

University Budget Advisory Committee

Minutes – 9/29/2022 Meeting

At-large faculty representatives present: Laura Bylenok (Asst. Professor, CAS) – Chair
Brad Hansen (Professor, CAS)
Drew Delaney (Senior Lecturer, CAS)
Dan Hubbard (Assoc. Professor, CAS)

College faculty representatives present: Liane Houghtalin (Professor, CAS) – Co-Secretary
Alexis Rutt (Asst. Professor, COE)
Smita Jain Oxford (Senior Lecturer, COB)

USC representatives present: Arin Doerfler (Senior Accountant-Fixed Assets) –
Co-Secretary
Kim McManus-Carini (Operations and Finance
Coordinator)
Ryan Snellings (Collections Manager)

Athletics representative present: Patrick Catullo (Director of Athletics)

Student representative present: Ellelyshia Ardo (SGA)

Guest: Melissa Yakabouski, Dean of Admissions & Assoc. VP

The meeting was called to order at 4:01 pm. Summary of discussion:

1. Dr. Bylenok announced that meetings would be recorded. Recordings will serve to aid not only those taking minutes, but also absent members in keeping abreast of the work of the committee. Recordings are not to be shared outside the committee.
2. Committee member introductions.
3. Dr. Bylenok asked Ms. Yakabouski to provide an overview of the Admissions budget, tell us about what is currently happening in Admissions and to provide the committee with areas where Admissions might anticipate additional need in terms of next year's budget.
 - a. Ms. Yakabouski provided an overview of her new role, her area now includes Admissions, Graduate Admissions and Financial Aid – the focus today will be on Admissions.
 - b. 2022-23 class size is looking good this year; approximately 100 more first year students this year than last.
 - i. At census for 2022-23 we were at about 750 in comparison 2021-22 we were at about 635 first years.
 - ii. Our 100 first years are a diverse group, both racially and ethnically.
 - c. Demographic changes will happen over the next three years. In 2008-09 when we hit the recession, people stopped having children. We will see the ramifications of that coming up in the graduating high school classes of 2026, where it will be significantly fewer in number and also a different demographic.
 - i. We will start to see fewer white students graduating, which are typically more prepared and resourced to go to college. We will see an increase in Hispanic students, some increases in African American students – the increases will not necessarily be enough to balance what we will lose in white students.
 - ii. In Virginia, we anticipate 6%-7% fewer high school graduates than where we are now; other areas of the country, like New England, is double-digits in their losses.

- iii. We are not likely to attract a lot of students from high-growth areas like Florida and Texas since most students stay within a two-hour radius of where they grow up to go to college.
- iv. Virginia has a competitive landscape; our public and private education system are quite diverse, there are a lot of wonderful educational opportunities in the state. The big schools are continuing to grow, particularly Virginia Tech, George Mason and even UVA and JMU are in a modified growth pattern. The bigger institutions that have national reputations are taking a larger share of the higher ed market.
- v. In anticipation of the change in demographics and the size of our classes, we are investing in recruitment and enrollment to make sure we are making smart decisions.
 - 1. This past year, we worked with Kennedy and Company, a consulting firm, to make sure we are doing all the things we should be doing. They made some recommendations that we've put in place and will continue to do so as we move towards 2026.
 - a. Staffing recommendations made and put in place by expanding the both the recruitment and operations teams. In regards to recruitment and the changing demographics, we are filling a position that is focused on diversity recruitment, connecting with community-based organizations to be able to connect with students of color within the commonwealth and through other means. We are largely doing that through salary savings and not filling previously held positions. The market is difficult right now and is proving to be a challenge. We also hired an Assistant Director of Operations to expand our operations team, the Assistant Director and Associate Director of Operations will be able optimize Slate, our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System.
- d. About 10 years ago, we made significant investments in how we recruit. Prior to that we didn't have a whole lot of modern technology, so we have spent some time implementing modern tools to include:
 - i. Slate CRM– allows us to zero in, to be very targeted with scheduled message to reach the right population at the right time, with the right messaging.
 - ii. Financial Aid Modeling – allows us the make sure that we are not only addressing student's ability to pay based on their need, income levels and assets, but also their willingness to pay.
 - iii. Territory Management – 7-8 recruiters who manage specific areas, who go out and really understand what is happening in their respective areas, connect and build relationships with prospective students. UMW utilizes a conversational recruitment process, we really do recruit students one by one.
- e. The budget 10-20 years ago was a couple hundred thousand dollars and made up of three buckets – travel, publication printing (viewbooks, brochures, transfer), and mailing costs.
- f. The current Admissions budget – half of the funds are used for specialized skilled services and consulting, and include the CRM and Financial Aid Modeling, which allows recruiters to focus on recruiting.
- g. A portion of the budget is utilized to generate leads, to build our funnel. At the top of the funnel we identify students that look like they may be a good fit for Mary Washington. As they move down through the funnel and become more engaged inquiries, to the applicant, to the admitted and then an enrolled/deposited student. We spend money at the top of the

funnel to try to build a good, healthy group of students to work through down to matriculation.

