

Draft Interim Report for the GOVERNING IDEAS TASK FORCE

September 1, 2005

Task Force Members: Allen Colebank, Geneva Hines, Bev Jones, Debby Kisner, Shane Livingston, Gig Meredith

Task Force Co-Chairs: Anne Patterson and Jerry Bacza

1 Beginning the Task

Work began in the summer, with the members of the task force considering a “compressed version” of the present Fairmont State University Mission Statement, which eliminated what appeared to be extraneous information and focused the institution’s mission:

Fairmont State University Mission Statement, compressed version

Fairmont State University is a multi-purpose institution, whose mission is to

- provide seamless transitions from public schools, certificate programs, or associate degrees to baccalaureate degrees;
- promote graduate education by offering select graduate programs;
- foster individual growth, professional and career development, life-long learning, global understanding, and a commitment to excellence in academic and community pursuits;
- offer flexible and relevant learning experiences that enable students to gain the knowledge and skills needed for responsible citizenship and fulfilling employability in a rapidly changing global environment; (*word order edited – ALP*)
- provide the opportunity to explore interrelationships among disciplines;

- foster partnerships with business and industry, public schools, government agencies, and other organizations that contribute to the economic, cultural, and social development of the region.

2 The First Draft and Call for Reactions

After a series of meetings, the members of the Task Force agreed that the Mission Statement should be something that *everyone can remember*—something that should get directly to the point.

The following draft was prepared and submitted to the faculty and staff for comment on July 22, 2005. These statements were developed as a starting point for both institutions: Fairmont State University and Fairmont State Community and Technical College. The intent was to begin with Mission and Vision for Fairmont State and then develop statements for each institution.

The Mission of Fairmont State is to provide a supportive and diverse learning environment that fosters individual growth, career development, lifelong learning, global understanding, and a commitment to excellence in academic and community pursuits.

The Vision of Fairmont State is to be a student-oriented institution that provides a flexible and relevant learning environment. The institution is committed to offer a comprehensive education with the acquisition of the knowledge and skills necessary to prepare the individual for intellectual growth, productive citizenship, and employability in a changing environment.

Only five persons responded to this mailing, and comments ranged from “Sounds great!” to “Both statements are too vague, too buzz-word heavy, and too brief....” Another person wondered if we really needed to describe our learning environment as “relevant.” “I mean,” he said, “would anyone assume that we’d envision one that was ‘irrelevant’?”

3 The Second Call for Reactions

On August 17, after faculty were once more on contract, the following letter was sent to faculty and staff, and once more we called for comments:

To the Fairmont State Faculty and Staff:

Strategic Planning Process Begun

Fairmont State University and Fairmont State Community & Technical College embarked this summer on a dramatic strategic planning process. Through this process we are reviewing our basic mission, vision and values; documenting the needs of our region and our potential to fill those needs; examining the makeup of our student body and our efforts to make sure each student succeeds; and exploring how to strengthen both the university and the community college by enhancing the partnership between them. The Steering Council for Strategic Planning is made up of more than 40 of our colleagues, divided into four Foundational Task Forces.

The Governing Ideas Task Force

We are co-chairing the **Governing Ideas Task Force**, whose mission is to examine and revise as needed the mission, vision, and core values of Fairmont State University and Fairmont State Community and Technical College. Members of the task force are Allen Colebank, Geneva Hines, Bev Jones, Debby Kisner, Shane Livingston, Gig Meredith, and Anne Patterson and Jerry Bacza (co-chairs).

We Need YOU

- We need your comments and reactions to the very preliminary drafts which appear below this message. Mission statements are difficult documents to craft, but they are a community concern. So we ask for your observations.
- We have also been asked to suggest possible mottoes for the Fairmont State seal, which is being re-designed. Since it is to go on the seal, it needs to be short—but “Mountaineers are always free” is already taken!

Please Comment

Please read the appended items and send comments to Bev Jones by return e-mail.

Tempus fugit...

A draft report from the Task Force is due August 23, and the final report is due in early October. We need your help NOW. A few of you who were around in the summer have already sent helpful comments. We appreciate those comments, but we are hoping for many more.

