

**President's Advisory Council Meeting
Minutes**

September 1, 2020 3:30pm, via Zoom

Present: JoEllen Pederson, Pam McDermott, Bennie Waller, Bill Burger, Ian Danielson, Lee Bidwell (recording secretary), President Reveley

1. *COVID-19 Update and Suggestions (30 minutes)*

Faculty and students have expressed concern over the methodology used for the COVID 19 Dashboard at Longwood University. We have several related questions and a few suggestions.

If a student takes a COVID 19 test somewhere other than Student Health, do we have any way of knowing or counting their test? Are those students required to quarantine? How can we verify these results if a student is missing class or saying they need to quarantine?

While the CDC has now said random testing of asymptomatic people is not advised, we are seeing reports from other schools that implies that it is actually an important way to prevent the spread of COVID 19. Can we implement random testing at Longwood?

We would like to propose the following changes to the COVID 19 Dashboard:

- 1. Include the number of tests that have been administered.*
- 2. Include the number of positive cases that have been reported by students, faculty, and staff in addition to those administered by the University Health Center.*
- 3. Include number of students/faculty/staff who are quarantined.*
- 4. Include faculty and staff in the count.*

President's Response:

- Huge thought has gone into the dashboard but nothing is “graven in stone. There is room for change.”
- VDH is not “wild” about the existence of university dashboards because they think the dashboards compromise the integrity of the data VDH is publishing in the public’s eye.
- If students take a test in their home county outside of PEC, it isn’t reflected in our data.
- Students are wary of going through the COVID process and if they feel their identity could be figured out they are less likely to engage with the process and follow through with public health testing.
- Currently we are in a “stable environment” with respect to the number of campus COVID cases.
- The problem with self-report data is trying to ensure it doesn’t duplicate official test data.

- Regarding reporting faculty & staff cases, President Reveley said he's concerned about privacy issues.
- Pam McDermott said that community members are comparing HSC's and LU's dashboards. HSC's dashboard has more information than LU's
- Ian Danielson said that students don't trust the dashboard because what they are hearing about cases on campus is not consistent with what is on the dashboard.
- President Reveley noted that Longwood has more conservative quarantine policies that what is recommended by VDH to help avoid any spread.
- Pam also added that we need to change the narrative about quarantining to reinforce that it is a good sign that we are being careful and cautious about limiting any spread.
- President Reveley said what's most important in a dashboard is that it is a good public health resource. It is possible to improve the current dashboard and perhaps make it more consistent with HSC's.
- Regarding random testing, President Reveley said that VDH is currently "warming up to antigen testing," and perhaps sometime in September LU will be able to implement random antigen testing. However, we also have to be concerned that testing can give students a false sense of security and if they have a negative test might think it's ok to engage in more risky health behavior.
- Pam said that we need to have ongoing education about COVID and the need for vigilance so that students don't let their guard down and become lax about health precautions after the first few weeks of class.

2. *Budget and Enrollment Update (30 minutes)*

Faculty continue to be concerned about the financial state of the University, as expressed by both you and the VPAA at the opening faculty meeting. Over the summer the Finance Committee worked hard to make sure faculty voices were heard and ideas were generated to help with budget shortfalls. We would like to express our intent on continuing to be involved in this conversation. We also have several questions.

What are the long-term implications for the University budget if we are unable to complete an in-person semester?

How are enrollment numbers looking after the first week of classes? What is being done by admissions to help generate more enrollment next year?

President's Response:

- President Reveley said that while this has been the most difficult year of his tenure at LU, it is not the "toughest year in LU's financial history."

- Enrollment numbers, even after the melt is accounted for, suggest we will be level with or a bit ahead of last year's enrollment, and he's "happily amazed" by that.
- The General Assembly is currently in session and we won't know for several weeks what Longwood's allotment from the state will be.
- On the one hand Virginia has a strong tax base with government offices and businesses like Amazon, so it is in a stronger financial position than many other states. On the other hand, there is still a projected \$2.7 million budget shortfall in state revenue.
- He stated that "nowhere in the darkest recesses is there the potential that we will have to reduce faculty positions this year." He is not concerned about the financial future of LU this year or in future near years.
- Long-term trends that can be troubling for all of higher education can, however, affect Longwood down the road. A decrease in the number of high school graduates and state budget support, coupled with higher health care costs and the desire of other institutions to profit by taking over the roles of residential colleges/universities are problems all of higher education is facing, and Longwood must grapple with these issues as well.
- He summarized the financial situation as follows: "Put succinctly, COVID has been a challenge more than anyone foresaw, but there is no existential threat to LU. We might need to figure out budget issues as the academic year progresses but LU will be fine."
- Lee asked what the financial effect would be if students had to be sent home mid-semester and how housing and dining reimbursements would be handled. The President said that students would be given a pro-rated refund. However, public health advice currently suggests that there is value in keeping students in place if there is a large outbreak of COVID on campus rather than sending them back into their families and communities.
- Ian asked what was being done regarding recruiting future enrollment. President Reveley said that he is turning his attention to that matter and noted that the new admissions building right next to the Wyanoke will be a huge asset in future recruiting. Additionally we have good practices in place with the Common Application and already we are seeing that it is giving us "good traction, especially in Northern VA."
- He concluded by saying we are fortunate that the Virginia legislature is working well in this crisis and helping navigate the financial hardships universities are facing; "This is a good time to be a public university."

3. *Convocation and Graduation (15 minutes)*

Faculty have expressed concerns over the intent to move forward with in-person Convocation and Graduation ceremonies. While we fully understand students treasure these events, we are concerned they send the wrong message. Are we encouraging students to break rules that we (and the town of Farmville) created to protect them? We feel consistent messaging is very important.

President's Response:

- Regarding commencement for the class of 2020, the President said the recent graduates have been very mature in understanding that they don't want an October celebration to jeopardize health or the ability of the semester to continue in person. They are not pushing the issue of an October ceremony. He said, "If a graduation happens in October, which is seeming less likely, it will be de-constructed." The truly ceremonial elements would be live streamed and perhaps students could walk across the stage in small groups across many hours for photographs. However, he sees this ceremony, which was originally planned for Fall Break, as "less likely."
- The Class of 2020 does not want a spring commencement celebration.
- President Reveley told the recent graduates he would be back in touch with them after Labor Day about commencement.
- Regarding convocation, President Reveley said the Senior Class wants to have the ceremony but currently he is talking with the Provost about how it can be held in a way that reinforces safe health practices.
- In response to his request for our input, Pam said that whatever is scheduled needs to be consistent with our current messages about not bringing outside guests to campus, size limits, social-distancing with masks, and it must be outdoors. We must give consistent messages and follow consistent policies.

4. Election Day (5 minutes)

As Virginia has just declared Election Day a state holiday, several faculty have expressed interest in having this day off in future school calendars. We request you consider this as you plan for Longwood's future.

President's Response:

- PAC members said that we understand that this year's academic calendar cannot accommodate the state holiday for Election Day. However, as next year's calendar is being built, it is important to consider this as an important date to allow students, faculty and staff to easily be able to vote. Given that we emphasize the importance of citizen leadership and civic engagement, building in Election Day as a holiday in the academic calendar reinforces the importance of participation in the democratic process. President Reveley said he would bring that issue forward in their planning process.