Council Minutes

Executive Committee of the Department Heads Council

325 Burruss Hall

8-9:30am

February 3, 2015

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); Benda Winkel (Biological Sciences); Bob Smith (Sustainable Biomaterials), Beth Grabau (Plant Pathology, Physiology & Weed Science); Stephanie Adams (Engineering Education); Ann Khademian (School of Public and International Affairs); Vice Provost Jack Finney; Provost Mark McNamee; Dale Pike (Executive Director of TELOS).

Rapporteur: Maureen McCusker

Welcome: Intro by Eric Paterson

Provost McNamee’s Announcements:

Stepping down from his position: Sometime this coming year, he plans to step down. He will stay in place until a search is completed. He feels very good about it, but he will still be with the University for the next remaining months.

General Education Proposal: Very pleased by his meeting last week. The proposal comes to University council next week. The only bump in the road is the faculty senators, who voted against it. He reached out to Bernice Hausman to see if there is way that the Provost can support her. She does not like several aspects of the Proposal. Provost said he wants to have the support of the faculty senate, even if it does pass with out their support. Thus, he is working on finding a way to incorporate the faculty senate’s thoughts. If they can reach some sort of an agreement, that would be great, but it if not, the bill will still pass. Other objection is that they’ve only had a year to look it, but in fact, they have had four years to look at it. Dr. McNamee says to tell him if DH faculty and are unhappy with the proposal.

Student task force: Dr. McNamee met with the committee last Friday to talk about he report they put together about the student Virginia Tech experience, so that will be circulated soon. The biggest recommendation is that they distribute the student space over 3-4 facilities, as opposed to setting Squires as the one large student space. Dr. McNamee thinks this makes more sense.

Recruiting season:

- Search for the VP of Research and Innovation. The search is underway and the first round of meetings is coming up. The search firm is very optimistic about the candidates they have attracted so far.
- VT will be accepting more freshmen this fall. The President has been working very hard in Richmond to garner state support for this, which seems to be very positive.
• DH Question: what’s the rationale for not being overt about increase in student body? Other schools often advertise that they are growing, but Virginia Tech seems to hide it more.
  o Dr. McNamee Response: If VT says to Richmond, “we’re growing.” They will say, “great, go ahead and do it” without funding the endeavor, whereas if they don’t make it as explicit, the University is more likely to get funds from the State.
• DH Comment: In the past decade, my department has seen 100% growth in our student populations, and it has had a huge impact on the education they deliver.
• DH Question: Is the undergrad increase across the board?
  o Dr. McNamee Response: the hope is that VT can distribute the increase across different colleges. Every college has new figures. We will see some disproportionate growth in engineering, but the hope is to broaden it across the college. VT saw record number of applicants this year. Business college is growing, so they are very optimistic.
  o Note: Provost’s office is working with the graduate school as to why graduate enrollment has decreased. They are trying to be more tactful on attracting and recruiting students. Agriculture is a good example of the way that “marketing” has increased enrollments.

Dr. McNamee asked for “other things on your [Department Heads’] minds”:

• DH Comment: Regarding guidelines for new general education proposal/pathways, I don’t know to what extent the faculty has been kept in the loop about what is going on regarding the changes the University is facing. He wants to make sure that administration is strengthening the communication line to faculty. Faculty recognize that something is happening, but they don’t know what it is yet. Not sure if the faculty are not engaging themselves or if they administration is not transmitting it to them.
  o Response: Dr. McNamee said he thinks that is a good assessment, but it’s a difficult to facilitate that communication. There will be a formal review process in which maybe the faculty will be more active and engaged in the process.
• DH Question: What is the timeline for implementation?
  o Response: Right now, Fall of 2016.
• DH question: other places have all gone through revisions to the CLE, and as a result, there were very specific things that the course did or had to do in order to to count. So if one had to have an engineering course they wanted to include; she would like to see some benchmarks that need to be met.
  o Dr. McNamee Response: The outcomes are what will be used to judge this.
  o DH Response: Well are there going to be any other guidelines, aside from outcomes? In previous experiences, there have been more specific benchmarks, such as “x many students” enrolled, etc.
  o Dr. McNamee Response: He does not anticipate these sorts of benchmarks
• DH Comment: Someone needs to talk about resources. Will they get more resources?
  o Dr. McNamee Response: This is a significant effort to increase the undergraduate experience. He assured them that they will want to be investing more funds to make this a success. There will be more funds added in. The need for better advising will be addressed, along with strategic plans for faculty advising.
• DH Question: “You mentioned intentional increase in graduate enrollment. Will there be any resources allotted to students?”
Dr. McNamee Response: no, because administration believes the schools have the resources they need, but they’re just not being used well.

DH Question: Some departments have grown and some have not. At what level does the argument need to be made? At the Dean level? Or at the College level?

