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## Council of Chairs Meeting, August 29, 2013

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COUNCIL OF CHAIRS, 2013-14  
Minutes of the Meeting on August 29, 2013, 3:30 p.m.  
Drinko 402; GC 134; CEB 102

1. Attendance. 28 members, as follows:

Chairs/Division Heads: Mike Castellani (CHM), Harlan Smith (FIN/ECN), Jeff Archambault (ACC/LE), Dan Holbrook (HST), Marty Laubach (SOC/ANT), Jane Hill (ENG), Denise Landry (NUR), Allen Stern (AST), Paula Lucas (CI), Josh Hagen (GEO), Alfred Akinsete (MTH), Asad Salem (ENGR), Eldon Larsen (ENGR), Allyson Goodman (MC), Penny Kroll (PT), Missy Reed (CISP), Lisa Heaton (ESE), Marybeth Beller (PLS), Caroline Perkins (MDL), Jennifer Perry (CLS), Eric Lassiter (HU), Cam Brammer (CMM), Mike Cunningham (LS), Maribea Barnes (Art & Design), Richard Kravchak (Music & Theatre), Del Chrol (Classics), Brian Morgan (IST), John Schloss (SOP)

2. Mike Castellani called the meeting to order at about 3:35 p.m. He began the meeting by asking each Chair/Division Head/Program Director to introduce him/herself.

3. Our New Chairs Mentoring Program will continue this year. Should any new member of the Council wish to have a Mentor, please contact Mike. He will set you up with a veteran Chair—and possibly also a person who has been a Chair for only a year or two—upon request. Last year we partnered with AA to run a couple of Orientation Sessions for Chairs; those who attended found them valuable. We do not know if these sessions will be run again this year. If you're interested, please like Mike or Harlan know.

4. Over the summer Mike updated the Council email list. Please check it over to make sure your listing is correct. Send corrections to Harlan. Also, check through the attendance list in these Minutes to make sure Harlan has your name and affiliation right.

5. Mike reports that he has been informed by the Provost that prerequisite changes are now considered "catalog changes" and must go through the university Curriculum Committee process for approval. The current official MU Course Change Form, however, as listed on the current Faculty Senate Website (and dated April 2012), does not include "prerequisite changes" as a line item. The current form identifies changes in the following aspects of a course as "Course Changes": Course Title, Alpha Designator, Course Number, Grading Mode (graded vs. CR/NC), Course Description, and General Education Attributes (e.g., Multicultural, International Studies, CT). The Council requests further information from the University Curriculum Committee (UCC), and Faculty Senate, as to the status of prerequisite changes as "catalog changes." FYI, Terry Hapney is currently serving as UCC Chair and Eldon Larsen is President of the Faculty Senate.

6. Discussion continued as to the official standing of the Council in the university governance structure. President Kopp supports a role for the Council within the governance structure, and will approve whatever the Faculty Senate approves in this regard. We need to develop a concrete proposal for the Faculty Senate this fall. In addition to this opportunity, the Council has at least two other ways of contributing to university-level decisions:

- a. First, the Council has an “observer seat” on the Associate Dean’s Council. The AD meetings generally take place once a month, on Fridays. Richard Kravchak volunteered to fill this seat for the Council during Fall 2013.
- b. Second, the Budget Working Group (BWG), on which our rep Dan Holbrook did outstanding work last summer, is going to be re-constituted—and expanded in size. In the process the Council will likely get a second seat. If we do get asked to add another rep, Mike will send out a request for nominees later this fall, when it’s time to staff the new expanded BWG.

7. Mike then asked the Council members present to brainstorm ideas for future Council meetings. He emphasized that members should feel free to continue this brainstorming outside of Council meetings and to email him with their ideas for topics and/or guest speakers.

