I am on board with moving forward in a way that helps us serve our mission. Absolutely.
We need to keep in mind the concept of development. Our students are on a developmental path of discovering who they really are. Thus, how they begin their experience here must be a part of the conversation of how we build the clusters. It doesn't seem to be a central part of the conversation and that would be a big mistake. Knowing what students want is really a minor piece of concern versus how they will develop and grow through their intersection with the cluster experience. It could be a very beautiful, mind blowing experience.

"I think there are many people who are nervous that their discipline may not ""fit"" into a cluster and are concerned about their job security as a result of changes which will be made. Also, not to be disrespectful, but the term ""clusters"" has engendered more than a few derogatory jokes, as in ""cluster f#$k"". Perhaps, although it is late in this process to do this, we should consider a different moniker for this concept."

The untenured tenure-track faculty have been drastically under represented during this process. I realize that we know the least about what’s already at PSU so it's difficult for us to make many recommendations, but we’re also the ones that will need to keep these things running in the future. If we build and fund clusters based entirely on current staff, while there be interest in those clusters when that staff has moved on?
I really think that a space we haven’t been talking about much is Gen Ed. Couldn’t we reimagine Gen Ed to fill some of this need and guarantee that students, even those in tightly scheduled/ regimented programs, get the chance to participate and discover interests? Our Gen Ed program is built on choice and on skills. I see the transdisciplinary work, and problem solving, product developing possibilities of the Clusters being a much better fit for tapping into student interests, making Gen Ed more attractive and meaningful for students, and truly demanding development and use of the skills we so desperately want our students to leave with. What about larger chunks of credit going to fantastic projects and experiences that help community (outside and inside the university) as well as industry, environment, etc?
What I shared in my last question sums up both my level of motivation for the clusters and the center for children and families idea (very high) and my concern with workload. This endeavor will be a giant waste of time unless we can achieve less following of the buzz-word trends and more authentic innovation.

This must be a process that leverages the faculty's existing competencies and capabilities and cannot be "built from scratch." Also, the only way the model successfully scales is by engaging the student population to execute much of the work required to succeed. How we incent those students is a fundamental issue. Credits must be paid for by the students; internships must have a predictable and reliable source of funding.
If this is going to proceed will teaching loads return to their previous states? If not discussing this is absolutely pointless, as no one will have any time available to make the changes needed to actually put a cluster plan into action. Please, let's not start an endeavor that is doomed to succeed from the start.

"I feel too much pressure on us re: timeline. In order to do this well, time will need to be dedicated to evolution of themes, structure of clusters, faculty collaboration including research, input form students, etc....I also feel as if this is being imposed upon us without thinking about the time and resources needed. We are hearing mixed messages about available resources."

There's a lot of tension among the faculty over this issue right now. In a way, Plymouth State is damaging its greatest teaching resource by making ourselves more of a business.

"Many faculty are excited about the change and are looking forward to it! Gains to students and learning should be the main driver for initiatives."

"I think it is VERY important that we define purpose of clusters, outcomes of clusters, and characteristics of clusters PRIOR to naming themes. I also think it is VERY important that their is a defined process in place. If there is no rule book, then we should write one. Enough colleges have done this now that their is sufficient information out their to inform a structured, valid process. There is no need to fly by the seat of our pants."

Clusters still seem to me more like rebranding than innovation. Maybe that's because it still seems so theoretical/hypothetical now, in the phase where we don't have to PAY for any of it yet. I am not an opponent of rebranding, just feeling a little skeptical as I have now been here long enough to see (too) many alleged "priorities" or "crucial innovations" pop up and vanish, sort of one after the other. Too many "here's the thing we're doing" or "here's the way we'll do things now," getting crushed under various wheels. Sorry that's a little Debbie Downer, but I don't think I'm alone here.

I am a graduate of a college based entirely on interdisciplinary learning. It worked well for motivated students. For less motivated students, a bit more structure would have made a big difference. PSU already has the structure, and I think that many students would benefit from more flexibility. If we take the existing Gen Ed concept and replace it with a cluster model, I think students would still graduate with a well-rounded academic resume.

I would just like to be invited to the table. There seems to be a lot I don't know and that makes it challenging to respond to these questions. I hope my responses make some kind of sense. This is exciting! I look forward to seeing where this process will take us.

This seems like an exciting opportunity!