Dr. McNamee Response: VT tends to give funds to the College, so they are trusting the Deans to allot resources, but Provost’s office are making a strong effort.

Dr. McNamee and Dr. Finney departed at 8:40am

Dale D. Pike entered to discuss TELOS at 8:40am

Welcome by Eric Paterson:

Introductions and brief overview of TELOS by Dale Pike:

- Technology-enhanced learning and Online Strategies (TELOS): is the unit he runs. This focuses very much on online learning programs. They are currently in the works of examining what drives a successful online learning program. Even examining tuition and costs.

- Other highlight concerns/key variables he will discuss:
  1. Learning management system: Where VT is and where it will be going with Scholar
  2. Course design support: this needs to shift a little bit
  3. Considerations for accreditation and support:

Learning management system:

- SAKAI is the learning platform on which Scholar is built; it is an open source model. Over the past two years, there have been some merging and political issues so that every other school that was part of the platform has left. Thus, the vision of where the platform is going is unclear. He has made the determination that there is not much more than 5 years of life in the platform, and he thinks that there will be security issues down the pike.
- Although VT does not need to “pull the plug right away,” it does need to begin the conversation changing from scholar.
- Scott Midkiff and Mr. Pike will be meeting with Deans and chairs over the course of the month to lay out the challenges they are facing with the platform. He wants to find out what students and faculty want to do (what does Scholar prevent you from doing? What are some components of a learning management system are you interested in?).
- One of the goals is to integrate this platform with Banner and other platforms.
- Other considerations:
  - Ease of media integration (importing and handling video and images)
  - DH Question: What about making the switch? How are they planning to manage this?
    - Mr. Pike Response: this is something where he (Mr. Pike) comes in; it would require some sort of importing feature
  - DH Question: He sees this as a major issue, especially for those who deliver online courses in his department.
    - Mr. Pike Response: VT certainly does not want to make any changes from scholar unless they are absolutely certain that the new one is better.
DH Comment: One of the needs outside of scholar is an online collaboration mechanism, and Scholar was not designed for that, so it is difficult. A system that allows for this would be great.

- **Mr. Pike Response:** The plan is to split this into at least 3 parts: 1. Course design; 2. Scholar project sites and what are the components that make this interface better. 3. E-portfolios; 4. SPOT online surveys

- Learning analytics: how can VT can show the student the patterns of his/her behavior that potentially have an impact. This way, they are aware of their own participation. At the next level is faculty so that they can keep maps of their own behavior and topics and their students’ behavior. Having these (self and other) reporting measures is key to Mr. Pike. He would like to be able to tap into these needs and wants for faculty and students

- **Timeline:** planned to be a 2-3 year implementation project

**Mr. Pike comment:** He wants to come to visit each of the colleges to find out that they want

- **DH Comment:** Do not think deans should be the target audience to speak to, because they are not the ones using and launching scholar.
  - **Mr. Pike response:** He certainly wants to identify and meet with as many faculty members active on scholar as possible.

- **DH Comment:** Recommendation that Mr. Pikes comes up to the national capital region, because scholar is an enormous component of their communication and linkages with the other campuses.

- **DH Comment:** are there not efforts to strengthen the Scholar platform, as opposed to replacing it?
  - **Mr. Pike response:** Strengthening the platform would require rewriting the entire platform, in may end up being a waste of resources, so better to just invest resources in a better platform.

- **DH Comment:** SPOT surveys are becoming to be a very huge situational problem. So few people are responding. The response rates are < 10% often. He hopes this situation can be addressed with this new platform.
  - **Mr. Pike Response:** This will certainly be addressed in the new platform, but at the fundamental level, he believes this to be a policy issue

- **DH Comment:** Is there any discussion to incorporate EFARS into this? The more of these systems we have, the cumbersome it is for faculty.
  - **Mr. Pike response:** He agrees that the fewer reporting programs, the better.

**Course design support:**

- In the past they have had a craft model, but he thinks they need to have more template-like “flavors” courses available for faculty to use.
- Will need more media support to help with course design, and hoping to build it in

**Accreditation Support**

- Hoping to build in some capabilities to build in the accreditation and certification requirements into course design
• SARA (state accreditation reciprocity agreement): the result was an expectation for every university to establish a contractual agreement with the state to teach in the state. Virginia legislature just joined the Southern States Reciprocity agreement

• SO now VT has to certify that it has standards of quality (similar to SACS expectations) and provide evidence that every course taught online has been certified, as has the instructor for that course. This is something they want to build into to the new platform to have this be a faculty-driven process.

• **DH Question:** She is working on launching an all-online degree and has been communicating with people around campus, but she would like the degree to be a streamlined, connected program.
  
  o **Mr. Pike response:** “If you’re program is already in the process, let’s see if we can try to launch a programmatic launch. Please contact me.”