

**President's Advisory Council Meeting**  
October 13, 2020 3:30pm, via Zoom

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

(The agenda items presented to the President are in italics, followed by his response.)

*1. Budget Update*

*We saw [this recent article](#) about debt reduction, and have been following legislation in the [House](#) in the [Senate](#) for General Funds and for COVID-19 related expenses.*

*Now that we are in our seventh week of the semester, how does the budget look moving forward and compared to previous years?*

**President's Response:**

- President Reveley responded that the article referred to above is particularly confusing regarding refinancing of debt. A wide range of public universities are not likely to accept the offer because although the process would free up money in the short term, the money would be restricted in how it could be used (only for auxiliary costs) and would require a “balloon repayment” in several years. This offer wasn’t “quite as advertised” in the newspaper.
- The General Assembly still hasn’t approved the final budget for the year which is a “stress factor” for institutions, and the GA might just wait until January to address budget issues.
- Responding to a question from Lee about whether LU had received any state allocations for the year, President Reveley responded that the GA passed a budget in April that is in effect; however, they then “unallocated” money that was in the final budget that would have covered additional expenses for FY 20-21 to adjust for inflation. The current special session of the GA, which is highly unusual, is designed to deal with these “unallocated” funds. LU did receive their first allocation of funds in August. The second state fund allocation is distributed in January. It is at this time that LU would see either an increase (if the reallocated funds were reinstated) or decrease (if they were not or further cuts were made) in state funding.
- On the “upside,” enrollment is stable, which is an exception compared to other Virginia schools.
- Undergraduate enrollment is essentially flat. Graduate enrollment has grown significantly, primarily due to the MBA program.
- What the president is watching from a “budget standpoint” is what happens with COVID this spring. Currently, most high schools are not open for in person instruction, which

means seniors are not getting the attention from guidance counselors about the college application process they usually receive, which could negatively affect fall enrollment.

## 2. *Administrative Positions*

*We are relaying a specific question from a faculty member expressing concern that we may be administratively top-heavy. This could be because we don't know how things have changed or how promotions are being financed.*

*How has the administrative structure changed at Longwood since the pandemic started, and how are we funding any changes in salary?*

### **President's Response:**

- President Reveley began by saying comparatively speaking, Longwood is on the “side of virtue” among institutions of higher education regarding the faculty/administration balance. Over time, faculty hiring has kept pace with student enrollment growth, keeping the faculty/student ratio low and “Longwood has held administrative growth flat.”
- He noted that over the summer there were “several folks who changed positions,” specifically mentioning Alix Fink and Larry Robertson. He said the Office of Sponsored Programs is a revenue generator and it needed capable, consistent leadership rather than relying on consultants. The revenue generated by her office and cost savings will offset her salary increase.
- As for Larry Robertson, the President said that he had been in the position of Dean of Students for a “long time” and that the job requires “constant e-mail and text attention; it’s a 24/7 job” so they wanted to “give him relief from those constant demands.” The President did not say how Mr. Robertson’s raise was funded. Lee pointed out that in creating a new position for Larry, someone had to fill the Dean of Students position which also would necessitate a salary increase. The President agreed that was true, but went on to say that “higher education is under much stress right now. If 50 years from now places like us are still thriving, it will be in part because of these administrative positions that are necessary to support residential college life.”
- He said the “firm intent” is that salary cuts for faculty and staff will be restored in the next budget cycle. Lee said that it seemed unlikely, given the grim budget picture he had just presented, that funds would be available in FY 21-22 to restore the salaries. President Reveley said salary cuts provided a one-time savings of just over 3 million dollars; current COVID-19 costs are a one-time cost of 2.8 million dollars so if COVID-19 is under control next year and those expenses are no longer needed, those savings would be available to restore salaries. If in the fall, COVID-19 is clearing, enrollment can be better; if it has not improved things could go “sideways.” There are many unknown variables.

- JoEllen told the president that faculty are working harder and earning less and we want him to know that. He said he understands the pressure. He knows that the lack of a Fall Break has made things more difficult and said he is looking for ideas, big or small, to help morale.

