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Council of Chairs Meeting, April 4, 2013

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COUNCIL OF CHAIRS, 2012-13
Minutes of the Meeting on April 4, 2013, 3:30 p.m.
Room 402 Drinko Library (plus connection to AC208)

1. Attendance:

Chairs/Division Heads: Mike Castellani (CHM), Harlan Smith (FIN/ECN), Jeff Archambault (ACC/LE), Dan Holbrook (HST), Marty Laubach (SOC/ANT), Allyson Goodman (MC), Steven Mewaldt (PSY), Jane Hill (ENG), Denise Landry (NUR), Betsy Dulin (Engineering), Janet Dozier (ECE), Allen Stern (AST), Eldon Larsen (Engineering), Alfred Akinsete (MTH), Byron Clercx (Art & Graphic Design), Monica Sawhney (Public Health)

2. Mike Castellani called the meeting to order at (roughly) 3:30 p.m.

3. The first topics of discussion involved looking forward to Fall 2013

- A. Participants noted that, for whatever reason or reasons, when the fall semester starts MU will have a dearth of women in senior-level administrative positions involving faculty responsibilities. Teresa Eagle, in fact, is the only woman in this group. Is this a topic that the Chairs should raise in future meetings and/or outside the Council of Chairs? For example, is this a topic that could fit into next year's Campus Conversations schedule? If so, should we initiate discussions with AA on this?
- B. The Council then turned to the nomination of officers for next year. First, Mike noted that the current nominating procedures need to be redone, to match them up with how the Council operates. He will do that over the summer and have a new set of procedures ready for Council review at the start of fall. Second, the Council proceeded to elect Mike and Harlan to serve another term as Chair and Vice-Chair/Secretary, respectively.

4. The Council then returned to the budget cuts faced by MU, and our cost-cutting brainstorming, that dominated the March meeting.

- A. As discussion got underway, participants realized quickly that the big questions facing us as a body involve much more than simply identifying potential cost-savings. How should the Council go about offering its suggestions to the larger university community? And, perhaps more importantly, when should we offer our suggestions?
- B. In light of these uncertainties, it was suggested that we focus, for now, on getting informed. The more we know about the costs and benefits of activities that fall under the purview of AA, the easier it will be to develop our own positions on potential cuts—and the more ready we'll be for real discussion. It was also noted, and participants agreed, that we should not get out ahead of the campus-wide discussion by offering a series of cost-cutting ideas before the wider Marshall community turns to areas we've developed a position on.

1) For example, can we get a good handle on the costs and benefits of reassigned time? We can get information on the total amount of reassigned time granted across the university, and the replacement costs associated with this. But what about the "social benefits" of reassigned time? So much of what faculty do to enrich the academic experience for our students, and to maintain the faculty's sense of intellectual identity and purpose, is done via reassigned time. Without reassigned time, much of this activity would no longer be undertaken. Eliminating reassigned time for faculty,

therefore, would likely have a significant impact on the culture and fabric of the academic enterprise here at Marshall.

2) Can we get a good handle on the costs and benefits of the FYS program? In principle, we should be able to get an exact cost figure per semester, based on the replacement of FYS-designated faculty in departmental curricula and on the cost of training faculty for FYS teaching. But, as noted in March, we don't yet have a good sense of the benefits of FYS. In more technical terms, what Return on Investment (e.g., in resources, faculty, and student time) does FYS generate? Does AA have a sense of the program's Return on Investment? Without this information, it is impossible to hold an informed campus-wide discussion on whether the FYS program, as currently practiced, is worth protecting in these budget-cutting times.

3) Participants also followed up on the costs of departmental/faculty phone services that were discussed during and after the March meeting. A key point, overlooked or maybe not fully understood at the March meeting, was highlighted: the university has bundled our phone and computer connections together, so our office phones are tied inextricably to our office computers, via the internet. Individual departments cannot eliminate their MU phone connections without eliminating their office computer connections. This would, therefore, not be a cost-saving option an individual department could pursue. But it is a cost-saving option at the university level. MU could, we surmise, restructure the phone/internet connection system in order to increase options for departments and faculty, and lower the overall cost. But at the Chairs' level we don't have enough information to offer this idea on an informed basis. The questions we articulated, as this discussion thread concluded, were: Why is the current phone system set up as it is? Could it be done differently and more cheaply? Who at MU makes this kind of decision? We'd also like to get a feel for what other universities are doing with respect to this issue. In light of this discussion, we agreed to amend the March Minutes on this topic accordingly.

