

Comprehensive Campus Facilities Plan

November 10, 2009

THIS DOCUMENT ATTEMPTS TO CAPTURE THE ESSENCE OF AND SPECIFIC DETAILS FROM THE CONVERSATION THAT OCCURRED AT THE OPEN FORUM INTRODUCING THE NEXT COMPREHENSIVE CAMPUS FACILITIES PLANNING PROCESS. PLEASE SEND COMMENTS TO GIL WISWALL AT cwiswall@wcupa.edu.

Environmental Sustainability: Arguably the major theme of the discussion; many comments were directly or indirectly linked to making environmental sustainability a major design criterion.

We need to remember that the current conditions (economic, academic, social, technological) are continually in flux and therefore, decisions should not just reflect the current situation. In fact, the life span of buildings will exceed the 10 year plan. Sustainability and resilience are important long term, persistent concerns and should play a central role in thinking and planning.

Any planning process begins by setting priorities, goals, and objectives. We as a community need to decide where sustainability ranks among the list of priorities and make decisions accordingly.

Facilities are more than brick and mortar; we need to consider the campus as a whole. If we adopt that view, the design should recognize our existing green facilities (e.g. Gordon Environmental Center), incorporate new ones (e.g. green roofs), and enable their maintenance and preservation.

As an academic community, all that we do reflects our educational values whether directly or by example. Our physical plant, our policies, procedures, and practices all speak about our priorities. The design should convey messages about our priorities and integrate academic life. Several specific examples that would reflect a high priority assigned to sustainability were offered including:

- Prohibit cars from the center of campus so as to enhance health, safety, aesthetics, etc.
- Eliminate the culvert system and return Plum Run to an natural open stream channel through campus so that it can be used in teaching.
- Buildings should monitor and display energy consumption for public viewing and use in classes.
- Close waste stream loop. Compost all waste. Reuse/recycle unconsumed food and food waste.
- Establish Glen Echo as sustainability center/demonstration farm or community garden plot.
- Convert all campus vehicles to electric power with solar panels.

Several students from The Earth Club were in attendance and spoke eloquently about several immediate issues with which they were involved including the greening of campus dining practices, addressing the lack of bike parking facilities, the relative ineffectiveness of our current recycling program and the difficulty in identifying responsible offices for sustainability issues. A specific recommendation was to appoint a sustainability coordinator for the campus.

A sense of Community: A second major theme of the discussion addressed the desirability of designing a campus that was integrated so as to promote a sense of community. Community was broadly defined to include the WCU community as well as the institution's place within the region and beyond.

The existing campus structure enhances the silo effect between colleges, departments, and divisions. The geographic division of North, South, and East campuses is the largest scale example. As a smaller scale example, the current practice of housing departments in specific buildings produces a silo effect between disciplines within single colleges. Using the NIH proposal for Sturzebecker as a model, we could develop spaces for scholarly communities to dissolve disciplinary boundaries.

A design that promotes and integrates the surrounding community with the campus was also promoted. We have several programs that would lend themselves to better integrating the community with the university. One example provided was a multidisciplinary health center that could reach out to the community and provide students the opportunity for clinical experience. A second specific example was the University Planetarium, the renovation of which could expand the connection with surrounding schools and the public.

The emerging focus on internationalization was also cited as a way to integrate WCU internationally. We currently lack adequate facilities and processes to provide cultural support for international students and assist them with integration into campus life. It was also noted that we have a number of WCU students choosing to study abroad. The design could incorporate a physical space to serve as a gateway for students coming from or going to international locations.

A number of specific suggestions intended to enhance the sense of community and campus integration included:

- Design bike paths to aid traffic flow and reduce vehicular traffic.
- Design pedestrian walkways to manage the flow of students across campus (e.g. solve the necessity of resident students to enter and exit Schmucker on their trip from the dorms to the quad).
- Create amphitheatre-like outdoor spaces amenable to teaching and social gathering.
- Create communal spaces for social interaction and eating.
- Provide department common rooms to facilitate interaction with students, faculty networking.

- Consider the currently under-utilized faculty dining room; whether and where to locate it.
- Convert Church St. to a pedestrian way to improve the sense of the campus.
- Provide short to long term housing for international visitors.
- Develop a conference center to showcase the university.

Professionalism of Design and Aesthetics: A particular focus on developing a forward-looking, aesthetically pleasing, flexible design was a third main focus of the discussion. These aspects were included as a component of many suggestions listed elsewhere in this document. Some specific examples include:

- Campus design conveys our sense of priorities and values; the design should contain flexibility that allows us to take advantage of developments in technology.
- The design should have a view toward the efficient use of space.
- Aesthetics are important to marketing the institution to prospective students and their parents. Main Hall's current condition is a detriment to this endeavor.
- Focus on integrating the campus with its surroundings.
- Find the proper mix of centralized and decentralized services. (e.g. should parking passes be purchased in a central location which contains one stop shopping?)
- Purchase adjacent properties on High and Rosedale to provide land on which to build.

Health, safety, and inclusion: Several suggestions addressed the general well being of campus residents and visitors especially with respect to physically challenged individuals:

- Improved health was noted as an outcome of several suggestions made above, particularly with respect to reducing vehicle emissions.
- Design outdoor lighting with safety and energy consumption in mind.
- Accessibility: all buildings must be ADA compliant so that we can meet our goals to inclusion and diversity; campus is currently very inhospitable.
- The design to promote mental presence and engagement as opposed to distraction by technology

Current conditions that need immediate or near term attention: A number of issues were identified that stem from evolution over time combined with enrollment growth. An example of the former is Sturzebecker Health Science Center. Designed at a time when the physical activity played an important role in the mission and curriculum, the space is largely unsuitable for the current mission and curriculum. Main Hall is an example of the facilities inadequacies resulting from growth where faculty office space is wholly inadequate. Several departments currently have inadequate facilities to teach the modern curriculum and/or inadequate office space to house faculty. Specific issues of an immediate or near term nature included:

- With the growth of the East Campus, an engineering solution is required to solve the conflict between pedestrian and vehicular traffic at the High/Rosedale intersection.

- Inadequate office space in Main Hall is compromising the ability of faculty to accomplish their jobs. Advising cannot take place with adequate privacy. Noise and odors are distractions that inhibit or prevent many kinds of necessary work.
- Athletic training labs and training rooms need creation or renovation to compete with surrounding programs and adequately train students.
- Social science disciplines have laboratory facility needs which are currently not available.
- Nursing labs and classrooms are inadequate to recognize trends in nursing education (e.g. simulation).
- If enrollment continues to grow, student service facilities will need to expand including the library, general use computer labs, tutoring, advising and other services.
- Classroom space is inadequate at present. Class rooms need to be flexible to accommodate different modes of pedagogy. Create a large centrally located classroom building.
- An assessment plan should be implemented to evaluate the service that facilities is providing.
- We need to involve the entire community in the planning; not just faculty and staff.