

Board of Visitors Meeting
September 14-15, 2012
Report to Faculty
E. Derek Taylor, Faculty Representative

As with last year's September meeting, this one had the feel of a very promising preface. In keeping with my previous reports, I have once again silently skipped over entire sections of the meeting in order to give breathing room to those portions most likely to be of interest to faculty; the full minutes of the meeting (well worth reading) are available [here](#).

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

I. Rector's Report

As part of her opening comments, Rector Marianne Radcliffe invited two members of the board to provide updates:

1. Mr. Steve Mobley (with assistance from Ms. Michelle Meadows, Associate Athletics Director) provided an update on progress made by the Compensation Task Force created by the BOV at the March 2012 meeting. Noting the "long history of uncompetitive compensation" at Longwood, Mr. Mobley (Task Force Chair) summarized the process by which members of the task force solicited and received feedback from the Longwood community. President Connelly explained that the work of the task force likely saved her "about two months" in identifying and beginning to implement changes, both large and small, that will improve the work environment at Longwood—everything from initial salary adjustments, to the creation of new faculty awards, to providing free access to Longwood sporting events. A full report from the task force will be presented at the December BOV meeting.
2. Mrs. Jane Maddux (Presidential Search Committee Chair) offered a very positive assessment of continuing efforts to locate and hire a new president who fits Longwood's historical strengths and aspirations for the future.

II. President's Report

President Connelly began by acknowledging the tragic death of Dr. Bill Stuart, Associate Professor of Communication Studies. After noting Dr. Stuart's reputation across campus as a favorite of students and colleagues alike, the president praised faculty in the Department of Communication Studies for "stepping up" to the extra work of filling the curricular and administrative gaps created by the loss of Dr. Stuart. She then hit upon a number of accomplishments, reports, and updates, of which the following are most directly relevant to faculty:

1. *Strategic Priorities:*
 - The president began by looking back at the five-year plan developed in 2008; she underscored not only areas of success as of 2011-12 (Creation of ESL program; Enhance Longwood publications and media relations; Join D-1 athletic conference) but also areas where we have fallen short (Recruitment and retention of diverse faculty; Move forward with plans for a convocation center). Of particular note is partial accomplishment of the

goal to “apply salary compression adjustments as funds allow.” The president explained that to this point roughly 20% of the overall compensation gap has been closed, and she expressed cautious optimism regarding the prospects for likeminded adjustments over the next few years.

- The president then introduced a new set of strategic priorities for 2012-13 (these were presented at the opening faculty meeting in August). A few points of interest in the wide-ranging discussion that followed:
 - Finding ways to graduate students “on time”—i.e., within five years—could present a “huge [economic] windfall” for Longwood, according to the president; developing five year M.A. programs, particularly in STEM-H areas, could be particularly valuable in this respect, and not only for those individual programs—members of the board were favorably inclined to the old adage about the effect of rising tides on ships.
 - State funding, the president explained, is unlikely ever to return to where once it was. Noting that increasing enrollment represents the most straightforward path to expanding Longwood’s financial capacity, the president expressed her hope that Longwood would refuse to “be victims” to the shifting economic realities of higher education and stressed the importance of seeking out and developing new sources of revenue.
 - The president offered her sense that the Longwood community is eager to replace the longstanding “why we can’t” model with the “how we can” one—“willingness,” according to the president, “is high.” But it is crucial, she continued, to take a “fact based” approach—from expanding online course offerings, to implementing a more efficient budgeting process, to more effectively engaging with our surrounding communities, there is much we currently don’t understand. The only way to move forward *strategically*, then, is to “get the data.”
- 2. *Dashboard Indicators:* In keeping with a goal set at the June BOV meeting, the president provided a “more robust” set of indicators that includes overarching goals, performance indicators, historical comparisons, and explanatory notes. This first attempt at a more comprehensive report, she noted, is rough around the edges; members of the board nevertheless voiced their satisfaction at the level of detail achieved, especially in comparison with past efforts. I’ve scanned the full document [here](#); the president made particular note of the following metrics:
 - Current enrollment (4860) is the highest ever
 - The number of Plus students is down (from 91 to 68)
 - The acceptance rate is slightly up (77.6%)
 - STEM-H degrees awarded is up (93 vs. 52)
 - Job offers for recent graduates is back up to 2008 (pre-recession) levels (74%)

- Classes with between two and nineteen students have increased from 41.4% in 2011 to 46.7% in 2012.
- Classes taught by instructors with a terminal degree have increased from 77.6% in 2011 to 84.7% in 2012.
- Total credit hours generated have increased from 131,785 in 2010 to 136,540 in 2012.
- State contributions per student for 2012 (\$9,234) have decreased from 2009 (\$14,956) but increased from the alarming low of 2010 (\$6,621).

