

# THE IMPORTANCE OF IDENTIFYING EXISTING INSTITUTIONAL ASSETS IN THE EARLIEST STAGES OF GIVING ATTENTION TO SPACES

**My personal take-away thought from my roundtable experience is the importance of identifying existing institutional assets in the earliest stages of planning. On our campus, we have many: amazing human capital, substantive engagement with a broad community of stakeholders beyond the campus, and a diversity of cultures represented by our students and within our faculty.**

I leave with a greater awareness of the need to focus on, define, and transform our learning culture by building on such identified assets, with a collective determination to achieve a campus-wide learning culture. I am reflecting on what it would mean if we started giving attention to spaces for learning for everyone in our community—for student learning, faculty and staff learning, everyone learning everywhere?

What would it mean if:

- we all spoke about integrated learning, about authentic learning for all?
- in giving attention to learning for all, we gave attention to all kinds of spaces, including outdoor spaces across campus, active-learning classrooms and labs within particular buildings, spaces that serve as connectors—as bridges connecting communities?
- we sat down and made a list of all the different ways we gather information and data about our spaces, as well as of the different purposes for gathering that information (e.g., grant proposals, state authorizing agencies)?

I don't think we have ever sat down and made a list of all our assets or—equally—about what we say about our spaces when we prepare a proposal for external funding, or about what information we gather in an annual space-analysis exercise.

Such information should be thought of as assets for our planning.

## **What other assets should we be looking for and paying attention to in the process of planning for the future?**

Perhaps:

- Our annual inventory of faculty, who they are, where they were trained, the work that they do here.
- The traditions that make us who we are, traditions that are changing given the changing culture. (We are also tossing out the "old junkers" of traditions that no longer reflect who we are.)
- Emerging work in sustainability, both by physical plant officers and in faculty experience in this area.
- The assets that include attention to connections to the community through our alumni, our partnerships with business, industry, service agencies and local schools.

**From this roundtable conversation, I realize that we do not take advantage of our assets. This happens because there is no common awareness of these assets we cannot celebrate them and use them as a foundation for our planning.**

One critical *auditing* step is to examine the current reality beyond the campus—what audacious questions are being asked, where are these questions being raised, what answers are surfacing.

Another critical auditing step is to canvas the campus community to identify those faculty and administrators who might be called boundary crossing agents, those who move back and forth between campus and national communities of practice—be they business officers, fine arts deans, faculty responsible for undergraduate research, and/or directors of assessment or other administrative offices.

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