

Report from Board of Visitors Meeting, December 3, 2021
Lee Millar Bidwell, Faculty Representative to the BOV

The Board of Visitors met in Radcliff Hall, 1:00-4:00 p.m. on December 3, 2021.

- Click [here](#) for the meeting agenda.
- Click [here](#) for the complete Board materials. My written report to the Board is found on pages 113-114 of the materials.

Rector's Welcome

- Rector Trigiani opened the meeting by noting that two Board members, Mr. Evans and Mr. Gould, were not able to attend. She welcomed new member Rhodes Ritenour to his first meeting.
- The Rector noted that October was a “banner” month with the dedication of the Gerald L. Baliles Center for Environmental Education at Hull Springs and the official ground-breaking for the Joan Perry Brock Center.
- Ms. Trigiani reflected on lessons we can learn from the legacy of Joan of Arc that should guide Longwood leadership.
- Staff from the Office of Human Resources were recognized and applauded for their outstanding work throughout the pandemic and in their statewide leadership testing and implementation of the Cardinal Software.
- Vice-President Kindon explained that in September of this year, the University officially affiliated with the Longwood Black Alumni Association (LUBAA). The LUBAA was established in 2008 and currently has 660 members. Ms. Kindon introduced Dr. Brown-Meredith, a member of the LUBAA Board, who explained the purpose of the association is to recruit and retain students of color, provide resources to foster academic success, and to mentor students as undergraduates and alumni. The LUBAA provides students with career professional development, mentorship, internship opportunities, and academic support through the CLASP. The association established the endowed Teresa A. Clark Scholarship. They also host an Alumni Weekend that brings together current students and alumni, with an average of 155 in attendance at these reunion events.
- The Board passed a motion made by Ms. Cookie Scott, Longwood’s first Black graduate, and seconded by Shawn Smith recognizing and celebrating the work of the LUBAA and the University’s official affiliation with them.
- The Rector said that everyone at the university has a responsibility for admissions. The times we are living in is difficult. Longwood offers an in-person, residential experience that is valuable for teaching students how to live with others and to lead. She said the Board is focused on Admissions and said Ms. Kindon and her staff have brought unique ideas to recruiting. She recognized the “ingenuity” of the Admissions office.
- The minutes of the September 10 meeting were approved.

Consent Agenda

- The Rector said Board members had several questions about the housing and dining costs proposed for next academic year and suggested that rather than pulling these items from the Consent Agenda, she would ask Vice-President Waller to explain how the proposed fees were calculated and to entertain questions.
- Ms. Waller explained that they try to minimize cost increases as much as possible. The rise in housing fees for next year reflects increased labor costs for housekeeping contracts and supplies. Her office works with the Real Estate Foundation to find a balance between revenue and expenses. The proposed fees are a 4% increase across the board. They are working with students to identify ways to make on-campus housing “more compelling.” For example, they have designed a new work order system that will be launched in January that allows students to submit a work order for housing issues and track the status of the order.
- As for dining fees, Ms. Waller stated that they try to find a balance between offering students a variety of meal plan options without making it confusing. Increased fees for meal plans are a result of Aramark’s increasing food and labor costs. She noted that meal plan costs would decrease \$490 for students living in Longwood managed apartments.
- Ms. Kindon noted that they are working with Financial Aid to offer housing scholarships. Ms. Waller said it’s important to explain to students and parents that compared to “inexpensive off-campus housing,” Longwood housing fees are all-inclusive.
- Dr. Pierson noted that students do not always listen to the logical benefits of living on campus; students want freedom to make meals on their own and not have the supervision of an RA. Students who participate in Greek life and athletes “pushed back hard” on the new housing policy, but the university is working to address their concerns. A new “lodge” for Greek life is under development. Additionally, Longwood is working with FAB to ensure that there are enough busses and routes to guarantee students reliable transportation so they can get to class on time.
- Ms. Raible said that she would like to get a presentation at a future meeting from Financial Aid so Board members can understand how students know what their options are to pay for their education.
- The Rector noted that the Consent Agenda also contains a resolution naming the John W. Woodward room in the Andy Taylor Center for Early Childhood Development (see p. 17 of the BOV materials).
- The Board passed the Consent Agenda.

