Council Minutes
Executive Committee of the Department Heads Council
325 Burruss Hall
8-9:30am
November 4, 2014

Attending: Eric Paterson (Aerospace and Ocean Engineering); Jenaki Alavalapati (Forest Resources & Environment); Nancy Ross (Geosciences); David Hodgson (Large Animal Clinical Sciences); Bob Denton (Communication) Anisa Zvonkovic (Human Development) Richard Rudd (Horticulture); Brenda 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, Karen DePauw, Dean of Graduate Studies

Rapporteur: Maureen McCusker

Welcome: Intro by Jenaki Alavalapati

Provost McNamee’s Announcements:

President Sands’ events are going very well. Dr. McNamee would like to hear feedback from Department Heads as to perceptions of how things are going with him.

Inclusion and Diversity Council meeting: Went very well. Today, Dr. McNamee will send out an email asking Deans to identify three Inclusion and Diversity projects that they would like to take on this year and then how they will take on those projects and assess their success. Things are moving but he’s finding that more people are talking about inclusion more than ever before; progress is being made. Department Heads should be included and involved.

General Education Revisions: Revisions to General Education Program are being introduced: will soon be ready for University Council consideration. People have many questions, as always regarding change. Less radical a change than Dr. McNamee had suggested, but still significant. Dr. McNamee is looking for any feedback DH may have.

University Enrollment: Wanda Dean has met with all colleges to talk about enrollment strategies for the upcoming year. Colleges should be strategic and try to grow their enrollments. Balanced and gradual growth for both undergraduates and graduates is valuable for the university. The trajectory is not status quo and not shrinkage, but modest growth. They are doing many calculations as how best to approach this strategy. The question is: will the resources follow? President Sands thinks that smart, well-managed growth (attractive, well-market and balanced) will allow for this. Dr. McNamee encourages any input from Department Heads on how best to approach this issue

1. DH Comment: There is a big demand for students housing in Blacksburg. To grow the student population will require growth of student housing. Something for the University to think about, as there will be many challenges.
2. DH Question: Is there any possibility to have any more opportunity to grow university on campus?
3. **DH Question:** What about graduate student housing for married graduate students?
   a. **Response from Dr. McNamee:** Karen DePauw has been working on this since she got here and will discuss it later in the meeting. Dr. McNamee thinks that it is extremely important and we should think about it.
   b. **Response from Dr. Finney:** Dr. DePauw will be able to talk about an opportunity she has been pursuing recently related to this issue.

4. **DH Comment:** University should also consider/think about costs and rates for student housing.

5. **DH Question (back to growth):** What is going to happen to second choice? Is it going to go away or be repurposed in this growth plan?
   a. **Response from Dr. McNamee:** Engineering uses this the most. Students get offered a place at Tech if they pursue a different major from what they applied to. Tech is in the second year of this, and it’s been a mixed success: Engineering is letting second choice students switch into program, which is sort of defeating the purpose; homes have not been as accommodating as we hoped in terms of making the students feel welcome. University is conducting modeling to see if program should get changed, but he really thinks students should stay in second choice.

6. **Dr. McNamee Comment:** When it comes to growth, Dr. Sands’ #1 priority is quality of programs, not simply increasing numbers. His focus is on how to make Tech’s programs more attractive to applicants.

7. **DH Comment:** In terms of graduate applicants, it’s not about a decrease in the number applying, it’s a problem of graduate student stipend. They (CLAHS) loose many top applicants because the stipend is low.

8. **DH Comment:** In order to remain competitive, is there any chance they can get any tuition remission for family members’ educational benefits.
   a. **Dr. McNamee Response:** the University is limited in what it can do, since there is no state funding for this. In order to do that, tuition would need to go up for the rest of the University in order to pay for it.

**Academic Analytics:** has improved dramatically. The Provost Office has started working with them again. Dr. McNamee would be more than happy if departments used it. **On a related note:** Dr. Sands is very interested in identifying metrics to measure quality of departments.

1. **DH Comment:** she has a number of faculty members who are looking at thinking about what the metrics ought to be in order to assess quality.

**Dr. Finney Announcement:** Executive committee is invited to lunch with Deans: Dec 2, March 3

8:30am: Exit Dr. McNamee and Dr. Finney; Enter Dr. Karen DePauw

**Dr. DePauw’s Agenda:** IGEPs; Childcare; Housing; Academy for GTA Excellence.

*Note: Department Head Forum on January 14, 3:30pm to 5:00pm: topic will be broader version of what we discussed today.*
IGEPs (Interdisciplinary Graduate Education Programs): Going very well; there are 14; do not have additional funding to support additional IGEPs. Graduate School has gone through the first year review of them, and they came out very nicely. Program is going well. Amy Pruden is new Dean of Interdisciplinary Studies. One of the issues in the past is how are these people counted? Dr. DePauw thinks that now they are actually able to be double and triple counted, as she hoped.

1. DH Question: There will be no more IGEPs because of funding, correct?
   a. The initial model was a 3-year cohort and that was built into the model. Funding for any more has not been built into the budget. The Provost is putting new dollars for assistantships, but enrollment is down, so Dr. McNamee wants to know where the dollars are going. He has awarded 204 new assistantships (May and March), and they have mostly gone out to the colleges. So it is bizarre that graduate enrollment is dropping.

