Council Minutes

Executive Committee of the Department Heads Council

325 Burruss Hall

8-9:30am

December 2, 2014

Attending: Janaki Alavalapati (Forest Resources & Environment); Eric Paterson (Aerospace and Ocean Engineering); S.A. Ahmed (Biomed Sciences & Pathology); Nancy Ross (Geosciences); David Hodgson (Large Animal Clinical Sciences); Bob Denton (Communication) Anisa Zvonkovic (Human Development) Richard Rudd (Horticulture); Benda Winkel (Biological Sciences); Bob Smith (Sustainable Biomaterials), Beth Grabau (Plant Pathology, Physiology & Weed Science); Paul Herr (Marketing); Stephanie Adams (Engineering Education), Vice Provost Jack Finney, Provost Mark McNamee, Vice President for Research, Robert Walters.

Rapporteur: Maureen McCusker

Welcome: Intro by Janaki Alavalapati

Provost McNamee’s Announcements:

New Search for VP for Research: Issacson Miller search firm will be doing the search and announcement will be sent out tomorrow. Things will really go public the first of the year, and there is a proposed timeframe for Spring with anticipated hire date for July 1. Please send in to Dr. McNamee any nominations you may have.

Department Head meeting with the President: Dr. Sands will make comments at the meeting, but would love to hear questions from you (the DH’s). Other issues he will address: update on InclusiveVT. Provost Office is already starting to see the 86 people involved showing evidence of progress (grassroots). Within the next week, everyone will have the chance to look at their proposals and redo them if necessary. Also, some initiatives are already prepped to be launched. The whole university committee (including DH’s) will have a discussion to select which ones should be immediately implemented. Dr. McNamee was very, very impressed with meeting he had yesterday with the 86 members. Please give Dr. McNamee any feedback you (the DH’s) are hearing- Dr. McNamee’s goal is to be transparent.

1. **DH question**: can you please give an example of these initiatives?
   a. **Dr. McNamee Response**: The University is going to start putting in some unisex bathrooms to show that it is accepting of all different gender and sex differences. Also, seminars to educate campus people on gender and culture will be instituted.

2. **DH question**: how will these initiatives be funded?
   a. **Dr. McNamee Response**: They are developing guidelines for how these resources will be administered to which initiatives, but most units will be paying for their own initiatives. Most of them did not ask for funds.

3. **Dr. McNamee Comment**: Another interesting outcome example: Office of finance, which is not typically concerned with these sorts of issues, came up with 3 great initiatives to launch.
4. **Dr. McNamee Comment: Themes:** There were recurring themes from these initiatives, including work with HBCUs, work with veterans, mentoring.

**Salary increases will show up soon:** This will be coming down the pipeline, so keep an eye out for it. But the Provost believes the DHEC is in a good place to give feedback on the proposal. So please provide Provost’s Office with feedback.

1. **DH Question:** In light of UVA issue, is there anything VT is doing to respond?
   a. **Response from Dr. McNamee:** Even before the story broke, VT proposed making a major presentation about sexual assault at March Board Meeting. US DOE is continuing to cloud their definitions of relevant issues. In addition, in the meantime, VT has put together a packet of resources for DH to better access VT regulations and rules in one centralized area, which is uploaded for DH website. Dr. McNamee briefly outlined the process that VT takes in responding to sexual assault issues, but thinks in general VT has been better in responding to these sorts of issues. VT has been very compliant in their reporting.
   b. Title IX training will be mandatory for all employees (this is a result of a complaint made to Department of Civil Rights), not the UVA case, so please sign up for it.
   c. **DH Question:** We could use some information and clarity on who needs to take the training- is the GA, GRA, post-docs, etc?
      i. **Answer:** it is everyone who gets a pay check from VT.
      ii. Also: online module is available, or other option is to have a group training with a group leader. Group training will be available to anyone who requests it.

2. **DH Question:** When does Governor’s announcement come out? DO we have any ideas what is going to happen?
   a. **Response from Dr. McNamee:** They do not have very much information yet, but the good news is that the Governor has made clear that he values higher education.

3. **DH Question:** The conflict of interest policy has now trickles down to us (the DH’s), and we are having to disclose everything. I’m curious why the paperwork is coming down to Department Heads now when it was not last year.
   a. **Response from Jack:** It’s a response from the former Governor’s actions. It’s an executive order from the Governor. The list has been expanded as a result.
   b. **DH comment:** Recommends communicate to the university the change and why it’s happening because there is some lack of clarity among faculty.
   c. **Response from Jack:** Jack will ask Hal to send out an email doing so.