President’s Report

- President Reveley is confident in how Longwood is managing through the current budget crisis. He is optimistic about Admissions, given the number of completed applications, but due to the pandemic much work will need to be done to bring in next year’s class.
- Mr. Pope gave a brief update on COVID-19, stating he is pleased at how Longwood is doing this semester. The number of cases of the virus are low and most students who have become ill got exposed at home rather than on campus. Vaccinations have stopped

the spread of the virus on campus and fewer class days are lost this year due to isolation or quarantine.

- Athletics Director Michelle Meadows said the Jerome Kersey Classic was a huge success that benefited the campus community, alumni, and donors. Vice-President Hodges said the event created tremendous energy with the alumni. Ms. Anderson commented on the “flawless execution” of the weekend.
- President Reveley explained the Board would not hear formal reports from each Vice-President as typically occurs to allow for longer presentations on Civitae and the Diversity Strategic Plan.
- Provost Smith briefly reminded the Board about how Civitae was developed and then introduced Dr. Heather Lettner-Rust, who explained how the curriculum is structured, highlighted some of the courses offered in CTZN 110 and 410, and described the first Symposium Day. Board members were impressed with the topics of classes in Civitae and the cohesiveness of the curriculum.
- Mr. Jonathan Page and Dr. JoEllen Pederson, co-chairs of the University Diversity Council, presented the final draft of the *Diversity Strategic Plan, 2021-2026* (pp. 116-152 of Board materials). The plan was developed after extensive review of the literature and other universities’ DEI plans, as well as analysis of quantitative and qualitative data gathered on campus between 2018 and 2020. The Diversity Strategic Plan “provides a blueprint of how Longwood will strive to meet the goals set forth in the One Virginia Plan for Inclusive Excellence between 2021 and 2026.” The plan is designed to fulfill the 5 goals of the One Virginia plan through specific strategies to meet 24 objectives. Longwood submitted the first two years of the Diversity Strategic plan to the Commonwealth on July 1, 2021. The plan will be rolled out on campus in spring 2022. The plan is designed to be flexible to adapt to changes as necessary.
- The Board praised the plan. Ms. Raible asked how progress on objectives would be demonstrated; Mr. Page said that the Steering Committee currently is in conversation about how to best assess and publicize plan progress. Dr. Pederson said the mark of success of the plan is when all students feel included and valued. Both quantitative data, such as examining NSSE survey data over time, as well as qualitative data will be used to assess plan progress. Ms. Scott commented that managing conflict is an important part of diversity strategic plans so that individuals learn how to express their perspectives civilly. Ms. Roane commented that the plan is “audacious and ambitious,” and she is impressed with how the plan “disavows the notion that DEI is the responsibility of one office but rather acknowledges it is the responsibility of everyone at the institution.” The Board passed a motion to adopt and endorse the Diversity Strategic Plan.

Reports from Representatives to the Board

- Mr. Daniel, representative from the Real Estate Foundation, said he appreciates the support and enthusiasm for the Baliles Center.
- Mr. Hazelwood, representing the Foundation Board, reported that they have completed the CEO search process and the Board will be meeting soon to make a decision. The Foundation assets are now \$101 million. Last year 99.4% of scholarship dollars were

awarded; the only scholarship monies not distributed were related to those supporting student travel. This year \$2.3 million in scholarships will be distributed, a 9% increase from last year. To date 90% of this year's money has been allocated; some is held in reserve for transfer students coming in the spring. Next year they will distribute approximately \$2.5 million in scholarship funds.

