

President's Advisory Council Meeting

February 27, 2024 at 3:30pm – 5pm

Location: Stallard Boardroom

Faculty are excited about ...

Many faculty are happy for Spring Break!

CBE Dean Search coming to a close as the feedback is due March 1st.

Faculty and Staff Appreciation Dinner went well! Thank you for the daycare.

Student Numbers

VT and JMU are boasting record breaking application numbers. We understand that the FAFSA has been delayed and thus our student data has been delayed, but why haven't we heard about our own application numbers.

- *What do our application numbers look like in comparison to prior years?*

President's Response: We are doing pretty well in this cycle and over 5 years compared to others. Our deposits are running stronger than they have ever run. We will not have as sizeable class as we did pre-Covid, but we will have a stronger group of students. We have more deposits than we did in the 2020 cycle, when enrollments were high before the pandemic hit.

Our enrollment now is 1.5-2% higher now than in 2019. Current total enrollment is 4544 compared to 4468 in fall 2019.

UVA, JMU Mason Tech & William & Mary did better than us with larger growth compared to 2019. William & Mary had an 11% increase; we compete with them for honor students.

Other state school have had enrollment declines. Radford is down 36%; Mary Washington 15% CNU 8%; VMI 8%; ODU 4.5%; and VCU 5%.

We are in the midst of the high season of recruiting. May is when deposits are due for the rising matriculating class, and then there is some melt over the summer.

The FAFSA issue is a real challenge for families right now across the country. There have been technical issues with the update to FAFSA that has delayed the ability for the DOE to communicate information from families' data out to colleges. Therefore, families will not hear about financial aid until late March. We don't know how this will affect LU. Since we have strong deposits now and we have merit driven aid we can share with families, we have some cushion against adverse enrollment effects from the FAFSA delay. However, the issue adds one more variable to predicting the fall enrollment. This issue affects the vast majority of universities equally.

- *Are these record breaking numbers, from VT and JMU, a result of the process or something these schools are doing?*

President's Response: Tech has been aiming at becoming a national brand university and they are now thought of as one of the 50 best universities in the country. They are beginning to appeal to a national set of students. JMU got a lot of attention around their football season; they have increased their acceptance rate quite a bit and are being less selective. It is possible the yield off the national applications may turn out to be fairly low.

Faculty Involvement in Student Recruitment

We recognize that the admission's office is increasing their involvement in student engagement but at the same time faculty do not want to lose some of the "Longwood touch" in the process.

- *What information was used to guide changes in reaching out to prospective students?*
- *How can we review this process to find an appropriate balance between admissions and faculty involvement?*
- *Is it possible to get a department visit from Ferg? This could occur at department meetings or at separate times. These meetings could focus on tailoring issues being seen by individual departments.*

President's Response: Mr. Ferguson, who has much experience and talent, has shifted admissions from a rolling process to a deadline process. This process provides for more equity, but has the effect of shifting when applications come through. Ultimately, a deadline driven process prevents students/parents from "putting off" applying because of the lack of a hard deadline. Also, Admissions has tried to ensure communication with faculty through deans. Reach out to deans for more information. Admissions staff would likely want to visit departments when they aren't in the throes of the recruiting cycle.

Andrew said the issue isn't something that the deans can help with when the problem is often that the high school recruiters are not representing the opportunities at individual departments clearly to prospective students. Departments hosting events such as competitions to bring high school students and teachers to campus need support from Admissions and we need the counselors to be able to communicate the unique opportunities offered in various departments.

President's Reply: Be sure to get the recruiting events (and other outbound messaging) on the radar of deans so they can communicate that to admissions. Deans can help streamline work for faculty in the recruiting process. Each department has unique needs and those needs need to be communicated to the deans. Ferg is a people person and enjoys getting to know people and will be happy to meet with departments.

Lee said that faculty appreciate the lower recruiting workload, but want to ensure some balance in direct communication with prospective students so that programs can effectively communicate the opportunities they offer to students.

*For clarity, it is important to note that department chairs were allowed to customize the email going out to accepted students via a few personalized bullet points that highlight the department strengths.

