

Pathfinding for Academic Year 2020-21: Guiding Principles - V5 6/13/2020

Origins and Purpose

Stakeholder engagement informed the co-creation of a set of guiding principles, which are being used to ensure our aspirations guide our efforts to plan for the coming academic year.

The guiding principles establish a shared compass heading we can collectively work towards, bridging us from our enduring mission and aspiration to this moment. Given the unprecedented challenges we face in the next year, it is particularly important -- and challenging -- to ensure that we are living up to these principles, including into the fall as we execute on our chosen path.

As the principles are a synthesis of the values, concerns, and aspirations of all stakeholder groups, they represent a “shared definition of success,” a touchstone that guides this planning process. They help us generate and detail pathways by acting as enabling characteristics and evaluate potential pathways by acting as discerning criteria.

These principles are constitutional in nature; they are fundamental and therefore independently and collectively important. They are grouped into themes and ordered according to community attention, although they are not formally prioritized.

Principles

As we move forward, we will pursue approaches that enable us to...

Institutional Continuity

Align with our mission. We are here to provide an exemplary engineering education supporting purposeful student pathways and collaboratively discover effective learning approaches and make transformational change. We will look to our unique mission and aspiration to provide a strong framework to guide us.

Ensure future financial sustainability. In the near term, we will likely need to spend more, not less, as we address these exceptional circumstances in a way that is true to our values. At the same time, our business model faces challenges in the long term -- even in the absence of the current crisis. Thus, even as we develop plans for the next year, we will begin to plan for a business model that better ensures the long-term viability of the college.

Collective Care

Keep everyone safe. Our individual health and safety are the foundation of our shared experience. We will stay informed about the evolving risks and take necessary measures to protect the health, safety, and privacy of all community members.

Ensure equity. We are a diverse community of people and circumstance, each with different hopes, capacities, and risks, and our decisions impact us all. We will seek approaches that realize inclusive

environments and equitable outcomes for all members of our community. We will enable voice and choice and continue to flatten existing inequities, especially those exacerbated by the pandemic, even as conditions change.

Care for each other as people. Our school is made up of a diverse community of people that we respect and love. And each of us needs the ability to manage our particular circumstances. We will have compassion for and consider the impact of our choices on students, staff, and faculty, recognizing and accounting for barriers to access and participation and differential burdens for all community members.

What We Do

Continue learning and growing. We are here to work, learn, and grow as people. We will continue to support the engagement and growth of all community members, and to create compelling learning experiences for students to effectively pursue their aspirations and make progress towards their learning goals including graduation.

Support our learning culture. We value a way of learning that is purposeful, experiential, and co-creative, embodied in our intrinsically motivated, hands-on, and collaborative curriculum full of projects and teams (Do Learn). We will continue to work and to realize learning experiences in a way that authentically aligns with our values of experimentation, innovation, and doing good in the world.

Nurture community and connection. We understand who we are in community and in relationship with each other. We will continually cultivate a whole and healthy community, providing social connection as well as physical, mental, and emotional well-being, which makes learning come alive.

How We Go Through This

Do this together. We are all part of this community, and we are better together. We want a realistic and inspiring plan, one where we are proud of what we will have achieved and how we got there. As a community, we will proactively communicate, be flexible, run experiments, be accepting of failure, be open and responsive to feedback, and continuously improve.

Be better for it. The world has changed, we are at an inflection point, and we don't want to just get through this moment. We will use these circumstances as an opportunity to change in advantageous ways, adapting to this new context, growing resiliency, and evolving to better embody our mission and aspiration.

Work with others. We depend on partnerships and regulatory guidance involving everything from health to housing to financial aid to privacy to accreditation to responsibly deliver a compelling experience for all our students and to protect our community members. We will engage with partners and abide by all relevant federal, state, and local regulations and guidance in ways that maintain creative options in this moment.