

## **Report from Board of Visitors Meeting, December 4, 2020**

### **Lee Millar Bidwell, Faculty Representative to the BOV**

The Board of Visitors met via Zoom on Friday December 4 from 2:00-4:30 p.m. in accordance with Chapter 1283 of the 2020 Acts of the Virginia General Assembly, which permits electronic meetings when the Governor has declared a state of emergency in accordance with Va. Code § 44-147.17.

- Click [here](#) for the complete meeting agenda.
- Click here for a list of the [2020-2021](#) members of the BOV [Note: The Governor reappointed all of the Board members who served in the 2019-20 academic year.]
- Click [here](#) for access to the complete Board materials. NOTE: The meeting materials are unusually lean and contain only the consent agenda, two articles from the *Farmville Herald*, and an article from *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Vice-Presidents and Representatives to the Board were not asked to submit written reports for this meeting.
- The contents of my remarks to the Board are included verbatim in the minutes below.

#### **Rector's Welcome and Consent Agenda**

- Rector Hansen called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. with a brief welcome.
- The Board approved the Consent Agenda.

#### **President Reveley's Opening Remarks**

- President Reveley gave brief opening remarks, noting that we successfully navigated the semester with pride, but are mindful of present and future challenges with the pandemic.
- He said that the level of disruption in the country today is much like it was during the Great Depression and in 1942.
- Higher education depends on “certainty in its rhythms,” but we currently are facing uncertainty in many areas, including whether another stimulus package will be passed, the effect of the pandemic and any relief packages on the state budget, how COVID-19 will progress, and the effects of all these issues on spring and fall enrollments.
- The President then explained that the meeting would be divided into 2 parts. First, each Vice-President would give a COVID-19 focused report and updates would be delivered from Justin Pope, Matt McGregor, Jen Fraley, and Jennifer Green. The remainder of the meeting would focus on the work of the Equity Action Task Force.

#### **Discussion Regarding COVID-19**

- **Dr. Tim Pierson, Vice President for Student Affairs**, said that the semester began with a great deal of uncertainty, but that ultimately it has been very successful. The opening of Moss and Johns residence halls was exciting and the buildings have been “enthusiastically received.”
- Results of the NSEE Pulse Survey show that the words that appear most from students regarding their experience this fall include: home, second home, faculty, professors, friendships, learning, COVID-19 compliance, staff, and access.

- 180 student organizations registered this fall, including 7 new organizations that were approved by SGA.
- Students needed a place to gather and connect, and the addition of 100 Adirondack chairs and 6 firepits provided very popular places for safe outdoor gatherings.
- SGA, RAs, Greek organization leaders, and other student leaders monitored how well students were adhering to COVID-19 compliance.
- The Greek community was very active. Recruitment numbers were up, a sign that students wanted to connect with each other.
- Students reported that the hybrid of Zoom and in-person classes helped them learn and being on campus made a huge difference to students.
- Traditions such as Oktoberfest were maintained although altered to accommodate COVID-19 restrictions,.
- Rector Hansen commented on how proud he is of the student body and complimented the Student Affairs staff on their work.
- Ms. Raible asked about student mental health services. Dr. Pierson said that more group sessions were offered this semester. All counseling was done through virtual appointments. CAPS and the University Health Center has done a great job supporting students.
- **Louise Waller, Vice President for Administration and Finance**, focused her report on the work of the Budd Group and Aramark. She said the Budd group used “Level 2 enhanced disinfecting protocol” throughout the semester, which requires among other things more frequent cleaning in high touch/high traffic areas. They hired 4 disinfecting technicians to their team at Longwood and helped set up quarantine spaces for students and will be deep cleaning winter break.
- We used 1181 gallons of sanitizer this semester and have 2842 gallons in reserve for spring and summer semesters, which should be plenty.
- In the spring the Budd Group will continue with enhanced disinfecting protocol.
- Aramark has been “another rock star contractor.” All 11 food establishments remained open in the fall, more grab-and-go options were added for students, buffet service was suspended in the dining hall, and the dining hall was set up for social distance eating for those who chose to dine in. Aramark also prepared meal kits for students in quarantine/isolation and helped deliver food to students.
- For spring semester, Aramark will add more touchless food dispensers, expand grab-and-go options for The Comma in the library, and will explore food truck options for South Brock Commons.
- The leadership of Aramark and the Budd Group have been very supportive and helpful.
- Rector Hansen asked whether thought had been given to adding short and long-term liability information on the financial statements. Ms. Waller said they have not discussed it, but are happy to consider that.
- **Director of Athletics Michelle Meadows** discussed the basketball season, which is just underway. She said it will be a unique season and players and coaches will have

to be prepared to pivot with schedule changes. However, it will be an exciting season. Both men's and women's basketball have relatively young players but the teams have depth and athleticism.

