

TO: President Zulma R. Toro
FROM: Professor Robert S. Wolff (Chair, UPBC)
DATE: June 7, 2017

RE: Downtown Planning - Focus Groups Report

Attached you will find the Downtown Planning Focus Groups report. This cover memo describes the steps taken to prepare for the focus groups, and provides some additional information gathered during that process.

In preparation for the focus groups, I met with a number of administrators on campus to hear their thoughts about downtown planning and gather suggestions for participants. These include:

Michael Alfano (Dean, School of Education and Professional Studies)
Richard Bachoo (Chief Administrative Officer)
Ken Colwell (Dean, School of Business)
Glynis Fitzgerald (Vice President, Academic Affairs; Dean, Graduate Studies)
Christopher Galligan (Vice President, Institutional Advancement)
Carl Lovitt (then Provost)
Susan Pease (Interim Provost)
Brian Sommers (Interim Dean, College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences)

Additionally, the UPBC sponsored an open campus forum on April 18, 2017, to address downtown planning. The list of participants (not including UPBC members) is as follows:

Gregory Berry (Management & Organization)
Andrew Clark (Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy)
Jeanne Criscola (Design)
Glynis Fitzgerald (Academic Affairs)
Antonio Garcia Lozada (Modern Languages)
Gabriel Guevara (AmeriCorps VISTA)
Jessica Hernandez (Office of Community Engagement)
Chester Labeledz (Management & Organization)
Michelle Malinowski (CSU-AAUP)
Mark McGwire (Information Technology)
Charles Menoche (Music)
Carlotta Parr (Music)
Rachel Siporin (Art)
Robbin Smith (Political Science)
Amanda Tellier (Registrar's Office)
Eleanor Thornton (Design)
Leanne Zalewski (Art)

Based on these meetings and the information gathered via the focus groups, I will offer a few observations (in no particular order) as a supplement to the report.

- 1) We should do much more to recognize our partnerships in the community. Our academic departments, athletic teams, and residence life contribute greatly to our relationship with New Britain, yet their efforts are largely invisible to many on campus. Changing campus culture might begin by celebrating what we already do.
- 2) The focus group conversations demonstrate that any planning for a greater presence in the downtown area should be as transparent as possible because our programs might collaborate in unexpected ways. A center for the arts might be paired with pop-up retail spaces operated by business students. Community programs focusing on early childhood education might partner with volunteer student athletes.
- 3) No one in the focus groups mentioned the possibility of a technology transfer center as an option for downtown planning, but I did raise the issue with Zdzislaw Kremens, the incoming Interim Dean of the School of Engineering, Science and Technology. Together we met with Richard Mullins, Director of the Institute of Technology & Business Development, to get his input. I believe this is an opportunity worth pursuing if we can identify an area of specialization.
- 4) Participants made many suggestions for greater community programming, but one person highlighted as an example the work of the [Green Street Teaching and Learning Center](#) at Wesleyan University. That appears to be a model worth exploring.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Raymond Tafrate, who expertly facilitated the focus groups. On behalf of the UPBC, I hope the results of our investigation prove useful, and look forward to hearing your feedback.

Downtown Focus Groups Report
CCSU University Planning and Budget Committee
June 4, 2017

At the request of President Toro, the University Planning and Budget Committee convened three focus groups to discuss the possibility of acquiring a larger footprint in downtown New Britain. The groups consisted of twenty-six faculty and staff drawn from across campus. The meetings took place on May 15 and May 22. Nine of the participants, or 35%, are residents of New Britain. The length of their experience at CCSU ranges from three to thirty-four years. The participants were:

Michael Alfano (Dean, School of Education & Professional Studies)
Jean Alicandro* (Director, Residence Life)
Luz Amaya-Bower (Assistant Professor of Engineering)
Thomas Burkholder (Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry)
Michele Dischino (Associate Professor of Technology & Engineering Education)
Timothy Garceau (Assistant Professor of Geography)
Wangari Gichiru* (Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership, Policy, & Instructional Technology)
Gilbert Gigliotti* (Professor of English)
Leah Glaser (Associate Professor of History)
Drew Harris (Professor of Management and Organization)
Jessica Hernandez (Coordinator of Community Engagement)
Shelly Jones (Associate Professor of Mathematical Sciences)
Fred Latour* (Associate Professor of Mathematical Sciences)
Evelyn Newman Phillips* (Professor of Anthropology)
Aimee Pozorski* (Professor of English)
Awilda Reasco* (Director, ConnCAP & EOP PreCollegiate & Access Services)
Paul Resetarits (Professor of Manufacturing and Construction Management)
Reginald Simmons (Associate Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice)
Rachel Siporin (Professor and Chair of Art)
Robbin Smith (Associate Professor and Chair of Political Science)
Jason Snyder (Associate Dean, School of Business)
Olusegun Sogunro* (Professor of Educational Leadership, Policy, & Instructional Technology)
Sarah Stookey (Associate Professor of Management and Organization)
Anna Suski-Lenczewski* (Chief Human Resources Officer)
Nghi Thai (Assistant Professor of Psychological Sciences)
John Tully* (Professor of History)

