Pitzer College Strategic Planning Town Hall Meeting
Notes from April 24th, 2018

Intro:

The Academic Planning Committee organized a second Strategic Planning Town Hall meeting during the evening of April 24th, 2018, held in the Board Room in Skandera Hall. This meeting was a follow up to the March 22nd, 2018 Town Hall meeting, and was held in the student dorm area in order to encourage more participation from students than had previously been achieved with our March town hall meeting. There was very high participation from students, and a large number of faculty and staff were also present.

The format of the April town hall was open, with a brief presentation from the APC chair, Emma Stephens, and President Melvin Oliver on what had been accomplished in this 'pre-planning' phase, with an overview of the results from the March 22 meeting. The floor was then opened up to participants for question and answer. Finally, APC had participants fill out index cards with (mostly anonymous) notes, comments and questions on the following six topic areas. These areas were highlighted in President Oliver's inaugural address to Pitzer in 2017 and have been core areas of concern for our strategic planning efforts.

1. Academic programs and student affairs

2. Scholarships and financial aid

3. Facilities (including Keck science)

4. Study abroad

5. Career Center

6. Future vision: 'Pitzer 2030 is…'

From the Academic programs and student affairs box (67 comments)

Comments from participants on our academic programs and student affairs covered many ideas that can be broadly classified into three broad areas:

1. Desired growth for our academic and student affairs programs into new areas.

Comments along this line suggested more integrated programming between STEM, Humanities & Social Science (i.e. more interdisciplinary programs and co-teaching), more humanities curriculum in general, adding computer science, American sign language, increased Keck presence at Pitzer, more staff-faculty co-teaching, more programming around reasoning, argumentation and writing across the curriculum.

2. Strengthening/improving our existing academic and student affairs programs

In terms of strengthening what we are already offering, participants had many suggestions and possible improvements, starting even with more opportunity to discuss what might be needed to support staff, students and faculty in their work at Pitzer, more opportunities to share information about current concerns and problems (like concerns about campus climate, workload imbalances etc.) and a sense that college-wide conversations tend to be 'policy-driven' rather than 'problem driven.' Also suggested were more funding and support for the different centers on campus likw the community engagement and writing center, as well the office of student affairs more broadly, to help it emerge from primarily serving as 'crisis response.' Practical suggestions included reorganizing field groups into larger units, moving to a 2/2 teaching load, finding an events coordinator for academic affairs, abolishing course replacements for sabbatical to construct more visiting positions, rather than hiring adjuncts, (particularly in science fields), more full time staff supporting marginalized populations, more easily accessible information about tutoring and limiting administrative growth.

3. Better support for individuals (students, staff and faculty) in their work in academic and student affairs

In this domain, participants raised concerns about workload and burn-out for staff and faculty, more recognition/compensation for students who do institution building labor, thinking more and better targeting of promises made and advice given to students on courses, majors, (especially double majors), more financial aid support for students, help with lab fees for Keck classes, and efforts to add economic diversity to the student body to reduce inequality and social costs of stresses for lower income students. Participants also suggested investment in IT infrastructure to support growing demands and expectations, more training and guidance for social justice courses given our new graduation requirements, more meeting spaces for field groups, meditation, hiring a health/wellness coordinator and other supportive activities.

From the Scholarships and financial aid box (20 comments)

Most comments acknowledged the need for more financial aid as an important priority and concern, and had different suggestions about how to increase the resources for financial aid. In addition to more general fundraising for financial aid, commenters noted that it is also important to adjust our rules and ensure that funds donated for financial aid are guaranteed to go to financial aid, rather than into the general fund. Others indicated a desire to make trade-offs between financial aid and other spending on campus, or think about resources currently dedicated to emergency loans and whether some can be used for financial aid.

Other comments focused on improving the financial and scholarship systems in place. One commenter mentioned are differences in FAFSA vs. CSS estimates on financial aid eligibility and suggestions that we use FAFSA, as it is a more generous assessment. Others suggested changing rules so that the four-year limit is relaxed, as it may lead to cutting off aid prematurely before students can complete their degrees. Several suggestions involved finding more resources

for our financial aid office – more staff, more investment in sharing information about different pots of money available, more advising on how to apply for loans/scholarships and financial literacy and finding more resources for important summer internships.

Several others suggested strengthening ties to the alumni network as a specific potential source for additional fundraising for scholarships and financial aid, suggesting also more interaction with faculty to improve alumni relationships.

From the Facilities box (35 comments)

The primary comments in this feedback discussion centered around two main areas: investment in our IT and A/V technology to support our community, and many mentions of needs for more social/non-academic gathering spaces for students (like a student center or living room), particularly ones that are open at late hours, similar to other colleges in the 5Cs. Commenters had several specific suggestions on how to find these spaces, including a more substantial audit of existing spaces, re-purposing the McConnell living room for either a new private dining room or other ways to make it more useful/accessible, consolidating scattered administrative offices and putting more structure in our 'great outdoor spaces' (portable shades or other furniture to allow more use).

