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Strategic Planning and Democracy

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Bucknell: Occupied
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Ellen Herman (EH)
Anonymous interviewee 1 (A1)
Anonymous interviewee 2 (A2)

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Good evening and welcome to Bucknell occupied here on 90.5 to WVBU Lewisburg. I you are tuned into an excellent four-way conversation tonight on the strategic planning process here at Bucknell University got three guests in the studio with me tonight. Two of them are choosing to remain anonymous and the third guest is Ellen Herman joining us from Bucknell's geology departments. I'd like to say welcome all three. My guess I so you know that there might be people tuning in, who are very legitimately wondering what is strategic so anybody everybody we get to start up a conversation, even thinking about was this process mean I and then we can get into the ways in which is actually proceeded here at this university all start this is Ellen so strategic planning. The way this university envisions a I think is a very generalized roadmap for how going to identify our most important hierarchies and follow them up with initiative's initiative of actionable items. I don't like that word but all users so these actionable items will have deadlines and they will ultimately fulfill these priorities that are bigger ideas and the other main purpose of strategic planning is so that you have something that guides the decisions you will make in the future, particularly about resources. Strategic planning is met with a lot of success for a lot of organizations, but the main success I've seen in strategic planning has been with corporate organizations and academic organizations are fundamentally different and I think the transference of that policy has to be extremely consuming orchestra little bit about how strategic planning is happens here Bucknell so this is been one of the main preoccupations of the University for this academic year stretching back into summer of 2018 but has really dominated campus conversation here right so what are the reasons Bucknell is going through it. What are some of the ways in which is actually proceeded home through start off I haven't stated March 20 struck and questioned by process. If you look at some of those sentences. Quoting from the one change can be difficult even succeed to a collective collective offense collective informed by data undertaken in the spirit of transparency and fuel wavering faith. Now the time to reject the status quo and to be as old chip talk a little bit about bringing a bottle of these different concepts. When we talk about collective efforts were talking about. What is the collective student. And what is magic nation off government government faculty processes governing the city imagined the form of shared governance. How does that concepts of informed by data twice faculty. The faculty and strategic about February when there was a motion by a group of faculty, yet it was November exactly because of the questions and questions about both data and transparency in front of the nation was not what basis strategy laid out talk about informing the implicit assumption in stated there that now is the time to reject the status quo right. Change can be difficult strategic plan. It wasn't clear to me

interesting. Just what exactly back to some parts where the strategic plan where some of those challenges have been described explicitly, but I should start from March strategic all is some were so important notice somehow you seem more like cold storage gurus. Priorities are identified somewhere. Nobody quite where how what you were supposed plan around so I would've imagined priorities, all the boxes already defined as is for discussion was planning a strategy sure you already put out so collective transparency clear to me process just kept on for now. Wasn't sure you were going with something for discussion on bold, just what is all a lot of conflict. Ideas were going to so well yeah what the strategic plan website at the University does layout process. Use air quotes. If I did that sort of thing and the process involved presentations from senior members of the administration last academic year, followed up by again very constrained strategic planning associated with working groups working groups are populated. This is interesting. From what I've seen the working groups are populated by Maxa faculty and staff. Staff mainly consisting of upper administration phones. I don't know that anyone below a director, associate director was involved don't quote me on that one and then the staff members. Generally, the balance was something like 8 to 7 faculty were seven and staff on a lot of the working groups working groups put together us. Presumably extensive suggestions again within that constraint framework. I know that several members of working groups had asked to expand that framework, and perhaps blow up the box, abets that was met with a firm no. And as a result, the working group reports which are not publicly available were within that constraint, framework, and then I was further constrained by the fact that those reports were never made public, and instead they were summarized by steering committee and the executive committee that's a little breakdown of the process following the publishing of the draft strategic plan. Comments were accepted. That's all we not me that's only if you are touching on like the very difficult issues raised here, and in particular like how the way in which this process was both organized and then the way in which it proceeded illustrates a lot about how this university thinks about what decision-making isn't one of the interesting features of this whole process is that Bucknell, unlike many other schools has a relatively robust if in battle, that the moment system of faculty governance, which is been rebranded shared governance and we can talk about that if we want, but it certainly has his existence of a faculty governance in which were all expected to commit a serious amount of labor onto these during our time here at Bucknell. In effect, our employment is contingent on us participating to a certain degree. In this process, but strategic planning didn't go through that system in all my time wondering if if any of you have thoughts on why it didn't, and what it says that strategic planning was carried out outside of the parameters of this already relatively flawed system all laid out for me also when business in the department's eyes, departments, colleges might end strategic on any process substantive department and how do we just individually back to this question is this other way to think of governing issues with respect outside the department about meeting some of these organized as big strategy that's been identified and priorities priorities that are supposed specific ways of achieving those logical priorities declared some point out but I want to point out something on page that says actually teach 12 priority number two number two page talks about by 2025 discount trade winds afflicting their facility. This looks at this and the meeting. While the strategic plan dated. If you look at the question then comes back? Why was a litmus test ways in which station processes full now, just shows the station site efficiency is not processed, the education mission time. We have a conversation