- Teams have been following protocols of VDH, Longwood, the NCAA, the CDC, and the conference.
- Players are tested three times per week on non-consecutive days--a conference requirement. Travel protocol and game day operations have been adapted as well. Willet Hall has been configured to restrict access to the "Tier 1 Bubble" of players and coaches. No fans will be permitted yet, but they will continue to evaluate fan access. Fan engagement packages are available and games can be accessed through ESPN-Plus.
- Academically, the basketball players are doing well. Men's and women's basketball teams had 93% and 92% graduation rates respectively; overall, student athletes had a 90% graduation rate for the third consecutive year.
- Mr. Evans asked Ms. Meadows to address the other sports as well. She said that the fall sports will have condensed seasons in the spring; all 14 sports will be competing in overlapping schedules.
- **Courtney Hodges, Vice President for Institutional Advancement**, explained how the University and Events and Ceremonies team, led by Judith Campbell, supported the COVID-19 task force and the students in quarantine. They managed quarantine as an event and students were treated as guests.
- Prior to going into quarantine or isolation, students were given a suggested packing list. They received a welcome letter and a tour of the facilities upon entry, and were given the contact information of a person to call if they had unanticipated issues (e.g., needing a phone charger).
- Students' health and their quarantine/compliance benefited because they were treated so well in the quarantine/isolation process. Other universities have requested information on the protocol Longwood used because it was so successful.
- Ms. Raible commented that the work of the team was "brilliant, smart, and kind" and helped reduce an already stressful situation for students.
- **Victoria Kondon, Vice President for Strategic Operations**, focused her report on admissions. The admissions cycle this fall has been affected by the fact that there are no high school visits or fairs. Additionally, the university has adopted a test optional admissions policy because SAT/ACT testing access has been affected by the pandemic.
- Admissions exceeded their application generation goal of 4300 by Dec. 1, having reached 4600 by that date.
- Ms. Kondon, the Provost, and the deans meet with Enrollment Management monthly to discuss program enrollment benchmarks. Nursing has exceeded their goal by 200%; Economics, Psychology, and CSDS all have exceeded their benchmarks by at least 150%.

- Admissions is working with undeclared prospective students to help them identify areas of interests.
- Longwood has offered in-person campus visits, unlike other schools. Since July 1, there have been over 700 campus visits held in small groups, masked, with social distancing. Visitors were respectful of the protocol.
- Lancer Summer Decision Days have been rebranded as Accelerated Decisions. The goal was to have 400 applicants through this program and as of Dec. 4, 402 have been received; this compares with 497 at the same time in 2019. These students yield well.
- COVID-19 provided opportunities to do new events virtually. For example, Admissions offered a “College 101 Happy Hour” attended by over 100 parents.
- The Cormier Honors College is expanding recruiting. Last year at this time there were 73 CHC completed applications; this year we have received 181 so far. Dean Kukk is doing an excellent job recruiting.
- Personal connections will be very important in the final yield. The Faculty/Staff Ambassador program that was piloted last year is fully in place with 128 volunteers across a broad range of programs.
- Currently, Admissions has received 95 deposits for AY 2021-22, only 21 of which are deferments from this year. Last year at this point, we had received 44 deposits. Ms. Kindon reported that she is pleased with the progress to date but this will still be a challenging admissions cycle.
- The Common Application has been very valuable in recruiting; 43% of last year’s yield came from the Common App. Presently 47% of this year’s pool has come from the Common App. High school guidance counselors are pushing the Common App for students.
- **Provost Smith** began her report by commending the faculty for meeting the challenges of the semester with creativity and hard work. She also thanked the staff in DEC and IT Services for their assistance throughout the semester.
- The distribution of classes next semester will be very similar to what it was this semester: 53% of undergraduate on-campus classes will be taught fully face-to-face with all students seated together in the same class; 25% of classes will be fully online, mostly all synchronous; and the remaining classes will be a combination of in-person and online.
- Last February the 5<sup>th</sup> year interim report, which covers half of the 73 accreditation standards, and our Quality Enhancement report were submitted to SACSCOC and in September we were notified that no further information was needed.
- Data currently are being gathered for the reaffirmation process. Our report is due fall 2023, with an on-site visit from the reaffirmation team in spring 2024.
- Ms. Raible asked if Longwood has been able to retain faculty during this time. Provost Smith said that faculty numbers have held steady. Faculty who needed them were provided accommodations to teach online and we have demonstrated that we can teach in-person safely.

