

- "November 30, 2012"

Posted by gavazzi.1

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Dear Ohio State Mansfield Colleagues,

I trust that everyone had a safe and very Happy Thanksgiving holiday break. It is hard to believe that we are only two weeks away from the end of our first Autumn Semester. Just before our last extended holiday weekend, and following our latest Ohio State Mansfield Board meeting, a working draft of the Framework Plan was released to the entire campus community. You will recall from earlier communications (including my Bi-Weekly Report from September 21st of this year) that the Framework Plan activities are meant to provide principles, strategies, tools and scenarios for guiding change over time by transforming and redefining how we think about our physical environment. I have noted that the work we are doing on the Framework Plan is especially timely for us as many of our campus buildings are reaching 50 years of age, a critical time for assessing the need to repair, renovate, or remove and rebuild campus structures.

You also know from earlier communications that our co-located technical partners have been intensively involved in this planning process as well, and will be releasing the draft Framework Plan to the NCSC community following its Board meeting on December 5th. The Framework Plan has been undertaken as a joint process by our two institutions, consistent with our Campus Implementation Plan's (CIP) stipulation for better resource stewardship of our financial and physical resources by working with our co-located technical college partner to gain operational efficiency (4.1.C). Of course, the Framework Plan touches on almost every aspect of our CIP, as physical facilities will directly impact how and where we provide teaching and learning opportunities, research efforts, and outreach and engagement activities. For this reason, the Framework Plan becomes an extremely important component of how we will move our campus forward as we create a blueprint for the next fifty years of life on the Mansfield campus.

In light of the significant future implications of this effort, the next step in the Framework Plan process necessarily will be to gather as much feedback as possible from our campus community and local stakeholders. In addition to gauging support for the document as it now reads, the hope is that constructive suggestions will be generated regarding edits, additions, deletions, and the like needed to further refine the current working draft. To gather this feedback, I will be hosting discussions in the next Faculty Assembly, with the Executive Committee, with Senior Staff, and with MSAC members over the course of the next several weeks. As well, the Physical Planning and Real Estate (PPARE) staff from the Columbus campus will be working with us to schedule town meetings in early 2013, which will include invitations to the Mansfield campus

community at large (faculty, staff, and students from Ohio State Mansfield and NCSC), as well as stakeholders in the city of Mansfield, the city of Ontario, and representatives from other sectors of Richland County and the surrounding geographic area.

I thought it would be helpful to use this Bi-Weekly Report as a preview of sorts regarding my own thoughts and reactions to the current working draft. Rather than being all-inclusive, I wish only to highlight some of the more prominent portions of the document as it now stands. Of course, our face-to-face conversations can and should be as complete and thorough as necessary, going beyond the points I outline below. At the same time, I hope that coverage of the Framework Plan in this Bi-Weekly Report will serve in lieu of any introductory comments I normally might be expected to make, thus adding additional time to our discussions.

I first would draw attention to the eight issues and opportunities that the Mansfield campus is thought to be facing. Together, this list might best be described as our current risk/needs inventory. Some of these risks and needs should be well-known by now, including declining enrollment trends, diminished state funding, a lagging economic recovery in our geographic area, the need to increase connections with the communities that surround us, and the demand to modernize the learning environment that we provide for our students. Other issues may need to be given some greater scrutiny in the near future. For instance, do we think that we have a good handle on understanding the distinctive and shared identities of our co-located institution? How best might we strategically manage assets related to our facilities and property? And how do perceptions of our campus and its location affect the way that various community stakeholders respond to us? My hope is that the Framework Plan becomes the spark that lights a fire under all of us to wrestle with these sorts of issues and opportunities.

Next, I would highlight some very good news coming out of the data analyses contained in the Framework Plan. This list might best be described as the asset inventory for our campus. First, we have ample teaching space for the foreseeable future, even if we were to see significant growth in the student population. Second, our campus rests on valuable property. Some of that value comes from the ownership of land that could be used to augment the transportation needs of the communities that surround us. Other value might be generated through use of the natural resources that are contained on our 600+ acres and, on a related note, highlighting some of the more picturesque portions of our landscape that to date have been neglected (such as the stream running through campus, for instance). Still other value could come from our taking advantage of the natural expansion of the commercial district that has been inching our way over the past decade, as well as pending residential development that we might facilitate through such activities as the granting of sewer line easements.

When taken together, the risk/needs inventory and the asset inventory create a platform for discussing how our campus can and should continue to evolve over the next 50 years. The Framework Plan contains quite a number of suggested avenues to take in this regard. Most prominently, readers will notice two initial "campus transformation" phases that include such activities as building a new entrance off of Lexington-Springmill Road, creating a new service drive and new accessible parking lots that serve the Bromfield and Eisenhower buildings, reconfiguring parking and removing the intersection between the Fallerius and Kee buildings, major sidewalk repair, and building a North/South bike path on our West property line that becomes part of a connected bike path system through our campus core.

In turn, there are activities related to the transformation of the student experience on our campus. Activities in this phase would include the renovation of Bromfield's second floor for new education programs and offices, the renovation of Riedl Hall in order to allow for the geographic consolidation of Ohio State and NCSC student services, the renovation of Kee Hall in order to accommodate a new bookstore and fitness/wellness center (this would involve both demolishing the current bookstore and Campus Recreation Center while adding a pre-fabricated basketball facility to Kee Hall), and renovating Eisenhower Hall to modernize student life activities, including both expanded dining space and social areas.

There also are two "academic expansion" phases that designate activities designed to allow for any and all expanded enrollment in the future. These activities include the construction of up to two new academic buildings, repairing and configuring the loop road that serves our campus core while demolishing the road currently running through our wetlands, landscaping the center of campus to better reflect a wooded Quad design, and demolishing Schuttera in order to make way for a new maintenance building. Finally, there are a number of "opportunity projects" that are designed to occur if and when timing, finances, and needs come together to allow for further campus enhancements. These activities include eventual replacement of the Molyet Apartments with new on-campus housing, the creation of new and more centrally located recreation fields, a new bike path along a pre-existing gas line easement on our property, a new bike path along the stream running through campus, trail head parking that would allow for greater community access to the paths and activities located on our campus, and a health clinic that would be designed to serve faculty, staff, students, and members of the surrounding communities.

All of these activities cost money, of course, and the sticker prices displayed in the Framework

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Plan are quite significant at first glance. Interestingly, analysis of our historical spending patterns on these sorts of renovation, repair, and rebuilding activities by PPARE staff members indicates that it would take us approximately 30 years to complete all of the projects named in the Framework Plan. So, in point of fact, these activities are thought to be well within our reach over the next 50 years. It is also important to remember that our campus began with a single building – Ovalwood Hall – that would likely be on its last legs of existence were it not for the renovation project that transformed the building into the jewel that it is today.

And so it goes. Over the past 50 years, Ohio State Mansfield has added buildings and infrastructure in response to previous assessments of risks, needs, and assets, including perhaps most significantly the incorporation of a technical college on our campus. Of course we cannot pretend to know exactly what the future will bring to our doorsteps in terms of new opportunities and challenges. However, we have in our hands what I believe to be a solid draft of a Framework Plan, a blueprint that charts a course for responding to what we do understand about our buildings and our land, and in turn how these physical properties and spaces can best help us accomplish our higher education mission.

I am looking forward to our discussions about the Framework Plan over the next several weeks and months. Please feel free to contact me directly with your feedback, as well as using all of the other available means of communication about these issues that are at your disposal.