about what is you think are already seeing the results when we call a faculty meeting and particularly the off cycle. Faculty meetings are poorly attended. So I feel like they their winning in terms of attrition that the mourn more our judgment and our governance role is rejected the lesson less likely we become to participate in that faculty governance role and I filled out personally but I've also seen Mike you're tuned into Bucknell occupying here in 90.5 to be people whisper you who may be tuned in and have a question guess here in studio number to reach a satisfied 70 577 34 89 to continue this conversation about the way you phrase it really nicely. The radical discrepancy between how faculty think about governance one hand, and often times how I not administrative staff. Think about how government should work on this campus and how at Thracian thinks about that when you took us down the overseeing is the real consequences of that power-play really manifesting in people's lives here. One of the really salient issues that I've seen in this process is the way in which because it's happening outside of faculty governance, which were Artie expected to participate in because it's happening outside of the parameters of our departments right colleges, etc. this is really a process of further exploiting faculty labor thoughts on that particular aspect of this chattel run emails here and there are certain software faculty from four hours.on top of all the stuff you regular process where usage clear word. You, Charles. Although one square channels were specified clearly still planning. The other thing that made it more confusing is somehow related to diversity plan civic action plan sums a reduction some point quite clear how role supposed plans for all you think that's by design nation that is not important. Make strategic vision is a process that we do decide just not much broader. Also, colleges college level so this is well versed in perspective. First wire colleges planning cycle department clear word out department doctors and we can't underestimate the amount of work that was required of the people who did participate in this is just an extraordinary and while some of them are happy with the strategic plan. I talked to others who are not, and I really feel for them, having invested so much in the process of this document as a result of the people who are fine with that but certainly not all knowing, I mean I think you know most of these people who run these groups and there they are large group is meeting once a week there small group within the working group is meeting. They were also doing work to draft the document that they were doing independent research zoning it's feasible to to protect that most of the faculty working on this responding one for workday week if not more on strategic planning itself, so this might be a good time first to dive into the document about together. So at this point the faculty has been graced with multiple versions of a draft strategic plan. Not a lot is changed over the process. Except now their states filled in sustainability has suddenly been included, which we can certainly spend some time talking about. That seems relevant to my guess here studio, but the plan itself addresses the four points that I will coincide with the working interestingly enough, yes, and we should certainly explore that. So there's four points that it addresses quite map onto the working groups as their work was sketched out for them. It gives a brief summary of what that steering committee steering committee executive believes to be the main salient points and then offers several suggestions sign we will had a chance to read this. This recent round of a draft report with varying levels of intensity, someone spend time dissecting what this particular document showings. Any particular place you click start anything that is standing up to people. This is particularly interesting thing that with their students. So just justice, specific priorities laid out headings is one that start off with debating identifying ways and discussed. It's not clear to me a

