

## **Main Street Minutes**

June 3, 2010

Roz Eaton-Neeb

**Present:** Steve McKelvey, Chair; Paula Carlson; Mary Emery; Ted Johnson; Pat Smith representing Bruce Dalgaard; Michael Kyle; Nathan Solan; Janice Roberts; Bruce Benson, David R. Anderson, Roz Eaton-Neeb

**Agenda:** Steve outlined the agenda for this first meeting:

- Receive our charge from President Anderson
- Define why the committee is made up of these people
- Discuss/define the role of this group
- Begin our discussion

**Charge:** The President's number one priority at St Olaf right now is that we look at what it is that we can do differently than or not do or do in addition to what we are already doing to make sure that our students are mentored and prepared to have a good, clear, sustainable path laid out for themselves when they graduate. At the end of it, we cannot say to students: "You had a great major, have a nice life."

Higher Education has been insufficiently attentive to a longer path. We should and will do this for the good of our students as well as for the firmament of our place as a national liberal arts college. This is/will be a profoundly compelling element of the value proposition we make to families.

If we as a committee agree with these thoughts, how might we get at this?

A likely result is that our work will change the way we speak to students in the enrollment process and advising processes, in the Center for Experiential Education and may perhaps even indicate curricular changes. Any resource of the college is available to us – we could tap alumni and our work is likely to include parents.

CEL is placed in Tomson Hall in the center of campus because it should be the center of what we do as an institution.

How might this group come up with a plan:

- 1) many people in and outside of St Olaf will feel a tension between a liberal arts college on the one hand and a vocation (small v) on the other. First, this group must discuss this tension. Do we need a new vocabulary? Is there a different way of thinking so that our interest in students getting jobs is neither perceived to be nor is it in conflict with our identity as a liberal arts college?
- 2) characteristics of highly effective organizations..President Anderson believes organizations may be distinguished by their ability to harness/focus/instill all of their energies toward a particular purpose. The next 'Big Thing' won't be due to

big donations or campaigns. The next Big Thing will going forward will be getting around some project that harnesses our varying talents and perspectives around a common aim. President Anderson's aim is that St Olaf will be a place where ALL of us, regardless of role, have this at the top of our focus – a singleness of purpose (i.e., lifeplan).

Expectation that many more will be engaged in this conversation, but that we are the group that will bring the conversation.

S. McKelvey: Want students to understand what it takes to make a living; what are the advantages talent to income; idea of thinking about earning a living *is* very important, not mundane and not a threat to a liberal arts education. This will be a culture change.

Discussion followed. Themes: must teach students to identify and speak articulately about their useful skills and talents; must be deliberate about helping students to lace/connect what they do while they are here; must be aware of our obligations to alumni; must teach students to connect to the alumni network.

Back to this project and what initiated it:

StO is up for reaccreditation by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). HLC is trying to pull apart 2 processes: 1) report to satisfy HLC; 2) report on our project (this is our part). This time StO has been invited to try a new approach – a process by which the college identifies something we'd like to do better. The HLC likes StO proposal for MSP.

Product: a plan with concrete steps to get there detailed. Likely some smaller pieces that will accompany this as well. S. McKelvey recommends that we also develop ways to assess the effectiveness of what we're proposing so that it's easy for us to know if what we're doing is working. \*likely that this plan would attract philanthropic support.

Now – think about the problem and what might be possible and then create a plan for implementation.

Next meeting week of June 28. S. McKelvey will send email requesting availability.

Homework: go out and try to identify 1 or 2 interesting programs/articles to help us understand. Plan to speak 2-3 minutes about the idea/article, etc. S McKelvey would like to establish an electronic archive.