Department Heads Council Executive Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 4, 2014

Executive Committee Members in attendance: Mary Leigh Wolfe (co-chair), James Tanko, Brenda Winkel, Eric Paterson, Rick Perdue, Anne Khademian, Bob Denton, Greg Daniel, Kevin Concannan, Beth Grabau, Kevin Carlson, Tom Thompson, Janaki Alavalapati, Steve McMullin. Rapporteur: Katie Snead

From the Provost’s Office: Provost Mark McNamee, Vice Provost Jack Finney

Guest: Ken Smith, Vice Provost

Part I. Meeting with Provost Mark McNamee and Vice Provost Jack Finney

The Provost provided updates on a variety of topics.

1. The Provost expressed very positive observations about President-designate Sands and the transition.

2. Work is continuing on general education (liberal education). Reports are due from committees in early February. Provost is cautiously optimistic that new general education plan will make it through governance this spring, with pilot implementations in the fall.

3. Administration is preparing for March Board of Visitors meeting – key issue is tuition and fees structure.

4. There will be a merit-based salary increase process this year. Increases will probably be effective in November/December. Details of process are being developed.

5. Promotion and Tenure: The university P&T committee will meet in March and finish in early April. Letters from the Provost will go out in April. Final notification will come following June Board of Visitors meeting. Promotion raises will be effective on June 25 for CY appointments and on August 10 for AY appointments.

6. The search for a new CLAHS Dean is ongoing. The search firm, Isaacson, Miller, has begun soliciting potential candidates. The search firm met with the search committee last week and will be back to campus on the 24th to finalize a list of semi-finalist interviews to occur in early March. The plan is to have a new Dean in place by July 1.

7. Steve McKnight accepted the position as the Vice President of the National Capital Region.

8. Academic Program Review: SACS interim review will be conducted in the year 2015. Provost’s office has already begun to bring reports together and in the next few weeks, more information will become available.

   a. Expect to be contacted by Ellen Plummer. Each Department Head will be responsible for their set of academic programs.

9. Applications for admission to Virginia Tech are up overall and are also up from underrepresented groups.

10. The Provost’s Office thinks that Winter Session was very successful. Analysis of the students who participated concluded that many students used winter session to complete credits necessary to graduate. Enrollment was centered on required courses. Also had students use Winter Session
to retake classes with poor performance. A number of faculty and departments benefited financially. When asked if a similar model could be followed in the summer, the Provost noted that the university budget includes summer tuition integrated with that from fall/spring, so removing summer tuition from the budget model would have significant impact. The Provost would like to see Summer Session become similar to Winter Session.

11. Progress is being made on having one tuition rate (no in-state/out-of-state differential) for online degrees.

Part II. Meeting with Vice Provost Ken Smith:

1. Ken described the scope of his responsibilities, which stated simply is “money and space.” A new role that he has recently been charged with is Institutional Effectiveness, which includes Institutional Research. His goal is make Virginia Tech more systematic as we look at institutional effectiveness.
   a. Money and space: Ken is involved in academic budget development and works closely with the budget office. Most of the academic space is under the control of departments and colleges. One of Ken’s responsibilities is to identify priorities and programming for what the next spaces should be. He is also responsible for classroom improvements.
   b. Institutional effectiveness: Virginia Tech has just purchased Business Intelligence software to help in developing a central repository for assessment and evaluation of institutional effectiveness. We are reengaging with Academic Analytics, a private vendor that collects academic data and sells it to institutions. The university will be using Academic Analytics to be able to provide benchmark data in regards to academic peers. The university recognizes some shortcomings with Academic Analytics and will supplement, e.g., set up different peer sets for departments rather than broad peer institution comparisons.

2. In preparation for the Department Heads Forum on February 5, Ken discussed the five-year interim SACS review scheduled for 2015. It will be an abbreviated review on a few selected items. The next SACS full review will be in 2019.

Key issues:

   a. Faculty core requirement - For this report we have to look at academic programs and make sure the number of faculty in each program is adequate. There may be some follow-up questions from SACS regarding this issue.
   b. Institutional effectiveness – how are we identifying learning outcomes and how we make changes based on the information? Happens at the department level and should be documented each time a change is initiated.
   c. Student success – institution evaluates student success by academic achievement – focusing on outcomes, degrees awarded, employment…not that they are getting A’s but rather the group of outcomes as a credential.
   d. Distance education – federal regulation of security. Ensuring that a student enrolled in an online course is the person actually taking the course. There has been a lot of
financial aid fraud and cheating in regards to online courses (not specifically at Virginia Tech).

e. Student Complaints – The university must demonstrate that we are responsive to student complaints. We must define what constitutes a complaint, e.g., it must be in writing; students have to identify themselves; must have a communication chain). Grade appeals are probably not considered a student complaint. Trying to find a more limited definition.

f. QEP (quality enhancement plan) – Virginia Tech’s QEP is focused on the first year experience. Want a report on the first year experience. Already collecting outcome data from first year experience. Not a test. Basically, for SACS, the university has to demonstrate that we did something, have assessed it and are we going to continue to use it.

g. Institutional effectiveness – Have to demonstrate that we have made progress on administrative assessment.

h. SACS timeline. Accredited in 1923. Reaffirmation in 2010. Fifth year notification to come in April. Have to respond in March of 2015. Already working on the reporting. The writing committee is largely administrators at this point; will reach out to deans and departments soon.

i. The cost of noncompliance with SACS is loss of federal financial aid.