

Board of Visitors Meeting
June 15-16, 2012
Report to Faculty
E. Derek Taylor, Faculty Representative

This was very much a transitional meeting—along with a new rector (Mrs. Marianne M. Radcliffe) and interim president (Ms. Marjorie Connelly), the BOV welcomed several new representatives (Alumni, Student, and Foundation). Furthermore, several curricular and personnel proposals important to faculty were approved. In what follows, I have tried to focus on issues related to faculty without losing important tangential information; as a result, I've deliberately not included sections that in previous reports I at least mentioned. (The full minutes of the meeting are available [here](#).) As before, I sometimes use agentless prose in order to decrease verbiage.

FRIDAY, JUNE 15 (beginning at 8:45 am)

I. President's Report

The president began with a positive assessment of the Joint Board Retreat held on the previous day, noting the many people who had expressed to her their sense that it had been genuinely informative and productive. She then touched upon a variety of informational items as follows:

- *Marketing opportunities presented by acceptance into Big South Conference:* A new fight song is nearing completion.
- *Broadcasting of Commencement:* May's graduation was streamed live on the internet using a high-quality feed, and real-time tweets and photos were posted.
- *Vacating of French Hall:* Students are out; the new Center for Technology is on the way in.
- *Student Population:* As of June 9, the incoming class is expected to consist of 1050 new students, 161 transfer students, and 30 readmits.
- *SACS:* The president explained that while thus far "we're in good shape," there is still "a lot of work to be done"; she noted that the BOV is itself part of the accreditation process and should be prepared for scrutiny.
- *Leadership Meetings:* The president has conducted a series of meetings with the "leadership of Longwood" (primarily vice presidents and deans) in order both to discuss institutional vision (What is a citizen leader? How do we transform students effectively? What are our primary strengths and weaknesses?) and to begin prioritizing strategic initiatives. Noting that we will soon need to resubmit our six-year plan to the state, the president expressed her hope that Longwood will find ways to establish a "more nimble profile," thereby enabling it more effectively to respond to priorities and to maximize opportunities as they filter down from above.
- *Closing the Salary Gap:* Work on this long-term problem has begun.

- *International Opportunities:* The president would like to focus on increasing both the number of international students we bring to campus and the number of students who study abroad; she noted that the two could form a sort of virtuous cycle in which Longwood students represent us to the world, while international students on campus encourage otherwise reluctant students to study abroad.
- *Dashboard Indicators:* The president expressed a desire to focus more intently on these as a means of measuring progress in key areas. She also mentioned the possibility of moving to quarterly reports for budgeting purposes, thereby allowing us to be less conservative in our estimates and increasing our flexibility in aligning resources with strategic priorities.
- *Tuition:* Noting that nearly 80% of our student population receives some sort of financial aid, the president stressed the importance of striking an appropriate balance between the cost and the quality of Longwood's educational offerings.

The president concluded with a note of encouragement—rather than encountering a host of problems in her new role, she has found “so much potential here.”

II. 2012-2013 Operating Budget

It will be better for all of us if I admit my limitations at this point—I only dimly understand the ins and outs of the budgetary process, though I am learning. Here are the highlights, as I understand them—but please don't rely on me too readily at this point. I've scanned the full 25-page informational handout and made it available [here](#).

1. *Increase* in tuition of 4.1% for undergraduates (\$240 for a 30-hour schedule); auxiliary fee increase of \$120.
2. *Increase* in state appropriations (nearly \$2 million, which includes \$500,000 in additional base adequacy funding)
3. *Bonus* of up to 3% for full time employees (paid Dec. 1, 2012)
4. *Salary increase* of 2% for full-time employees (effective July 10, 2013)
5. *New faculty positions* (five) have been included in the budget
6. *Additional funds* for faculty salary increases (\$94,750) and FY 2013 faculty promotions (\$45,000) have been included.

After a brief discussion, the proposed budget was approved.

III. Auxiliary Reserve Funds

The president offered an explanation for how this portion of the budget functions (often as a mechanism for preparing to meet large and unavoidable future expenditures—e.g., a new HVAC system when the current system ceases to function) and stressed the importance of transparency when utilizing these funds. The BOV then approved the following uses of auxiliary reserve money:

1. Funding for Student Center: \$5,000,000

2. Funding for Third Boiler: \$1,037,000
3. Funding for video equipment to tape games (as required by Big South Conference): \$95,000

IV. Report on the Intercollegiate Athletics Strategic Business Plan

I elected to include this in my report because it elicited a passing discussion of the potential merits of applying the Department of Athletics' "sloped investment" model to the academic side of the institution. (Given limited funds, those sports that perform at higher levels and that provide the best return on investment receive the most financial support.)

V. Salary Study

A representative from Sibson Consulting presented a report detailing the current status of faculty and staff compensation at Longwood, along with a set of recommended compensation levels. The full report (42 pages) will be made available in Greenwood library; I would also be happy to make my copy available to those interested in looking more closely at the numbers.

