

**FINAL**  
**MINUTES**  
UW-Green Bay Campus Climate Committee

Present: July 13, 2004  
Lucy Arendt 9:30 AM, CL 810  
Anne Buttke  
Bill Laatsch  
Illene Noppe (Chair)  
Bob Skorczewski  
Georjeanna Wilson-Doenges

Guests: Mary Ann Rose, Provost Sue Hammersmith, Chancellor Bruce Shepard

1. Illene began with a succinct review of the committee's discussions to date. Having accomplished that, she provided an overview of this meeting's purpose, and invited the Chancellor to describe his vision of campus climate at UW-Green Bay.
2. The Chancellor noted that his particular vision of campus climate was not relevant. Rather, he believes the role of the organization's top leader is to ask difficult questions, prompt people's thinking, and repeat constantly the campus' vision. In drawing upon his July 2002 "Educating the Chancellor" report, the Chancellor noted the prominence of several themes relevant to the discussion of campus climate, e.g., diversity, gender equity, and people in general. In discussing the quality of the UWGB (internal) environment, the Chancellor reiterated his preference for zero tolerance of comments or treatments that are disrespectful. He then asked the committee to consider identifying the campus' values and priorities. The campus' leaders, he said, are charged with listening to people, and reflecting their priorities in planning and budgeting documents. In any discussion of climate, he advocated for processes that involve and are welcoming to all colleagues, rather than processes that draw from the command-and-control model.
3. The group then discussed communication at the university, with special attention given to hierarchical vs. lateral means of communicating. It was noted that even when discussing "bottom-up" communication, "up" remains the goal. Several committee members identified what appears to be a "ceiling effect," wherein ideas are generated throughout the campus, but they don't seem to reach the top floors.<sup>1</sup> Dialogue without fear of

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<sup>1</sup> The Secretary *pro tempore* cannot resist noting the match between the metaphor and the physical reality.

confrontation was called for. Other committee members commented on the need for better means of “closing the (feedback) loop.” Specifically, ideas are generated and discussed apace, but action and closure seem elusive. Meetings are called, minutes are recorded, and reports are written – but it is not always clear who or what unit can and should act on the reports’ contents. Also not clear is whether and when governance should be involved vs. the administrative structure. Consistent with this discussion, it was noted that people across the campus are talking more and more about the “great abyss” into which the campus’ ideas, and the energy needed to implement those ideas, seem to disappear.

Along the same line, the Chancellor suggested that the campus would benefit from more effective planning processes, and from more consistent use of public forums to discuss ideas. As it stands, said several committee members, important ideas are not communicated effectively throughout the campus, input is not always solicited, and as a result, buy-in is not assured.

4. The group then discussed the campus’ need for a shared vision. History, at least as it has been popularly portrayed, suggests that UWGB once had a thicker and more cohesive culture, one driven and supported by a shared vision. Actions reflecting the initial UWGB culture included (willing) sacrifices on the part of the primarily young and optimistic faculty and staff. These sacrifices, the stuff of legends, were experienced as essential to accomplishing the institution’s mission and potential. These days, the campus’ culture “feels” fragmented; perspectives and goals are not shared, and people’s energy seems turned inward.

Despite its imperfections, the Learning Experience was mentioned as something that “got people buzzing,” as something that energized people’s sense of common purpose. How can we return to that sense of common purpose? For starters, said one committee member, we need to move purposely away from practices that divide the campus into units, and into classifications. Rather, we need to move intentionally toward practices and activities that better link us (e.g., shared Orientation, job shadowing).

In creating our common purpose and shared vision, we need to identify and capitalize on that which makes UWGB special and unique. De facto, it seems as though our shared vision has become “staying alive.” Responding to this part of the discussion, the Chancellor shared his long-standing perception that the campus’ shared vision revolves around its problem-solving and interdisciplinary mission (i.e., its academic focus). From the first, he recognized the need to better “market” this sometimes

misunderstood academic focus to external constituencies. Perhaps more attention is needed internally, as well. Certainly, people need to agree on the institution's mission, and they need to understand its relevance to their daily work lives. Along the same lines, the institution needs to find a way to address what appear to be significant rifts between its faculty and staff.

As the group continued its discussion of creating and supporting a shared vision, several additional points were made:

- Budget issues (e.g., shortfalls) have exacerbated conflicts between and within units.
- As much as possible, our focus should be on collaborative behaviors.
- Compelling people to work together seems to reduce conflicts.
- Communication needs to "trickle all the way down," to include the classified staff.
- Unit managers are responsible, and should be held accountable for, their people feeling valued and "in the know." We need formal mechanisms for soliciting evaluative feedback from direct reports on our managers' performance, in addition to any developmental mechanisms currently in place (e.g., existing Upward Feedback processes that yield information for focal managers, but not their supervisors). Have we invested in our managers, asked the Chancellor, and given them the tools to manage in modern ways? Should we offer a Leadership Institute to our own managers? Primary themes for such training and education might include an emphasis on collaboration, followed by a focus on decision-making that facilitates both effectiveness and efficiency.