- a. Allyson Goodman noted a desire to meet with the MU Foundation in order to learn about fund-raising possibilities at the departmental level.
- b. Mike Cunningham noted the lack of academic input into technology decisions. The Council discussed who to approach about this. Jan Fox? Arnold Miller? Other members of the Information Technology Council?
- c. Jane Hill would like to have a discussion with the Budget Office RE the recurring monthly charges for items such as departmental telephones, internet hookups, and copiers. The money each department has to “encumber” at the start of each year to cover these expenses is eating up large chunks, and in some cases almost all, of the departmental budgets we get handed in July of each year. How can we be expected to run our units each year on the few dollars we have left over after encumbering all the necessary funds? Who has oversight over this aspect of budgeting? Should we request a meeting with a member or two of the Information Technology Council to discuss the mechanics for budgeting and expensing our telecommunications and IT needs? One member even suggested we might want to invite a local Reporter from the Herald-Dispatch or a TV station to a meeting at which we address these issues.
- d. Cam Brammer raised the issue of cell phones vs. the standard landline phones for which each department must pay a monthly charge. Can we go cellular? Dan Holbrook noted that a university-wide contract dictates these monthly charges, and that if any particular department opts out no savings will result—since the contract must be honored anyway. Brian Morgan noted that the safety aspect (e.g., the ability to find phones to make 911 calls) of having standard landline phones at the departmental level may well require us to maintain our landlines regardless of cost.

8. The next major topic of discussion was our upcoming meeting with President Kopp, on Thursday September 5<sup>th</sup>. The President has requested this meeting; the Council is the first university-wide group he wants to meet with this fall. During the summer Mike, Josh Hagen, and Cam Brammer met with the President on multiple occasions, had substantive discussions with him, and believe that the President is listening. The President is seeking our input because he realizes the Chairs are practical problem-solvers, who are charged with making sure that the university’s academic activities at the classroom and program level continue to function regardless of the circumstances. The President has ideas, but wants to work with us on implementation strategies. Starting on September 5<sup>th</sup>, we are being given the chance, as a group, to work with the President to make the best of a very difficult situation.

Mike emphasized that we must engage with the President as a group. We need as many members as possible at next week's meeting, for our credibility depends in large part on how active our membership wants to be. Currently, the upper administration gauges our credibility as a group by the length of our attendance listings in the Minutes. The more people who attend Council meetings regularly, and the more who attend on September 5<sup>th</sup>, the more credible will be our voice.

9. Josh Hagen then provided a summary of his 3 meetings with President Kopp this summer.

a. The discussion was wide-ranging, focused on institution-wide issues. The President's #1 concern is how to engage the faculty in the decision-making process. He admits he doesn't have answers for us, nor workable solutions ready for implementation. He's looking for ideas. And he's ready to listen to others, including the Council.

b. Josh identified a number of issues that "keep the President up at night," such as:

(1) The consistently negative news coming out of Charleston RE future state funding for higher ed. More big cuts are on the way, and performance-based funding proposals are being developed. It appears that these proposals are one way of cutting state funding, based as they are on improvement over time in a set of metrics—which means that failure to meet these improvement standards will result in further funding cuts.

(2) Demography. We all have known for a long time that the pool of WV high school students is shrinking, and we draw the majority of our students from WV.

(3) Federal-level interventions and activism RE higher ed. In particular, the Federal Government is considering revamping and restructuring (taking over?) the university accreditation process.

(4) Consolidation within the WV system of higher ed. Current budget cuts in the statewide higher ed system are affecting the viability of some smaller institutions and the state is looking at some hard choices as to how to address this problem.

c. Josh also felt comfortable enough, in his discussions with the President, to identify where the upper administration has failed. In particular, Josh emphasized to the President that incentives matter, and that he must design policies in ways that give faculty an incentive to work with him rather than against him.

10. Cam Brammer reported on her meetings with the President. Her discussions with him centered on an AGB (Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges) document highlighting 6 principal factors that will drive the future of higher ed, across the country, in the coming years. Mike, Josh, and Harlan also got this document and read through it as well. We found the document enlightening, in part because we now know that this is the kind of material that the President is reading and thinking about. Cam found the questions posed in this document interesting enough to suggest that the document be distributed across campus and that the university hold a forum at which these questions can be discussed and debated. Meanwhile, if you're interested in what this document has to say, please email Mike for a copy. It's not easy reading, but this is the kind of material driving the President's thinking.

a. Cam noted that another \$5.3 million dollar cut is coming in January of 2014. As Josh noted, the President is developing a plan to cope with this and is looking for input from us as he does so.

