

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ARKANSAS
Planning Introduction Meetings
February 16 and 17, 2010

Dr. David McFarland, hired as a consultant to assist the University of Central Arkansas administrators, faculty, staff, and students develop a strategic plan, was on campus Tuesday and Wednesday, February 16 and 17, to conduct an environmental scan and introduce the process to the UCA community.

The environmental scan was conducted by McFarland meeting in small groups with randomly selected faculty, academic department chairs, students, staff, non-academic directors, and selected members of the Conway community. During these meetings, he gathered information on the different perspectives and perceptions that the group members have about UCA. McFarland also met with the President's Executive Staff, the Council of Deans, and members of the Strategic Planning and Resource Council (SPARC) and its Task Forces. He indicated a necessity for the task forces to begin their work as soon as possible

Toward the end of his visit (2:30 p.m., Wednesday, February 17) McFarland introduced himself, presented his experience and academic credentials, and described the planning process to the campus community during an open meeting in East McCastlain. Using a PowerPoint presentation, McFarland explained the steps to be taken toward creating a successful strategic plan. He stressed that he would not have become involved in the process had he not received a firm commitment from the University President, Allen Meadors, that all areas of the university would be involved in the planning process and that ultimately resources would be available to implement the plan – the plan would not simply be put on a shelf in a closet.

McFarland described the membership of SPARC as having broad representation from faculty, staff, and students as well as UCA administration and community representation. He introduced members of SPARC, including chair Mike Schaefer, provost Lance Grahn, logistics coordinator Carl Frederickson, recording secretary Carol Daves, and communications director Jeff Pitchford.

McFarland suggested that four task forces be created to identify and determine the university's mission, vision, and goals. The SPARC task forces are:

- Core Values
- Institutional Distinctiveness
- Planning Assumptions
- Driving Forces

He explained that the university's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats need to be identified and that these task forces would start the analytical process.

McFarland opened the discussion up to a Q & A period.

Q What are the repercussions if you don't have a good strategic plan?

A Accrediting agencies often require them. You would want one especially since there has been a leadership change.

Q We spent a lot of time working on the self study for the Higher Learning Commission, will that be used in any way?

A Sure. If you are in the middle of a review you will use that. It's not going to mess up the self study. This will not destroy the good stuff.

Q We have done strategic planning before that ended up on a back shelf. How do we know that won't happen again?

A The president has committed to the project. He is on SPARC. Be vocal. Let us know if we have missed anything. Go to the website and watch the progress.

[Need to use Facebook to reach students.]

McFarland ended the large open meeting, and at 4:00 p.m. four groups of 8 or 9 people volunteered to stay for a brief workshop and small group discussion on identifying driving forces.

Some of the forces identified were:

- Financial forces: state scholarship mandates, role of the lottery scholarships, need a comprehensive scholarship plan – need to focus on scholarships in a meaningful way
- Continued problems with the economy: could work in our favor since many may return to college
- McFarland mentioned returning veterans after the war in Iraq & Afghanistan may increase enrollment.
- Technology: how can we encourage high tech on campus
- Should there be an office in town to encourage economic development
- Does the public understand liberal arts education?
- How do we educate students about the importance of liberal arts before they get here?
- Shared governance: promote and advance
- On line education
- Student service learning
- Study abroad
- High school students starting earlier and earlier
- Faculty expectations, resources, and faculty scholarship
- Consumerism: students and parents as consumers
- Cronyism: political/back room deals
- Competition from non-traditionals
- Retention

- Integrating information
- Financial concerns in a global environment
- Enrollment management
- Legislature: state mandates
- Texas: student recruiting possibilities

Formal meetings adjourned at 5:00.

David McFarland, Mike Schaefer, Lance Grahn, Carl Frederickson, Venita Jenkins, and Carol Daves remained. McFarland explained next steps to the SPARC leadership and logistical crew.

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