

PAC Minutes

November 29, 2021 3:30 pm – Stallard Ballroom

1. Planning for the future and faculty workload:

Faculty remain concerned about Admissions strategies and leadership / staffing. Specifically, we are interested to learn more about:

- Immersion days
- Resources for retention for students who are not academically prepared for college
- Plans for rebuilding professional admissions staff
- Responses from prospective students about changes in housing policy

General conversation / points related to workload:

- President Reveley believes that Longwood is doing everything it can to make it through the storm well.
- Longwood's priority of full-time faculty in the classroom creates a budget / workload balance that is different from other universities. We don't solve workload problems by relying on adjuncts and temporary hires; this impacts the solutions we find when faced with budget issues.
- Accessibility Resources and Mental Health support staffing also needs careful scrutiny; trying to balance staffing needs is an ongoing concern. Longwood is typically understaffed, in part due to the way we prioritize academic positions – this is part of our identity and strength, but it does create different pressures on staff positions.
- If it was not 2021 and a pandemic, he would say we are on a very good track, but there is not the predictability and certainty that there once was. It is more difficult for Admissions to rely on early indications to predict actual matriculation.

Admissions-specific conversation:

- President Reveley started by sharing that Emily sometimes feels discouraged by communications with faculty. Faculty have a shorthand kind of communication style with each other that foregoes some niceties; sometimes this direct kind of communication leads to misunderstandings. She believes she is being collaborative but does not feel supported in her efforts.
- Lee and JoEllen expressed concern and surprise that this is the case and expressed support for Emily. Pam said that we have been trying to communicate a need for more admissions staff – that faculty cannot be Emily's partners in Admissions; she needs professional staff to help her connect with various departments and faculty. Faculty do not have the time and expertise to give; current workloads limit the amount of collaborating we can do and the time we have to give throughout the semester. Lee said we have been trying to say that it is too much responsibility for any one person to handle – not specifically Emily.

- President Reveley was encouraged to learn that reinforcing admissions staff at a time when each position is carefully scrutinized would be supported. He noted the two types of admissions staff – that some staff are out, off campus, recruiting, but that we also need staff here on campus to support recruitment efforts. He also mentioned that general recruitment is one thing, but getting each department the type of student they would like to have is more specialized and intensive.
- Will pointed out that retaining students in the present environment also increases faculty workload substantially. Students require more individualized attention and we have seen a tremendous increase in the number of students who have accessibility accommodations. President Reveley said that higher education cannot fix the problems of K-12 education. Lee agreed but said that faculty must meet students where they are academically for them to be successful, and we need the assistance of staff in Accessibility Resources and Academic Success. Both of these offices are understaffed for the current and increasing demand placed on them. President Reveley said that the “staffing model” around these offices “may need to be reassessed.”
- Immersion Days – discouragement from both faculty and admissions. Faculty report cancelling classes and participating in communications with prospective students, only to have no one show up. Emily feels criticized only; she would prefer constructive conversations about making Immersion Days better.

This led to a more general conversation about communication – some faculty felt that no one reached out and said let’s work on this together; staff often feel unsure about how to get information to faculty. Because we have several academic bodies it can be difficult to communicate effectively. We have an active Provost’s office, Deans, an active Chairs Council, and a productive Faculty Senate – all different avenues for connecting with faculty. President Reveley suggested that this might be something we could work on with the Provost, to distinguish among the various academic channels and help establish more formal lines of responsibility and communication. One example is the amount of time Emily spends reporting to faculty about admissions – she works with administration, she prepares presentations for Chairs Council and Faculty Senate, she is open to meeting with individual departments and faculty. Often it feels like the information she presents does not get disseminated. JoEllen said that Faculty Senate minutes are posted on the web site, and that they are available for everyone to see.

2. On-campus living arrangements:

Where can we learn more about the work of the Housing Taskforce? What are their goals, and how are they progressing? How is this being communicated with students and the community?

- The Taskforce’s Charge is to give a forum for student input into how residence halls are working. It is an SGA-facilitated idea.
- Ann Patterson, SGA President is very involved. The Taskforce is trying to systematically ask rising sophomores and above, “What do you want to see in Longwood housing”?

This includes everything from amenities to the suite of services that students desire to role of RCL staff.

- One example: older students are inclined toward a more independent living style; could there be particular halls that allow that?
- It's an open-ended dialogue that is student-driven, examining campus housing – something that has not been done with this kind of intention in several years.
- Timeline is not pre-determined, but he expects that by mid-Spring semester there will be some decisions made; others may take longer.
- Communication will be internal and external. One example – the FAB is town-operated; Longwood supports it ... does it still support student needs? Schedule? Technological innovations? Some things are specific in this way; other things are more broad.
- Students and parents are relieved to know that we have housing available all four years if needed. Most current juniors live on campus; students who stay on campus retain better; every indication is that it will help retention and engagement.
- Emily and Jennifer Green will be tracking this how this plays into retention and recruitment.
- JoEllen pointed out that there are financial implications related to on-campus housing. President Reveley shared that the Financial Aid Office is working to make it a cost-neutral consideration for students.

3. Symposium Day Introduction. (Questions about President Reveley's introduction were submitted before the campus-wide email with his apology / response.)

What steps have been taken to address the concerns of the students? What further steps will be taken?

- It meant a lot to him that Megan took it as a mistake and had not thought anything of it again until she heard from others about it; he considers their relationship strong.
- He deeply regrets this mistake, for Megan and because it took some focus away from Symposium Day, which was a wonderful event. He reiterated that he wishes he had stopped and corrected himself.
- He received messages from 5-10 people after his email; expressing appreciation for the email and for his addressing the situation.
- Lee said that she was proud of the way that students spoke up in a responsible way; that it shows us the importance of Civitae and citizen leadership, and it was good that they knew they could speak up and would be supported in their concerns.
- President Reveley has spoken with many students, and will continue to be in conversation with them.

4. COVID Changes

- Monitoring the new variant; it will be a few weeks before there is enough data to know how this will impact us.

As COVID-19 protocols are rolled back at the state level, will Longwood reconsider our COVID-19 policies? How will these policies be formed?

- COVID was not a forefront issue in the election; not sure that either party is feeling intense political pressure to do something one way or another.
- Ultimately, we are a creature of the state. We do have some leeway, but at the state level there is a desire for uniformity among state employees – less institution by institution, more state-wide decision, unlike what we saw at the beginning of the pandemic.
- He is constantly thinking about how to be proactive in our decision making, as far as we are able.
- COVID has precipitated this swirl of related crises – federal debt ceiling; federal government is not going to be in a position to be as helpful as it was.
- There is much contributing to the uncertainty around these policies; the new Governor will not be inaugurated until after our semester begins. The General Assembly will be in session as the semester begins. While the new governor could implement Executive Orders regarding COVID-19 policy, the General Assembly has divided control of the House and Senate, so it's unlikely any major legislative changes will be made related to managing the pandemic. The state will be monitoring the new variant, there is pressure for uniformity among all state employees.