commitment so-called commitment to serving the common justice ways are on second. It's not clear to me what is and how that's goes those like to. There's also quite a bit to be said about the sudden inclusion of sustainability in the plan right one working group in particular working group for was charged with thinking about canals finances right but largely thinking about in terms of which programs are worth keeping and it's unclear what the metric for that was but which programs are worth keeping and contribute to Bucknell's identity, but financial sustainability and and which which are which need to be let go, and there were certainly very little public conversation about either what the metric was that the working group developed to talk about this, and to what degree this groups decisions translate into actual change in terms of no one knew if they were talking about. For example, the future of an athletic program, the feature of a academic program, possibly the future of farm right I way that that's been rendered in the strategic plan I is through particular fuzzy language of sustainability which is on first glance, many of us associate that with an environmental analysis but in this case it's been using being used primarily to talk through a financial lens I with this vague commitment to carbon neutrality by 2030. Being thrown in might receive this language of Bucknell really needing to think about its economic sustainability in the long term being used as this way is entrance discourse into one what one can only assume is a list of of programs, departments, activities, spaces on campus that are no longer sustainable, and I think that was very small so working group. Their goal, and it's a valid one is to develop a method by which we could make those decisions rather than to make the decisions selves. I don't think that that is clearly reflected in the current version of the strategic plan but much more worrisome to me is the implicit threat and I think it would be naïve to read it any other way that implicit threat is total line or your programmers or your Program or favorite extra or even department is on the chopping block and I'm sure that that would be Matt's by the members of the executive committee was shock and horror, but I've been here 12 years now know how it works out to me as I called implicit threat, it may actually be excellent identified margin. Highlight one decisions regarding resource environment with transit central components often inform interesting to me that document itself. The process that led to the document I see evidence not transparency patient account process that needed fundraising base that will be the primary next just one country. Why is estimate down. Now I know meeting that sentence. I don't have the data to be able to make an informed decision. I don't know I was not on thinking about recognizing activities that most strategic I run or despite best missions effective. I see this matching serving the common good. Promoting educators to calcified a very disturbing that we just pleaded a capital campaign that brought in ostensibly alien dollars and treating 20 million as if it's impossible very again. I don't tend to understand the math behind you are tuned into 90.5 WV BU now occupying. We are talking about strategic planning. Here studio got three guests with me tonight. For those of you tuning in care deeply about this. You can reach us at 570. 577 34 89 so one interesting thing that we haven't brought into the conversation yet is that towards the end of the fall semester others to we have color right hello on the their colander. Yes, we got you on the air here. Thanks for calling it no problem. The question I really agree with this. It was very hard decision for me to decide actually send comments to the steering committee because in some way that feels like an endorsement of a plan I can't endorse because of all of the reasons you just mentioned, so it's hard to know where to draw the outline and what else have any thoughts strategic argument, argue framework lost strain

