

Committee on Priorities and Resources
Meeting Minutes – November 17, 2020

In attendance: Professor Javier Corrales; Professor Andrew Dole; Professor Jill Miller, chair; Professor Monica Ringer; Library Administrative Assistant/Bookkeeper Susan Bradley; Retail Dining Assistant Peter Charron; Director of Financial Planning Thomas Dwyer, *ex officio*; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Catherine Epstein, *ex officio*; Chief Human Resources Officer Maria-Judith Rodriguez, *ex officio*; Chief Financial and Administrative Officer Kevin Weinman, *ex officio*; Brooke Harrington '22, *ex officio*; Sydney Ireland '23; Steven Hegarty, recorder

Not in attendance: Allie Ho '24

Guest: Chief of Campus Operations Jim Brassord

The meeting came to order at 8:30 am.

Proceedings

Jim Brassord visited CPR to discuss the facilities measurement, benchmarking, and analysis process; to share how the capital program has been affected by the pandemic; and to update the committee on plans for future projects.

1. The college engages Sightlines Consulting to ensure building assets are adequately funded and maintained. Their model is used to predict necessary funding. They measure four main elements:
 - a. Annual stewardship (“keep up cost”);
 - b. Asset reinvestment (“catch up costs”);
 - c. Operational Effectiveness; and
 - d. Service.
2. The campus includes buildings from different eras, dating from the 1800’s, that represent various periods and characteristics of construction. In comparison with peer schools, Amherst has invested more in new space in recent years.
3. Use of the Sightlines model replaces the prior 3% replacement value rule. That measurement is based on a projected 50-year building life. Among other benefits, the current model allows for intentional deferral of building work due to program changes or upcoming projects. The adjusted capital spending target for FY19 was \$18.4M, as opposed to \$32.1M at the 3% rate.
4. A 10-year overview of investment shows the college hitting its targets through 2015. New construction, in particular, took deferred maintenance off the books.
5. Amherst maintains a high net asset value (NAV) in maintaining the campus, above the peer average. NAV is a calculated measure of replacement value, proportionally subtracting deferred maintenance. A higher NAV allows for more intentional and planful choosing of projects and capital dollar spending. By comparison, a lower NAV requires responding to daily emergencies.
6. Javier asked if the NAV gives too much weight to science center as opposed to facilities that need TLC. Jim responded that the number alone can be misleading, given the variety of conditions. There is a dual benefit of the new space in the Science Center and taking the deferred maintenance in Merrill off of books. The campus framework plan from 2015 measures condition

and program need, and identifies other facilities that need comprehensive work. This is incorporated into long range capital planning.

7. Jim next reviewed the current status of facilities funding and the changes brought by the pandemic. Funding was significantly reduced for many stewardship and catch up projects (for example a roof replacement), and there was substantially less to spend than prior years. The high NAV at Amherst allows the college to choose its projects. While the current level of funding is not sustainable over time, short term it will not impact operations. Peer schools have made similar decisions, from a less strong position.
8. There has been a reorganization in design and construction to create a facility stewardship position. The focus is on identifying and documenting the lifecycles for various components. This allows the college to hone in on its most important projects and assign capital dollars to essential needs. Facilities is additionally phasing in upgrades to building automation to replace legacy systems and enhance capabilities.
9. Updates on major projects:

- a. Student Center and Dining Commons

The program planning and conceptual design process is ongoing for the combined student center and dining commons. Since the last report to CPR on the project, the benefit of co-locating dining with student center has emerged. This will allow a partial reuse of the Merrill structure. The conceptual design has been approved by trustees, and now schematic design in higher detail is progressing. Over the next two years, we will have drawings and specifications for the building.

The project will require significant capital resources and fundraising. The planning will be ready to go when fundraising is successful.

It is currently anticipated to be a 2.5-year construction process. As a comparison, the Science Center was constructed in 2 years.

The plans for student center, include a flexible facility for performance and gathering space, focused on extra- and co-curricular work. This is meant as a supplement to existing facilities, where access and flexibility are limited, and would replace the Friedmann Room in Keefe.

- b. Climate Action Plan

The goal is to replace a legacy steam and fossil fuel system with a modern system running electric heat pumps that use ground source heat and are powered by renewable solar energy. Energy will be distributed through low temp hot water, which is inherently more efficient than steam. Currently the project is in the design phase, in preparation for approval. There will be a phased approach to construction and roll out, with completion by 2030.

There will be a significant capital cost, offset by a of reduction in energy spend, as well as cost avoidance of reinvesting in the legacy steam-based system. This project will pay for itself over time, and bring decarbonization. After trustee approval, which is anticipated in January, the project will be shared with campus in more detail Andrew asked about the retrofitting of existing buildings. Some newer buildings are ready to accept the change, other buildings are hybrid, and some are pure steam. The last category will require additional renovation.

c. Academic Building at 197 South Pleasant Street

Project is to repurpose a brick home, formerly faculty housing, to an academic building through renovation and expansion. This is a gift funded project to promote collaboration across disciplines. The conceptual design has been developed to incorporate the Center for Humanistic Inquiry (CHI) as well as the History department. The building will be outfitted with classrooms and gathering spaces, and create a vital environment. The design is expected to be complete in 8-10 months, followed by an 18-month construction period.

Javier asked why was the CHI chosen for this space and what will happen to their current location. This will create an independent location for CHI, with better gathering space, the addition of an outdoor area, and solving accessibility issues. There is no current plan for the existing space.

Adjourned 9:33 am.

Respectfully submitted,
S Hegarty