### 3. *COVID-19 update*

*How much did the University pay for COVID-19 preparations? How is that being funded? How much of it is permanent infrastructure?*

*Should we have spring break? Is that decision finalized?*

#### **President's Response:**

- President Reveley previously explained that the university has spent \$2.8 million on COVID-19 preparations and they were paid for in part with salary savings. Approximately \$500-600K of that spending was for permanent infrastructure (e.g., HVAC improvements).
- Regarding Spring Break, President Reveley said that he and Provost Smith spoke recently and they agree that the decision about whether we will have Spring Break needs to be made before Thanksgiving. He said that Provost Smith and David Shoenthal are making the call about Spring Break.
- Ian said that on the one hand it is important to pay attention to public health and safety issues, and on the other hand it is important to recognize the need for some kind of break in the spring for faculty from the overwhelming demands of pandemic instruction. The President said that one option being considered is to spread out spring break days throughout the semester to avoid students traveling to Spring Break destinations for a week and being exposed to COVID-19, but that spacing out the days would still provide some relief from the stress of the semester.
- Lee said a very simple thing that could be done to improve faculty morale would be to include faculty in the decision-making process regarding Spring Break. Bill and JoEllen pointed out that Faculty Senate could be consulted regarding the decision for input.
- JoEllen asked for an update on testing at UHC and whether the Percent-Positivity rate for COVID-19 tests could be added to the dashboard. President Reveley responded saying that public health officials do not agree that mass testing is a good idea because it generates the effect of people being less cautious with their behavior if they receive a negative test result. He iterated his confidence in the Virginia Department of Health's (VDH) guidelines and the Governor's guidance. He said if "we diverged from the public health approach, we'd have a lot of explaining to do to VDH." Perhaps by spring semester there will be better tests or different thinking in public health and Longwood would revise its practices.

- He further said that public health officials believe that because many asymptomatic people are being tested, it results in an inaccurately low positivity rate. JoEllen said she believes the concern being expressed from faculty is the opposite—that the University isn't testing as many as they should because it would show a high positivity rate.
- JoEllen asked why the numbers of students in quarantine are no longer being distributed regularly and asked if we can get them again. The president said that currently there are 25 students quarantined in ARC. Others are quarantined in non-Longwood housing, either in the local area or their home communities. Quarantine space is available in the Villages if need be as well. He pointed out that Matt McGregor has recently assigned more staff to help with contact tracing. It is good that by and large we have not had significant community spread, although there were parties 2 weekends ago that did contribute to the increase in numbers recently.
- JoEllen pointed out that if we need to switch to all on-line instruction again, faculty and students need some advance warning to make the transition.
- Pam asked what the consequences for students are for non-compliance with COVID-19 protocol at social events and whether students who are “repeat offenders” are being dismissed from the university. President Reveley said that Greek organizations have been the “biggest violators” and that is being handled and that we are working with Hampden-Sydney to keep off-campus parties in check.
- Pam said we need to send consistent messaging to students about expectations about behavior in and out of class. Lee said that regarding consistent messaging, the Commencement activities hosted at Longwood House the previous weekend sent an inconsistent message to campus regarding limiting unnecessary social contacts with many others. She said she recognized that the President worked to maintain groups no larger than 50 at a time, but he still put himself at risk by interacting with so many alumni and their family members. He said the decision about commencement activities was “very difficult” but ultimately he decided to put himself “out there for the greater good.”
- Ian said we need to revamp efforts and messages to arrest the increase in cases.

4. *Do you have any questions for us?*

**President's Response:**

- President Reveley repeated his request for ideas to improve faculty morale. He also said that when the pandemic is over, it would be good to identify innovations that came out of the COVID-19 response that are worth retaining.
- Pam suggested it would be interesting to collect and record experiences of faculty, staff, and students at Longwood during the pandemic like the NPR Story Corps project.

Meeting adjourned at 5:02 p.m.