right Question for so what most people want to question so the next best thing you can work within the framework want you want so happy but slightly yeah one not constrained by our sleep. I'll write Rob's baby crib another one more script this one to mission is with flex songs about me and I just think about so much of what we've been talking about in terms of this strategic planning process for sure in the way in which were expected to offer endorsement to this within the next two weeks of also like the erosion of faculty governance and faculty patient were generally this is all related to a top-down process of the engineering of consent, which is been going on for quite a while here certainly gotten much worse over the last for five years in terms of this idea that all that matters to the continuation of the process is that we appear to be agreeing with the process right so we show up to faculty meetings, and get lectured to by administration for 25 minutes and I count governance people waste 10 to 15 hours a week on the strategic plan. Their concerns which were already water down in the working group disappeared in the final plan but yet were meant to think this is proof that we are agreeing with the process to me from my perspective the only response to that kind of engineering processes to withdraw consent right, but the key feature of withdrawing consent has to be collective right can't simply be this kind of like individualizing I'm not putting my labor or I'm not can vote yes or whatever faculty have to come to an alternate understanding of governance, which could in fact create an alternate plan right if we had another system where we said we are going to as a group of 50, 60, 70 faculty refused to participate in your process but hold alternate democratic faculty meetings that I think would be meaningful and that would pose a threat and trying to do that on a certain level and got got a pretty good response to two, four are held in late in the fall semester. I was actually really shocked when 40 people showed up on the evening of the last day of classes to talk about strategic planning. I assumed I would be sitting in a room alone with my co-containers of that meeting, but people did show up so I don't know how we engineer our kind of consent bites. It does seem that people are very interested in this as long as it can happen outside of the very frustrating framework right now of our faculty meetings are faculty meetings have become filibusters by the administration and it is everything I can do as I'm sitting in my office right before them on Tuesday to get myself to get up with this notion getting is so close system strategic vision process committees. A lot of my I cannot imagine that going back to this part that objective universities stated in 19 why she showed objective as opposed to be committed and I'm not the first very confident a lot of my reference to this principle assessment and have lots of strength short is a good place to start talking about mine my time. I think that's a great way for us to actually talk about very interesting that we have at our disposal, which happens to be one of the reports from one of the working groups came into my hands, so I have a human studio with me and I think it goes a long way towards reflecting what our colleagues were in fact concerned about think that the open forums that happened in the fall were certainly much more revealing right people who were on the working group showed up and talk very candidly about the concerns their group had been engaging with and what it was that they were actually worried about in the process right everybody across the board regardless of their level of investment in strategic planning was very concerned that that work that they had put in would not be reflected in the final report noted like to think a little bit about I report coming out of group 3, which talked that the group was charged with thinking about doing engagement right so academic engagement, but in particular social engagement and the way in which many of our students run through the gauntlet of the Greek system. Feel

compelled to join it, or in fact I can't stand to join and then and feeling quite marginalized on this campus. This working group. I was extremely concerned I with the toxic environment established by the Greek system here now, and in fact out of what is a 14 page group report spent four of those pages talking about very specific and very concrete ways in which the Greek system could be transformed to your account and I'm sure that as we talked about before I this report was watered-down from what some of its members may have wanted to say, but these people were recommending restricting membership and Greek letter organizations to no more than 40% of students i.e. eliminating the gender discrimination heart of the Greek system. I read considering general expectations on campus around alcohol and looking at our peer schools right and thinking what is it that our peer schools of actually done to combat Greek life and it concludes with a pretty strong set of statements, but now needs to avoid a destructive spiral whereby Bucknell continues to reinforce the reputation as a Greek letter centered party school at other universities eliminate or restrict their Greek letter systems. This could impede our ability to attract top students of the road. The campus climate. Further, rapid and significant balancing of the living, and social scene is necessary to reposition our brand right so that last word aside, I think we there is very little mention made in the strategic plan about the Greek system. Apart from the fact that yes we should consider. Mention nine providing paragraph Asian nations you lifelong action. General incense generations. Higher education across the structure. Student also so that there there is so much research that talks about how to structure ownership plumbing to be talking about site kind of decided which so I think this is your tuned in to 90.5 WPB spring. This is Bucknell occupied. We are in our last 15 minutes of talking about strategic planning and its impending faculty vote. If you have a question for any McKesson studio you can reach us at 570577 3489 so I like to shift a little bit. We spent a lot of time talking about all of the issues with the process with the conception of this you know it, with the erosion of faculty governance within radical discrepancies between faculty concerns. The working group reports in the final strategic planning report which we should be receiving tomorrow, but I actually think about the issue of how faculty might begin to fight back against four-week about how to mention why so faculty and unique position at this university staff, particularly non-administrative staff can never hope talking and I very concerned about what's been happening on the staff front of the hourly staff France over the past year and I think the faculty just have an extraordinary responsibility to our community members in our colleagues can't speak out and talk about the problems with the plan and with access plan. I was really hoping to get this document and it was going to evince some sort of commitment to our staff. I wasn't so foolish to think maybe we would see the same kind of thing to the faculty but I was (at least the staff. I've looked at other strategic plans because I've been told no strategic plan does that that is not true. There are many universities that realize that their community made up of their faculty and staff and administration. And of course students is at the forefront and the staff and the faculty have the biggest long-term effect on the University so it's extraordinarily important that you not only get good ones, but that you keep them and I was really hoping to see that somewhere in this plan and it is no so now we can talk about why, how are going to fight back but for me that's really why even I think place to start. What kind just having this conversation. What is that old ship are that that's a process not process search for Martin governance page webpage exhaustive list two things that that I won was that in 2007, there was talk faculty governance, charged with examining those one can opportunity for the

