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Transition Leadership Team October Report

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Transition Leadership Team: October Report (Word attachment)

Transition Leadership Team

Mon 10/23/2017 8:42 AM

To: Campus Communication <campus-communication@plymouth.edu>;

 1 attachments (31 KB)

TLT Oct Monthly Report Final.docx;

Colleagues,

Here is another copy of the October report as a Word file, which may be easier to access.

Apologies if you received any errors.

Sincerely,

Ann McClellan (on behalf of the TLT)

Ann K. McClellan, Ph.D.

Professor and English Department Chair

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FALL 2017 Office Hours: TR 10-12pm, WF 12:30-2:30, and by appointment

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Transition Leadership Team: Monthly Update October 2017

The Transition Leadership Team (TLT) has been working hard to connect with our constituencies, learning about gaps and priorities for our transformation process, and communicating observations and recommendations to the President and Cabinet. This is our October report.

Reaching Out to Constituents/Principle Policy Making Committees

As mentioned in last month's report and above, a significant charge of the TLT was to meet with, and listen to, our colleagues in different constituencies. We've been doing this, listening to people's concerns about the rapidity of change and difficulties with keeping track of personnel and offices as we move into different positions, as well as noting the excitement many have with the changes so far bringing greater efficiencies and testing new models of service.. Since our last report we joined the **faculty** meeting on September 6th to introduce ourselves and answer general questions about our first report.

We reached out to the **Teaching Lecturers** in late September asking if we could meet with them at one of their monthly meetings. President Birx had included a TL representative in his original organizing of the TLT but they did not send a representative at that time. Members are scheduled to attend the next TL meeting on October 25th to talk more about their perspective and hopes for clusters as we move forward. The TLT recognizes that TLs are an integral part of the success of our cluster transition, especially given so many of them teach the majority of our general education classes which are foundational to the president's "[Four Tools](#)" for clusters. We encourage principal policy making committees to invite TLs to their upcoming forums about cluster curriculum.

Also on the academic side, the TLT is working with both the General Education Committee and the Curriculum Committee to help identify priorities and needs we've realized are essential to act upon as we move toward a cluster educational model. Based on our work from the summer and reported in our September newsletter, curricular revision is a top priority in order to give our current first-year cluster class (and beyond) the experiences they have been promised. The TLT wrote a recommendation memo to the Gen Ed Committee and met with them on September 11 to go over some ideas and timelines. We discussed the importance of planning early for sophomore level (and beyond) cluster curricula, particularly in general education courses, design, and planning. We discussed ideas for different 'themed' gen ed courses or 'pathways' students could follow, either in alignment with particular cluster interests or with micro credentialing by topic, skill, or discipline. We also talked about different ways other campuses have illustrated students' skills and specializations through 'flipped' transcripts; such transcripts can highlight student work in different ways including both traditional curriculum-based reports as well as ones based on particular skills (communication, technology, laboratory science), or themes (sustainability, entrepreneurship, contemplative practices). Also we suggested the Gen Ed Committee either

create a sub-committee or call for a task force that could begin designing the new Integrative Connection Capstone course for juniors and seniors that would create a truly interdisciplinary, project-based course that represented a capstone for students' clustered gen ed curriculum. We believe you have seen the committee incorporate a response to our recommendations in its recent report to the faculty and discussions by its chair at the October faculty meeting.

Similarly we believe you have seen our work reflected in the Curriculum Committee's recent reports concerning two new cluster course formats: toolkit courses and cluster project courses. Both of these proposals are built on important conversations from last year between faculty, staff, and the Curriculum Committee about different ways we can offer—and highlight—cluster curricula.) We will be meeting with Curriculum Committee next month as a constituent involved in our transformation.

We met with the **Operating Staff** and **PAT's (Professional, Administrative, and Technical)** in early September and early October, respectively, to ask about particular concerns they may have. Both groups had lots of great questions about the role of the TLT and the kinds of work we are doing.

A significant piece of our work over the last month has been understanding the place for **administrative assistants** in clusters. As information pertaining to the transition to new roles in the cluster support models has developed, the TLT has helped the communication process. A representative from the TLT sat in on the administrative assistants' luncheon with the deans in late September to try to get a clearer sense of the communications among different groups on campus; three TLT members also, by default, attended the subsequent chairs' meeting about the same issue; and the whole TLT brought the issue to the president and his cabinet. This has helped the members of the TLT put into practice the president's call for it to serve in a stewardship model.

