

**STRATEGIC PLAN 2010  
COHORT FEEDBACK SUMMARY**

Distilled from notes, survey, online forum and the Cohort meetings.

**Survey**

Only 25 people filled out the survey, so there's not much power to it. Those who filled it out were very satisfied and fairly involved.

The main trends are that perceived strengths are ordained, lay seniors, and accessibility/breadth of teaching. Needs and challenges are larger facilities followed by smooth transition. Greatest gift is lay practice and accessible/open environment.

The smaller details are that Sundays, sanzen and sesshin are highly valued, while community events, weekday zazen and work practice are low priority. The repeat ideas for something new: 3 suggested retreat space and money making ventures, 2 suggested lay/Daoren and hospice/elderly.

Member's involvement is not inhibited by cost, knowledge, or childcare, we're just busy.

**Children and Families**

Dharmagarden is highly valued by membership, both for its own sake, and for its effect on the sangha. There was broad consensus that having less segregation between youth and adult sanghas would be nice, at least at times.

There is a high level of interest from every cohort in seeing Dharmagarden continue and perhaps expand. There were ideas for several possible directions, including moving towards supporting home schooling, forming a school, or a parenting co-op, or a mentorship program. Little was said about childcare, classes for parents, or Mandala on the Mountain.

A dedicated administrator for Dharmagarden would be appreciated, primarily to improve communication and planning for our existing offerings, but there was also nervousness about costs going up. A variety of ideas to compensate for our space limitations were given, involving adjusting dates, times, splitting the group, and renting more space. There is relatively less interest/commitment to the broader needs of Dharma Rain by Dharma School families.

**Facilities**

Members were quite interested and engaged in discussing needs and options regarding facilities, and largely considered resolving facility challenges as high priority. There was broad acknowledgement that a move would be a major change and have far reaching impacts, and some consideration that it would be helpful to move before succession was complete so the Carlsons can have input.

There was limited discussion about the five options the SPC has considered. The most popular options are remodeling a large central facility and the dual campus model, which has a residential/retreat facility and a central facility for main events, classes, and Dharma school. Members voiced concerns about the convenience of attending a facility that was farther away, and with separating parts of the sangha, and appreciated the container that the dual campus model could provide.

Other ideas included planning for eldercare or hospice needs, concerns about Dharmagarden, doing more work to promote alternative transportation, having satellite households, and developing "branch offices."

**Finances and Staffing**

Members perceive staffing as a more significant challenge for DRZC than finances. Finding strategies to minimize staff burnout and manage competing demands are high priorities.

There was a moderate amount of questions and answers about finances. Take home messages are that retaining members really helps and we are getting better at fundraising. There were suggestions about tithing, planned giving, wish list, raising fees, mindful work for money, and other fundraising events.

Another area of discussion revolved around indirect Dharma school costs and how to account and pay for these, and the usefulness of providing administrative support for Dharma School.

**Rigor in Practice**

The resident cohort in particular spent a lot of time on this focal point. Topics included wishing for more visibility and accountability, discussing whether a residential facility would be a monastery, and clarifying full-time/guest/part-time/staff nomenclature.

There was broad interest in sesshin, many people value it highly, but timing is the primary limiting factor. Suggestions include having more sesshin throughout year, especially local, weekend retreats, acknowledging attendance at sesshin, and having some relaxed as well as some formal opportunities. Zazenkai were also popular, with the suggestion that they appear more, perhaps on other days.

It was noted several times that seniors have a healthy ability to develop responsibility and leadership here. Daoren or oblate program was discussed in this respect.

Other issues included developing apprenticeship-style learning opportunities, satellite groups, fear of sanzen, approval of family retreat, and instruction on forms.

**Succession and Leadership**

There were relatively few opinions put forth on this topic, except for the lay teachers and lay disciples cohort groups. Most of the discussion was question and answer. However, addressing succession is the second most urgent need and challenge members identified, and the lack of opinions is not likely indicative of a lack of interest. In fact, there were numerous mentions of how large and emotional an issue this will be.

The other issue that jumped out here is a lack of clarity about satellite and affiliated groups.

There was also limited discussion about clarifying lay/ordained paths and leadership, the process of succession, the Elder's council, and leadership roles and responsibilities.

**Associated and Affiliated Groups**

All of the A&AG greatly appreciated being approached and asked to take part in Strategic Planning. It has encouraged each group to think strategically about itself as well as its relationship to Dharma Rain. No group had serious concerns that other aspects of the Strategic Plan were going to negatively affect them. Many (perhaps not all) of the cohort felt that their groups and efforts were rather invisible to the DRZC Sangha and leadership. They appreciated their independence, but felt their groups would benefit from a sense that their work was a vital part of Dharma Rain's mission rather than peripheral. Suggestions were things like a higher profile on the website, better communication to groups about options (e.g. listing in Stillpoint, web page attached to/on DRZC's, association/affiliation, visiting monks/teachers), a commitment on the part of the leadership of DRZC to honor the work being done by associated/affiliated groups.