***Updates from UFC Exec Committee meeting with Provost O’Donnell***

***1/14/22, 12:30, kmarsh***

UFC Executive Committee members (Ian, Kristin, Rachel, Andrew, Marcel, and Justin Wilkes for USC) are meeting with Provost O’Donnell on a monthly basis. Justin was unable to join us today.

***Welcoming Dr. Shorter***.

Dr. Shavonne Shorter, Chief Diversity Officer and Associate Provost for diversity and inclusion, joined the beginning of our meeting. She shared with us her long-standing commitment to faculty governance and expressed looking forward to working with UFC. Among other priorities moving forward, she has begun work on (1) developing diversity, equity, and inclusion training for faculty, in collaboration with the teaching center; (2) working with faculty interested in diversifying course content; (3) setting up socializing opportunities and mentorship relationships, to provide space and support for conversations and build community. We invited Dr. Shorter to our Feb 2 UFC meeting.

Updates from the Provost’s Office:

1. Potential for allowing individual faculty to initiate an ***early retirement*** agreement. Paul Messplay has been working on what it might look like and what would be involved (what other schools are doing; consultation with lawyer).

Although the plan is not yet finalized, Tim outlined likely parameters:

- faculty initiated during any year, though with a minimum # of years of service (not a one-time buy-out option);

- one-year’s additional salary compensation, paid out over two or more years;

- a BOV policy; draft will go to BOV at February meeting; would need governor approval.

Tim mentioned that several faculty had approached him about the possibility, which inspired exploration of the option.

1. The University is proposing a change to our ***Carnegie Classification*** to bachelors’ primarily liberal arts institution (a national classification). We are currently classified as a regional comprehensive university (south) with some corresponding master’s programs. The important thing is that this is in an effort to represent ourselves more accurately, NOT to undermine the importance, integrity, or visibility of our professional and graduate programs.

Debra Schleef is looking into the change, (the window of opportunity is brief; classifications have already been published, but there is opportunity for revision). We discussed implications of the change. The benefit is that we could more easily and effectively communicate what we offer. Potential students will more readily find us, and the classification will differentiate us (accurately) from other Commonwealth universities. The comparison in publications such as U.S. News and World Report, however, would put us in a broader field which could affect our ranking. There are potential implications for marketing strategy and enrollment strategy. The UFC Executive Committee responded favorably to this move, though—of course—this isn’t UFC endorsement, just our in-the-moment response.

1. Update on ***Equity Study***.

Melba Kishpaugh has been in communication with the four firms listed on the VA state contract. The Provost will put together a small committee to recommend the winning bid. The committee will likely include a member of UFAC, Debra Schleef, and perhaps another faculty member. We are requesting line-item pricing in order to prioritize analysis in balance with cost. We should not expect findings until fall 2022 (a bit later than originally requested in the COP).

1. Faculty Representation on ***Strategic Vision*** Committee.

UFOC completed its appointment process, announcing the results after (or as) we were meeting. Kristin commented on the willingness of UFOC to engage at the very end of fall semester; with thoughtful, expert sense of timing and procedure, they orchestrated a call and appointment process at perhaps the most awkward time of the academic year.

Moreover, the faculty stepping up for this assignment deserve our gratitude. We discussed how our own individual reticence to volunteer underlines broadly experienced burn-out and exhaustion, particularly among the “usual suspects” of faculty who are thought of because they fit the bill or will do the work once they raise their hand, but *also by all faculty at such a difficult time in our lives and careers.*

 We discussed a revisiting of service workload and governance structure, both at the university and college level.

1. ***J-term and alternative semester terms***.

We discussed options for teaching courses on different schedules than the usual two-semester (16-week semester) academic year; Tim clarified there are many options already available; we can already offer alternative structures within the current calendar.

UFC will vote on the motion for a committee to study a J-term option on Feb. 2nd. For anything to move forward, we’ll need to make a decision a year in advance, so January 2024 at the earliest). Tim recommended that the faculty committee should finish its work by end of spring 2023. The committee will have the benefit of starting data compiled by UAAC during 2020-2021.

Respectfully submitted, km 1/17/22, corrected 1/25/22