

## President's Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

April 29, 2022 3:00-4:00 pm

President's Advisory Council (PAC):

- Members Present: JoEllen Pederson (Chair), Will Holliday (Vice-Chair), Meg Meng, and Dorothy Suskind, Virginia Lewis (Attendant)
- Meeting with President Reveley

*PAC meets one week prior to meetings to set the agenda, based on questions received from faculty. The agenda is sent to President Reveley, who comes to the meeting prepared to discuss questions on the agenda. Each item is brought forward, President Reveley offers his response, and members of PAC ask follow-up questions. We try to stay within an estimated time frame for each item, so that we get responses to all questions on the agenda.*

*The questions from the agenda are listed as Items; responses and discussion follow each item.*

### Opening Thoughts

President Reveley:

- Deep thank you for the last couple of years. This is not what we signed up for in the good work of education. Pay raises are solid, but the exact amount is up in the air.

JoEllen:

- Inflation is up 6% in the past year, so faculty and staff need pay raises in order to keep us afloat.

### 1. The Future at Longwood

*Faculty are concerned about having fewer students over the next several years especially given these recent articles.*

- [\*Virginia's elite colleges are booming. Others are struggling to find students.\*](#)
- [\*Budget cuts are likely coming to VCU this summer\*](#)

*Specifically, requests have been made to PAC concerning:*

- *Does the Commonwealth see a specific role for Longwood in the broader context of higher education in Virginia, and in relation to the economics of this region?*
- *What new recruitment strategies will Longwood roll out in the face of challenges related to demographics, the pandemic, and ongoing financial constraints?*
- *Faculty morale is low. The workload demands of recruiting and retaining students with unfilled faculty lines and support staff lines has become overwhelming. Faculty also feel increased stress related to job security. The sense of being a valued member of a community that is the hallmark of working at Longwood is disappearing. What specific actions can the administration take, in concert with faculty and staff, to improve morale and restore the sense of workplace community?*
- *Faculty have been told that Longwood values the in-person undergraduate experience, and that face-to-face interactions are essential. Yet there is a perception that*

*administrators are not being held to the same standard. Administrators have been less visible at on-campus academic and student life activities, and some in the administration seem to have contracts that allow them to be on campus part-time. Is there an expectation for administrators to be held to the same standard for in-person, face-to-face interactions with students and faculty?*

## Discussion

- JoEllen: Morale is very low around campus right now, and of course students' mental health impacts professors too, but perhaps this low morale goes beyond that. Is there a plan to help us feel more secure?
- President Reveley:
  - It is a mix of many things. We are all not immune to what we are reading from colleagues in other places. There is a felt sense that in higher education, we have been used to an easy, wide, bi-partisan support, and that has changed. Part of that is the natural anxiety that could surround enrollment and seeing that solidify and tick the right way will help.
  - We are taking steps to support the mental health of students who transfer to us. All of higher education is struggling with this.
  - This specific cohort got hard hit hard by the pandemic. We are all in a disruption, and that manifests in different ways. What seems to be natural habits is really learned behavior that actually needs to be taught. I actually think 2021 was easier, because at least it was all COVID all the time, but this year has been this back and forth mix of responsibilities both pandemic and non-pandemic. I think next year will be easier, with a natural rhythm. I hope that the summer provides a space of rejuvenation,
- JoEllen: As a sociologist, I think about structures. Getting faculty feedback is important throughout the year, because we feel these waves, too.
- Virginia: For example, a while ago an article was posted about our enrollment being down, and I hoped that you would have sent us something. It would have been great to have heard from you.
- JoEllen: We keep hearing about people working remotely, and it can make faculty feel devalued, because we are always here.
- President Reveley: You can take this into contemplation. When you walk the halls, people of all stripes are not here. That has changed around campus. It is a hard nut to crack. The thing about knowledge work is it is not the proverbial nine to five. It has been a challenge for everyone. So there are some roles that are not student facing. It has been a challenge when the student is not in play. It is tempting to be away and be as productive at home as on campus. I found that with Student Affairs, Athletics, and Alumni. I hope the naturalness of next year will begin to counteract that trend. We can conjure up many reasons why there should not be a rule for keeping hours.

- JoEllen: But it does impact our sense of community. Faculty are here when we teach our classes and during our office hours. The Farmville community has also noticed fewer people on campus.
- President Reveley: It is a phenomenon that feeds on itself. There are not as many students around campus, and when the buzz is diminished, it is harder to get people to walk around campus. I put a lot of energy this Fall into trying to re-energize students' habits, but COVID didn't help. My own instinct is that if we can succeed in getting student life to kick in again, then everyone begins to enjoy being around for that basketball game. It is a deep challenge in a knowledge economy to mandate people being around. People have gotten really into Zoom life.
- JoEllen: We are marketing this place as an in-person institution, and faculty have come back in person. We would like to feel like everyone who works on campus has done the same.

