

President's Advisory Council Meeting

March 27th, 2019 4:00pm

Stallard Boardroom, Lancaster Building

Present: President Taylor Reveley, Jennifer Apperson, Adam Franssen (recording), Carl Harvey, David Lehr, and Robin Smith

The meeting opened with greetings and the PAC sharing the agenda with President Reveley. In order of discussion:

- 1. Dr. Franssen started with a follow-up question from the recent BoV meeting by asking what the Board's #1 Priority is for the upcoming strategic plan.**

The President shared that discussions at Board centered around the issue of how to “make the enrollment engine work.” This naturally led to a discussion of the challenges facing colleges and universities around the nation as the sheer number of high school students is decreasing. Though the problem is *most* obvious in the northeast and much less obvious in Virginia, Longwood will still feel the number crunch in coming years. Two reasons for optimism are 1) funds from the state are approximately equivalent to what a school with an endowment of ~\$700M would receive. Private schools are not nearly as fortunate. 2) Though there is significant concern in higher ed, actual college closings number in the 5-10 of 2K institutions.

Still, Longwood needs a sound strategy going forward. Since 2012, many VA schools have seen a decline in enrollment. Longwood is among the exceptions (GMU, UVA, VMI, VT, and WM) and the goal moving forward must be to maintain that standing.

We can expect more strategic plan discussions at the April 4th UPC meeting.

- 2. Dr. Smith segued by asking about the possibility of initiating a “Region 8” pipeline to attract students to LU via summer experiences and other on campus that might pull from underrepresented groups**

The president acknowledged this as a sound strategy and indicated that Longwood must also focus recruiting resources on northern Virginia, where the population is increasing, rather than decreasing. There will certainly be strong competition for these students among VA institutions.

- 3. Dr. Lehr continued the conversation about students by noting that Admissions and Strategic Operations has done well to advertise that Longwood offers a personalized relationship between student and faculty member. He suggested that it would therefore make sense for faculty to be more fully incorporated into recruitment of perspective students.**

This was received as a good idea all around. Dr. Apperson and Mr. Harvey felt that collaboration with Admissions – even including faculty texting prospective students a la Jason

Faulk – might be seen as an enjoyable outreach opportunity for some faculty members rather than another layer of committee work.

- 4. This lead to discussion flowed into an assessment of Longwood’s retention rates. Despite the previous Strategic Plan’s focus on retention, rates remain in the 70%-80% range rather than in the mid-80’s.**

For context, the President pointed out that LU’s 2012 cohort of students had a 4-year graduation rate of about 50%. That doesn’t sound like much, but only about 60 schools nationwide have that rate. It turns out that 8 of the 60 are in VA, so it seems less impressive regionally despite being a positive figure.

The hope is that those numbers will continue to rise through the faculty’s work on Civitae. Having a curriculum designed to help students succeed in college should only improve retention. Additionally, we’re working to improve enrollment access for all students and there’s a fair reason to be optimistic that a few students might stay longer when Curry and Frazier are renovated and nice to live in.

Challenges are very real at the student level, too. We as an institution need to recognize what it means to teach GenZ in the same way we needed to navigate Millennials. One of our great strengths is having a 4-year, on-campus experience that cannot be replicated at schools that are focusing on massive online offerings (e.g., Arizona State & Purdue). Dr. Smith noted that we can promote the development of students’ “soft skills” that take place at residential institutions.

In real numbers, President Reveley feels that 6K students is a desirable place for Longwood to be. This may involve increasing the number of graduate programs, including both 4+1 and 6 year options.

- 5. Dr. Lehr shifted gears to ask if there is a study in progress regarding the impact of the VP Debate on Longwood Admissions/Advancement/Economics/etc.?**

There is not. Though we mapped some initial effects, there has not been an effort to tackle the effects thereafter. Some effects – philanthropic, “Earned Media” – are quantifiable whereas others are not. Has LU’s enrollment been buoyed by the debate? What were the positive effects on the creation of new classes for Civitae? We’ve had a strong run of faculty applicants, which may also be helped by the national attention brought on. These questions are yet to be resolved.

- 6. Next, Dr. Franssen asked about the search process on campus. Specifically, if there is a highly-qualified candidate in-house, do faculty need to conduct a national search, or can we save the time and money by simply hiring our candidate?**

President Reveley noted that the approach of routine national searches is a relatively new phenomenon from the 70s and 80s. At that time, companies that were doing searches for corporations realized that the same could be done in academia. Thus, while some campus hires are bound by state law, that isn't as true for faculty and our procedures could be changed to hold on to excellent faculty members.

We then discussed the need to be judicious with search searchless hires to ensure that LU was always bringing in top candidates for every position.

- 7. President Reveley asked the PAC a question that came up at the last BoV meeting. Specifically, there is a sense among the Board that this could be a time to shift away from our current a la carte pricing model back to semester-based billing. He noted that there are technological and perhaps political challenges to such a move, but asked for faculty feedback.**

Dr. Smith indicated that she could see such a move being positive in terms of retention and graduation rate since students wouldn't worry about paying for additional classes or, conversely, falling behind for not taking enough credits. She suggested that we might even then be able to guarantee pricing for students over 4 years with such a model to further improve 4-year graduation outcomes.

Dr. Lehr wondered about how such a move would affect the behavior of students. Would they take fewer summer and intersession courses? More? And what would be the effect on faculty salaries and workload.

Mr. Harvey noted that graduate programs would likely still be billed on a per-class basis even if the switch was made at the undergraduate level.

Dr. Apperson shared concerns about over-enrollment in classes with intent to drop in a semester-based model and emphasized that advising would play a key role in minimizing this occurrence.

The meeting ended at approximately 5:20pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Adam Franssen