Additional suggestions concerned thinking about new dorms once Mead is torn down, and how those rooms will be designed, including suite style apartments, more single rooms, as well as reflections on planning for the new Keck science building and our failure in the previous iteration to make it large enough to meet our needs at that time, and a wish to avoid a similar experience.

From Study Abroad Box (11 comments)

The feedback received about study abroad centered around expanding into new programs in various ways, like increasing access to non-approved programs, adding shorter 'mini' programs over the summer, and fostering more connections and educational opportunities/programs with international academics, bringing them into the classrooms at Pitzer. Comments also centered around more support for existing programs, recognizing that students are increasingly likely to interact with international colleagues in the future, particularly STEM students, but these are the students who might be least likely to be able to go abroad for a full semester. Along this line, commenters asked for more opportunities to link study abroad programs to career planning and development and coordinate more with our existing academic curriculum. Another commenter asked that we work towards incorporating social justice and social responsibility praxis into programming in abroad programs, particularly in the independent research projects.

From the Career Center box (12 comments)

Many suggestions concerned providing more structured information about careers – from alumni and other professionals and graduate programs via opportunities to speak with them about their career paths, via faculty sharing information on career paths in their chosen fields and what they anticipate for the future for their students, more collaboration with Study Abroad about important career building skills learned while abroad, and more structured advising about law school and careers.

In addition, many other commenters indicated that more support for different aspects of career advancement, including more summer internship funding, more help with entrance exam fees,

would like to have stats on the use of career services – poll alums on how they got jobs

From the Pitzer in 2030 is…(future vision) box (24 comments)

This is more difficult to summarize, so these comments have been left in their initial form, also to give a flavor of the types of comments themselves. Overall, many commenters want Pitzer to continue to improve in terms of self-improvement – more just, healthy, sustainability, better living of our values, better treatment of our staff, and more respect given to all constituencies. We also want to invest in the tools to do our jobs.

- Still weird – not corporate – more <u>diverse</u>

- A new residence hall to replace Mead Hall. This hall should include a student center on the ground floor instead of academically controlled (and closed at night) spaces. Involve alumni to help name the hall

- An institution leading as an example of a just establishment

    - allocate money to where no student with need has to pay/struggle to pay to get an education

    - anti-capitalist

    - sustainable sourcing of food and resources

    - paying youth who organize to make positive institutional changes (that will later be touted in admissions material)

- Pitzer in 2030 should have a community that appreciates expertise despite the constituency conveying it. Staff, faculty and students all have experience and it deserves to be heard and valued at all levels

- Pitzer in 2030 should have stronger support for staff and greater faculty and staff collaboration to give students real world skills. Academics alone do not prepare you for life after Pitzer

- Faculty and staff operate consistently on overload and within demanding and unsustainable work model – we need to strengthen what exists and support those who do such hard work instead of growing more and more. Bigger is not better

- Actual substance free housing. Some folks have needs/reasons why they don't want to be around substances and it is impossible to avoid them on Pitzer's campus. Campus house owned by the college that is strictly substance free or separated from substance use areas (where inhabitants of the house don't have to run into substances in their living space) would be incredibly helpful and community building

- In 2030 I would like to see Pitzer less tuition dependent

- A place I'm actually proud to call my alma mater – more events for alumni, connections between alumni and students

- General strategic planning – who do we want Pitzer to be? With an acceptance rate below 14% our students are less diverse academically regardless of any efforts to promote racial, gender, and economic diversity among our students

- Pitzer is national leader in prison education (co-founding a college within prison as the next 'Claremont College' (Blaisdell plan)

- Pitzer 2030 is a top 20 college (in those hated rankings)

- Teach faculty to treat the staff with some respect

- We need more funding for Career Services

- Student accounts should work on customer service. We are here for the students

- We must become a student centered organization. we are here for our students first

- The chairs in Fletcher 112 need to be replaced. They are broken

- We need to have more classrooms which seat 30-40 students. Our classrooms are in bad shape

- Solve the work imbalance problem. Require all faculty to teach at least 100 students each year

- Why is Pitzer <u>more</u> tuition dependent today than several decades ago? Why can't we go the other way?

- We should have enough faculty to teach the students we have. We must decrease the number of students <u>or</u> increase the number of faculty

- <u>Science</u> – Keck needs to be made to fall part of Pitzer. Keck faculty should not have to select 'not a part of Pitzer' when logging on to Ptz web pages

- More reflective of the top majors in terms of department funding

- Would like to see both academic excellence and social justice survive