- h. Another portion of the budget is used for events. We are back to having in person open houses for prospective students and doing Destination UMW for admitted students. We do at least two large Destination day events, hosting 600-700 guests, with a cost of about \$10K for each (catering).
 - i. There are platforms that generate leads and help students begin to identify good college matches, one example through their high school is a system called Naviance. We have a \$30K contract with Naviance to have a strong and robust profile page with videos and student and faculty profiles, which is a good starting point for students in their search. We are also monitoring the return on investment for another company we use in comparison to a new company that might generate more and better-quality leads for us; potentially adding to swapping out, but we are always tweaking and making improvements to help find good student matches for Mary Washington.
 - j. Another investment that we have made, which was supported last year by the UBAC, was the addition of resources for the marketing budget. We have not had year-round marketing in the past, nor did marketing have a line on the University's budget. We have begun marketing year-round. In the past, we started our marketing campaign in October which coincides with the start of receiving applications. This year, our marketing campaign started in July as students are starting to engage in the application process. We can already see that it is having a positive impact on the application process. We've made the investment in digital marketing although you may not see this directly unless you have a high schooler between the ages of 14-19, since we use target marketing.
 - i. Kennedy and Company recommended that we make an investment to expand our digital resources to target that age group and parents of that age group. We are reaching parents of Facebook because that is where parents are, but students are reachable on Snapchat, TikTok and Instagram.
 - k. Biggest unknown this year is travel. Because of COVID, we had two years where we didn't really travel. During this time, we had to mail three times as much material to get in front of people, so what we would have spent on travel went to publications. Last year, there was some return to in-person activity in some places, but there were missed opportunities to connect with prospective students in key markets. There is an eight-week college tour across the Commonwealth of Virginia called the Virginia Tour. It pretty much ensures that every student in Virginia has an opportunity on their home turf to engage with public and private institutions. We aren't flying as much now because UMW has a regional draw, but the cost of travel in general has increased. There are certain things that we cannot miss as a public institution, but we have to be very strategic about where we go and travel out of state is very targeted.
 - l. One of the things that Ms. Yakabouski said she is committed to is retention, though not under her purview, it is one of the things that we need to always remember as we recruit. We spent a great deal of time looking at recruitment initiatives last year, including establishing a Recruitment and Retention Council. Ms. Yakabouski is hopeful this year that we will really dig into some retention strategies and would love to see some additional investment there.
4. The meeting transitioned to questions.
- a. Dr. Bylenok asked about the return to in-person events and if we were still maintaining the virtual ways of connecting and the cost of doing so.

- i. Ms. Yakabouski said that we are maintaining some virtual activities via zoom, but what we have seen over the last year is that they are not well attended. Last fall, we did three in-person open houses between September-November and one virtual open house. Each in-person open house had about 200 attendees, where the virtual open house probably had about 50. There are benefits to offering virtual events particularly for students that may not be able to travel and to offer specific sessions for financial aid and disability resources. When offered, those virtual events have had great attendance. Our CRM has virtual capabilities that have allowed us to jump into the virtual world without additional costs.
- b. Dr. Bylenok asked if Ms. Yakabouski gets a sense that as our increase in first year students this year was due to in-person engagement versus virtual engagement.
 - i. Ms. Yakabouski said that we are able to track visitor attendance and yield and the in-person events yields at a much higher rate than virtual. If we can get them on campus, we do really well, getting them on campus is the key.
 - ii. Ms. Yakabouski said one of the investments that we did make virtually, that has been very beneficial, is part of our search package that builds the top of our funnel. Cold leads are the names of students that we buy, who are likely a good fit for UMW. Two additional platforms that we are currently using as part of this package are for parent engagement/continuing students and a prospective student platform. The parent engagement platform provides regular updates to parents and families about what is happening on campus for continuing students, but in the application process it prompts parents/families with important dates, financial aid information, filing dates. The prospective student platform (ZeeMee) virtually allows prospective students to connect with other prospective students, allows them to meet and establish affinity groups before they even get to UMW. This is proving to have an even higher yield rate than our visit yield.
 - iii. Getting prospective students here on campus is really important. We struggled with the class of 2021 because even though we were open for visitors, many of the big draw institutions that people travel to were not hosting. We missed out on having prospective students/families visiting UMW en route to the bigger draw institutions and that impacted our ability to build a bigger class for 2021.
- c. Dr. Bylenok asked how we can get more students on campus this year and going forward.
 - i. Ms. Yakabouski said we are already starting to do it through marketing and awareness. We are doing year-round marketing now and taking advantage of other opportunities to get our brand out there. We have billboards on I-95, including a digital billboard in Richmond. We are running transit ads in the major metropolitan areas. The most impactful thing that we can do is to be out there marketing year-round.
 - ii. Ms. Yakabouski said that she would like to do more with high school counselors, though it is challenging because of personnel resources and counselor attrition. The more we can do to get in front of the influencers of counselors and parents, the better we will do. If we can do more counselor events in the community on their turf, it would be very beneficial. An event will run a couple thousand dollars, so having the resources (staff and monetary) to dedicate to that would be a great opportunity.
- d. Dr. Bylenok asked how many positions are vacant right now.
 - i. Ms. Yakabouski said that there are three mid-level positions open right now, the Assistant Director of Marketing, Transfer Assistant Director, and Regional Recruiter

