

Committee on Priorities and Resources
Meeting Minutes – May 4, 2021

In attendance: Professor Javier Corrales; Professor Andrew Dole; Professor Jill Miller, chair; Professor Monica Ringer; Library Administrative Assistant/Bookkeeper Susan Bradley; Interim Director of Human Resources Chris Casey, *ex officio*; Retail Dining Assistant Peter Charron Director of Financial Planning Thomas Dwyer, *ex officio*; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Catherine Epstein, *ex officio*; Chief Financial and Administrative Officer Kevin Weinman, *ex officio*; Allie Ho '24; Sydney Ireland '23; Steven Hegarty, recorder

Not in attendance: Jae Yun Ham '22, *ex officio*

Guests: Jim Brassord, Chief of Campus Operations; Tom Davies, Director of Design and Construction

The meeting came to order at 8:30 am.

Proceedings

Jim Brassord and Tom Davies joined the meeting to discuss long term capital planning. The conversation focused on the Student Center/Dining Commons project, and the adaptive reuse of the Merrill and McGuire site. For reference, there is a [page](#) with information about planning for the new Student Center, and a link to Bidly's original [announcement](#) to the community.

1. Student Center/Dining Commons project
 - a. The 2015 Campus Framework Plan is a flexible planning tool to imagine the evolution of campus over time and generations, including the location of the Greenway dorms and the siting of the Science Center on east campus. The Merrill/McGuire location is a premier site for a building with adaptive use, and it has been chosen for the new Student Center and Dining Commons.
 - b. The college has hired architects, Herzog & de Meuron (HdM), and a design partner, Beyer Blinder Belle (BBB). There have been meetings to define the program needs, and these have been translated to building requirements. The results are a conceptual design, developed to meet the needs of the community.
 - c. HdM prioritizes sustainable design principles, and will reuse more of the Merrill structure than anticipated. This includes the foundation, beams, and columns for the lower two floors. On top, the plan is to add a flat table (plinth) and additional, lighter weight structure, using materials such as “massed timber”. These choices further the sustainability goals for the project.
 - d. Included in the building will be the Student Center, and a co-located, updated Dining Commons. The combination creates a critical mass of energy and vitality that would be lost with a decentralized approach. Dining fits nicely within the lower two levels (Merrill re-use area), and relates well to the student center above it.
 - e. The location will create pedestrian traffic, and the design emphasizes fun, recreation, and wellness. The building will appeal to the broadest range of students and include a mix of public and private spaces, similar to Science Center.

- f. Currently the design phase is being completed, and the results will be shared with the community. Communication plan is not yet decided, but it will begin this summer. Timing is estimated as two years to create the construction documents, followed by two and a half years for construction.
2. Questions and thoughts from the committee
 - a. Jill asked about the size of the building. The SC/DC will be approximately 140,000 square feet; 90,000 for the student center and 50,000 for dining. This is a reduction from the current Merrill/McGuire footprint of 210,000 square feet. By comparison the Science Center is 255,000 square feet.
 - b. Javier asked if any hard choices remained to be decided. Remaining is part of the design process, and managing the budget. Jim prefers re- engineering rather than re-scoping.
 - c. Javier asked about space for student activities and performances. The plan has a wide range of spaces, including a flexible studio theater, for less formal student productions and film screenings. There will be a small gallery for student installations, maker spaces, an outpost of the Book and Plow Farm, group movement room, and an oasis room. In addition, there will be quiet space, and room for e-gaming.
 - d. In response to Andrew's question about administrative departments in the Student Center, Jim responded that student facing activities that are part of Student Affairs, including Religious Life, will relocate.
 - e. Andrew asked if the new dining commons will allow for an expansion of the student body. It will accommodate a slightly larger student body and provide more flexibility. In response to a follow up question on dedicated faculty dining, the project is looking to accommodate a faculty dining area, convertible to a banquet space, within the lower levels. Related to dining, Javier shared a complaint from students around set meals and times. The opportunity is to reimagine dining, including schedules, menus, and how grab and go works. Students value the "to-go" approach, and the new Student Center includes a café. AC could allow swipes at retail location in the Student and Science Centers.
 - f. Pete asked about the reuse of the facilities at Valentine and Keefe. With dining, catering, and banquet facilities moved to the new facility, Val could become academic or administrative space, along with Keefe. The college is working with a planning architect to reimagine these spaces. Andrew suggested building a new library on the Valentine site.
 - g. Jill asked about lessons learned from Science Center, and Javier followed up with an observation on available facilities in the current building. If hosting conferences and meetings, these need to accommodate high volume use during breaks. The planning will look at the program needs and design proximate facilities to meet the peak demand, along with providing gender inclusive facilities.
 - h. Allie asked about outdoor space such as existed with "Merrill Beach". The building will have inside/outside spaces, such as terraces, incorporating the view.
 - i. Jill asked if HdM designs with a lot of glass. Extensive use of glass at the Science Center has resulted in an ongoing problem with dead birds. The Student Center will include less glass than the Science Center, with smaller areas of glass along with opaque surfaces.

3. Following up from prior CPR meetings, Javier asked if there were lessons learned from remote working that will allow “work from home/anywhere” (WFH/WFX) to continue and free office space on campus. Kevin responded that it is under discussion with HR. There are two phases: First is how to transition to having more people onto campus. Second is to define the nature of work going forward. While the answers are to be determined, there is a possibility of more flexibility for staff and, as a consequence, recapturing space. Catherine added, as a residential liberal arts college, faculty will be expected to teach in person in the Fall.

Adjourned 9:30 am.

Respectfully submitted,
S Hegarty