

Common Work May 2007 Update

During the last ten months, we have assessed, deliberated, and collaborated, on our ability to create and support a culture that celebrates our common work. Changes have been made in how we work and live together in an academic community, and the campus is energized. The challenges that we've encountered as we begin to do our work differently remind us of the passion that faculty, staff, and students have for this wonderful place, and help us remain focused in our thinking and planning. We are a stronger community than we were last July, with a clearer understanding of and appreciation for our work together.

Common Work

The Common Work project is intended to create an organization that keeps the promises stated in the college's mission statement. An organization in which we learn to work together to achieve more than we might achieve alone. An organization that deploys its resources consistent with its mission and vision. The project includes four components:

- Our Culture:** Living and working together as a community committed to the same mission and vision; effectively communicating with each other
- Our Workplace:** Creating an infrastructure that holds us accountable for deploying resources responsibly
- Our Governance:** Creating and ensuring a fair, open and informed participatory decision-making process
- Our Collaboration:** Creating a culture of shared work and purpose that inspires and energizes our community

Examples of the work we're doing in each of these components follow this report.

Our Culture

Intentionally creating times to come together has deepened our sense of community. Over lunch, at Wednesday Gatherings, during chapel, at community times, and during our celebrations, we are reminded that each of us wants to create a learning environment for our students that keeps our promises to them and exceeds their expectations. We are recognizing that we can do that better together than we can as individuals.

Our methods of communication are more diverse, and the amount of information that is shared has increased. A challenge we face is how that information is translated into our work and learning. We encourage Advisory Group members and other college leaders to ask "So what?" with the information they receive. "What does this mean for my department?" Information should be a means to an end, not the end.

Culture is influenced by our stories. It is important that we let new stories emerge, especially those that celebrate all the good things we are experiencing, rather than letting the fear of unfortunate past experiences strengthen our silos and prevent us from taking bold, new steps. Continuing honest conversations, seeking to understand each others' perspectives, and having the courage to work together in new ways results in better service to our students and a healthier institution.

Our Workplace

Our ability to create a healthy learning environment for our students is influenced by our infrastructure and allocation of resources. As part of our organizational assessment work, we have reviewed best practices, evaluated our staffing levels, and sought the wisdom of industry experts, within the framework of our culture and mission.

Several key decisions:

- An additional increase to faculty base salaries will be made in May. Additional dollars above the standard cost of living increase have also been budgeted for faculty salaries next year.
- Our 2007-08 budgeting process began with a commitment to fund several key priorities: student retention, classroom and technology enhancements, faculty development, campus safety and security, and faculty and staff salary increases and new positions. These commitments provide the foundation for our fiscal decisions.
- Based on recommendations from the AQIP project work on teaching/learning spaces, the college is supporting a one-time “catch-up” investment in classroom facilities, using money from the Capella agreement. This enables us to improve 16 classrooms, while adding ten new classrooms from The Kennedy Center and Oren Gateway Center. As a result, the percentage of classrooms that meets our quality standards moves from 19% to 62% by this fall.

We will continue to look for ways to ensure that we attract, hire, and retain the best faculty and staff. Our culture, employment practices, governance model, and the clarity of our mission and vision are critical partners. We will additionally need to review ways in which we measure our success. What development opportunities should we offer faculty and staff? How do we measure our performance? How do we know when we’re doing it right? These are good questions that require thoughtful consideration and dialogue.

Our Governance

Augsburg is fortunate to have a long list of stakeholders who care passionately about our college. This care and commitment brings expectations and involvement. That’s good. We are working hard at creating ways in which these various voices can be heard as we consider different ways of doing our work.

It is important that we translate what may at first seem to be mutually exclusive requests from our stakeholders into opportunities for collaboration and dialogue. Then decisions can be made with a broad network of influencers. We must recognize the gaps that prevent the right people from making the right decisions, and what bottlenecks we’ve created in our infrastructure. Where we were at one time defined by our silos, we need to learn how to communicate across lines of responsibility. This brings us back to our organizational and cultural work. Our common work should become seamless and transparent as we bring together our culture, our structure, and our governance.

Two key areas require special attention. First, we need to make sure that our traditional day students *and* our non-traditional and graduate students have equal voices and equal participation. Our “One College” initiative provides an important framework. Secondly, we want to continue dialogue related to governance roles of staff and faculty. Both groups care deeply about our students, and they each possess a healthy dose of pride in their work. We are working with the Faculty Senate and Staff Senate to develop a deeper understanding of and appreciation for each other’s work.

