October 23, 2020 – Campuswide email

Dear Students, Faculty, and Staff,

In the midst of a rigorous academic schedule – as we end the second week of Block 2, and living with all the warnings and risks of being in a world pandemic – it is hard to look to the future to imagine (and even dream of) what we can do together as we build the future of Centre College. But we will emerge from the fog of this global crisis, and when that occurs, I want to make sure that Centre is prepared to do so from a place of strength and resilience. Strategic planning is how we will get there.

Throughout the pandemic, Centre has already demonstrated an ability to stay flexible and to move projects and initiatives forward. We will soon open the wonderfully redesigned and expanded Olin Hall, with new labs and classrooms for chemistry, physics, environmental studies, computer science, and date science, as well as some great new common areas and study spaces. Doherty Library will also reopen after the break with terrific new spaces for our Centre Learning Commons, study areas, and our relocated Center for Teaching and Learning. And the beautiful new CentreWorks space on the 3rd floor of the Hub building above the bookstore will be available for many new initiatives starting this spring.

Clearly, we have not been sitting still, and with this forward movement in mind, I’d like to devote this week’s update to share more information about how I imagine this important effort in strategic planning unfolding over the next 12 months.

With such beautiful weather yesterday, I took some time to step outside of my office in Old Centre to share a few thoughts on this process:

- **Thoughts on the Strategic Planning process**

As indicated, I propose that we think about seven key areas as the pillars or columns of our work together, which will provide focus for eventual subcommittees devoted to each part. These are currently the topics I would call the “Centre 7”:

- Increase access and availability
- Seek curricular innovations and new revenue streams
- Strengthen the residential experience and engaged learning
- Recruit and retain a diverse employee base and student body
• Promote environmentally sustainable practices on campus and beyond.
• Expand upon athletics as a core strength
• Fully connect to Danville and our region

Our Chief Financial Officer Brian Hutzley is helping to organize this effort and we will soon begin an RFP process to engage a consultant as a partner and to offer an outsider's perspective on this venture. Brian also chairs our Planning and Priorities Committee, and he has met with that group twice now to begin laying the foundation for this process. I am also seeking guidance from a variety of students, faculty, and staff groups about how we might additionally engage existing committees and select representatives from across the campus to serve on our strategic planning committees. We will also be engaging all of our other constituents and stakeholders beyond our campus such as alumni and parents.

In terms of timing, the initial draft of our timeline imagines a year-long process culminating in approval of the strategic plan by the Board of Trustees at its fall meeting in 2021:

• October 2020: Establish a steering committee, name co-chairs to lead subcommittee for each pillar or column, develop campus communications plan
• November 2020: Select a planning consultant, establish membership of subcommittees that then meet and develop goals and work plans
• January 2021: Steering Committee meets to plan surveys and forums for wider Centre constituent participation and feedback
• February-March 2021: Ongoing steering and subcommittee meetings, implement surveys and forums, begin testing strategic ideas and proposals
• March-April 2021: Steering Committee receives reports from subcommittees; writes first draft of strategic plan, which is presented to the Board of Trustees at its spring meeting
• May-September 2021: Complete research and writing of full strategic plan and redesign the Campus Master Plan to align associated projects and resources
• October 2021: Present final plan to trustees for approval, then link plan to clear initiatives, program development, and resource allocation

I would repeat what I said at the start of the academic year: the Third Century Conversations laid important groundwork for this new effort, helping us begin to think about all the ways in which Centre College is “grounded, yet ready for change.” Based on that work, I am convinced that we need not change our mission statement as a part of this process, since our core values remain sound. Nonetheless, we do need to imagine how we remain responsive to our current and future students’ needs and expectations in ways that develop authentically from this firm foundation.
I look forward to embarking on this adventure with all of you.

Sincerely,
Milton