The gist of the report can be summed up in a few sentences; I would be surprised to meet anyone at Longwood who is surprised at the findings:

1. Faculty are generally hired at rates appropriate to the market, but they quickly fall behind. In other words, if a first-year Assistant Professor is at 95% of the market median, a fourth-year Assistant Professor is likely at 80%. This trend-line almost never fails to *not* improve—which means, with few exceptions, the longer you are a member of our faculty, the less appropriately paid you are. If you have been at any given rank (Assistant, Associate, or full Professor) for more than four years, you are almost certainly "paid below the expected competitive range," to borrow a phrase repeated throughout the report.
2. Compensation for staff is in even *worse* condition, with 36% falling outside the competitive market range (benchmarked at 85% of market median). Put differently, where 94% of faculty are within (if barely) 15% of the market median, only 55% of staff can say the same.

In the discussion that followed, President Connelly confirmed that Longwood currently has "the bandwidth" to begin grappling with this problem, but she also stressed the importance of considering far-reaching cultural shifts that may enable long-term solutions. One member of the board expressed concern at the prospect of determining a hierarchy of need (my phrase)—given that not every inequity can be addressed at once, who goes first? The consensus seemed to be that the best approach would be initially to target the most obviously egregious situations, using the salary study as a guide. The president concluded by sharing her sense that continuing to pay people below market value is, from an institutional perspective, short sighted.

VI. Approval of Action Items

Several action items were approved, but "attention must be paid," as Linda Loman puts it, to four in particular. I've provided summaries below; for full details, see the new *Faculty Policies and Procedures Manual* when it becomes available.

1. *Action Item 13: Leave for Department Chairs & the Director of Liberal Studies after two consecutive terms.* The title says it all, I think—essentially, chairs who serve two terms are awarded an automatic sabbatical. The BOV was swayed by the argument that a faculty member who agrees to serve as chair of a department at Longwood inevitably puts himself/herself at a competitive disadvantage; while colleagues can focus on establishing or enhancing research credentials, a responsible chair must remain focused on running his or her department. I must mention two encouraging aspects of the discussion surrounding this item:
 - a. Provost Ken Perkins' vigorous explanation/defense of the proposal
 - b. The alacrity with which members of the board came around to supporting this unique means of handling an increasingly daunting work-load problem.
2. *Action Item 15: Approval of Bachelor of Science in Integrated Environmental Sciences.* Members of the board were very supportive of this new major and urged all involved to find ways of using it as a means of building relationships with communities beyond Longwood—schools, businesses, state agencies, etc. An announcement of the approval of the new major may be found [here](#).
3. *Action Item 16: Approval of Revisions to Maternity Leave Policy.* Our former policy was memorably described by Dr. Larissa Fergeson as something akin to “go ahead and give birth in the classroom.” The new policy attempts to balance the realities of staffing courses (there is a cutoff date for taking leave in fall, spring, and summer, depending on due date) with the realities of becoming a mother. In essence, “birthing mothers” (to quote from the policy) will now be able to secure a semester of paid leave.
4. *Action Item 17: Approval of Parental Leave Policy.* This policy would apply both to fathers and to “women who become mothers through adoption or state placement of a child”; it allows for “flexibility in course delivery up to 36 contact hours” and may be taken intermittently throughout a given semester.

VII. Faculty Report

I offered a brief, and largely extemporaneous, explanation for why the phrase “summers off” is so grating to faculty ears: summers may be *flexible*, but they are decidedly not “off.” I then announced my intention of compiling a concise list of our summer projects (which I have since forwarded to all members of the board). The gathering of summer projects may be found [here](#). Please note that I have tried to regularize entries as best I could—which means that in some cases I’ve reedited your edit of my edit of your original (!).

The board managed to cover all of its usual business by the end of the day (usually we spill over to Saturday). The meeting adjourned at around 5:00 pm.

SATURDAY, JUNE 16 (beginning at 9:00 am)

Presidential Search

Members of the board spent the better part of the day with consultant Dr. Steve Portch, Chancellor Emeritus of the University System of Georgia. Dr. Portch first offered his

insights, advice, and cautions with respect to our impending presidential search. (For instance, in his view, when it comes to the composition of the committee, “smaller is better”; people named to the committee ought to be “opinion leaders” of “the highest integrity”; the committee should avoid ever getting ahead of itself—“the position is open until it is filled.”) Two “breakout groups” were then formed, each one tasked with discussing

1. Challenges and opportunities for Longwood over the next 5-7 years
2. Implications of the above for the qualifications and experience of potential candidates

There was remarkable similitude in what the two groups settled upon as the top “challenges” (low pay; state funding decreases) and “opportunities” (faculty-student interaction; marketing potential of existing and new programs).

One substantive but productive point of disagreement emerged. The first group argued for the importance of finding presidential candidates with academic experience and credentials who will both understand and value the central mission of the university. The second group maintained that academics appears to be in good shape, given the hiring of Dr. Ken Perkins as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs; what Longwood needs, then, is a president with corporate experience who can effectively position the institution in a rapidly changing economic environment. After some back and forth, the two groups seemed to reach something of a consensus: the potential benefits of having a president with both academic and business chops—an academic C.E.O., as it were.

After a break, the board invited President Connelly to join them and moved to closed session.

Respectfully submitted,

E. Derek Taylor