- Ms. Margiloff asked how students' schedules were managed to monitor the balance of their online, in-person, and hybrid classes. Dr. Smith explained the office of Student Success assisted students with their fall schedules as needed and they are carefully monitoring students' academic progress, particularly for first-year students. This fall almost 100% of mid-term grades were submitted, demonstrating faculty commitment to this early warning system. Nine first-year students withdrew from Longwood at the end of this semester, compared to 10 first-year students at the end of fall 2019.
- **Vice President and Chief of Staff Justin Pope** said that through aggressive testing, contact tracing, and supportive quarantine we were able to keep COVID-19 cases low, averaging 1 case per day. Many students who were positive were asymptomatic or had mild symptoms. No students were hospitalized with the virus. Many of the students identified as positive were already in quarantine because they were known to have been exposed, demonstrating that the protocol worked. There is no evidence of virus transmission in the classroom, fitness center, or dining hall. Student transmission occurred in social settings.
- Nine employees (1%) tested positive; there is "no evidence of workplace transmission in any of these cases."
- Like Mr. Pope, **Matt McGregor, Associate Vice President for Wellness and Auxiliary Services**, complimented Potomac Health and the staff at the University Health Center for their hard work. Mr. McGregor explained that although VDH originally said they would do all the contact tracing for university cases, they became overwhelmed with community tracing. Therefore, Potomac Health staff and some other LU staff did 100% of the campus contact tracing. Local public health official Dr. Nash said there is no evidence of student to faculty, faculty to student, or student to community-at-large transmission.
- We have had an increase in testing resources so that most anyone who wants to get tested for "peace of mind" will be able to, even if they do not have any symptoms of the virus.
- This semester 155 students were quarantined or isolated in ARC. Additional beds are available in Longwood Village if it becomes necessary.
- We have kept up with CDC and VDH regulations. In October when the CDC said that outdoor time is important for those in quarantine and isolation, the university adapted to allow for that.
- Earlier this week the CDC revised the recommended quarantine length for those who are contact exposed but asymptomatic from 14 days to 10 days, which Mr. McGregor said will be a huge benefit next semester.
- **Dean of Students Jennifer Fraley** added that throughout the semester 545 students were quarantined or isolated. Students generally complied with COVID-19 protocol and held each other responsible and accountable.
- **Dr. Jennifer Green, Associate Vice-President for Enrollment Management and Student Success** reported that 195 students requested assistance with the fall

- schedules, with about 2/3 of them wanting to be fully online. Currently, 35 students have requested to be fully online in the spring semester.
- Students were provided with a variety of supports to facilitate academic progress during quarantine/isolation including regular check-ins, mental health resources, and having books, instruments, and other academic supplies delivered to them. Fewer than 1% of students were too sick to do academic work while in quarantine/isolation.
  - Students have been very complimentary of how faculty have worked with them this semester.
  - Mr. Evans moved to have the Rector and President compose a resolution commending the faculty and staff for their outstanding work during the pandemic. Rector Hansen explained that the Board wants to make a public statement in support of all the work Longwood employees have done. The motion passed. A resolution will be forthcoming.
  - I thanked the Board for the resolution and said that I know statement will be much appreciated by faculty and staff. I explained I did not provide a written report because Kay Stokes told me that formal reports generally were not being provided for this meeting and because quite frankly I couldn't bring myself to ask faculty to do one more thing this semester. To write a report, I would have had to solicit input from the faculty and it seemed unfair to bother them at such a busy time in such an unusual semester. The rest of my remarks follow in italics:
  - *Although I don't have formal feedback from my colleagues, multiple conversations across campus suggest that at this point in the semester overall faculty feel **relieved**, **fortunate**, and **exhausted**. First, faculty are **relieved** we made it through the whole semester without having to go fully online. We are proud of the students for their cooperation and sacrifices; we are appreciative of those who worked behind the scenes to prepare campus and keep it clean on a daily basis; we are thankful for the careful planning and consistent messaging and leadership that allowed students to be on campus and stay on campus all semester.*
  - *Second, the faculty feel **fortunate** to have had the opportunity to teach students to some degree in person. Faculty who teach at Longwood thrive on classroom interaction and face-to-face instruction; it's why we came to Longwood in the first place and why we remain committed to this institution.*
  - *Third, faculty are **exhausted**. Plain and simple, to use a rural colloquialism: we are plumb worn out.*
  - *Faculty had to not only do the ordinary planning, teaching, and grading for what is already a high credit-hour teaching load, they had to adapt to a series of ever-changing classroom dynamics. The variety of accommodations to teaching that had to be made include: converting existing courses to fully online; devising ways to offer labs, private lessons, performance opportunities, and simulations in a Covid-safe manner; teaching simultaneously in-person and on Zoom; and teaching with masks to students seated 6 or more feet apart who also were masked while trying to facilitate discussion.*