- SGA President Anne Patterson reported on their activities this semester, which include a Town Hall with President Reveley discussing the new housing policy, a Safety Walk, a Scholar of the Month program, and a Caps and Gowns program to help students who have financial barriers to participating in graduation. Students are happy to be able to participate in campus activities again and are excited to have access to booster shots. Oktoberfest was a huge success. Issues being addressed by SGA include ensuring minority students receive the support they need through the stressful recent national court cases and helping the sophomore class in particular because of all they missed last year due to the pandemic
- I began my report by explaining to the Board that unlike with previous reports, I felt a great deal of anxiety about writing and presenting this one because:
 - I want to accurately communicate the sentiments faculty expressed which ranged from **pride** in all of the creative, innovative ways they are working to recruit and retain students to **grave concern**, almost desperation, about declining enrollment in general and the accompanying increase in workload that comes along with helping to address the issue;
 - Unlike in previous reports, some—perhaps much—of what is in the written report is not positive; acknowledging the effect that recruitment and retention concerns may have on academic rigor is uncomfortable to say the least;
 - I worry that in articulating faculty concerns that some offices or individuals will perceive the remarks as somehow criticizing or minimizing the work they do; nothing in my report is intended to cast blame or imply lack of confidence in any colleagues.
- I noted that one thing that makes this campus so special is the commitment that all employees, both faculty and staff, have to the institution. This isn't just a job—a way to pay the bills; working at Longwood is a career, a part of our identities. Every employee wants to do all we can to help students and the institution thrive and succeed. That is why everyone on campus is so concerned about declining undergraduate enrollment and why we ALL are working so hard to identify and implement solutions.
- I briefly highlighted the efforts detailed in the written report that we are doing to recruit and retain students and noted that we partner with outstanding colleagues in CAPS, Academic Success, and Accessibility Resources to provide students necessary resources; these professionals also have experienced a tremendous workload increase.
- I explained faculty want them to know that we are willing partners in addressing the undergraduate enrollment crisis, but all of the increased efforts to recruit and retain students take time and energy. Nothing gets removed from our responsibilities; more simply gets added. I noted that current situation is unsustainable. I explained that faculty certainly are not averse to working hard, as we demonstrated with our efforts in spring of

2020 and throughout last year. However, unlike with the pandemic where an end is in sight, faculty perceive the additional work load related to recruiting in particular will not diminish but only grow. I thanked the Board for their attention to enrollment and for their on-going support of faculty.

- Rector Trigiani said the Board recognizes faculty for all the remarkable work we do and she wants us to know that they appreciate our efforts. She said our commitment is “remarkable.” However, admissions is “everyone’s responsibility” and that is “not going to change.” Admissions is changing; birth rates are declining and every student is a “precious gift.” We all need to “put our shoulder to the wheel and work together” to recruit and support students.
- Ms. Roane echoed Ms. Trigiani’s sentiments saying she is proud we are “all working together.”
- Provost Smith said that faculty asked for “better communication with Admissions and that is what we now have.” She pledged to work with deans and department chairs on “streamlining” some of the processes.
- Ms. Trigiani asked me to explicitly express the “deep gratitude of the Board of Visitors” to the faculty. The work we are doing with recruiting and retention is “astounding and exciting.”
- Ms. Anderson said she is grateful for the work of Admissions. She asked “where would we be now if we had the same admissions team as 5 years ago?” She applauded Admissions’ initiatives related to the Common Application and data mining. She said we currently have “the leadership in place to minimize the negative impact” of the “perfect storm” created by the pandemic. We should be “thrilled with what we are doing” with recruitment.
- Ms. Raible said faculty were the only reason she was retained at Longwood as a student and that we are the “secret sauce” of retention. She said everyone’s job across the country has become more difficult due to the pandemic; increased anxiety and stress is common in health care and elementary school teaching as it is among the faculty here.
- Dr. Pierson commented that he has done extensive research on the key to student retention and success; it was the topic of his dissertation and the data then, as now, suggest that the single most important factor in student retention and success is student relationships with faculty.
- Ms. Trigiani said we need to keep working hard, noting “Longwood is the best kept secret in higher education.”
- The Board response to my report lasted approximately 20 minutes, which is quite unusual. Typically reports from representatives are typically acknowledged with a thank-you and a compliment.
- The Board meeting adjourned at 4:20 for members to tour the Andy Taylor Center, slated to open in January at the on-campus location.