

OFFICIAL NOTES FROM THE OCTOBER 18 & 19, 2022 TOWN HALLS

Tuesday, October 18 – Doudna Recital Hall

Q&A after the presentation by Jay, Danielle, and Grant

- A question was asked about whether there were any new people on the Strategic Planning Committee (is anyone on the committee who has been at EIU less than 3 years?) Jay responded that the committee does include several new people representing staff at different stages of their careers.
- A faculty member discussed the loss of expertise through decreasing faculty numbers, and asked how we can have a strategic plan without a hiring plan. Jay responded by explaining that a plan will be developed, and used the Biology area as an example. We currently have a student-faculty ratio of about 14:1, and this needs to be closer to 16:1 or 18:1. The positive impact of the new science building was also shared.
- A followed u question asked how we are reaching out to LatinX students. Jay responded that we have a LatinX recruiter, bilingual admissions counselor, materials are printed in Spanish, and student organizations relevant to LatinX students. We are very intentional here, and are working to ensure that the LatinX and all communities feel welcome and included in the campus community.
- A faculty member stated that with our current student-faculty ratio we offer excellent opportunities to students outside the classroom. Increasing the ratio may sacrifice this benefit. Jay responded that we can do both by investing in high impact practices, including undergraduate travel, research, and study abroad. He mentioned the need for fundraising. Jay also asked the audience to consider how we structure majors with curriculum efficiencies, such as cognate graduate courses. As a regional comprehensive, we offer excellent faculty interaction with students, and we are able to provide opportunities for students and continue to benchmark against our peers.
- Another question was asked about the student-staff ratio—to her it seems dysfunctional. Jay responded that there has been some growth since the impasse, especially in IT and groundskeepers. He stated it is critical that revenues equal expenses. Grant added that this is why strategic planning is so important. We are trying to staff up in business areas—including facilities and projects—invest in expanding staff, and making measured investments in line with our obligations to financial responsibility.
- A safety concern was raised about understaffing in UPD. Jay explained how the hiring process in that area is slower, and officers are difficult to retain.
- A question was asked about how much strategic planning will focus on building resources. Jay responded that we need explore tuition levels, increase enrollment, expand scholarships, be more entrepreneurial in our approach to programs and partnerships, and add more grants and research.
- A question was asked about how we can have more effective advocacy in the general assembly—with emphasis that this should be a priority. He provided the growing gap in state funding over time. Jay responded by discussing the increase in MAP funding and base state funding. It was shared that for every dollar a student spends, state support has diminished, and we have a duty to remain available and accessible to our constituents. Advocacy efforts always help, including anything we can do address that financial gap and needs of our individual students, citing MAP/Pell, the strategic articulation of the value of public higher education, and an increase in donor funds as examples.

Wednesday, October 19 – Phipps Auditorium, Physical Sciences
Q&A after the presentation by Jay, Danielle, and Grant

- How often does the strategic planning committee meet? Grant shared that the committee has met several times; as have smaller, task-oriented subcommittees. Now that the academic year has started, the committee of the whole meets about once a month.
- A comment expressed some concern about doing this exercise before the change of president. Jay's response was that there is value in doing an internal process that is rooted in shared aspirations, the Illinois higher ed strategic plan, and realities in Illinois/the upcoming "cliff." It's important to view the strategic plan as an evolutionary document. Also, it was noted that strategic planning was intended to happen earlier, but was delayed by the State budget impasse and then by COVID. The plan is being encouraged and supported by the board of trustees at this time.
- Another comment expressed concern about the need to enhance/reassess Student Disability Services to respond to enhanced/changing needs, especially as it relates to limited support staff and the work on faculty to address needs of students with accommodations; it could become a compliance issue. The concern was noted by the presenters.
- A commenter shared that it is critical to focus on the updating of facilities, and with this there is a need to consider what kind of environment we're creating for students. The Life Sciences Building was the example cited. A connection was made to disability access here too.
- There was a request from Student Affairs personnel to keep them involved in the strategic planning process. The committee invites input from all areas and encourages members from across the university to join the Strategic Planning Committee.
- A question was asked about how we're going to prioritize things in this process. Jay's response was that we intend to create short-term goals, then attach them to longer-term goals, then make connections from them to KPIs (Key Performance Indicators).
- A question: would you all want some input from books/articles on the topic we all are reading? Jay's response: Yes, definitely.
- A comment was made about the continuing need to diversify our employment base, and this effort needing to be part of the work of the forthcoming Senior Diversity Officer, or a distinct person tasked with doing that. To this end, Jay talked about the need for flexible paths to the professoriate. There was a comment about including this in the UPI negotiations as well.
- An articulated need to consider relations with the community was expressed, and to enhance our engagement with the Charleston community and beyond. Hypotheticals included how to partner with industry, school districts, etc.
- A facilities comment: What environment is created for students when making decisions about *when* facilities are updated and how? HVAC update issues in biological sciences building impacted student experiences was discussed as an example for consideration moving forward. Jay agreed that this concern was noted, and that interruptions from the budget impasse and COVID delays have put EIU and peer institutions on update schedules that are not ideal. Hopefully this will be addressed as we return to normalcy of operations.
- Development of simultaneous strategic plans was mentioned. As an example, strategic plan development in student affairs is underway but further advanced than the current EIU Strategic Plan. How can we align all of the plans that are being developed individually at the same time? Jay said that involvement is the key—closer dialogues are encouraged and we want these groups to be a part of the larger plan, but also acknowledged that most departmental plans would favorably align with the larger plan in some way, shape, or fashion because we are all working toward the same

goals. This process is just more official and necessary for reaffirmation and for aligning goals under the institutional brand, themes, and values.

- How are we going to prioritize and manage all of these broad and multi-faceted goals? Jay said that the first step in the strategic planning process is developing measurable benchmarks. Once that is done (by next spring), over time the committee will prioritize short-term versus long-term plans in relation to all others as we prepare our KPIs.
- How are you gathering information from others on campus? Jay said that all EIU community members are encouraged to share any resources for consideration on higher education with committee members.
- What is the intention of retaining or hiring diverse staff? Jay indicated that some initiatives are already in place, but that strategic planning will allow us to sharpen and focus resources for this purpose. As an example, he suggested EIU may need to think creatively about broader and more inclusive advertisements.
- A comment/question: We should focus on why does a student, a faculty member, staff member come to EIU? Because of the community. How do we integrate the strategic plan of the Coles County community with the EIU community? Jay suggested that we need to commit to a community of care where we are all working reciprocally. This will take some effort, of course, because many people across different industries are busy and/or overwhelmed (EIU employees included) but that making this a part of our strategic priorities (under Theme 2: Engage, perhaps) that he is confident EIU and the community can get it done.