The Beloit Project
For Senate Endorsement, Spring 2016:

TWO MOTIONS FOR SENATE ENDORSEMENT:

1) We endorse the creation of a working group of volunteer supervisors of student employees as a first step in a three-year pilot toward fulfilling the goals of The Beloit Project’s student employment proposal. This group will work together to explore liberal-arts-in-practice work models for students in their offices in 2016-17, and they will share their work in development opportunities for other supervisors. This model will be repeated in 2017-18, with consultation between senior staff and ASP on next steps occurring afterward.

2) We endorse continuing advising practicum each semester, with a new three-year pilot aligning the spring practicum (possibly re-branded) with a reimagined reunion and building both events around connecting students and alumni. To realize this, we endorse the creation of an implementation group led by members of DAR and Yaffa Grossman, with a central task of ensuring and facilitating communication between DAR and academic departments in the recruitment of alumni and the planning of the day.

STUDENT EMPLOYMENT:

The original proposal, from TBP December 2015 concluding document (BACKGROUND ONLY--NOT A PART OF THIS MOTION):

With respect to student employment, we propose, beginning in the academic year 2016-2017:

1. That job descriptions for student work across the college be developed to make explicit the skills students will develop on the job, and that this be done in a two-stage process;
2. That student employment be made a deeper part of the academic advising experience, with respect to both academic advisors generally and Initiatives advisors in particular;
3. That at least minor improvements be made to the visibility and functionality of our online job-search platform;
4. That mechanisms be developed (including an online toolkit and face-to-face sessions) for sharing best practices in student employment supervision, and for providing support as supervisors develop the capacity for understanding and supporting the liberal arts in practice experience of Beloit students; and
5. That a “Work Ventures” committee be created, comprised of 5-8 student employment stakeholders--both supervisors and student workers--with a primary role of overseeing the implementation of the above recommendations and overseeing our campus student employment pipeline more generally.
What we’re asking for your endorsement to begin now:
As an opening experiment, a group of student employment supervisors has agreed to come together, starting in the spring of 2016 and continuing through academic year 2016-17, with the following goals:

1) Implementing a more developmental, liberal-arts-in-practice-focused approach to student employment in their offices;
2) Meeting with some regularity to share ideas and experiments in their offices, and to talk through questions and concerns; and
3) Offering development opportunities for interested staff and faculty supervisors in order to share their experiments and what they’ve learned, with the goal of helping others to think of experiments in developmental approaches to student employment in their own offices.

The supervisors who have agreed to be a part of this first step are Melissa Dix, Lindsay Chapman, Pat Walsh, Tara Girard, and Paul Dionne. We plan to add at least one faculty member, as well as one or two students, to the group. As a three-year pilot, we would like to repeat this model in 2017-18, and then aim in the third year for consultation between senior staff and ASP to determine next steps with respect to other elements of The Beloit Project proposal (thinking about changes to job descriptions, imagining possibilities around advising, etc.). But these next steps probably can’t be meaningfully considered until we first see what this looks like on the ground. The crucial first step is putting student employment supervisors in a position to try what they’re excited to try with their students, and then share what they’ve tried. This is where we’re hoping to begin.

Evaluation plan:

These experiments in student employment will be successful if (a) students find their employment in participating offices to be a meaningful part of their liberal-arts-in-practice education at Beloit College, and (b) student supervisors find that these new approaches to student work contribute to a thriving, productive workspace, and are not too onerous or taxing a burden on them. Therefore, we propose to develop survey instruments for both student workers and student supervisors that ask them to evaluate whether this proposal is succeeding in these respects.

ALUMNI CONNECTIONS

The original proposal, from TBP December 2015 concluding document (BACKGROUND ONLY--NOT A PART OF THIS MOTION):

With respect to student-alumni connections, we propose, beginning in the spring of 2017:

1. That Beloit College’s annual reunion be moved from its current summer timeframe to the spring semester post-spring-break, likely in early-to-middle April;
2. That reunion be reconfigured to emphasize the connection of alumni with current students;
3. That the spring advising practicum be moved to the Friday preceding reunion weekend, and that it be built expressly around student-alumni interactions;

4. That we explore the prospect of also moving student symposium day in the spring Thursday preceding advising practicum and reunion;

5. That these reimagined and newly-aligned events be renamed (in coordination with Communications & Marketing) to call out their unity and importance.

What we’re asking for your endorsement to begin now:

There are two main pieces of what we’re asking you to endorse. The first piece involves continuing advising practicum as a once-a-semester event, but reimagining (and possibly re-branding) the spring iteration in a way that decouples it from course registration and instead builds it around connecting alums and current students. The Initiatives part of the day will continue in the morning, as it has in previous years, but the rest of the day will be built around alumni-student connection events, via a reimagined reunion. This begins in spring 2017, with advising practicum moving from a Wednesday in March to a Friday in April.

This leads to the second main piece: the construction of a core implementation group, led jointly by members of DAR and Yaffa Grossman, and joined by a small number of faculty, students, and staff, including representation from the LAPC. This implementation group will, among other tasks, ensure and facilitate communication between DAR and academic departments in the recruitment of alumni for the joint event and the planning of advising practicum (which may be re-branded through this work). This communication will extend beyond academic departments to athletics, student organizations, AODI, CELEB, and other similar groups. This may require a kind of second-level programming group of staff and faculty, with whom the implementation group would consult as needed.

Evaluation plan:

These experiments in alumni connections will be successful if (a) students, faculty, and alumni all find the opportunities to engage with each other in this reconceived event to be meaningful, and to advance the goals of advising at the college, understood appropriately broadly; (b) these new structures facilitate and enhance the kinds of interactions that faculty want for and have built for students and alums in a variety of ways, both within and beyond past advising practica; and (c) this reconceived event continues to meet DAR’s goals for reunion, as defined by their Alumni Engagement Index and other similar metrics. Therefore, we propose to develop survey instruments for all parties--students, faculty, and alumni--that ask them to evaluate whether this proposal is succeeding in these respects, and DAR will continue to monitor this event with respect to their goals. For this proposal in particular, we are imagining a three-year pilot, from 2017-19, with an evaluation of both events (reunion and advising practicum) taking place in 2019. This evaluation will determine whether the aligned event should continue as is, be expanded (possibly by aligning Symposium Day with the weekend), or else be discontinued.