5. Throughout the above discussion participants kept bumping up against the information constraints, and the participation constraints, that the Council faces as a body. First, the Council is generally in the dark when it comes to university-wide budgetary reality; our meeting with the Provost in February was one of our first chances to get informed about the bigger picture and to understand the budget situation from a campus-wide point of view. Second, the Council appears to have no official, well-defined role in university governance (e.g., at the AA level or at the Faculty Senate level). As such, we do not know how to participate effectively, as a body, in the campus-wide budget discussion. So, how can we become more effective? How can we make the Council relevant?

A. As several participants reminded us, one way to deal with the constraints we face is to get informed. Another way is to get connected. We need to find out where, across the university, we can find a seat (or be given a seat) at the table during discussions that affect the scope and effectiveness of our teaching efforts. In other words, what we really want is the ability to provide input into ongoing discussions, in ways that are timely and respected. We know that, as a body, we have insights into the academic enterprise that others do not have, and in particular an understanding of the constraints that affect teaching and learning across campus. We submit, therefore, that our input can be valuable and should be valued. And so the question before us is: "How can we get there, from here?"

B. When it comes to getting connected, we should explore the possibility of obtaining a seat, for the Council, on the Faculty Senate. We'll work with Eldon Larsen on this and see what develops. We

should also explore our ability to attend MUBOG meetings, and even the regular Deans' meetings run by the Provost. Should we designate a representative or representatives who will attend MUBOG meetings? Should we do the same for the Deans' meetings? Can we even decide this on our own? If not, who should we talk to about setting this up?

6. Talk then turned again to the budget cuts. Participants are concerned that MU will decide to use our course-based and program-based course fees and lab fees, and even our in-load e-course fund accounts, to shore up the budget as the anticipated cuts take effect. Is it even possible for MU to use fees collected at the department or program level to close campus-wide budget gaps? For example, certain course fees have been approved by the MUBOG for specific purposes. To what extent can MU draw upon our course and program fees, and our e-course money, to manage the university's overall budgetary situation? Concerns about such an action had begun to develop shortly before today's meeting, but without concrete information we do not know how to respond. The members of the Council agreed, once again, that greater information sharing would benefit everyone.

A. Several participants noted that departments use these fees and funds to manage yearly purchase flows (e.g., summer purchases for fall courses) that do not fit well (if at all) into the university's fiscal-year timetable.

B. These fees accrue, which means that these funds are the key way departments manage larger purchases that are necessary for their programs to function.

C. A question arose as to the treatment of student fees versus the in-load e-course funds. Are these funds subject to the same policy oversight and usage protocols? We are not sure, but we think not. Should the in-load e-course money disappear, several departments will lose the ability to run the programs, and provide the services, their students deserve.

7. The meeting wrapped up with a short discussion of Performance-Based Funding and how it will impact MU. As Dan Holbrook pointed out in an email memo sent around to us the day after the meeting (i.e., on April 5th), which I received while working on these Minutes:

"There is legislation currently wending its way through the WV Legislature that will establish outcomes-based funding for a portion of the state money that supports higher education. This will clearly impact Marshall University. I believe at the recent Council of Chairs meeting called by the Provost, he said that if outcomes-based funding were implemented right now, Marshall would face an additional budget cut of 1% or so, and that would increase in future years if our outcomes remain the same as now. Senate Bill 326 [attached for our review] has been sent to the House of Delegates. It establishes outcomes-based funding, based on the recommendations contained in the Final Report to the West Virginia Select Committee on Outcomes-Based Funding Models in Higher Education [also attached for our review].

Dan concluded his note to us as follows: "The committee that will establish the exact [implementation and measurement] formulae will be appointed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House, and, according to the report, will have representatives of the Legislature, the CTCs, and the baccalaureate-granting institutions. I think it will be important to have faculty representation on that committee." Here's another opportunity for the Council to get informed, and get connected, should this legislation pass and the necessary committee be established.