Also in late September, the TLT met with the **Graduate Council** and learned about admissions processes, funding, and timelines, as well as more basic infrastructure issues regarding the transition process. We learned that updating PSU websites and sources for the most accurate information regarding offices, personnel, and contact information are crucially important and in the works to varying degrees.. In the TLT's purview is the issue of communicating to the president issues affecting the transition that we encounter and we promised the Council to forward their concerns not only to the administration but also Marketing and Communication Services, as well as ITS. We feel it important to share in this report one main issue the Grad Council raised: a disconnect between campus communications and the expectations which link undergraduate and graduate students together; particularly alignment issues that seem to assume an undergraduate bias in all student communications; they explained that lumping graduate students into UG communications risked alienating an important audience and demographic. The TLT shared these comments and observations with MCCS and other campus leaders.

Members of the TLT also met with the **Student Success Coaches** to hear about their perspective on the first-year students' experiences of clusters. We learned that some first-year students are reporting that their courses do not seem to align with what our marketing and admissions has

been promising about cluster education, a promise that promotes the [“Four Tools”](#) for clusters. In particular, they noted they did not see many project-based assignments or classes, nor did they feel particularly engaged because they were experiencing mainly traditional lecture-based classes. This kind of feedback is essential to all of us as it helps us better understand the connections (and disconnects) between our admissions and marketing promises to new and prospective students and how we are actually changing our pedagogy and approach to education.

The TLT also met with Marlin Collingwood, interim director of **Marketing, Communication, and Creative Services (MCCS)**, in September to talk about our own communication and communication across campus. It was impressive to hear about all of the communication strategies PSU is using to share information and reach different groups; at the same time, however, the TLT expressed concern that still it remains challenging for employees to find the information they need/are most interested in, and that much of the communication we receive seems to be general and not answering people’s questions. In a sense, we have more communications now than we ever have at PSU, (the [Integrated Clusters websites](#), Sharepoint, and “Cluster Connect” to be revealed shortly for projects, etc.). However, faculty, staff, and students continue to express frustration about communication overall with many saying they feel like they don’t know what’s going on or that they are not getting the information they need—or, perhaps more damaging, that misinformation and rumors are dominating campus discussions. We are continuing to work with MCCS and the cabinet on this issue. We did have clarified for us that much of the content from the “old” www.plymouth.edu was migrated to a new campus.plymouth.edu site intended to serve internal campus needs.

More recently, the TLT met with representatives from **Advancement, Alumni Relations, and Finance** to talk about how clusters are working in these groups, needs and concerns they have, and how we can with the transition, especially with our external partners and alums. We will be meeting with Finance more frequently to discuss financial reporting and ways to share financial updates with the campus.

The TLT met with Brian Dye (Student Activities) to discuss and plan the best ways to talk to students about what they know about clusters, what they expect from clusters, and how they can communicate about clusters. The TLT also is exploring having monthly meetings with the Student Government leadership.

Finally, as we think about the groups around campus with which we interfaced this past month, there is the President’s Cabinet. To help facilitate the rapid change of our transition, and to assist with campus communication, the TLT now meets with the president and cabinet every Tuesday to talk about our most pressing concerns, in addition to our weekly meetings to conduct our own business and our site-visits to various constituents.

Clusters

If you did not know, PSU is about to launch two ‘pilot’ clusters in Justice & Security and TESD (Tourism, Environment, and Sustainable Development) this January. Exploration & Discovery also has received the president’s “green light” although they have not committed to a definite

launch time. All three will have the opportunity to use the Spring of 2018 as a trial from which to learn; all three will be expected to have new iteration of their organizational/functional plan ready to go in the Fall of 2018. Other clusters are expected to be developing an organization for themselves and the president has told the TLT that he encourages them to use the time between now and Fall 2019 to create and reiterate on their creations. As has been broadcast for two years now, academic departments will be moving away from their current chair leadership to a team-based leadership beginning as early as January, 2018 and the Fall of 2019 will see clusters in-place with none of the current academic departments constituted as they are today. This is how the president projected the rough timeline of departments transitioning to clusters (from an email):

Fall 17 clusters establish a leadership team and some form of transitional organizational structure that allows them to analyze data, structure cluster entry courses and think about cluster majors. This transitional or hybrid structure could be anything from just a cluster of departments to the first attempt at a fully integrated structure with a leadership team.

Fall 18 clusters move from a hybrid or transitional form to a fully integrated cluster organization. This happens over the course of the year with the result that at the end of the year the kinks are worked out, a financially stable plan has been implemented for the future, and cluster majors and entry pathways have been formed/planned. All departments will have transitioned to discipline based communities and support services have been moved to the cluster hub during the year.

Fall 19 clusters are fully implemented and have been tested operationally the previous year.