ECP and especially PSU Centers have faculty and staff that are paid to do such cluster-like work. Most of the rest of the faculty and staff carry a very significant
teaching / student-servicing work-load, since tuition revenue (until the clusters kick in), is still our main source of income. How are teaching faculty going to be compensated for cluster-like work? Assuming credit reallocation, who is going to teach our classes (assuming we still have them)? If the answer is more part-time lecturers, what is going to be the impact of less FT and more PT instruction if it becomes too lopsided? Unless we properly integrate students into clusters, are we still fulfilling our mission as a primarily student-centered teaching institution? Are today's students ready to immediately tackle real business and other problems in clusters, or do they need to first learn the basics (writing, critical thinking, problem solving, etc.). If not, don't we still need classes, which then circles back to the question of who's to teach them if FT faculty are busy with cluster work? Just a list of questions I don't know the answers to, that's all.

My answers may be way off the mark as I was unable to participate in this process. I would like this process to take into consideration the mission of serving the public and the greater civic good that is incumbent upon us as a public institution of higher education. We should think more broadly than what might appeal to business interests and be sure to bear in mind the responsibility we have to the citizens of the state we serve.

We are going toooooooo fast to make this happen. I believe we need to see what results come out of the URSA process. Then we could determine if there might be opportunity to have time/room in our schedules to want to be part of clusters. I keep hearing faculty say that they don't know how they are going to be able to be part of a cluster. We don't know what we will be able to give up so that we have the necessary time.

I have heard complaints that no one seems to be in charge of this, and that the implementation is being poorly handled. It might help to have a Q&A blog available online, so that faculty and staff can anonymously post questions, and those in a position of authority to issue opinions or decisions can respond to those questions in a way that the whole PSU community can share, rather than only those few who happen to have attended a specific meeting at a specific time.

How will clusters impact certification programs? How will they interact with General Education?
How URSA will be used to impact the growth or development of the clusters?

Study the organizations that have done this successfully. What can we learn in regards to best practices? Almost any process in academia and business can be learned and repliated. So, who are the premier colleges and universities in regards to clusters. Then of those, which ones closely represent PSU in regards to size, rural, current programs, etc. I can share specific examples of how this has been done.

A lot of faculty who are not participating in the work sessions seem to think he sessions are just informational. They don't realize the developmental components of each progressive session.
I embrace change that is for the good and this may be just that, but I don't mind having a crude road map that is more than we've gotten to date. How do the cluster ideas superimpose upon our style/niche of institution? Could be cat's meow but devil is in the details, right?

I find the prospect of revisioning our college extremely exciting! Although any undertaking of this magnitude will experience a certain level of resistance, I admire the leadership's willingness to take this on, and look forward to the transformation of our University.

I am extremely uncertain as to how I will fit into this process and any of the clusters. I am at a very anxious point in my career here at PSU. This whole cluster idea is very disconcerting to me.

This is an interesting project and I look forward to participating in Clusters.

Can I make a new cluster? and How many people/departments must present in a cluster?

I like the idea of clusters in the sense that it would add another dimension to our promotion of the educational process we could offer, but I have logistical concerns about space use and students' access to technology in the digital area. For example, our Graphic Design computer lab is already scheduled from 9 am-6 pm (avg.) every day during the week, and then our GD students need time to use the computers to complete assignments outside of class time, usually from 7-10 pm each night. Therefore, if we cross-pollinate with other disciplines on campus, my concern is for the current lab spaces to be able to support all the additional students in the new "cluster" approach. Also, GD students need Mac computers, and generally, science majors may tend to be PC oriented, so I have questions about the mixing of platforms and the interaction of groups who are trained in different platforms. This relates to saving, storing, & accessing information in differing platforms, as well as having students learn a different platform.

I hope that this will help us gain greater focus to what we do. We need something that will make us distinctive. Without that differentiation, we are just like other universities (even though we really aren't!).

I'm sure I'll have deeper thoughts on this in the near future. I am still not quite sure where we are going with this and how it might work.

I started as a real skeptic about the whole thing, but have seen some ideas I could get involved with...but also some that still need a lot of refining and rethinking. Not as skeptical now; there are some things that would be fun to do.

I know that it is impossible to schedule meetings for a time when everyone can attend. But almost all of the meeting have been when I am teaching or preparing for class, or at URSA Evaluator meetings. It would be extremely helpful if someone established a communication tool whereby meeting minutes or notes are posted so that those of us that aren't able to be part of the discussions can have the ability
catch up and hear what's going if we choose.

Abstract but actualizable and transformative, and a pragmatic approach toward creating curricular/institutional change.
Good job! I think this is going really well and I've really enjoyed the conversations I've been having so far. It's all very exciting!! :-)

How do we bury the inherent politics and "old buddy" network in allowing this to happen?