Impact Circle for Imagine Flint Master Plan Implementation
December 12, 2014
207 Northbank Center

Present: Gary Ashley (UM-Flint Staff); Charles Banks (UM-Flint Student); Susan Borrego (UM-Flint Chancellor); Jennifer Burger (UM-Flint AmeriCorps); Robert Gold (UM-Flint Staff); Janet Haley (UM-Flint Faculty); Zach Hayes (UM-Flint Student); Thomas Henthorn (UM-Flint Faculty); Keshanda Jones (UM-Flint Staff); Collette Kelly (UM-Flint Student); Diana Kelly (Metro Community Development BNCP); David Lossing (UM-Flint Government Relations Director); Murali Mani (UM-Flint Faculty); Brad Mikus (UM-Flint Alum); Victoria Morckel (UM-Flint Faculty); Mona Munroe-Younis (UM-Flint Staff); Kevin Schrone (City of Flint); Vince Slocum (City of Flint); Lindsey Tarrant (UM-Flint Staff); Stephen Turner (UM-Flint Faculty); Barbara Urlaub (UM-Flint Staff); Rev. Monica Villarreal (Salem Lutheran Church Pastor); Bill Webb, (UM-Flint Vice Chancellor); Todd Womack (UM-Flint Faculty)

Conversation with Chancellor Borrego – vision, answering questions, sharing ideas

After calling the meeting to order, introductions were made around the room. Mona Munroe-Younis gave a brief overview of the group’s purpose, progress to date, rationale for strategic community engagement in three geographic areas of Flint, and a list of the support the Impact Circle is looking for from the chancellor.

The chancellor talked about her evolving, “wet cement” ideas regarding interaction with the community. UM-Flint has many relationships in the community but she hears that we are not involved where the community wants us to be. She supports the idea of being strategic in our community engagement (i.e. the idea of “going deeper” with UM-Flint’s community engagement rather than broadly responding to requests). It is important to make connections but we also need to set realistic goals and invest in the right partnerships. She emphasized the need for our community engagement goals to be achievable (e.g. questioning whether the goal of the UM-Flint/Beecher Partnership, to increase Beecher’s graduation rates, is an appropriate goal for UM-Flint to have). She shared her concerns about the ½ mile anchor strategy; education is not explicitly a part of the strategy and she doesn’t feel that her time has been well spent in the Anchor CEO group because UM-Flint can support efforts to reduce blight, but education is our core function. We need to work more with K-12 schools in general, not just within a ½ mile radius of campus. For example, she talked about her idea to develop a Flint Scholars program to give scholarships for all 9th graders who maintain a certain GPA (similar the Kalamazoo Promise).

Chancellor Borrego sees the next transformational steps as more student housing and student life activities and opening the campus to Downtown both physically and symbolically, including repairing the clock tower, making use of the outdoor arena next to the University Pavilion and encouraging use of Wilson Park. Other issues to address as a campus (and as also needed within the nonprofit sector) include leveraging infrastructures, eliminating duplicate programming, and creating a system for interacting with the community to eliminate misunderstandings and working at cross-purposes. She would also like to see UM-Flint partner with the other higher education institutions in Flint to market each organization’s strengths to allow students to tailor their education to meet their goals.

The chancellor believes that the university is about education and the community. We need to change the way students, faculty and staff talk about Flint and develop a common language. The general perception of Flint is not what Flint actually is. There was some discussion about needing to tell a new story as a community, including about UM-Flint participating in all parts of Flint and leveraging relationships with our community partners to build relationships between faculty, students, and staff in underserved parts of the city. The chancellor pointed out that, as we check the stories we tell, we need to look at what are the five things that we are going to tell and five things we’re going to stop telling.
Cultural competency is an important value and we need to ensure that we (faculty, staff and students) are culturally competent as we enter and work in/with communities so that we do not do more harm than good. Cultural competency training will be offered, starting in January 2015 with UM-Flint’s top leadership, to open the way for more respectful exchange. The University needs to start with a campus conversation on what cultural competency means.

Chancellor Borrego also wants to get a handle on all the partnerships/connections the university has established in the community. She needs to be aware of all the interactions and commitments being made on behalf of the university.

The chancellor asked what the committee needs from her. Mona reviewed the bullet points asking for her active support in advocating for the UM-Flint’s participation in the implementation of Flint’s Master Plan; setting the expectation for the university’s intentional and strategic community engagement; opening up the campus to the community, both physically and virtually; and drawing on the impact circle as an advisory/strategizing body for UM-Flint’s community engagement with the Master Plan.

Mona asked Chancellor Borrego for guidance on how the Impact Circle could move forward so that the group is helping to inform the vision for UM-Flint’s community engagement in ways and timing that make sense and are effective. The chancellor suggested that the group:

- make connections by aligning common areas within the Master Plan and the university’s strategic plan;
- use research and data to make our case;
- send our revised proposal to the chancellor with a timeline for her response. She will, in turn, share with the (interim) Provost to raise the proposal to the cabinet level.

invite people to the table strategically (“We want you here because...”)

After Chancellor Borrego departed a few other closing thoughts were shared by group members:

- Lindsay pointed out that the Impact Circle should not spend too much time discussing frameworks to follow in order to stay action-oriented.
- Brad discussed the need to create incentives and alignments between our strategic efforts and funding lines.

The meeting was adjourned.