* = New Britain resident

Raymond Tafrate, Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice, facilitated each session. Robert Wolff, Professor of History and chair of the UPBC, recorded participants' responses. Each group responded to the following questions:

1. How do you currently see CCSU's relationship with the city of New Britain? What are the strengths and weaknesses of that relationship?
2. Where would you like to see this relationship in ten years?
3. If CCSU acquired a larger footprint in downtown New Britain, how would you use it? How would your vision benefit your school, department or entity? How would it benefit students? How would it benefit the people of New Britain?

This report summarizes their responses. It should be noted that the UPBC assumed that later conversations would be held with students, alumni, and the New Britain community.

Responses

1. How do you currently see CCSU's relationship with the city of New Britain? What are the strengths and weaknesses of that relationship?

Strengths -

- Individual connections cultivated by faculty and staff with specific New Britain institutions, programs, and events.

Respondents identified ties between individuals and a wide array of organizations in New Britain, including but not limited to the New Britain Museum of American Art, Greater New Britain Arts Alliance, Trinity-on-Main, New Britain Public Library, Klingberg Family Centers, Prudence Crandall Center, and the American Savings Foundation.

- Long-standing institutional ties between the University, especially via the School of Education and Professional Studies, and the Consolidated School District of New Britain.

Respondents pointed to our many connections with the schools, bringing middle and high schools to campus, sponsoring tutoring programs, and through the teacher certification programs that place student teachers in city public schools.

- Existing programs sponsored by the Institute for Technology and Business Development (ITBD) and the Office of Community Engagement.

Weaknesses -

- Lack of coordination and communication.

Efforts to foster ties between CCSU and the downtown, with some exceptions, are largely ad hoc. There is no centralized effort to advertise events on campus that might interest the New Britain community, and conversely, no single venue for promoting downtown events and opportunities that might attract CCSU faculty, staff, and students.

- Lack of continuity.

Many ad hoc efforts last no more than a semester. Others last longer but often wane when faculty/staff develop new research and teaching interests, move on to other positions, etc.

- Physical separation between campus and downtown.

Most participants saw the distance between campus and downtown as a significant barrier to fostering greater ties with downtown New Britain, despite existing public transportation options.

- Common student and faculty perceptions of downtown.

Participants recounted stories of colleagues and students who have never been to downtown New Britain and have no idea what the city has to offer.

[Because the responses to the next two questions tended to overlap, they are treated together here.]

2. Where would you like to see this relationship in ten years?

3. If CCSU acquired a larger footprint in downtown New Britain, how would you use it? How would your vision benefit your school, department or entity? How would it benefit students? How would it benefit the people of New Britain?

How could a larger footprint be used?

- Community programs and resources

CCSU could focus on supporting community needs through a combination of programs that might include some combination of the following: early childhood education, tutoring, after-school programs, career training, ESL classes, pathways to higher education, day reporting center for justice-involved individuals, and community psychology. Several participants mentioned the possibility of drop-off daycare as a means of supporting these programs. Additional programs would build upon and expand the work done by the Office of Community

Engagement. Such programs would offer real-world training opportunities for students and provide valuable services to the New Britain community.

- Economic development

CCSU could focus on business and technology, developing additional incubator and maker spaces, and creating marketing and management opportunities for students (e.g., co-op coffee shop, retail pop-ups). These would also offer real-world training opportunities for students and provide resources to the New Britain community.

- Center for the arts

The art department has actively sought to relocate to the downtown area. The department has a specific vision that would enhance its own programming and provide opportunities for faculty and students. Such a center might also include the departments of design and theatre. Relocating such departments would provide a positive presence in downtown New Britain.

- Housing

Several participants suggested developing student apartments in the downtown area.

What are the characteristics of the visions shared by the focus groups?

- Nurturing ties to New Britain should become part of campus culture.
- CCSU should develop a space that is:
 - open year-round
 - accessible and welcoming on the street
 - easily identified as part of CCSU but which New Britain residents see as part of their community
- CCSU should develop the space in partnership with New Britain so that it addresses the priorities of both. A broader commitment to New Britain should also be visible on campus through programs for city residents, including some that target our immediate neighbors.
- The space should provide opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to meet residents of the community, and vice versa.
- Institutionally, CCSU must ensure that its commitment is not dependent upon any one faculty member, department, or program. It must also provide support for faculty and staff to develop downtown programs, and ensure that candidates for renewal, promotion, tenure, and professional assessment receive credit for their efforts.