3. *Virginia Longitudinal Data System (VLDS)*: The president asked Ms. Brenda Atkins (Executive Assistant to the President for Governmental Affairs and Special Projects) to explain the implications of the *VLDS* for Longwood. Briefly put, the *VLDS* is a newly-created, SCHEV-sponsored database that seeks to chart the performance of individual colleges and universities by tracking the employment history and pay scale of their graduates. Theoretically, the *VLDS* thus provides an assessment tool for prospective students and parents; in its current form, however, the database is more blunt rock than sharp scalpel. (Among other significant limitations, the system has captured information only for 48% of graduates; only measures students who remain in the Commonwealth; and does not include part-time or federal workers.) Ms. Atkins noted that as *VLDS* develops, Longwood may find that it is uniquely positioned to “tell good stories” about itself.

III. Presidential Reports

1. *Administration, Finance, Facilities and Technology*

- Mr. Ken Copeland (Vice President for Administration and Finance) and President Connelly presented a revised “Statement of Revenues and Expenditures” showing a surplus of roughly \$2,000,000 based on current estimates. In the past, they explained, Longwood has lacked a strategic budgeting and reporting process for effectively managing extra monies; instead, excess funds have tended to gather (this is my simile) like water in a balloon until . . . POP!—the end of spring comes, and everyone scrambles to “clean up” the financial mess. President Connelly stressed the importance of more aggressively managing the budget; she noted, for instance, that we currently do not include *any* summer school money in the operating budget, this despite the fact that we *always* make money over the summer. She also reminded the BOV that the numbers in question are *estimates* and thus must be approached cautiously and conservatively. Generating quarterly reports, she explained, would allow for more precise allocations of funds while protecting us from overspending.
- The BOV approved a number of auxiliary reserve expenditures, including a new bus (\$500,000) for conveying various sports teams to contests around the Big South Conference. This expenditure, it was noted, is cost-neutral given the expense associated with renting buses and drivers.

2. *Six-Year Capital Plan.*

How will (might) the campus develop over the next six years? I have scanned and attached a pdf of the powerpoint presentation [here](#). As explained during the presentation, the slides (or, in this case, pages) are arranged in order of priority—which means that the first priority is a “New Academic Building” to be constructed on the site of the French Tennis Courts.

IV. Instructional Technology at Longwood

[A two day discussion that I am collapsing into a single item.] The discussion was led by Ms. Suzy Palmer (Dean of the Library) and Dr. Janine Perry (Dean of Graduate and Professional Studies) with input from Dr. Nicholas Langlie (Director of Digital Education Collaboration Policy and Planning) and from President Connelly. Much of what unfolded was informational—e.g., how students can use their smart phones to learn crucial library skills, how professors can capture and upload videos of lectures, how technology enables distance learning (sites in Martinsville and Emporia).

One item that generated a sustained discussion was Dr. Langlie’s development of a free online course based on “Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.” President Connelly stressed the opportunity presented by such courses and pointed to UVA’s recent decision to join Coursera (a consortium that offers free online classes from a host of research institutions), but she acknowledged that, as it stands, there is no clear model for generating revenue from free courses.

Several board members wondered about the possibility of using online offerings to expand our enrollment, with particular emphasis on marketing online *degrees* (as opposed to individual *classes*). One member suggested the possibility of marrying online offerings with general education requirements—why *shouldn’t* a student be able to “go to class” in his/her dorm room at 2:00 am if he or she so wishes? President Connelly offered her impression that general education classes may be hindering our graduation rates and pointed to online options as one possible way of alleviating the problem.

Other board members urged caution. One noted that he simply doesn’t believe online courses are effective, while others wondered if generating and marketing online offerings might damage the Longwood “brand.” Several faculty members noted the vital importance of direct, ongoing student-faculty interaction, especially for students who initially struggle with the pace and rigor of university-level course work.

In the end, there seemed to be broad agreement that, given the omnipresence of technology within and outside academia, Longwood should seek to strike a balance

between maintaining its core identity and maximizing opportunities technological innovation may present.

- V. University Advancement. Among the items shared by Dr. Bryan Rowland, Vice President for University Advancement, were the following:
- Fundraising for 2011-12 was the third-best ever (\$9.1 million)
 - A new [commercial](#) (which drew hearty applause from the BOV) is running on television, in movie theatres, and online in targeted portions of VA.
- VI. Academic and Student Affairs. The BOV approved revisions to the six-year plan required by the state in 2011. Among the new initiatives for fiscal year 2014 are the following:
- Analyze General Education courses to ensure relevance, rigor, and efficiency
 - Enhance academic advising through an increase in advisors and the use of predictive technology
 - Develop the Center for Excellence in Environmental Education (CE³)
 - Ensure resources for creating a simulation and animation graphic design major
- VII. Admissions. Mrs. Sallie McMullin, Dean of Admissions, presented a variety of new initiatives aimed at increasing early enrollment and at recruiting honors students. She also noted that this year's freshmen class is the third-largest ever and that we attracted our largest transfer class in 20 years.
- VIII. Reports from Representatives. I changed plans at the last minute and offered some thoughts on our much-missed colleague, Dr. Bill Stuart; I attach a copy [here](#).

Respectfully submitted,

Derek Taylor