Our Collaboration

Bringing people together socially has always been easy for the Augsburg community, and that is a wonderful testimony to our care for each other. It is not as easy when we are intentionally coming together for work purposes. It still seems easier to make decisions within our silos. But our decision-making model is changing. It is beginning to look more like a web than a linear model, with boundaries and restrictions on the flow of information being minimized.

The programs and activities we've created as part of our community building have had a direct impact on our willingness and ability to collaborate. We have seen many examples of students, staff, and faculty working together formally and informally, simply because they have had early connections with these colleagues at other events, often times over a meal. We are remembering more quickly to ask ourselves, "Who else has relevant information? Who else needs to know? Who may be interested?"

Summary

We are pleased with the progress we've made in our commitment to our common work. Building on the strong foundation laid by those who came before us, we are strengthening the four components that will help us keep our promises to our students: our culture, workplace, governance, and collaboration. Good things are happening.

Examples of our Common Work Initiatives

Our Culture

We are reminding each other that as we create more time for building and strengthening our community, our communication improves and expands. We have created very successful opportunities to listen to each other's stories, talk about what's important to us as individuals and as a community, and dream together.

- **Recommitment to Daily Chapel.** This is a Sabbath time for our community. Our campus ministry team is also providing it for our WEC students.
- **Table Talk.** Meals in the cafeteria are subsidized for faculty and staff, encouraging us to share meals together.
- **Monthly Community Time.** This time of congregation brings us together to receive updates from the president, and learn about issues presented by staff or faculty that are timely and relevant.
- **Volunteer activities.** Staff and faculty have been given two extra days off per year to volunteer for an organization of their choice. It reminds us that our culture of abundance, generosity, engagement, and service extends beyond the perimeter of our campus.
- **Wednesday Gatherings.** On the first Wednesday of every month, we meet for a free soup and salad lunch. It is wonderful to see faculty and staff intermingled at the tables, introducing themselves and learning about each other's work.

Our Workplace

We need to be structured in a way that supports our one college commitment and honors our mission and vision. We are using several organizational assessment tools that help us evaluate our structure, business processes, and talent:

- **Internal organizational assessment.** Each Cabinet member is identifying how we can more effectively use the appropriate resources (positions, support, talent) to serve our students.
- **Administrative assessment.** Identifying where and how we can reduce costs related to owning and operating campus property, buildings, and non-educational support services.
- **Advancement program.** Determining the strengths of our development program, and what new opportunities will continue the College's legacy of service.

- Financial model. Creating a financial model that is strategic, nimble, and integrated, and that honors and supports our unique institution.

In addition to reviewing the College's infrastructure, we recognize the importance of supporting staff and faculty so they can best serve our students. We have implemented:

- Inter-disciplinary team teaching opportunities through our vocational development program.
- Faculty chair training program.
- English as a Second Language (ESL) for staff employees.
- Staff sabbatical program.

Our Governance

Our governance model frames our decision making and collaboration. Questions that we include in our work are "Who should influence this decision? Make the decision? Be informed?" Examples of our work include:

- The President's Cabinet is focused on strategic discussions and collaboration. Rather than making top-down decisions and then reporting out on them, we are bringing the appropriate people to the deliberations, and then intentionally identifying decision makers.
- The President's Advisory Group regularly convenes to discuss key institutional issues and future opportunities and challenges related to institutional planning and activity.
- The Diversity Committee has been asked to develop a comprehensive, strategic diversity plan for the college. This charge has re-energized the committee and clarifies their important role.
- The Staff Senate has been charged with re-writing and re-energizing its charter, and is working on strengthening and broadening its influence and representation.
- The students recognized the need for more voices and participation in student body governing. They have reorganized themselves into two Student Senates, day and weekend.
- The Environmental Stewardship Committee has been re-energized with greater opportunities to influence campus decisions.

Our Collaboration

We are seeing some new and very exciting examples of collaborations emerge among faculty, staff, and students, including:

- Campus Ministry and Student Affairs. Two critical components of our students' lives are intentionally coming together to build bridges and connections between their common work.
- Campus committees. Several task forces have been initiated that are generating discussions with a variety of stakeholders:
 - a benefits group will be looking at how we can continue to provide great health care while the costs continue to increase;
 - a wellness group is discussing issues that are relevant to our individual and community health;
 - the budgeting process will be much more inclusive as we bring together a budget committee of faculty, staff, and students;
 - ad hoc groups are coming together in meeting spaces and the coffee shop to discuss issues that impact all of us – for example, library hours, and the use of space.
- Student retention: This work cannot be assigned to one division or person. We are working together to integrate it into the fabric of how we educate students.
- Community outreach. Several areas on campus play key roles in our community and government relations. We are intentionally bringing these people together to make the most of their gifts, connections, and expertise.