often traditional strategic planning takes the plans from previous years, dusts them off, updates them a bit, and puts them back on the shelf. This process hopes to break down barriers between groups to see if there are ways we can work across colleges, divisions, programs and units.
Many of the co-champions who will lead this process have been asked to take part and have agreed. As soon as the remaining positions are filled, the names will be shared with the Ferris community. At that point, this process will truly begin to be set in motion. The goal is for all stakeholders to provide their perspective on the ways in which our university can best move forward, guided by its principles, by sharing their insights, experience and expertise.

Next meeting: Tuesday, March 19, 2013, 3:00-4:30 p.m. in WCCC
Adjourned: 4:08 p.m.

Submitted by Elaine R. Kamptner