## 2. Hiring Issues

*How will the hiring strategies for faculty/staff/administration in the coming years reflect the mission and vision of the university with regard to diversity, workload balance, and attention to program needs?*

*Diversity issues in hiring.*

*Quote from a faculty email: I know plenty about the bicentennial commission, the UDC committee that exists, and the changing of building names, but I want to know about the actual hiring of people of color and the recruitment of students of color. In light of the fact that the administration has blocked the history department's nomination for a position in African-American History for two years in a row, and now that we will no longer be able to hire in this field for next year, I would like to know how the President feels this mission of DEI can realistically be fulfilled.*

## Discussion

- Will: We have been thinking quite a bit about morale, diversity, and meeting students' needs. The email quote captures the complexity of all of this. We are curious about strategic hiring. How can we go about hiring a diverse faculty and staff on campus?
- President Reveley:
  - It matters to me enormously. There are things I have more consequential sway over than others. The Board of Visitors is easily the most diverse part of the University. The Provost is always thinking about it. It is obviously a real challenge, because universities are at the front edge of society, because the Assistant Professor today started a decade ago. There is not an easy supply and demand for the really consequential issue that presents itself.

- The History position I have been far more involved in than the typical hire. As you know, two great candidates turned us down, and that is part of the challenge. Then there is the conundrum that in a hugely important field, is it better to demand excellence in first choice or just get it filled?
- Will: As a follow up to this idea of supply and demand, one of the issues we face in general terms, is that in some fields programs get 150 candidates, but in this field the demand is so high we get only a few. What are some of your hiring strategies?
- President Reveley: There is cluster hiring that has proven to be effective. I would say across universities this has been an acute challenge. I wish there was an easier way to crack the code. I think our connections to the Moton Museum helps us to ensure we are a welcoming community. Those things begin to have a cumulative effect. For example, the Athletics department just hired an athletic coach from the University of Florida. She is big leagues all the way.
- Dorothy: I worry about this a great deal. We know across the country in education, that the majority of teachers are white, and this demographic is not reflective of the overall student population in K-12 schools. We have not had a concerted nor successful strategy for hiring and supporting diverse faculty in our college. This impacts the sense of belonging for our students who will be future educators, counselors, social workers, and nurses.
- Will: This is also a significant student related challenge as well in History. We have coursework that requires this specialty for licensure and now the position is left open.
- Dorothy: I think our experience in Education may also speak to this frustration. Currently, in the Elementary and Middle School Program, we have 14 open courses, for 201 students, that will need to be taught by adjuncts or a visiting professor. This number does not include incoming Freshmen. We have been communicating this concern since September. We were hopeful that by now we would have had in-depth meetings with top administration about our plan for moving forward, but today, on this last day of class, no plan has been communicated. Our request for another tenured track line was declined. In response, we floated the idea of capping our enrollment in the Elementary and Middle School Program, as other Programs have done, in order to match our number of faculty to the number of students served. That request was turned down. So our problem is not a lack of students, it is a lack of faculty. Morale is at an all-time low. Most of our faculty are actively seeking other employment, as they have openly shared with administration. A sense of hopelessness pervades the building, and I don't use that word lightly. When I arrived at Longwood four years ago, there were eight tenured-track professors, and next year, at best, we will have four and at worst one to none. We need help, and do not feel like anyone is listening, despite our continual effort to speak up and reach out.
- President Reveley: I am starting to pay attention to this now. I believe administrators can make a difference. Lissa is doing great work. Angela, the new Dean, will provide an additional burst of stability and forward movement.

- JoEllen: It is almost summer, and we are nine month employees. It is difficult that these things are not addressed during the school year.

### 3. Concerns from CBE

*I have received the following written questions from CBE faculty:*

*CBE has been applauded for their work in graduate education; however, they are understaffed and facing reaccreditation. What are the advantages to appointing Sara Neher to be interim dean for two years? What is the plan for securing support for reaccreditation?*

*Does the administration have any concern about a conflict of interest with the interim dean working for Longwood and her consulting firm creating a strategic plan for the business school?*

*What are your suggestions for improving communication between administration and faculty about hiring and personnel issues that affect classes and scheduling?*