Along with these first two academic leadership changes, the piloting clusters are also testing a new administrative support model focused around four areas of service to the clusters they will serve: communication, operations, project development, and partnership support. For this first iteration, and staff from the deans' office will be piloting the new roles with (for the time being) embedded academic administrative assistants remaining in their current roles. The pilots will give feedback to allow for necessary adjustments in the fall by when other clusters may begin moving to this new leadership/support model. As a part of that transition, the TLT participated in a joint meeting with the two pilot clusters and several other offices on campus (Alumni Relations, Advancement, ITS, MCCA, etc.) to see how their cluster work intersects with other areas and needs inside and beyond the university. Presumably the two pilot clusters are appropriate beginnings as they are the two smallest clusters. Their support staff are taken primarily from the deans' staff rather than from the current administrative assistants. . .

Transition Issues Shared with the Cabinet

We have noticed the underutilization, at least in terms of communication, of the [transformation timeline](#). Originally developed for our Board of Trustees, the April 2017 timeline laid out some of our current accomplishments and tasks while also articulating what needed to happen over the next three years. The TLT has discussed with the cabinet the need to update the timeline, to move accomplishments to a separate document, and to 'operationalize' the majority of goals. By operationalize, we mean articulating who is responsible for each goal, what needs to happen to achieve said goal, and what steps and timeline need to be in place before we need to meet the end date. This timeline will then need to be a living document, with constant updates,

communication, and transfers of information. Once we accomplish a particular goal, the item should be moved into a separate archive file to track our progress. The cabinet was very much in favor of such a recommendation and we look forward to seeing some new developments and uses of the timeline soon.

The TLT also found itself invited to partner with the deans on the next phase of URSA, URSIG (University Review for Strategic and Innovative Growth). We declined, stating emphatically that faculty and staff participation with URSIG had been completed and that the implementation phase was solely in the hands of the administration. The president charged the TLT to recommend a framework for the administration to explain why it was conducting URSIG and to detail the rationale behind the data gathered and its importance to the process which we shared with the deans October 13. The TLT has been told that URSIG data will be available to programs, disciplines, and clusters in early November. In the President's URSIG model, programs within their clusters will examine the data and rather than react to the administrations "recommendations" for cutting, instead will have the opportunity to use the data and reinvent themselves by building bridges between programs. Not only will this ensure the survival of disciplines that might have been lost in an URSA vision, but should vitalize interdisciplinary education in exciting ways that will help students graduate better-off because they were educated at a clustered university. The TLT expects the president to begin blogging again so-as to clarify his vision, and expects this within the next two weeks.

The TLT also was consulted about the issue of commencement changes being discussed by the administration. There have been several campus-wide conversations about the 2017 undergraduate commencement and concerns about student conduct, and these have been comingled with proposals regarding separating graduate and undergraduate commencement, moving the dates to weeknights during finals, and with best practices for establishing clear expectations for student conduct. While not necessarily part of our transition leadership purview, the TLT drafted a recommendation to the president about ways to communicate clear conduct expectations to all graduating students. We will recommend the president meet with representatives from Student Affairs, Student Government, and the graduating classes to talk about different ways we can give undergraduate commencement the dignified ceremony it deserves.

Looking Forward

The TLT has partnered with the Center for Transformation (CfT) to help organize the January Jamboree on "what matters most" to Plymouth State University. Using the guiding principles we've identified in this report, the CfT and TLT will be organizing a set of workshops and speakers to help us better align our values, principles, and actions to best ensure Plymouth's success as an institution of higher education. We've invited two of the authors of *The Undergraduate Experience*, Betsy Barefoot and John N. Gardner, to come to campus to talk about the different strategies they've used to build successful colleges and universities. Even though the book is titled "the *undergraduate* experience," we are making sure that the workshops and talks address ALL aspects of PSU, including graduate students and faculty, and employees

from all areas of the institution. In order to prepare for the workshops, we recommend you order a copy of the book, *The Undergraduate Experience*, as soon as possible.

Final Comments

Leadership continues to be an important point of development for our campus, especially as we change our organizational structure from a hierarchical model to a flatter, team-based model. As noted above, clarity about decision-making and decision-making-roles continues to be a confusing issue for many. The TLT is working closely with the cabinet to identify topics and areas in the discussing-deciding-determined timeline and to figure out ways we can better indicate which stage a particular item, change, office, or issue is in..

As always, we continue to work diligently on PSU's behalf and seek out connections with members across campus. Our goal is to work together to create a stronger PSU, one that is well prepared for (and a leader in) changes in higher education, pedagogy, and student engagement.

We look forward to hearing from you! Please don't hesitate to contact us at transition-leadership-team@plymouth.edu, or feel free to reach out to any individual member of our team.

Thank you,

Lori Armstrong

Jane Bjerklie-Barry

Meliss Furbish

Annette Holba

John Krueckeberg

Joyce Larson

Stephanie Magoon

Jason Moran

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