

# University Budget Advisory Committee

## Minutes – 10/18/2021 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:	Melissa Yakabouski (Director of Undergraduate Admissions)

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

1. The meeting was dedicated to a presentation from Melissa Yakabouski, Director of Undergraduate Admissions. She began with a picture of what has happened over the last few years and data on the incoming first-year class in 2021. At about 650, this year's incoming class was considerably smaller than trend data from recent years. The incoming class of 2020 was about 900, and for 2019 and prior we were above 900 with a high-water mark of 972 in 2015 and a plateau at around 925 for 2017 and 2018.
2. To give context on the last two years, the incoming class of 2020 had missed out on the end of their senior year, but they did have until February 2020 to interact with potential colleges, whereas the class of 2021 was completely Covid-impacted, being online or hybrid from mid-junior year and their full senior year. Those students did not have the same opportunity to do campus visits to colleges, as many institutions in the state were completely closed to visitors, and while we did allow visitors with size and other restrictions, we missed out on students who would have stopped on the way while traveling to big-name universities.
3. There are several bright spots in the data for our student profile for 2021:
  - a. GPA increased (Admitted: 3.74, Deposited: 3.71) and SAT scores increased significantly (Admitted: 1252, Deposited: 1230). It's notable that this group was predominately test-optional, as many students were not able to take SAT or ACT because there was very little test availability. 70% of the applicant and admit pool did not matriculate with test scores. Scores may be up since stronger test takers may have started early when there was more test availability.
  - b. Our out-of-state profile increased. Many of these students were international, and this year we have the largest true F-1 international student population on campus that we've had. Many of those students are tied to rugby, and we also have music scholars in that group. There has been some challenge financially to support our students coming internationally.

- c. Our Honors profile was significantly stronger than prior years. We enrolled 90 students in the Honors program, which is against best practices, since we want to keep that number at 10% of the incoming students. We stopped awarding admission to Honors students because of concern about over-enrollment.
  - d. We enrolled two Alvey Scholars and seven finalists; a total of nine out of fourteen students we interviewed for that scholarship chose to enroll.
4. Ms. Yakabouski emphasized the importance of cohorts for our students. One of the hallmarks of the FSEM program is following these students through their cohorts, and we would like to cohort students based on their interests. Some updates on cohorts include: a new opportunity this year, called “Impact” for community engagement; we also continue to offer the Student Transition Program, STP, which has changed from a 6-week to a 2-week summer program; we continue to offer the Nursing program, a non-traditional program partnered with Germanna; and Athletics has a strong showing.
5. The University is continuing driving to increase diversity. This year the overall number of students decreased, which goes along with decreasing numbers of students self-identifying in these categories. However, the percentages remained similar, and we have been approaching 30% of students self-identifying as racially or ethnically diverse.
6. Fall transfer trends, including deposited trends and enrolled trends, have been fairly consistent over the last few years. We typically bring in about 300 transfer students each fall among our three programs (BA/BS, BLS, and BSN). We need to appeal to nontraditional students going forward. Diversity among transfer students quite strong, with 32% identifying as racially or ethnically diverse. One of the challenges this year was an increase in transfer students who deposited but then didn’t matriculate, and this situation was not unique to our institution in the state.
7. There are a number of factors that are influencing the enrollment landscape in Virginia, which are not necessarily Covid-related but are Covid-impacted. Big institutions are growing (for example, Virginia Tech over-enrolled by 1,000 students in Fall 2019, and they are aiming to grow to a 30,000 student cap), and there are trickle effects to other institutions. Declining demographics also come into play, and although fortunately we’re in a state not projected to decrease dramatically in the next ten years, the demographics will change, and the larger institutions growing complicates that.
8. Looking ahead, Admissions has been given resources to try new strategies, and there are some activities that we are able to return to this year, including high school visits and college fairs. In a normal year, we might visit a minimum of 325 high schools, including a total of 400-425 visits; and we would visit 80 in-state and 80 out-of-state college fairs. This year, which is not a full return to where we were pre-Covid, we’re still going to visit about 150 feeder high schools, but many of those visits will be virtual, which doesn’t get the same attendance or engagement as in-person events. Some in-person events have been very successful, but with attendance about 30-35% lower than we’d typically see, reflecting that people are happy when they can come to campus, but they’re not ready to come out at the same levels yet.
9. Last year, the University invested in some tools, anticipating we wouldn’t be able to do as much face-to-face recruiting. That includes a two-way texting tool called Mongoose, which our Covid-implementation team is on board with, which has been a huge benefit to the admissions team. Last year, we also added Capture, which uses our website as a lead

generator: repeat visitors are prompted to reach out to us, and we can embed links in emails so that we can track interested students and respond to what they're looking for; we can use it at any stage, and we're only tracking the prospective students in our database and on pages tied to admissions. In addition, in Fall 2019 we implemented a new CRM called Slate, which gave us some tools that our previous communication system didn't give us.