2. Dr. DePauw Comment: Concerned that they’re not taking enough risks with the assistantships. Departments should extend more offers than they have spots. Dr. DePauw is encouraging faculty to take risks and send out more offers than they have spots. She is fairly certain that if students take risks like this, they’ll accept. If all offers accept, then graduate school will find a way to fund them.

3. Dr. DePauw Comment: Average stipend is 16,000/academic year. Some students are down to 11K and 12K and some are up to 30K. She suggests talking to the Provost if they want more money for stipends/assistantships.

4. Dr. DePauw: Communication recruitment system
   a. DH Comment: Her department tried this last year and students were spammed so badly that they had very negative reactions from potential applicants.
   b. Dr. DePauw response: Thinks this is under control now, but departments have the ability to control how many emails get sent out when.

Discussion regarding Post-Docs: DH Question: Is there some way that post-docs can be included in the metrics of graduate school? Post-docs cost twice as much and often do the faculty more good in terms of research help. Is it possible for post-docs to be included when counting for graduate students?

   c. Dr. DePauw: they’re not counted as graduate students because they are not graduate students
   d. DH Response: but they are being trained like graduate students
   e. Dr. DePauw.: She is certain that Dr. McNamee is able to see who has post-docs, but she also sees that lots of schools are investing in post-docs and not grad students.
   f. DH comment: why does the graduate school not just assume responsibility for the post-docs?
   g. Dr. DePauw: Post-docs are housed now in the Office of Research; Dr. DePauw does not directly communicate with the post-docs. However, she can and is willing to do so.
   h. DH Comment: they fall through the cracks; at least for the first few years, they are like senior graduate students.
   i. Dr. DePauw: Post-docs have switched back between graduate school and Office and Research many times, but she agrees that they are not well represented.
   j. Discussion with whether or not they be treated as faculty or graduate students. They is certainly is a relationship between # of graduate students and # of post-docs, so they should not be considered independent, but they have the benefits of the faculty.
   k. Dr. DePauw: said she may be more intentional in extending offers of the graduate school opportunities to post-docs and will have discussions as to how they are counted.
**Childcare:** Several childcare-directed efforts are coming out of graduate school right now. She hired a childcare coordinator for the grad school. She is terrific and ran a co-op in NY and has a great deal of experience. They are opening up with three new programs in January 2015. These initiatives are geared primarily toward graduate students, but it can include undergrads. It will not address the issue of faculty or staff, but she has talked with the President about that issue as well. Thus, you’ll see a lot more about childcare coming out of President Sands’ Office.

- **1. Parents club:** hanging out with other “new” parents. Started by Anisa’s students
- **2. Vetted babysitting list:** list of individuals who will babysit (in-home care) in one’s home; graduate school will manage the list and they will be vetted by the Graduate School, and the School will help with pricing and accountability and will compliment what is already happening in HR.
  - **DH comment:** this is very temporary and short term, but it does not solve the issue of long-term. We must be certain to note that this is only one solution of a multi-pronged approach.
- **3. Co-op for graduate students in January:** will be ensured, licensed. It is not full-time because of the regulations. 3-hour blocks of 15 children in morning, afternoon, and evening, when students can sign kids to attend. Dr. DePauw is hiring a supervisor at this point. There are 2 possibilities for location: 1. Blacksburg Rec center or 2. Lutheran church. There are pros and cons for both places, and they are still working on decision of location. Cost is $160 dollars per month, and the school is paying $12/hour to the employees. However, since it is a co-op, students have to put in some hours as well. Dr. Sands has been completely supportive of this project. Full announcement will be sent out soon.
  - **DH Comment:** Are there any previous models used at other universities from which VT can study and learn how this is done elsewhere?
  - **DH Response:** Anisa: we are way behind other places; so the more the noise surrounding this issue, the better.

**Family Housing:** Dr. DePauw has been working with the owners of First and Main. At the other end, where the Rugby field is, is being considered for gradate student family housing. This is not a VT project. It is a partnership with private owners of the field. The developers are looking at starting at 100/200 beds starting off and rolling into 500-600 after a couple years. Dr. DePauw has been working on this for a couple years and thinks that this is finally rolling out.

- **DH Comment:** is this not something the VT foundation can help with?
  - **Dr. DePauw response:** the problem is that it’s not a VT project. If VT can come up with a plan, then she thinks the foundation may help.

**The Academy for GTA Excellence:** The graduate school has just started the Academy for GTA Excellence. The purpose is for recognition and also a way to enhance GTA skills as teachers. Dr. DePauw is working with several others to identify Academy faculty scholars to help with mentoring and training. Post-docs are mentioned and included. They can either be mentees or mentors. There are three categories of membership: member, associate, and fellow. There will be different criteria at each categories. There will be screening categories to admit into fellow. Once they are fellow, they will receive “top off funds.” They will teach in summer, winter, residential life, CLE, as well as department. Department will also pay them, but they will receive some additional funding from the graduate school. Any graduate students can apply as a member, but associate and fellow will be limited in numbers. Dr. DePauw can send out the penultimate draft to Department Heads, and hopes to have the final formal draft in January.

- **DH Comment:** Are there any incentives for the faculty scholars to be involved?
Dr. DePauw Response: She has no funding for faculty, but she hopes that departments will recognize them for their efforts.

9:30am: Exit Dr. DePauw and Maureen McCusker