faculty to get together with what you think this part of the process should attempt all support process all think there are just a challenge, especially one question, large people like you just use by people community owns large caps on actions. Six. What was the process but say much sense to me or circumvent child throughout you by go, given the increased demands of Artie been put on faculty time. If you think about the people in the working group. This was working groups as to their duty as they received additional compensation course. No question is nothing University can function with all this people on course earliest but you know at some point in and I think there was any relevant faculty listserv highlighted this quite nicely. At some point there will be a breaking point, you can expect this level of labor even if you agree with it right if you grew awesome. Can't get that much more labor out of a population without some serious alterations like production course which we've been told that it's interesting like I think I think your your comments in particular really reinforcing think Ellen we said at the very beginning right, which is the deeply corporate nature of the way in which this process happened, we can say like the whole idea of a strategic corporate. But even if we accept that okay universities are now doing this the way in which it been carried out deeply top-down, deeply superficial and deeply exploitive towards the labor force involved in in the end if you look at at least the most recent version of the draft plan. More than half of the recommendations are for the creation of more plants right in the end there's no actual outcomes that are really happening here. These none that were being shown. There's a strange focus on advising in this document. That's the only thing where they're actually like concrete. Let's not play a much just for recommendation ship. How odd is that that's great fall 2020 will Juergen what we can do next week we're going to. We are allowed to discuss the plan at the faculty meeting next week for 52 minutes and then and then the next week April 16 we have another faculty meeting at which we will be allowed 15 minutes to continue our discussion and then we will vote and what's the vote on it's not on approval or rejection. I believe there will be a motion before the faculty floor, indicating that the faculty endorses the strategic plan and we will be voting on that motion. So yours are not yours or not. Possibly yes. Unclear. Because no unspecified this but yes is in the open for one of the workgroup members did say that we were actually not voting up or down plan but rather that we have the opportunity to endorse yes it's it's an endorsement motion. I believe that there's not going to be agreed to see. Yes, I think it will be construed that way but that doesn't actually impact at all the carrying out of this plan and transmission of the plan to the Board of Trustees at the chrysalis faculty meeting as I like to call all we know is that I buy some reports. Board of Trustees is upset when faculty seem to express discontent or refusal to participate in something that's really at this point on the strategic plan. The only amount of power faculty thing, no agreement. This particular the last five minutes might be worth thinking about whether this is a springboard to future action right yes and we can say that the strategic plan I is something it may not be something intended to completely distract us from what matters here. Instead, we could debate that we didn't have time right but certainly we could say that it's just one battle right and it's a battle that union doesn't mean a lot because the plan itself is airy and meaningless. It was necessary in that reaccreditation process was written in the five year mark after the middle states review, we would produce the strategic plans of ego plan, but what are our actual opportunities beyond this writer there ways in which we can take what this particular event has highlighted and actually spin that into a new understanding of some nation particle process. Some songs trust form. This is a lot of you don't know right if you would

just well maybe you weren't aware of this work all or shrink externally. Turn sign course before picture work, working, asking all decisions about how work and trust you learn what starts thank you appreciate anyone who actually listen to us talk about this. I think the only way forward is the faculty are going to have to make some really hard decisions just for a fight. I think stole three of you this evening drink I think you offer tuning into the occupied this evening. I will leave you with a very exciting and very brief public service announcement. All