**Dr. Finney’s Announcements:**

1. **Search season is upon us:** Please make sure to keep in mind the College Liaisons program. The University consistently gets very positive feedback from candidates from this program.
   a. **DH Question:** Can you please describe program
      i. **Answer:** It a program that allows for interviewees to have confidential meetings with representatives with particular people on campus to discuss any concerns, questions, or issues they may have.

8:36am: Drs. McNamee and Finney exit and Dr. Walters enters.

Robert Walter’s Discussion:
Strategic Plan: A couple years ago VT was putting together targets for their plans, which was 680 million for 6 years. VT is now at 500 million. To achieve that, it will take a 6-7% growth per year in research expenditures. This will be a challenge for several reasons: 1) much of what is reported (about half) comes from the internal University’s funding; 2) the remainder comes from sponsored programs. Dr. Walters is very worried about meeting these targets. The good news is that VT has been 50% greater than other schools in research expenditures.

1. **DH question:** Is the medical institute planned to be part of the research plan?
   a. **Dr. Walters Answer:** The Institutes are part of the plan, but the hospital has not yet been included, but it probably will be.

2. **DH question:** There’s a rumor that the institutes do not actually bring in any money. Is that true?
   a. **Dr. Walters Answer:** Well, research in general, is not a money-making endeavor after you balance it out.

3. **DH Question:** If we want to bring in more research, what can we do without straining our faculty and staff? This strains our faculty extreme amount.
   a. **Dr. Walters Answer:** He says that he agrees and encourages DH to bring this up to the President (How can we do this without crushing our faculty). At the end of the day, he says, it’s a resource issue. Need more resources. There is a disconnect between public perceptions of faculty workload and actual workload.
   b. **DH Comment:** There is also a disconnect within the University. The fact that the University rolls out timeclock plus suggests the University does not value its faculty’s time.
   c. **Dr. Walters:** He agrees the university needs to be connecting more.

4. **DH Question:** Although the university is getting more collaborative, the University tries to put together these teams that are relatively arbitrary and not well-constructed. The University needs a more structured strategy to assemble collaborative teams and groups and facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration.
   a. **Dr. Walters Response:** That is one of VT’s top strategic priorities: having University infrastructure to facilitate it. The Provost is getting ready to roll out some tools to help this. The reality is that for the University to reach 680 million, faculty need to collaborate.
   b. **DH response:** Suggestion: the proposal development institute was geared toward the hard sciences and tech, not social sciences. The national capital region implemented a workshop on teambuilding, and the rest of the University can learn from this. They have this at the institutes, but the faculty at rest of the university does not have this resource. The University should work on implementing similar procedures.

5. **DH Question:** Overhead return rate: College of engineering was one of the highest in the US. Is there a likelihood that it will go down?
   a. **Dr. Walters Response:** You’re right in that 61 is high among our peers. Certainly a large reason for the increase has been investment in constructing new buildings without filling those buildings with researchers, so we’re not getting a large return from them. He hopes they’ll come down once we fill them with researchers. He does not want to see it go up, he hopes it will come down.

6. **DH Question:** Research faculty title ranges. Can the University differentiate a little better what is a faculty member, and not? There is a huge difference between a technician who is called a faculty member and who is a true faculty member.
a. **Dr. Walters Response:** This is clarified in his office, but it’s probably broken down and lost in the HR department. This is an issue for HR, he believes.

7. **DH Question:** We hear a lot about entrepreneurship. Where does this fit?
   a. **Dr. Walters Response:** Great question. Innovation and entrepreneurship has been a large focus. President says that if we can’t increase our rankings, then we need to increase our scholarly output. The reason why Dr. Walters wanted to promote innovation and entrepreneurship because it encourages students to attend VT and for young faculty to take risks. His push was on the students and young faculty side, but there is also a lot of push from the state and other political agencies to try to get more out of Universities.
   b. **DH Comment:** Other Universities actually assess the degree of innovation of entrepreneurship.
   c. **DH Comment:** Is there more allocation needed for instruction? How do we connect educating these students and faculty to be innovative?
      i. **Response:** At the end of the day, the most important part of our mission is instruction, so Dr. Walters agrees this is necessary.
   d. **DH comment:** We really need to question what our mission is... is it really instruction?
   e. **DH comment:** We do not do a very good job assessing what we’re actually doing. We need to communicate better how we promote certain priorities.