SPARC
December 11, 2009, 3:00pm
Founders Room, Rankin Center
Meeting Summary

In Attendance:
Dan Burcham
Mike Cron
David Eisler
Fritz Erickson
Claire Gould
Rick Griffin
Mike Hughes
Leonard Johnson
Michelle Johnston
Jim Jones
Ken Kuk
Sheila MacEachron
Ian Nagy
John Norton
David Pilgrim
Matt Pinter
Miles Postema
Kristen Salomonson
Jerry Scoby
Mischelle Stone
Allen Sutherby
Luzia Tartari
John Urbanick
Robert von der Osten
Tom Weaver
John Willey
Chris Westerkamp

Introduction:
Chair von der Osten introduced the most recent members to SPARC based on the new membership structure. He thanked SPARC members for their work and shared his appreciation for the opportunity to serve as Chair since the inception of the group.

President Eisler thanked Robert von der Osten for his extraordinary leadership throughout strategic planning and in forming SPARC.

Discussion/Action:
SPARC Chair Recommendation:

- After conferring with a cross-section of the Strategic Planning and Resource Council and the University community, President Eisler found a common agreement on the appropriate Chair for the 2010-2012 Strategic Planning and Resource Council. He requested that Leonard Johnson be endorsed and confirmed by SPARC.

  Vote: Confirm Leonard Johnson for the Selection of the Chair (a simple majority vote of the committee as a whole is required)

  Motion made by Rick Griffin, seconded by Michelle Johnston

  Decision: Unanimous

The term begins January 2010 for two years, and he may be reappointed once.

Announcement:
- President Eisler thanked SPARC members and welcomed Leonard Johnson.

Strategic Plan Progress:

- SPARC was reminded by Chair von der Osten of their responsibility to review the progress of the Strategic Plan. One or more vice presidents have been assigned to each initiative. They have prepared a summary on each initiative; “Progress on Year One Initiatives” was distributed for discussion and questions.

  - Goal 1, Initiative 1: Enhance assessment and the use of assessment data at the program and course level to measurably improve student learning.
As Assessment Coordinator, Robert von der Osten provided an update on University assessment activities. Provost Erickson is pleased that “more than 50% of the faculty have engaged in some faculty development in assessment."

- **Goal 1, Initiative 2: Enhance the Availability of Scholarships & Responding Effectively to Donors.**
  - In addition to the written report of activities, several people mentioned programs underway, such as, Making the Connection receptions (to connect scholarship donors and recipients), efforts to secure major grants, recruitment of Tuition Incentive Program (TIP) students, and Ferris’ fall payment of eligible students’ Michigan Promise Scholarship and Michigan Competitive Grant from federal stimulus funds.
  - Discussion/Questions: Could or should there have been more personal communication to faculty and staff for the Opportunity @125 initiative to provide additional internal scholarship funding; how well are we doing on one-on-one communication to students regarding financial aid options; are there ways to increase funding for student employment opportunities; how can we increase coordination across colleges regarding available scholarships and raising funds for scholarships?

- **Goal 2, Initiative 1: Implement and sustain the Ferris State University Diversity Plan.**
  - CDO Pilgrim provided information on the four goals listed in the Diversity Plan. Considerable progress has been made on the first two goals; there has been some progress, but there is more work to do on the last two.
  - Question: How can we train and encourage departments and search committees to be more intentional in hiring a diverse workforce?

- **Goal 2, Initiative 3: Review current structures for resolving conflicts and concerns and recommend strategies for improving conflict resolution.**
  - VP Postema shared the work of the conflict resolution task force in identifying and mapping processes; nearly 150 different processes have been found. A report, including recommendations will be presented to SPARC next semester.
  - Discussion: Ferris should have a clear mechanism to assist co-workers and better communicate that system. Although the unions do a wonderful job of helping to resolve conflicts, there are many areas for improvement.

- **Goal 2, Initiative 6: Enhance Sharing of Information Among the University Community.**
  - VP Willey informed SPARC of the refined process to share information, including a news gathering work plan, a defined set of sources of information, and transitioning to be more inclusive. There is also an effort underway to reshape the Ferris Web site to provide more functionality.
  - Discussion/Questions: During the stakeholder meetings, faculty and staff shared a perception of not receiving communications from the University; what can we do to more clearly and easily share information – could we use focus groups? The online “policy page” has been very helpful. However, online forms for the AFSCME group is not useful in that electronic forms take time and training; staff are not provided opportunity to go online and do not have options that other employees have. The publications are first rate and are strengthening the brand and image of Ferris; however, it was noted that there is a disconnect between what goes out and what is read by employees. For example, there are stacks of publications being thrown into recycle rather than placed in mailboxes. Another
gap appears to be the online version of the FYI – few people read the online information, where in the past many people read the printed version – why spend the time to prepare if it is not used? Again, could we use focus groups to receive feedback for the most efficient publications, decide who uses which communication tools, and how they read/receive it?

- **Goal 3, Initiative 2: Expand the Marketing Campaign to Support the University’s Positive Image.**
  - VP Willey mentioned that the marketing campaign has become focused to reinforce admissions and position Ferris as a distinctive institution that is pivotal to the future of Michigan.
  - Discussion/Questions: We have strong contacts and connections with all Michigan community colleges. There are many positive representatives of the University who canvas Michigan and surrounding states. The Ferris image has been elevated with this deliberate approach.

- There will be continued review at the next meeting.

- **Ferris Forward - Goal 6, Initiative 2: Designate a standing “blue sky” committee to review market trends identify opportunities and work with appropriate leaders and structures to facilitate the development of innovative programs.**
  - As we look toward the future, President Eisler requested SPARC’s endorsement to proceed next semester with this initiative. As we talk about reducing the budget in the next set of forums, we need to balance the conversation. New ideas and opportunities will also be discussed. This futures group would discuss where Ferris could be academically, “SPARC” new ideas and “Imagine More” for Ferris, and then report back to SPARC with recommendations. Other opportunities to consider will be how to attract and retain students, cut through silos, encourage creative energy, share information across colleges, use dual enrollment models, catch up with online teaching and learning, what online education and students will look like 5, 10, 15 years from now, and using broader educational options like career tech centers.
  - SPARC is comfortable conceptually with starting this group. Next meeting there will be continued discussion about a charge to and membership of the committee. Members strongly support this method of transparency with the budget and balancing reductions with creative opportunities in upcoming forums.

**Closing:**
Chair von der Osten closed the meeting stating that Ferris State University is more collaborative than we have ever been. Ferris couldn’t be in better shape as far as meeting challenges together. We are ready to move forward to find opportunities in this budget situation. He thanked the group and again shared his pleasure at having chaired SPARC. President Eisler thanked Robert for his wonderful service to the group. Council members applauded Chair von der Osten.

**Next meeting date:**
The next meeting will be Friday, January 22, 2010, 3:00-5:00pm in the Founders’ Room.

Adjourned 4:45pm
Submitted by Elaine R. Kamptner