b. Student scholarships, loans, and financial aid in general came up for discussion. Should MU make financial aid contingent on student success and progress towards graduation? Should we revamp the financial aid process to provide students with incentives to stay and complete? (This is one of the topics discussed at length in the aforementioned AGB document.) In this regard Mike noted that the President talked with him about re-examining the tuition, scholarship, and financial aid landscape. One idea the President is floating is to reduce or eliminate MU's internally-funding merit scholarships, which in his view would result in lower tuition costs for all students. This discussion is being driven, in part, by anecdotal evidence showing that students with very high GPA's are more likely than other groups of students to leave MU before completing their degrees. Is our current financial aid structure giving top students an easy financial ride through the first couple of years on campus, so they can build up their GPA's and skills for transfer to more prestigious institutions? Caroline Perkins, among others, noted that no systematic study has yet been done on who is transferring out and why. One way we can contribute to this discussion is by insisting on careful analysis of the transfer data—as it connects to each type of scholarship that's awarded on the basis of merit.

c. Cam urged us all to keep our disagreements with the upper administration out of the media as much as possible, and in particular to be more positive in our discussions with parents of current and prospective students. Marshall has received lots of bad press in recent months, and we need to start talking about the good things, at least with parents and in public, rather than the bad.

d. Cam, like Josh and Mike, noted the President's desire to get the faculty engaged with him in finding solutions. She urged the President to keep the faculty current on issues being brought to the BOG, and to bring the faculty into discussions on these issues before BOG voting takes place. In sum, she urged the President to think in terms of "working with" the faculty rather than in terms of "doing to" the faculty.

11. Mike met with the President at least 8 times this summer. He emphasized to the President that the Council as a group wants to be part of the solution. We want to help, to make the best we can of the current and projected future situation we find ourselves in. We do disagree, though, with the upper administration's top-down one-size fits-all approach to decision-making and policy reform. As Chairs, charged with implementation, we want flexibility more than anything else. We want and need room to figure out how best to achieve the institution's goals. But this means, too, that we need to know what the institution's goals are. We need to be in the loop during all phases of the discussion, from goal-setting to implementation.

a. Mike corroborated the upcoming budget cuts: almost certainly \$5-plus million next year, with quite possibly a similar cut the following year.

b. He reports that the President also wants faculty to engage in the state-wide political process. (Cam agreed.) The President knows we need a state-wide higher ed agenda, and we need to have a dialogue with the legislature. (Again, this reflects the material in the AGB document.)

c. Mike reports that much of what Cam and Josh said in their independent meetings with Dr. Kopp were discussed in his meetings. He notes that the President, on a number of occasions, quoted Cam and Josh back to him. And Dr. Kopp met with other chairs over the summer, too. Our interaction with the President has become, as Mike puts it, a genuine dialogue.

d. Mike asked us all to be present on September 5<sup>th</sup>, and to contribute to making the meeting as productive as possible. He believes the Council is in a “sweet spot” with the President, and that we have a real chance on the 5<sup>th</sup> to have some constructive input. Let’s make the most of it.

12. Jane Hill noted that we need to have a two-level discussion with the President. We must, of course, follow up on the kind of macro-level discussions that Mike, Cam, and Josh have had with the President. But we also need to make him aware of the breakdowns occurring across campus, and the dysfunctionality that’s present, at the micro/operational level. Day-to-day operations are often conducted in crisis mode. In particular, the budgeting and personnel/hiring processes are breaking down (if not already broken). Some faculty are not even being paid. And the President doesn’t seem to know this. How can we communicate this reality to him? Who else should be communicating this reality to him? How can we improve the vertical communication channels on campus in order to make sure the President understands the on-the-ground reality he is dealing with? And where, exactly, is the vertical communications process breaking down?

a. The Council now sees a distinction between the President and Academic Affairs. The President appears to be listening, and is in Mike’s words “on an outreach tour.” But communication links between the Chairs, the Deans, the Provost, and AA are not strong, and not two-way. Where do the roots of this problem lie? How can we contribute to a solution? How do we explain this to the President?

b. One way to manage the communications breakdown is to set up a university Ombudsman Office, to serve as a place where our operational problems can be described and heard.

13. Dan Holbrook switched topics to remind all Chairs to check the status of their roll-over accounts. Every July the Budget Office holds back, e.g., some of our previously-earned in-load e-course money—to cover payments we made with that money towards the end of the fiscal year that may take some time to clear. This “temporary hold-back” is currently in place; previously-earned funds are slowly being released back into our accounts. But not all the funds, according to many members present, have not yet been returned.

14. Mike closed the meeting at 5 p.m.