

College Council
Thursday, December 10, 2020
Minutes

Present: Kevin McGruder, Shadia Alvarez, Sharen Neuhardt, Noah Greer, April Wolford, KaDae Brockington, Gariot Louima, Christine Reedy, Elise Peyroux, Coco Gagnet, Mila Cooper, Kim Landsbergen, Jennifer Grubbs, Susanne Hashim, James Lippincott

Absent: Dean Snyder, Hannah Montgomery

Call to Order

Kevin reported that, with Tom moving to Emeritus status, his duties are being assumed by John, Sharen, and Shadia, and that Shadia will be chairing this meeting going forward.

Shadia then took over as convener of College Council.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved.

Approval of Minutes from November 12, 2020

Mila stated she was in attendance at the November 12 meeting and would like that added to the minutes. The minutes were approved.

Alcohol and Drug Policy Revision

This policy was originally written by the Dean of Community Life at the College's reopening with legal counsel. It went to ComCil and then to senior leadership for final approval. Noah would like the Council to review it again with some suggested revisions.

Mila suggested that a policy review committee or task force be convened to review this policy and bring it back to Council for discussion. Noah stated that he and Gariot have a detailed list of policies in need of revision.

Shadia asked Noah to decide how to move forward on a policy review committee.

College Council Processes

Shadia stated that "Dynamic Facilitation" is the facilitation style she ascribes to. It allows for all voices are heard and pushes decision-making and problem-solving to the center so the group is responsible for the establishment of policy and how it lives within the culture of the institution.

She then posed the question of how we use our policies to align with the institutional culture. Does it make sense for a talented and powerful group of people to come together to create policies that are then shelved? How can we make these policies more alive and integrate them into the culture of the community? Shadia then asked all members of College Council to weigh in with their intentions for this group, for priorities ideas for making the council its most effective form of itself.

Kim: She agrees there should be a policy review committee and possibly other sub-committees, but what should be different about this council as compared to SLT is a spirit of transparency. She suggested that the spreadsheet of policies adopted and revised by College Council be made public to all members of the community.

Coco: A priority to her that will both further outline our priorities is how we're structurally organized. How are we in direct community with other groups (Board, Comcil, Faculty)? She would like a vision articulated about channels of communication and accountability. This wonderful works happens in a lot of pockets but what's lacking is how it becomes synthesized into a shared vision. Ex: thinking about participation credit for CG or curriculum component that is participation and shared governance. Credit and space for students to participate in shared governance.

Jennifer: A priority would be to centralize an invitation to the community. To set a priority list and once those things are done and we're breathing, then do phase 2 list. So much is siloed. There is essential work (curriculum) but it's hard to not get caught up in other stuff that's drama and taxing but we need to be a functioning college. Her hope is that College Council can agenda-set and then create a clear delineation of what committees are doing what and in what order so the critical work is done first. Let's focus energy on pressing issues and create an appropriate balance of those things needing to be done but not necessarily that everyone is doing everything at all times. We don't need all hands in all buckets all the time.

Sharen: She very much wanted us to have this discussion and thinks it will be a while before we're clicking on all cylinders. Since beginning this work, she has come to see an amazing group of leaders - if we can get them out of this minutia and to talk about the big issues and big things, the council can be an enormous help to the leadership of the College. She invites this group to come up with the substantive issues and get to work on them. She is hoping for meaningful participation in the college along with members of this group.

April: Can we schedule an hour retreat time so we have time to think about these questions/priorities and give meaningful feedback? And perhaps have a criteria for evaluating and prioritizing? The transparency part has driven some of this but we hear the financial situation is dire but we don't have the information and that is difficult.

Kim: What's the interaction between this group and CPFC? Faculty are already working on a better assessment and understanding of our curriculum. What is our rate-limiting step?

Shadia: One concern is that even if we had millions of dollars and a 30-million dollar endowment, we still have a cultural problem at Antioch. There is something that is keeping us stuck - to break that for Shadia is to unpack it but make sure that it doesn't just become a question of money, but how can we live into abundance and become the college we're meant to be? Her role is to facilitate those courageous conversations around getting the information but also frame the information to help us move through that.

Noah: one priority is focusing on educating our employees (staff) with performance evaluations and straight-up training and onboarding. He believes this is the cause for losing students. Not yearly or 90-day, but just plain, consistent supervisor feedback. This involves the performance evaluation policy. April added accountability.

Kim: Whenever you're adding people into an administration, the hiring moment is so critically important. If the issue of whether a candidate is a suitable fit, there will be a problem and people will be set up to fail. Adding an HR process to our priority list is key. What is our role in terms of how we interview candidates who represent other ethnicities, races, etc.? That is not clear.

Jennifer: This gets back to a cultural issue. Antioch is so different from other institutions of higher ed and this is part of the existential issue. We're working in a school that focuses on students who are less academically prepared. They are thrown in and don't know what to expect. Our advising strategy is in need of repair. What is this institution? Are we the new school? Are we trying to compare to Wittenberg? Do we have the right processes and people to be what we want to be? From a faculty standpoint, we have divisions and programs that function very differently from others. There is not a clear path for students to follow. Do we need bigger visioning of who we are? A coherent vision? Some solutions are interconnected between divisions.

Gariot: We have challenges in recruiting. There is no real articulation of an institutional educational philosophy that will guide us in designing a curriculum. In admission we have conversations with individual faculty or specific divisions about what students should expect. But students may not have those experiences when they come here. There are times when the mission of Antioch and the potential of Antioch is not big enough to overcome what feels like the ongoing hurdle that is living Antioch. What are we beyond a co-op school with a focus on social justice and how do we work together to make this the college we want it to be?

Kevin: The faculty have been meeting to define their work with the loss of faculty. What they're describing now aligns with the process we're in now. Educational philosophy should say this is how we teach - this is what we teach. This has not been clear. ACW is partially a way to describe the kind of student we want to attract and serve. When they get here - we talk about co-op but don't talk about what happens in the classroom. This conversation helps me realize we need to add that to the conversation the faculty is involved in. AAC and ECF will discuss a process where we as a faculty can develop the educational philosophy. Part of it is each of us has our ideas about what that is, but how do we come to consensus on a philosophy that reflects who we are and what we can do, that admission can use in talking with students?

Elise: Philosophical conversations are important. It is the job of every single employee to support the mission of the school. If you don't know why we're here or believe in the institution you should not be here. The institution has an obligation to define for the constituencies what the strategic pathway is to support the mission. That identifies how you support the mission of your school. Money should be spent in a way that supports the mission of the school.

Christine: We're too small to be siloed and some of us feel very out of the loop and under informed.

James: He sees so many people doing so much work, always working, working, working, then we come around to a point where it seems the work never happened.

Susanne: Wants to see the college survive and hopes this group can take this on.

KaDae: He'd like to see more accountability and work on student retention. His problem is that we can't strategically go after kids from marginalized communities and then not offer the resources they need.

Shadia stated these notes will be shared out. The actual template we use for this meeting agenda may not be the best to facilitate the deeper questions we want to ask. How the way we create the agenda - the actual template we use might not be the best to get to deeper questions we want to ask. She said the issue of accountability lies not just in the agenda and the amount of time we give agenda items, but also how we review agenda items and how they take life in the College and how we assess them. She agrees that, at Antioch, we have to do a better job evaluating performance at all levels. Being able to develop capacity and having peer review and feedback from multiple sources builds coherence and consistency brought up here today.

The meeting adjourned at 2:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Anita Brown