Contracted Employees

The faculty have again expressed concerns that our buildings are not clean and the food services are inadequate. It does not appear like our money is being well spent in the services provided by the Budd Group and Aramark.

- *Are there other companies that Longwood can look at or who compete with these?*
- *When are these agreements up for renewal or reconsideration?*
- *We understand that state/federal per diem has not gone up with inflation, but it still seems outrageous that we can't even afford the box lunches provided by Aramark on per diem. Is there any way to negotiate reasonable pricing that fits within our allowed budgets?*

President's Response: Aramark and Budd group are the two contract entities we have dealings with. We have a decade's long relationship with Aramark. They value our business and are responsive to suggestions. Their biggest problem at the moment is that the cost of food has gone up substantially. They are open to having other caterers come on campus. He said we need to think of Aramark and the Budd Group separately.

The Budd Group provides better pay and benefits to their employees than our former cleaning services contract. There isn't much affordable housing in the community making it hard to recruit and retain workers for both these companies.

Lisa said that the issue isn't the lack of employees. The employees who are working are not getting the job done. The existing supervisors are not overseeing the employees well.

President Reveley said that it is ultimately a lack of affordable housing that leads to much turnover. When there is much turnover in a company, employees are not as committed to their job. This problem is not unique to Longwood.

PAC members asked how we address higher pay for employees to attract more and better workers. The President shared how he is working to build more affordable housing at Longwood Village so people don't have to commute far for work and we can attract more and better workers to these companies.

PAC members agreed that it's important to address the macro issues, but we need short term solutions so that the buildings are clean. President Reveley said he is not sure when the Budd Group contract expires, but even if we went to a different vendor we would likely encounter similar problems.

A discussion ensued about we make the cleaning staff more welcome so they feel part of the larger whole. The President said that they get invited to the campus luncheons, tickets to basketball games. But, those more macro challenges of not living in town affect the attractiveness of these benefits. Other ideas suggested were having more day cleaning staff so that they can meet and interact with the faculty in the buildings they clean, and the work would be less isolating and easier to manage with child care responsibilities. Offering space in a residence hall for catering staff to spend the night after a late event could also reduce stress and help retain workers.

President Reveley said he would see what could be done to improve the cleanliness of campus buildings.

Faculty Compensation

There are a multitude of fees that are taken from faculty paychecks. The faculty whether it is time to consider whether this type of compensation system is adequate for our university.

- *Can the university consider reviewing faculty benefits related to using University grounds, i.e., parking, fitness membership, etc.?*
- *Where are the parking fees going? The parking lots do not appear to be updated regularly.*

PAC members said that faculty would like to know where these fees go or, even better, do away with the fees altogether—particularly the parking fee. Some universities do not charge faculty for parking. The president agreed that there could be better explanation of where the money goes and would request that information. Kari pointed out that on her end of campus, there is concern about the cost of the parking and that faculty lose parking to athletic events. Faculty working in the evenings then have to walk farther to their vehicles in the dark, creating a safety concern. She advocated eliminating the faculty parking fee. The President agreed to look into the issue and to see if the fee could be rationalized in some other way.

Elaboration on the LU impacts of discussions at the General Assembly (10 minutes)

- *How will these conversations broadly impact Longwood?*

More specifically, what of the bill that brings the university counsel in-house rather than involving the attorney general's office?

President's Response: The General Assembly is going ok. From a funding standpoint, he thinks we will almost certainly be a little better off. There should be some funding to help with salary

increases. Capital budgets are going well. He's worried about, timing wise, whether the House and Senate will agree on the budget priorities, even with unilateral Democratic control. We potentially could be pushed into May or June before we know final budget numbers. It will unlikely will go to September or October like last year because we are at the end of the Biennial budget.

The Federal budget situation doesn't usually affect Higher Ed immediately, but it can have implications down the road.

This has been a light year for new bill proposals. The proposal to move University counsel in-house from the AG's office is unlikely to be enacted. Even if it gets legislative approval, the Governor is likely to veto the bill.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Lee Bidwell