

McPherson College

## ***Community by Design 2.0: Assess and Plan***

### **Retreat Summary**

July 15-16, 2021

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#### **GOAL:**

Set the direction for the next iteration of the *Community by Design* strategic plan by assessing progress and outlining a framework for a future plan.

#### **RETREAT TAKEAWAYS:**

The board of trustees had an engaged conversation over two days to diagnose *Community by Design* progress by discussing what we've learned during the past 5 years and where to keep building. Below is a summary of the discussions.

What did we learn?

- **Risk:** Courage breeds opportunity—it is time for us to be bold; Big risk stretches the possibilities, Being bold is difficult at times but produced important results the past 5 years
- **Leadership:** Good leadership makes a difference; We are not always in control
- **Operation:** Incremental results led to big impacts; Online is a good tool but does not have to define us; Well thought out priorities; How we use our time and emotional energy is important; “A work” focused; Don’t forget a strong financial base
- **Community:** In Person is key; Pivoting together is a good strategy; Relationships will drive efficient change; People like to win; “Great College to Work For” institutions can have high expectations
- **Growth:** We can grow and still be a small college; Growth never ends as we consistently invest in our future; Leveraging what we do well for growth; Students are attracted to quality
- **Strategic Planning:** Fluid, and we must adapt as needed; Planning by community vs. committee works; Creating measurables that are measured; Keep learning; Can’t be all things to all people; Big ideas take long-term strategies; direction is good, but consider new trajectory over 10 years
- **Loss:** Suffering is not equitable; DEI is never ending, and we should not forget the student voice in programs, processes, and policies; Retention is hard and takes the whole campus; Mental Health; Momentum lost during the pandemic disruption; KLC Adaptive Leadership as a solution
- **Communication:** Early and often; Hard to speak to loss; Parents and students want to be informed
- **Stop:** Anything we don’t do well and isn’t a priority—programs, majors, sports, clubs; Barriers to Entry for First Generation and Minority Students; Carbon is disappearing—how does AR need to adapt?; Midwestern Humbleness—reinvented culture that embraces our founding and connects to today’s students; USD 418 Lease; Traditional Small College Philosophy—small thinking, traditional library, residential/outdated living options, meal plans; Only traditional ways of learning that exclude virtual options; Resistance to change; Focus on employees required to live in McPherson, KS; Take down Beeghly Hall; Start a list of things MC should stop doing—ask the campus

## What should we build on?

- **East McPherson:** Residential Housing plan with upgraded spaces and new spaces to include retail and/or student interests and branding; Euclid Corridor—Campus housing anchored with lakeside park; Quick Wins like boiler room, outdoor/green spaces as well as reused spaces after campus common is complete like Miller Library, Mohler Hall, Hoffman Student Union; There is real estate to expand campus; Identify innovative partners to develop current and new spaces; Equitable housing pricing; Consider affordable multi-family opportunities for employees; Spaces and facilities can drive culture—“Sheds” in Auto Restoration Example; Space is limited and tight on campus—reuse of space after campus common completed will be critical; Campus Common at the center
- **Operation:** Scaling the operation during times of growth—systems, technology, staffing/structure; “Great College to Work For”—united, cohesive campus focused on building community; Diversity, Equity, and inclusions commitment; Invest resources in quality employees—Professional development, Stronger, more diverse hiring pools, Grow our own, Develop bench strength; Empower entrepreneurial employees; Invest in leaders
- **Enrollment Growth:** Pillar (formerly “general”) student focused; Retention; Better connection with families; Success of signature programs that pair market demand with liberal arts; Efforts to achieve gender balance; Quality drives quantity; Mentorship as a strategy to improve retention
- **Student Experience:** Elevate and integrate service; Career Oriented Liberal Arts; Growth is exciting, Inclusive excellence, Engaging general ed; Relate to students as people rather than initiatives
- **Student Debt Project:** Promotes lifelong learning; Mentorships increased retention as an unintended outcome; Replacing institutional aid with student debt project earned dollars; Program with purpose and impact
- **Fundraising:** Balance traditional donors (annual) with Ultra High Wealth Efforts (endowment)
- **Awareness:** National recognition; Marketing; Win Kansas market; Focus on virtual spaces like web and social media; Relationship with local constituents—USD, City, County, Chamber, McPherson Industrial Development Corporation, Mainstreet Inc.
- **Culture:** Continue to embrace our identity around community, social justice and inclusion, career oriented liberal arts, service and entrepreneurial spirit
- **Board:** Continued focus on ideal board composition; Knowledge; Efficient operations