- in Maryland. Filling the positions has been a struggle, people want to be remote and out of the office and the industry is somewhat underpaid. Looking at salaries, for positions that are the life-blood of an institution, we are not paying a great salary. Many recruiters spend weeks out on the road, work weekends and evening and cannot afford to live on their own in Fredericksburg, on average bringing in \$39K per year. It is a challenge and one that other schools are facing as well.
- ii. Colleagues across the state are looking at what we are paying for common positions, there is a significant disparity among institutions. We are trying to help each other out by sharing information. But to some degree, we are going to have to really dig in if we want to fill key positions. For example, the Senior Assistant Director for Diversity Recruitment mentioned earlier, is a key high-level position that will be responsible for building relationships in the community and overall strategy. The salary for that came back in the mid-\$40Ks, is not competitive with similar positions making mid-\$50-60K minimum at other institutions. It is not a challenge that is unique to Admissions at UMW. When attracting new talent is a challenge, our approach is to build and develop from within.
 - iii. Dr. Bylenok commented that recruitment and retention applies to employment, not just students. Ms. Yakabouski said that admissions staff turnover is pretty regular, particularly at the admissions counselor level.
- e. Ms. Oxford asked for clarification on the \$100K budget mentioned earlier in Ms. Yakabouski's discussion and what the current budget is.
 - i. Ms. Yakabouski said that the budget as recently as 2012-13 was \$300K per year.
 - ii. The current budget is just shy of \$1M. Almost half of the budget is going to skilled services and includes the consultants that we use to help model, purchasing names of prospective students, developing leads, virtual tours, the CRM and tools to process applications and transcripts.
 - f. Mr. Hubbard asked with the demographic drop off, what are we doing with the transfer side of things.
 - i. Ms. Yakabouski said that we can't just rely on first year students. Most of our projected growth includes transfer students. This year, we are close to 300 students. Germanna and NOVA Community Colleges are our direct feeders for transfer students. We have made some strategic pathways and partnerships within the and must continue to look for and meet the needs of those partner opportunities to continue to grow.
 - ii. Our ideal class size is about 750-800 students for first a first-year class. If we can maintain 300-350 transfers and maybe grow that a little bit each year, we will be in good solid shape.
 - g. Dr. Bylenok mentioned that we heard in our conversation that some of the areas of need in Admissions are engagement with counselors, finding new enrollment opportunities with partnerships, filling positions and increasing salaries, but if there was anything that the UBAC could advocate for on behalf of Admissions.
 - i. Ms. Yakabouski said that she feels very passionately about retention, that she would love to see additional investments to make sure that we have people that are just as focused about keeping our students and understanding why some may be leaving. If it is a financial matter, then helping them connect with financial aid or advising them after they've stopped out. She would really like to see intentional activity to prevent withdrawals.

- h. Mr. Catullo asked what faculty and staff can do to help with the recruitment effort on campus.
 - i. Ms. Yakabouski said that when you have the opportunity, that you really try to connect and have good conversations with prospective students. For example, it means a great deal to have the Faculty Fellows program, that we can connect prospective students with faculty members. It is influential and impactful to be able to make those kinds of connections.
- 5. With no further comments from Ms. Yakabouski or questions from the committee, Dr. Bylenok confirmed the next meeting.
 - a. Confirmed 10/6/22 Meeting with Juliette Landphair.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:03pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Arin Doerfler - UBAC Co-secretary