Thank you for your interest and your assistance.

Anne Patterson

Jerry Bacza

By August 23, we had received ten responses, some of which include suggestions for the Fairmont State motto.

Suggestions for the Fairmont State Motto

The following were suggested to appear on the newly designed Fairmont State Seal:

- “Soaring to every greater heights” (Nancy Lassiter)
- “Falcons soar with eagles” (Debby Kisner)
- “Falcons soar with the eagles” (Debby Kisner)
- “Every falcon soars high” (Larry Allen)

4 Issues for Clarification

One faculty member wrote, “On a readability note, I think we should remove the singular institution references since it is a shared vision,” referring to the use of “Fairmont State” in the statements.

So we need to be clear about

- The language we use to denote the joined institutions;
- Whether each institution is to have its own Mission and Vision Statements and Core Values, or whether they are to be shared.

End of August 23, 2005, Report

SEPTEMBER 1, 2005

1 Issues for Clarification

Beginning with the Issues for Clarification, above, we have made it clear within our own group that “Fairmont State” is the wording used to describe the two institutions *together*. This usage was documented in the Higher Learning Commission’s Report of a Comprehensive Evaluation Visit, dated April 28-30, 2003. In the section headed “Institutional Context,” pages 4 and 5 of the Assurance Section of the report, the reviewers include definitions of the terms “Fairmont State,” “Fairmont State College,” and “Fairmont State Community and Technical College.” We will need to be consistent in our usage of these terms in future communications with the faculty.

Furthermore, we have are emphasizing that, while Fairmont State University and Fairmont State Community and Technical College certainly share some core values, the goal is ultimately that each institution have its own Mission and Vision Statement.

Third Call for Reactions

On August 25, 2005, we sent another call for reactions to the faculty, and this time we included John Moore's document entitled, "Governing Ideas: Concepts and Terminology." Ten responses have been received.

Edited Statements

Although the Mission and Vision Statements are still under consideration, a few changes in both grammar and content have been incorporated. At this moment, the new versions read as follows:

The Mission of Fairmont State is to provide a supportive and diverse learning environment that fosters individual growth, career development, lifelong learning, global understanding, and a commitment to excellence in academic and community pursuits.

The Vision of Fairmont State is to be an institution that promotes student learning by providing a flexible learning environment and excellent teaching. The institution is committed to offering a comprehensive education focusing on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to prepare the individual for intellectual growth, full and participatory citizenship, and employability in a changing environment.

Although we now clearly envision FSU as a master's degree granting institution, this issue has not been raised by the members of the Task Force. And since the current statement is by design appropriate for *both* FSU and FSC&TC, that is probably understandable. Becoming a Masters I institution as a vision has an entirely different "flavor" from those visions so far embraced by the Task Force, and we will probably want to discuss measurable elements of our vision at some point. As the statements for each "side" of the institution diverge, points that are particular to each side will emerge.

Core Values

As of August 25, our focus had been on Mission and Vision, although some thought perhaps we were getting the cart before the horse—that is, that we should have identified core values first.

On August 25, the co-chairs sent the following message to members of the Task Force:

Dear Governing Ideas Task Force Members:

PLEASE NOTE: Meeting of the Task Force Monday, August 29, from 8-9 a.m. in 358 Wallman.

To date, we have addressed in draft form the Mission Statement and the Vision Statement for FAIRMONT STATE (unified institution). Ultimately, we will move on to create Mission and Vision Statements that are specific to Fairmont State University and Fairmont State Community and Technical College.

At the moment, however, what we need to address is the matter of core values. We are on a VERY tight time line, and we must have a draft report ready for a meeting of the Steering Committee on Thursday night, September 1. So this is what we are asking of you:

♪ IMAGINE THAT YOU ARE IN THE PITTSBURGH AIRPORT AND THAT YOU ARE WEARING SOMETHING THAT ASSOCIATES YOU WITH FAIRMONT STATE. A STRANGER APPROACHES YOU AND SAYS (AFTER AN APPROPRIATE INTRODUCTION AND CHIT-CHAT), "I HAVE A PRETTY GOOD IDEA ABOUT WHAT YOUR INSTITUTION'S MISSION AND VISION ARE, BUT I WANT TO KNOW WHAT **FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS** PROVIDE THE UNDERPINNING FOR THE INSTITUTION. WHAT ARE THE VALUES AT THE VERY **CORE** OF WHO YOU ARE AS ADMINISTRATIVELY LINKED INSTITUTIONS?"

