

# University Budget Advisory Committee

Minutes – 10/04/2021 Meeting

At-large faculty members present:	Nabil Al-Tikriti (Professor, CAS) Laura Bylenok (Assistant, CAS) – Secretary Randall Helmstutler (Associate, CAS) Suzanne Sumner (Professor, CAS)
College representative members present:	Chris Garcia (Associate, COB) Liane Houghtalin (Professor, CAS) – Chair Kyle Schultz (Associate, COE)
USC representative members present:	Arin Doerfler (Sr. Accountant-Fixed Assets) Kim McManus-Carini (Operations and Finance Coordinator) Marta Smith (Asst. Controller-Compliance)
Athletics representative member present:	Patrick Catullo (Director of Athletics)
Student representative member present:	Ellelyshia Ardo (SGA)
Guest:	Tim O'Donnell (Interim Provost)

The meeting was called to order at 2:05pm. Summary of discussion:

1. The meeting was dedicated to a presentation from Tim O'Donnell, Interim Provost. Dr. Houghtalin began the meeting by asking for Dr. O'Donnell's perspective on the budget in terms of academics and the University as a whole, and what we can anticipate in terms of the budget in coming years. Dr. O'Donnell indicated two major areas to present on: First, to report on our current status in terms of major sources of revenue, including students and our recruitment and retention efforts. Second, to go over the legislative agenda that Mr. Messplay had previously shared with us, to give more information about its context and rationale.
2. Dr. O'Donnell presented updates about our status in terms of enrollment:
  - a. We now know the full size of our incoming class and returning cohorts. The good news is that retention is up, and the returning first-year cohort has returned at a rate of 83%. Historically, we've been at 81%  $\pm$ 2%, so we're at the high end of that historical trend. That means the students who committed to coming here last year had a good enough experience to want to continue and persist.
  - b. The less-good news is the size of the first-year class, in the range of 650, which is smaller than last year's class, which was in the mid-700s. Those smaller class sizes will continue to impact us, as that momentum is in place for the next few years. We don't yet know what the right size of a first-year cohort could or should be, coming out of the pandemic and facing the demographic cliff resulting from the anticipated reduction in the number of high school graduates. There are also downstream consequences for us from other institutions in the state admitting more students.
  - c. We currently have approximately 3,650 undergraduate students, which is the smallest we've been since 1992. However, we continue to have additional expenses, including faculty and administrative expenses, and there are fewer out-of-state students and lower occupancy than at that time. Since that time, however, the University has

acquired residential stock and made significant investment, in the range of \$200 million, in properties including Randolph, Mason, Willard, Virginia, the William Street properties, and the University apartments. Our opportunity going forward is to have more students living residentially and participating in our undergraduate experience.

3. Admissions and Marketing are now working much more closely with the Provost's office and the Deans. Enrollment Management is focused on the funnel and late-funnel returns, and more strategic conversations are needed with our colleges and academic programs about what we need to do to maximize late-funnel returns. For example, we have Tech Talent Investment Program (TTIP) money from the state, from bringing Amazon to the Commonwealth, that is dedicated to Computer Science with the expectation that we will turn out additional Computer Science graduates, which needs to be calculated into where we recruit students. We need to be buying names and programs that have capacity so that we can fill those as opposed to just buying traditional big programs.
4. We are in the midst of a significant marketing and branding rollout with Mindpower, including three ongoing projects: Web development, brand identity, and recruitment.
5. Internally, our marketing division is going to work more closely with academic departments and programs. That may mean new brochures for particular programs, coverage of stories of graduates from particular programs, and other efforts that can happen as part of the larger Recruitment and Retention Council that will work deliberately with Malcom Holmes on all of these issues.
6. Dr. O'Donnell transitioned to give an update on the web, which is going to be a special project managed by Jeff McClurken. The University is investing resources with Mindpower to develop the website and also internally to manage it from strategic and content-development perspectives. The project is in the early stages, and the goal is that by the end of this academic year we should be able to roll out a new website that goes several levels down and focuses on those programs and offices that matter to the students that we're trying to recruit. However, it won't be an overhaul of all 30,000 pages, and part of the project will be to eliminate some of the pages that haven't been used in several years.
7. There were several questions and comments from the committee regarding the website.
  - a. Dr. Houghtalin noted that there is the issue of pages for academic departments, which departments have a problem maintaining in an up-to-date way because it's work that there is no time set aside for. Dr. O'Donnell acknowledged that there's not a lot of support for faculty taking on website maintenance as academic service, and that departments may have to give up some autonomy to make sure there's consistency.
  - b. Dr. O'Donnell noted we need to consider that much of our current outward-facing website, including the homepage, is dedicated to links to internal pages, which is not what our visitors need to access.
  - c. Dr. Al-Tikriti noted that we need to be careful as we update the website to prevent content loss, and Dr. O'Donnell responded that Dr. McClurken is aware of preservation of digital artifacts and will proceed with care.
8. Questions and comments transitioned to recruitment.