### Discussion

- JoEllen: What I am hearing from the faculty at CBE, is they are worried about reaccreditation. The MBA program has been very successful, and faculty are concerned about making sure reaccreditation goes smoothly.
- President Reveley: It is not that there is not work to do, but I am confident in how that will progress. Lara spent lots of time talking to people around the state, including emeritus faculty, and I have too. It is a part of Longwood that has all sorts of opportunities for an undergraduate and graduate standpoint. A really strong undergraduate CBE is really important. The point that Lara could find someone of Sara's caliber to serve as Interim Dean is really good for Longwood. Sara is from a premier business school in Virginia, herself a Jefferson Scholar with ASCB accreditation experience too.
- JoEllen: The interim part of the appointment is worrisome too. How well does she know Longwood and the faculty? It took me years to know how things operate. How does someone walk in with so much on her plate and be successful? What is happening to make sure she is successful in the position?
- President Reveley: Anyone serving in a big job like that has a steep learning curve. The fact that she really does know how business schools work and has a deep vein of experience, will make a difference. It is helpful to have someone look at Longwood with a new lens when there is lots of opportunity ahead. It is helpful to have someone with a broad perspective, powerful work ethic, and lots of resources and colleagues to call upon. There are 25 or so faculty in CBE, and Lara took some real time to give the opportunity for each faculty member to speak to her at length. Almost all took her up on that. I think junior faculty feel a sense of momentum right now more than senior faculty.

- JoEllen: CBE is also down faculty, and the stopgap has been adjuncts (and visiting faculty), and students are beginning to notice. Students are feeling like they are not getting the same quality as before and that weighs heavily on faculty.
- President Reveley: The flip side is to think of all of the opportunities that are out there as we think towards the future. I don't know Sara well, but others do, and think she is excellent.
- Dorothy: As we enter the Fall with so many of our Education courses being taught by adjuncts, one of the things that worries me is the adjunct pay is so low it is difficult to recruit and retain quality adjuncts. As a rural community, many of our adjuncts are coming from Richmond, Charlottesville, and Lynchburg. Currently, the pay is so low it barely covers the high gas prices. At a time when we have to rely on adjuncts, how can we better compensate them, so we can attract people with a high level of expertise to teach our classes and support our students?
- President Reveley: I don't want to be a place where adjuncts are working too well. Right now we are the flip of what is a national trend of employing more adjuncts than tenured-track faculty.
- JoEllen: Do we have a better record of that than other similar colleges our size?
- President Reveley: Yes.
- Meg: I think we are still short on staff. Especially after last year when several of our faculty left and found jobs elsewhere, especially in finance. Some faculty members in our college also get different treatment. It is just a rumor. We don't know the specifics. How do you suggest we foster better communication and transparency?
- President Reveley: I think Sara will help with that a great deal. The little I know about her, it is a real passion and understanding of hers. It is a real engagement of hers. I am really optimistic at what she can do.
- Meg: We all got to meet her. She is nice and we are happy to work with her, but she does not have the direct experience of working on the AACSB accreditation process. What resources and support would she have during the process?
- President Reveley: David Shoenthal is primed and ready, and he is as meticulous as a person can be. Another thing is that Sara has operated in very consequential circles in the business world. If she doesn't know something, she will pick up the phone. But with David, Sara's contacts and work ethic, it will be fine. Cheryl is committed to being helpful too.
- JoEllen: But, Cheryl is only here through December.

- President Reveley: Yes.
- JoEllen: There is also the issue of both her consulting firm and her getting paid by Longwood. Is it true that she will receive a salary from Longwood and her consulting firm will also be paid by Longwood?
- President Reveley: She will keep up her consulting work. Her firm will be helpful with a strategic plan. She will be a Longwood employee, and others at her firm will be helpful to us. This is one of these things in higher education and something we see quite frequently at UVA.
- Meg: It has been communicated to us that she will only be on campus two days a week because of balancing the consulting firm and her job. Is that accurate?
- President Reveley: I really think she will be here more. Rumor has it not all CBE faculty are here all of the time either. None of them teach on Fridays.

#### **4. Academic Calendar.**

*Is there a plan to address the issue of a 2-week gap between exams and commencement before approval of the '23-'24 Academic Calendar? This gap is increasingly difficult for students and families to navigate, and for supporting departments (like Music) to support.*

*Faculty would like to see an Academic Calendar that does not require final grading on the weekend, especially when it falls on a Holiday. If exams end on Friday, Monday should be considered a grading day.*

#### **Discussion**

- JoEllen: The two week gap is causing trouble for music, travel courses, and students to name just a few things. It is difficult when exams end on Friday, and we are expected to have grades by Monday morning. As nine month employees, we need to set some boundaries. This is a tough part of the semester for us.
- Will: I have been here until 2 in the morning on Sunday to get exams in on time, and am not the only faculty member to have done so. This time crunch leads some faculty to give less rigorous exams in order to meet the grading demand and tight deadline.
- President Reveley: Lara is very attentive to this, and she is working to help make that a Tuesday instead of a Monday.

#### **Concluding Remarks**

- President Reveley: I really do want to say thank you, and I hope JoEllen will attest to the fact that no questions are out of bounds or off limits. I don't always have the perfect answers, but I will try to do my best.

- JoEllen: When I looked up PAC in the FPPM it showed no rules. What the faculty sent to me, I moved forward. I appreciate you humoring and working with us.
- President Reveley: These last two years have been the hardest in Longwood's History, and JoEllen has led us magnificently.