

Driving Discovery and Innovation Work Group

Kansas Room, Kansas Union

Tuesday, January 18, 2011, 2-4 p.m.

Members Present

Steve Warren and Kristin Bowman-James, co-chairs; Kevin Boatright, staff; Shrikant Anant, John Colombo, Tom Cravens, Rob Fiorentino, Steve Goddard, Kris Krishtalka, Stacy Leeds, Greg Loving, Deb Ludwig, Steven Maynard-Moody, Tom McDonald, Berl Oakley, Christian Schöneich, Kevin Song, Paul Terranova, Lorie Vanचना, and John Younger.

Agenda

1. Update on the status of the overall KU Strategic Planning initiative
2. Discussion of the new Strategic Initiatives RFP process
3. Discussion, revision and prioritization of draft strategic actions
4. Determine the need for a January 29 meeting

Opening and Strategic Initiatives RFP Process

Bowman-James presented a review of past actions and led a conversation concerning the Provost's recently announced process for nominating KU strategic initiatives. This prompted questions on what the selection process will be, whether research center directors will be involved, and whether the DDI Work Group is now redundant.

Warren said faculty should be strongly encouraged to enter this process. "Participate. Don't be silent." It was noted that the College will hold an open forum on January 24 to discuss this and propose initiatives. Unclassified staff should also be involved in the process.

Warren described this as a "best ideas" competition with different levels of review. It's possible the DDI Work Group may be tasked with participating in the review process. It's also possible we will reach conclusions on our strategic actions this week and that our face-to-face work will be done at least for now.

What happens if there's no outside funding for these initiatives, and is there any sense of the scope of these proposals? Warren said it's not required that there be outside funding, and that these might be something to put funds into. As for the scope, there are no guidelines yet. They could be very large to rather small. "View this as an exercise in imagination and creativity. Focus on big, multidisciplinary things." They are intended to be ongoing, not just short term projects.

For some, the process seems idealistic and too top-down. It's not clear how KU will make progress toward the AAU benchmarks as a result. Warren said the intent is for KU to emerge a stronger, more relevant research university. Others noted that an effort is now under way to identify savings at KU. There may be winners and losers in this process. Warren reiterated the need to be involved. Otherwise, you're on the sideline.

The process was likened to KU's "Tuition Enhancement" initiative, which also had an RFP process. It "generated cynicism because you knew in advance what would be selected. It's discouraging if it's not a truly open process." Warren replied that he thinks it's an open process, and "some very creative combinations may emerge out of this."

Discussion: Strategic Actions Document

Bowman-James reviewed the Research Engagement Task Force recommendations and the six DDI “characteristics,” later defined as six “outcomes.” She presented a new document, prepared by her and Warren, that attempts to merge past group work into 10 proposed strategic directions. They are categorized generally as:

1. Data-focused, metric, accountability (1-5)
2. Recognition, facilitation, incentives (6-7)
3. Resources, infrastructure (8-10)

General discussion ensued on all 10 of the proposed strategic directions. Examples of comments:

- What does “translational science” mean and shouldn’t it be translational “knowledge?” (9)
- The only actions that would positively drive discovery and innovation are 8-9-10. Others are more procedural-bureaucratic. (3-4-5)
- Thought we had a post-tenure review policy? (4) Research centers are already reviewed. (3)
- We should have an innovation award, not a lifetime achievement award, e.g., Higuchi. They should be team awards that complement 8-9-10.
- In past meetings we talked about more positive and supportive things. A lot of this is now negative, e.g., reallocation, etc. There’s a problem with the tone. (5-6-7)
- We could use the term allocation instead of reallocation, but in an environment where no extra money is coming in, the alternative to reallocation is general mediocrity. (7)

It was noted that “There’s nothing here about graduate education, which is central to research.” Warren responded that doctoral education is now being addressed by a separate group, and that we are meeting with Sara Rosen, Dean of Graduate Studies, on January 22 to discuss doctoral education. That meeting is an avenue for raising this topic with that other group. It was suggested that we reference doctoral student support in our list of strategic actions. It was added as a new #11.

Other comments:

- We propose post-tenure review, but without teeth. (4)
- We’re endorsing the concept. Someone else will be charged with the implementation. (4)
- Translational science means “bench to bedside,” high-impact, etc., depending on context. (9)
- Reallocation of 40-40-20 should not be an option for pre-tenured faculty. (5)
- Why exclude pre-tenured faculty? (5)
- Some research should be done into what’s actually going on with “permanent associate professors.” There’s a need for data-gathering, as much as deliberating. (4)

It was decided to utilize a different method for rating the [now] 11 proposed strategic actions than originally planned. Instead of ranking them 3-11, with eliminations noted, we will use a system that assigns a range of three values, so that they’re not competing with one another.

Other comments:

- Don’t understand “differential.” Does that mean a merit-based approach and we throw money at people? (6)
- Action #3 is the process for implementing #7.
- #7 means “allow the provost or the dean to do his/her job.”
- Autonomy requires accountability. (3, 7)
- The focus of #9 is really on “within and between” campuses, vs. just policies, whatever those might be. What’s needed in this area is something stronger.

At the close of discussion, group members proceeded to write down and submit their priorities. For proposed actions 3-11, they were asked to assign a priority to each on a scale of 1 to 3, where a 1 is a high priority that promises the greatest impact, a 2 is a lower priority but still important, and a 3 is a lesser priority but worthwhile. If you cannot support an action, mark it with an "X" in the "Eliminate" column. If 1/3 or more of all members wish to eliminate an action, it will not go forward as a recommendation from the group. Members who couldn't attend today should complete the revised version of the form and submit it via e-mail by the end of the day on Thursday, January 20. The lists of priorities will be tabulated on Friday and the results will be finalized at the January 22 meeting.

NOTE: The revised version of the original document includes substantive changes to #5, #9 and #10, while adding a new #11. The original version and the revised version are both available at the DDI Work Group Blackboard space.

Next Meeting

The meeting adjourned at 4 p.m.

The next meeting of the group is scheduled for 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, January 22 in the Malott Room at the Kansas Union. The agenda will center on a discussion of issues in KU doctoral education, led by Sara Rosen, Dean of Graduate Studies.

The group will not meet on Saturday, January 29, as originally planned.

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