The group reiterated the idea that a positive campus climate depends on our engaging people as a complete community, not one segmented by classifications. Accomplishing this while maintaining a hierarchical chain of command will be difficult at best.

5. Returning to the discussion of communication, Provost Hammersmith wondered how units can communicate when they don't seem to meet face-to-face very often, or at all. When do the larger aggregations of people (e.g., everyone in Liberal Arts & Sciences) get together? If people don't regularly meet, then how can anyone regularly communicate?

Responding to people's desire for "closure" and action, the Chancellor noted that plans (ideas) need to be included in the budget and planning process to become realized.

Outside of the budget and planning process, it was noted that the institution's management structure seems not to have matured with the academic structure. Specifically, we don't have a communication structure in place to facilitate the engaged interaction that seems to have occurred in days of yore.

6. The group next turned to a discussion of the ombudsperson position. As described by the Chancellor, this person's responsibility is to help people wind their way through the institution's bureaucracy. At present, this position is filled by someone (Melissa Jackson) who also serves as the institution's legal counsel. As it stands, the role played by this individual in any given situation appears to be a function of who solicits Dr. Jackson's assistance first.

Scenario 1. If Dr. Jackson has already engaged in conversations with an individual, and the institution is in need of legal counsel with respect to the individual's situation, then the institution seeks assistance from UW System legal counsel.

Scenario 2. If Dr. Jackson has already been asked to provide legal counsel to the institution, then ... well, what happens next is not clear.

The dual role played by Dr. Jackson is perceived by some to represent a conflict of interest. As discussed by the committee in an earlier meeting, its purpose in raising the issue of the ombudsperson position during this meeting with the Chancellor and Provost was not to debate whether a conflict of interest exists. Rather, the committee asked the Chancellor to identify an organizationally-sanctioned individual who could serve in the position of "back-up" ombudsperson if the ombudsperson was already involved in a discussion via her legal counsel role (see Scenario 2, above). In this way, individuals can always count on having an ombudsperson (regular or "back-up") to whom they could go for consultation, and the institution can always count on having legal counsel (via its in-house legal counsel, or via UW System legal counsel).

7. The group next moved to a discussion of support for its efforts. Acknowledging the relatively short timeframe in which the committee is to operate (about one year), Illene asked the Chancellor and Provost about their support for the committee's efforts. Several events and activities were suggested as needful of support (in terms of leadership, communication, and resources). They included:
  - A communication audit conducted, perhaps, by an Organization Communication class.

- Freeing a block of time in the weekly class schedule for formal and informal faculty and staff gatherings. Responding to this, the Provost agreed to ask Tim Sewall for a previously-completed report on this issue.
- A “Summer University” for all employees.

Consistent with these ideas, and given the campus’ reverence toward old traditions (however few in number they may be), the group discussed its great desire to resurrect the community-building and community-celebrating “Bill Laatsch Wine and Cheese Classic,” complete with: (1) Bill in his mouse costume, and (2) all campus community members invited to attend.

In discussing these and other specific ideas for enhancing the campus’ climate, the Chancellor emphasized the importance of campus climate, and his strongly-held belief that both he and the Provost should be seen as key resources. He promised both time and attention, and a willingness to serve as a mouthpiece for the committee’s endeavors. The Provost offered her support as well.

8. On a final note, Illene asked whether the topic of campus climate was being addressed within the administrative structure. The Provost noted that the topic had been discussed by the individuals attending Administrative Forum (a gathering of the campus’ managers), and by her own Administrative Council. While a regular topic of discussion, no specific actions have been taken by that latter group of her direct reports. Relatedly, the Academic Affairs Planning Committee (AAPC) has been discussing how Academic Affairs might engage in “eliminating outcome-inhibiting processes.” In brief, the AAPC believes that eliminating what are essentially dissatisfying and non-productive activities (e.g., acquiring multiple signatures on travel authorization forms) might free up peoples’ time and energy for more engaging and productive pursuits.

Continuing with the notion of administrative activities in support of campus climate, it was noted that the campus will administer UCLA’s HERI faculty survey this fall. Following advice from the climate committee, the campus will seek or create a similar instrument for all other staff members. Conducting these surveys is intended to provide a baseline for any efforts to improve our climate. As noted by the Provost, having such baseline data should also give guidance with respect to which areas need the most attention and in what order.

Returning to the discussion of shared vision, the Chancellor asked whether the group thought the campus needed to formally review the institution’s

mission. No one thought this was a good idea at the moment, and Illene suggested that we need to get better at conversing, first.

9. We adjourned just short of 11:00 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lucy Arendt, Secretary *pro tempore*