10. The Mindpower rebranding is now underway, which had been put on pause at the start of the pandemic. That rebranding gives us fresh visuals and messaging, which we can roll out with our prospective students. At this point, some materials are still at the printers due to communication delays and supply chain issues. In addition to new materials, there's recruitment advertising and awareness advertising that Mindpower is working on with marketing. Going forward, this is an area that needs to be resourced so that we can do year-round marketing.
11. The main goals this year are to increase applications and increase yield. Last year, we had fewer applications than previous years by about 1,000, which meant that there were fewer students we could admit. In addition, yielding students is essential, and the percentage of students we've been able to get to matriculation has been decreasing. We're taking measures to address that, including things such as developing personal financial aid videos so that students know how they will pay for college, developing the Admission Faculty Fellows program, and an enhanced student search process that focuses on the classes of 2023 and 2024.
12. Ms. Yakabouski advocated for year-round awareness and touch points. The University is behind in applications this year, even from where we were last year. The applicant group of current high school seniors is late to the process because they didn't have the opportunity to do the same activities and to meet with their counselors. Currently, our marketing plans run from October through March, and this year we've started late, on October 25. However, most students submit applications to early application or early action before the holiday break, and so being able to market during the summer and reach juniors will be critical.
13. Admissions requires skilled services to assist with the student search process through multiple channels, including emails, texts, phone calls, and other messages based on how students respond. This is very challenging for a CRM team that only has two dedicated staff members, and there is an opportunity for skilled services to continue to achieve better results than executing this process in house with current human resources. To continue to outsource this service will require funding based on solid returns.
14. The meeting transitioned to questions.
  - a. Dr. Houghtalin asked whether there is anything we're doing to recruit transfer students and bolster admissions down the line. Ms. Yakabouski mentioned the Transfer Virginia process, which our departments and the University have been working on so a student can come through VCCS and know exactly where they stand with the University in a consistent and planned pattern. However, we've cut back on resources in that area in the past few years. Our feeders are primarily Germanna and NOVA, but NOVA is dominated by George Mason, and resources we've invested in haven't panned out. We buy prospect names through Phi Theta Kappa, however much of our transfer recruitment is face to face. This has been hampered by an inability to be in-person with those students; visits have been all virtual, and we've had no in-person fairs the last couple of years for transfer students.

- b. We've recently returned to our weekly campus visits with NOVA, but Germanna is not yet letting recruiters back on campus.
  - c. Dr. Schultz appreciated the recommendation for year-round marketing for recruitment and asked what that would require in terms of increasing the budget. Ms. Yakabouski said it would probably increase the budget as much as double, because it's not about internal resources but areas such as social media, re-targeted ads, and search engine optimization. Fresh content is also critical, and we tend to use the same material for the whole campaign because that's what we can afford. It would be an increase, with a need in external and digital marketing.
  - d. Dr. Sumner asked if is there something the committee could recommend that would be helpful for a budget priority regarding staffing, software, travel money, or something else Admissions could really use. Ms. Yakabouski said all of the above. In Admissions, it's a complicated recruitment plan that includes all of those elements, and we need to maximize and prioritize our budget. Events, publications, travel, mailing, and skilled services are the biggest costs. Marketing is really key, and there is a tremendous lack of awareness about the University; we need something splashy that gets our name out to draw the attention to students to look into specific programs, and the biggest piece is marketing.
  - e. Dr. Al-Tikriti asked whether there is optimism in the long term, considering how the tri-county area is booming. Ms. Yakabouski said there's future with transfer students, but the challenge with high school students in the immediate area is that they're ready to spread wings and go somewhere else. We are invested in local students, doing local events that address navigating the college search and financial aid. Many students in our region choose our institution for financial reasons, because they can go to a four-year college and live at home; we're aware of that, yet we want to expand into new markets.
  - f. Dr. Al-Tikriti asked about alumni and whether they can they be mobilized to participate in recruitment through interviews or other ways. Ms. Yakabouski said that alumni do not conduct interviews, but they have the opportunity to do referrals, and that they participate on Alvey and Washington Scholarship committees. There are opportunities, but our resources are limited and it requires management, and a full program of interviews isn't something we'd be able to sustain.
  - g. Ms. Ardo noted the importance of high school visits and forming a relationship with prospective students early. Anecdotally, in the Tidewater area, we're not well known. Ms. Yakabouski said it's not for lack of trying, and that we're working in those regions, and in the Tidewater area it's a challenge.
15. Discussion concluded with the committee identifying the impactful areas within Admissions that could benefit from increased funding. Dr. Houghtalin proposed and Ms. Yakabouski agreed that two most important areas for the committee to recommend are increased funding for year-round marketing and an increase in skilled services.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Bylenok

UBAC Secretary