True North Initiative Task Force Meeting
March 20, 2019
Becht Hall, Rm. 332
Meeting Notes

Attendees: Daniel Clark, Josh Domitrovich, Merrilyn Dunlap, Jen Dutkiewicz, Ray Feroz, Lynne Fleisher, Jen Herron, Deb Kelly, Anita Lahr, Terry Latour, Gwen Price, Sam Puleio, Adam Roberts, Matt Shaffer, Chad Smith, Chad Thomas, Tammy Varsek. Tree Zuzzio.

Absent : Brad Wagner.

Dr. Roberts called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m. and thanked all of the working groups for submitting their report and recommendations by the March 15 deadline. Dr. Roberts asked that their working group chairs provide 3-5 minutes summary of their reports.

Working Group Updates

Ray Feroz reported for the **Academic Programming** working group. They provided two key actionable recommendations: 1) Encourage and actively support academic program development in promising new areas and the adaptation/modification of existing academic programs while supporting disciplines that promote a robust general education program, to maintain and enhance our mission as a regional comprehensive university. This process should be led by the Provost and include discussions with International Programs, Career Services, technology support and Clarion Online; and 2) Promote and integrate existing resources that we already have to strengthen our academic programs, and make them more attractive. They recommend creating a regular forum meeting to explore new educational opportunities to meet the needs of emerging markets. Disciplinary boundaries should be removed to encourage good program ideas to be nurtured with colleges and departments working together. They suggested making the School of Education a stand-alone entity to make it nimbler and enable focused specialized program growth.

Sam Puleio reported on the **Affordability and Finances** working group. They identified affordability as a priority. Clarion needs to position itself with more market competitive rates. In their research, Clarion is near the top in fees as compared with other PASSHE institutions. There is also a perceived discrepancy between the fees being paid and how they are used. Moreover, our scholarship model is focused almost exclusively on merit and not financial need. The group had conversations with the financial aid office to gain a better understanding of the costs of a first-year student with financial need and discovered these students may pay significant out-of-pocket expenses above financial aid awards. Clarion needs to lower this gap.

Matt Shaffer reported on the **Campus Climate and Diversity** working group. The group established three priorities: 1) Establish mechanisms to increase engagement of students and enhance citizenship; 2) Promote a climate of student success where students' basic needs, and higher level needs, are met to allow for growth in and out of the classroom; 3) Complete a comprehensive campus climate survey regarding diversity and climate relative to students, faculty, and staff to further guide positive change. He noted that communication is a big concern, communication between students and between students and faculty.

Josh Domitrovich reported on the **Recruitment and Retention** Working Group. The group identified three recommendations and provided actionable items for consideration: 1) Student success needs to be better defined, structured, and coordinated to help deliver a high-quality experience to all of our students, both within and outside the classroom; 2) We must clarify and communicate, both internally and externally, our brand and deliver on that promise to students. It is essential that there is accountability for what we market and the consistency of the experience students receive; 3) Clarion should define and adhere to a systematic process that listens to and acts upon the needs and voice of students. They suggest the development of a Division of Student Success to help strengthen efforts overall.

Gwen Price reported on the **Venango Campus** working group. This group's recommended priorities are: 1) Developing a Business Plan for Venango campus, and 2) Provide the campus with the appropriate personnel and financial resources. The Venango Campus has potential to be used for training and certifications for the non-traditional students, and working professionals, such as in the fields of healthcare, education, business, technology, and science in Northwest PA.

Dr. Latour noted that the True North Initiative charge is to provide five or six priorities to the President. The group then discussed how to move forward with their final recommendations and the priorities that will be the focus of their final report. The theme of student success was an important element to the investigations of all of the working groups, and is a focal point for the mission of the University and the State System of Higher Education. It was decided that in general the six recommendations will be: 1) student success facilitated by a clear definition of what that means and an enhanced operating structure that promotes coordination and communication; 2) academic programming that is better aligned with the educational needs of the populations that Clarion serves and a programming development process that is streamlined and more inclusive; 3) steps taken to make Clarion University more affordable to students; 4) a campus climate that promotes engaged students who are good citizens, and have a voice in the operations of the University that is working to address their needs; 5) clarification and strengthening of the Clarion brand so that it delivers on the promises made to students and helps to better market the opportunities Clarion has to offer; 6) develop a realistic business plan for the Venango Campus and provide it with the appropriate personnel and financial resources to support the plan.

ACTION ITEM: Each working group will create a one-page summary of the recommendation(s) that primarily resulted for the work of their group.

Upcoming Meetings

Wednesdays: March 27, 8 a.m., Conference Room 332 Becht Hall.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:03 a.m.