- *As an empty-nester, I count myself among the lucky for unlike many of my colleagues, I didn't have to do all of these things while dealing with children at home due to day care and school closures.*
- *So we are tired. It's likely that in retrospect after the pandemic has passed, that the faculty will feel a sense of accomplishment, pride, and resilience. But for now, we simply forge ahead knowing we face the same—perhaps bigger challenges—in the spring semester.*
- *It deserves mentioning that we've done all of this for less money. Not that we resent the pay cuts—because we are a caring Lancer community and would rather collectively sacrifice than to see individuals lose their livelihoods entirely through lay-offs—but we do understand, we're working harder and earning less.*
- *Covid-19 has been a seismic disruption to higher education in general and to us specifically at Longwood. Some of the pedagogical changes forced by the pandemic ultimately may be retained and enhance the university experience, but that's a conversation to have after a time of rest and reflection in a post-COVID environment.*

### **Equity Action Task Force Report**

- The second part of the meeting began at 3:50 p.m. **Cameron Patterson, Managing Director of the Moton Museum**, updated the Board on the progress to date on the 3 goals of the Equity Action Task Force: (1) Develop a process for addressing incidents of racial discrimination, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; (2) Design opportunities for every student to engage with the Moton Museum and Farmville's civil rights history' and (3) Propose a series of Conversations on Campus for the campus community.
- Jonathan Page has been named Title VI Coordinator to begin developing a process for addressing incidents of racial discrimination.
- With respect to the goal of engaging every student with the Moton Museum and Farmville's civil rights history, Mr. Patterson reported that over 30 academic related groups engaged with the Moton Museum in fall 2020. In the spring a Moton Short Course will be available for faculty. Planning is underway for including the Moton experience in fall 2021 orientation. The first Moss Scholars cohort will begin in Fall 2021.
- In terms of the conversations on campus, Mr. Patterson reported that students are finding their voice. Two town halls on civil discourse and a post-election conversation were held on campus in the fall. CAFÉ offered workshops this semester to facilitate faculty development in this area and are developing an “Equitable-Inclusive Certificate Program.” Police chief Doug Mooney participated in dinners with students and multicultural affairs staff and student leadership.
- **Cainan Townsend, Moton Museum Director of Education and Outreach**, and **Associate Professor of English, Dr. John Miller** discussed preparation for the 2039 Longwood University Bicentennial, noting the university will “pivot in how it tells its history” to uplift voices that traditionally have been unheard and marginalized.

- **Dr. Naomi Johnson and Jonathan Page, co-chairs of the University Diversity Council**, reported on the 5-year Diversity Strategic Plan, which is being finalized. The plan will be presented to the University Planning Council in April for approval, with implementation in fall 2021. The plan is built on the Full Participation Model. Between 2018-2020 the Diversity Council conducted a Campus Climate Survey and focus group interviews with faculty, staff, and students. They reviewed high-impact practices, audited our current practices, examined 200 diversity strategic plans at other institutions, and consulted with others at JMU and University of Richmond regarding their diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.
- The strategic plan includes 7 broad areas, each of which contains goals, SMART objectives, strategies, responsible parties and campus partners, and a timeline for completion ranging from short- to long- term.
- The 7 areas covered in the Diversity Strategic Plan are: Communication; Community Outreach; Faculty/Staff Education & Assessment; Faculty/Staff Recruitment & Retention; Multicultural Student Advisory Committee; Student Education & Assessment Plan; and Student Recruitment & Retention. Dr. Johnson and Mr. Page gave examples of goals in each of these areas.
- An annual assessment of the strategic goals will be published and the results will inform revisions of Diversity Strategic Plan every 5 years.
- Several Board members commended the plan.
- The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.