- a. Ms. Doerfler asked how much recruiting we're doing in our local areas, such as in Spotsylvania and Stafford counties. Dr. O'Donnell said recruitment in those areas is significant, that each school in those school systems has a recruiter assigned and that we invest significant time, personnel, and resources in our local schools. Dr. O'Donnell also noted that the area we find the greatest number of students is in Northern Virginia, and areas of concentration in terms of branding buys include Northern Virginia, Fredericksburg, Richmond, and Tidewater. However, Dr. Al-Tikriti and Ms. Doerfler each noted anecdotally that we could be doing more to advertise and recruit in local high schools.
- b. Ms. Doerfler asked whether we have thought about expanding our online education platform. Dr. O'Donnell said that we've taken steps in that direction, but considering our investment in the residential experience, we're never going to be a big online university. There is an opportunity with adult degree completion or the BLS program, for example, to be offered fully online, and for that we will need internal approval as well as approval from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia.
- c. Dr. Al-Tikriti asked about the Admissions Faculty Fellows program. Dr. O'Donnell said that there is one-time funding for that program to recruit faculty to serve as fellows to support yield efforts, and those faculty would work in high-touch ways to recruit students. Dr. Houghtalin noted that since the recruitment of faculty has started relatively late into the start of the academic year, many faculty who would have been good candidates may not be able to commit to that work. Dr. O'Donnell said he is hopeful that by end of the semester we'll have interested and willing faculty to participate in that work.
- d. Dr. Houghtalin brought up the importance of the role of faculty professional development in the process of recruitment, in terms of name and program recognition and contacts in the professional field, and that there's a need to restore more of the faculty development funds to support that. Dr. O'Donnell noted that some but not all of the faculty development funding was restored and agreed about the importance of the support.
- e. Dr. Sumner asked whether there are any efforts to attract international students. Dr. O'Donnell replied that we're at a place where there's an opportunity to increase international students, post-pandemic, but there's a lot of uncertainty there due to geopolitics and other global forces. There are specific examples on the agenda for the Recruitment and Retention Council to consider. Dr. Al-Tikriti noted that if we are going to boost international, then there is a need to support those students, and that it's a question of "go big or go home." If we make the decision to recruit international students, then we need to first redefine an office to be able to support that many students.
- f. Dr. Houghtalin noted that Virginia Tech has been exceeding expected enrollments and asked how long can they get continue to do so without state approval. Dr. O'Donnell responded that because of the nature of the regulation of higher education in Virginia, the question of the "right" size of any given institution doesn't typically come up.

- g. Dr. Al-Tikriti suggested that we could be more active recruiting with our alumni, and that alumni could respond to interview requests as part of our admissions process. Dr. Houghtalin added that we could ask alumni to interview scholarship candidates, supporting scholarships and recruitment at the same time.
  - h. Dr. Helmstutler asked about our current enrollment, and how our lower-than-expected numbers compare to other institutions in the state. Dr. O'Donnell answered that the lower numbers are not unique to us, and that other institutions such as Radford, Longwood, and JMU have lower enrollments. However, UVA and Virginia Tech have seen growth, and so the pattern is not uniform.
  - i. Dr. Sumner asked whether we could parlay our good record and caseload numbers for Covid, to send the message that we've handled the crisis well. Dr. O'Donnell replied that the best parlay has been good leadership, and that our success has helped our reputation and meant that we're being taken seriously by the Commonwealth.
9. Dr. O'Donnell transitioned to the legislative agenda. He reported that President Paino has presented the six-year plan to the Op Six (Secretary of Education, Secretary of Finance, and SCHEV), and it was well received. Our priorities line up with those of the current administration, including the priority to build an office of diversity and inclusion. Additional priorities include supporting our students and employees with disabilities, rebuilding classroom infrastructure, and providing additional funds to successfully recruit and also cope with problems that arise from compression or conversion. There's also an item to replace our information systems, including Banner, and to address the future of our finance, human resources, and student information systems, as well as requests for further support for adult and degree completion and further support for our museums. Overall, there was good support for the President's agenda, but we will know more as the Governor's budget gets built and ultimately when we get into the legislative session.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Bylenok

UBAC Secretary