♪ YOUR FLIGHT IS BOARDING IN TWO MINUTES. PLEASE LIST THE **FIVE** THINGS YOU WOULD TELL THIS EXTRAORDINARY PERSON ABOUT OUR "CORE VALUES" OR "FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS." YOU ARE NOT CARRYING YOUR FAIRMONT STATE CATALOG, SO YOU TELL THIS PERSON THINGS THAT **YOU** BELIEVE ARE ACCURATE ABOUT OUR CORE VALUES.

Attached here, as a reminder of "definitions," is a copy of the memo sent from Dr. Moore when we began our strategic planning.

→ **Please bring to Monday morning's meeting enough copies of your five points for each member of the Task Force.**

→ **Please send your version of Fairmont State's Core Values to Bev Jones bjones@fairmontstate.edu before you come to the meeting. (Please remember that we are looking for your ideas, unaided by the present statement of Core Values—and before you discuss them with other members of the Task Force. After all, the Task Force wasn't with you "in the airport"!**

Thanks in advance for your brilliant work!

The meeting time of the Task Force conflicted with the weekly meeting of Deans and Provost with the President. Those present at the Task force meeting came with ideas, as requested, which included the following:

1. Diversity
 2. Educational Equity
 3. Promote Social Responsibility
 4. Promote Physical, mental and social wellness
 5. Secure environment
-
1. Student-centered
 2. Teaching Institution
 3. Quality education for all students
 4. Center for resources for service area
 5. Initiate programs to meet the needs of the region
-
1. Identify poverty areas
 2. Strengthening resources: including financial, physical, technological and human
 3. student-centered
-
1. Outreach to community
 2. Professionalism
 3. cultural development through art
 4. partnership

By the end of the meeting, the group had reduced these to the following list of six;

1. **Respect**
2. **Integrity**
3. **Equity**
4. **Diversity**
5. **Integration**
6. **Excellence**

Meanwhile, in the meeting of Deans and Provost, the Deans went through the process described for the Task Force and, without refining the ideas at all, produced the following list of core values in a two-minute timed exercise:

- Each person develops his/her own fullest potential
- Liberal Arts background/broad education
- Function in global society
- Tolerance/understanding
- Preparation for career and further learning.

- Student centered
- Diverse programs (traditional and recent)
- Sensitivity to non-traditional student situations/needs
- Academic standards
- Emphasis upon both developing the individual and preparation for team work

- Liberal education
- Transition from high school to academy
- Transition from academy to real world
- Citizenship
- Critical thinking

- Facilitating student learning
- Accessibility of classes and services
- High quality programs and outcomes
- Student centered campus
- Advising and mentoring

- Every student can learn
- Create an environment to facilitate that learning
- Student as an individual matters
- Holistic education is a goal (mind/body/spirit)

- Full participatory citizenship
- Dedicated to learning and to preparing students to *continue* to learn
- Flexibility, motivation, teamwork, creativity
- Preparation for employment and for entrepreneurship
- World-wide awareness and citizenship

- Student orientation – new facilities – learning communities – culture of warmth
- Small classes relative to large university
- Student/advisor/advisee relationships
- Value
- Quality

There is clearly more room for discussion here.

We have a good foundation to produce Mission, Vision, and Core Value statements for Fairmont State University and Fairmont State Community and Technical College. To this point, because of the academic calendar, we have had no opportunity to have campus-wide meetings to discuss the developing statements.

Although we have sent out three calls for responses, we believe that electronic calls for comments do not have the immediacy of a “town hall” type meeting. And while we are not anxious to encourage a long, drawn-out discussion of revised statements about

who we are, what we stand for, and what we do, neither do we want to discourage lively exchange. So we look forward to face-to-face soon.