Spring 2010 Faculty/Administration Roundtable
March 5, 2010
President Keenum's Home
Topic: Benchmarking and Consolidations

On Friday, March 5th, the Faculty Senate Spring Roundtable was held at President Keenum's residence from 1:00 to 6:00. There were eight administrators, eight faculty senators, and eight members of the general faculty participating in the discussion. The entire 24 members of the roundtable began together with a welcome from Dr. Keenum and an introduction and overview of the schedule by Senate Vice President, Meghan Millea. The two topics discussed were Benchmarking and Consolidations. Both of these topics addressed recommendations from the President's Select Committee on Efficiencies and Innovations.

BENCHMARKING

The participants in the benchmarking discussion were:

Hart Bailey (facilitating)	Michael Berk	Cody Coyne
Susan Diehl	Jerry Emison	Gary Ervin
Julia Hodges	Bill Kibler	David Shaw
Glenn Steele	Jan Taylor	

The initial discussion revolved around the philosophical question of the eventual use of the data collected in the benchmarking exercise, i.e. Would the decisions from the data be made to appropriate resources to the stronger programs (large and or growing enrollments) or to the smaller programs? From these discussions there grew a consensus that there needs to be a university strategic plan used to assist in the allocation of resources.

The question was raised as to what the points are driving the strategic thinking, e.g., number of students/class. One of the primary considerations is MSU must first meet the student's requirements in the classroom and then addresses the research needs of the university. Obviously both are a major part of our mission as a land grant university. A central component of the decision making process needs to be how to utilize the data collected in determining when to hire instructors verses tenure track faculty.

One of the major thoughts that arose was that there are essentially two different components of the benchmarking decision making process: census vs. demand.

The term census pertains to the more immediate needs of how to address the teaching needs of the students that will be at MSU this next year. There was discussion that enrollment is slated to increase

this fall. This situation could possibly create some challenges in meeting the class needs of the students due to the retirement incentive now available to the faculty.

The term demand looks at the long term needs of MSU and thus the benchmarking exercise is needed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the different programs.

There was some discussion on the difference between strategic thinking vs. strategic planning. Strategic thinking refers to responding to immediate needs and is fluid in nature. Strategic planning was defined as a more long term investments in our system and infrastructure based on data and decisions.

There was also a discussion concerning the logistics of the benchmarking process, i.e., How will the data be collected and stored, will there be a central/campus wide data base/program to gather information that is used for benchmarking? It was noted that different units have their own programs designed to collect the specific program for that particular group. It was mentioned that there are commercially available programs/services available that can be customized to accomplish collection of benchmarking data at a university. The current benchmarking process initiated by the Provost should help position MSU to address these issues.

CONSOLIDATIONS:

The participants of the Spring Round table Merger/Consolidation group were:

Administrators	Faculty Senators	General Faculty
Mike McGrevey	Meghan Millea (facilitator)	Brendon Hale
Greg Bohach	Barry Stewart	Louis Dawkins
George Hopper	Brian Rude	Richard Baird
Gary Myers	Stephen Klein	Devon Brenner

From the Select Committee on Efficiencies and Innovation Report, 2 colleges and several departments were recommended for mergers/realignments. Each of the merger pairs recommended had a least one representative at this roundtable discussion. There were several questions and concerns raised such as:

> **Hiring practices**—how would new positions be filled? According to whose priority within a new department/college?

> **Workloads**—how does the new unit address differences in research, extension, and teaching? how does the new unit assimilate the different cultures of the two units?

> **Accreditation**—how does a merger impact accreditation for the unit?

Equity—how does a new unit accommodate drastic differences in salary within a new unit? How does a new unit manage faculty members with 9 and 12 month contracts? How does a new unit make decisions when a majority vote would predictably disenfranchise a portion of the faculty?

While the challenges associated with a potential merger are relatively easy to identify, the question still remained, how do the units begin navigating a potential merger? How do the units transition from focusing on obstacles and to opportunities? The roundtable group identified a process that could be followed to focus discussions within the units and to initiate discussions with the faculty in the paired unit.

Step 1—each department needs meet to outline its position.

1) IDENTITY—
   a) List and describe the current faculty
   b) List and describe the current programs
   c) List and describe department activities.
   d) How do you describe what your department does?
   e) What are the priorities of the department?
   f) What are your strengths?
   g) What must you preserve?
   h) How do you maintain aspects of service to students?
   i) What are the keys to maintenance of the unit's identity?

2) OTHER UNIT—
   a) How can the other unit support these pieces?
   b) How will they detract from these priorities?

3) MERGER—
   a) Are there opportunities that could be realized with the merged unit that could not be realized without it?
   b) What would have to be done to realize the opportunities?
   c) What are your boundaries? Non-negotiable points?
   d) What are the challenges to the proposed merger?
   e) What would have to be done to overcome the challenges?
   f) What are accreditation implications?

4) CONSTITUENTS—
   a) Who are the impacted constituents?
   b) Can you get buy-in from the constituents?
   c) Are there ways that a merger could enhance the unit's relationship with constituent groups?

STEP 2—meet with paired unit.

A meeting should be called together by appropriate administrators – department heads, deans, or provost. The group should be given a charge from the administrator, but the meeting should proceed with only the faculty of the units (excluding department heads and above). The charge from the Provost and Executive Vice President should include parameters, deadlines, and specific action items.

1) The faculty should discuss the findings from Step 1.

2) Openly discuss concerns including identity, mechanism for decision making, concerns about own unit, concerns other unit.

3) Describe scenarios that would elevate current programs—separately consider programs from departments.

4) Identify similarities and potential synergies between units. What are potential program groupings?

5) What are the institutional barriers?
6) Set deadlines for future communications.

STEP 3—evaluate questions that require further consideration and review.

1) How will hiring decisions be prioritized and made within a new unit?

2) How will such a merger impact the ability to recruit and retain faculty?

3) How will such a merger impact the students—graduate and undergraduate—especially in terms of job placement?

4) Identify and prioritize steps toward collaboration, cooperation, consolidation.

5) Consider how to expedite the planning and process.