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Council of Chairs Meeting, September 5, 2013

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COUNCIL OF CHAIRS, 2013-14
Minutes of the Meeting on September 5, 2013, 3:30 p.m.
Drinko 402; GC 134; CEB 102

1. Attendance.

A) 41 Chairs/Division Heads: Mike Castellani (CHM), Harlan Smith (FIN/ECN), Jeff Archambault (ACC/LE), Dan Holbrook (HST), Marty Laubach (SOC/ANT), Jane Hill (ENG), Lynda Turner (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), 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), Janet Dozier (COEPD), Tracy Christofero (TM), David Mallory (BSC), Gary McIlvain (SOK), Kelli Williams (Dietetics), Jeff Ruff (RST), Burnis Morris (SOJMC), Venkat Gudivada (CS), Margie McInerney (MGT/MKT/MIS), Steve Mewaldt (Psych), Sandra Stroebel (School Psych), Barbara O'Byrne (Literacy Ed), Joyce Meikamp (Special Ed), Terrence Stange (Literacy Ed)

B) 2 Guests: President Kopp, Matt Turner

2. Mike Castellani called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. He began the meeting by asking President Kopp to make some Opening Remarks.

3. President Kopp stated that his primary purpose in attending today's meeting was to listen. He then laid out in brief the short-term budget situation we have to prepare for. Two scenarios may develop, according to current thinking in the State Legislature: (1) Flat funding for Fiscal Year 2015; (2) Another cut—similar in size, if not identical to, the Fiscal 2014 cut we've already had to absorb. The advice he's gotten is that we should prepare for Scenario #2. To do so, he would like our input and our suggestions. He then opened the floor to questions. The rest of the meeting took place in a Q&A format.

4. State Appropriations for MU and "performance-based funding": Discussion on this topic got underway when one member asked the following: If/when a "performance-based funding" process gets implemented, will it be on a one-size fits-all basis? Will a single set of "success metrics" be imposed campus-wide? If so, this could prove difficult for programs such as the Performing Arts (Music, Theatre) in which it is very hard to predict student success before-the-fact. Is it possible, then, that under performance-based funding the university could be forced to do without the enhancements to university life and culture provided by such programs?

Answer: President Kopp noted that he understands this concern. He then took some time to lay out the key issues surrounding performance-based-funding in WV, as he sees them. First, last year a performance-based funding bill was proposed but did not make it out of the Legislature. In that proposal, during the first year a baseline set of metrics would be established. Then, year-by-year, in 5% increments, more and more of MU's state appropriations would be based on meeting those metrics, with a limit of 25% of state appropriations eventually subject to the metrics. Second, to the President's knowledge no new plans or proposals for performance-based funding have yet been developed and discussed. Third, a key point about performance-based funding is that the "at-risk

state funds” (that portion subject to the metrics) must be treated as 1-time money and therefore could not be used for recurring expenses. The budgeting process would become that much more difficult.

Discussion (with the President’s responses summarized in italics):

(1) What percent of our current annual operating budget is accounted for by state appropriations?

Roughly 22-24%.

(2) How would the cuts be implemented over time? How would the state use the “baseline metrics” established in the first year of such a program? Will the metrics be ratcheted up year-by-year in order to maintain funding? If so, would that not doom MU to failure? *Making the metrics a moving target has not been discussed in the Legislature. Once the metrics are established in the baseline year, new funding in future years would be determined by whether MU is meeting the established benchmarks. RE new funding: the likelihood of the state developing significant new revenue sources over the next 5 years is very low. And the state’s budget revenue forecasts are not good. It’s going to be very hard, if not impossible, for the state to find new money for higher education. As such, we need to begin a strategic planning process that focuses on a 10-year time horizon, during which the President’s best guess is that we will lose roughly 90% of our current annual state appropriations—an amount of money on the order of \$50 million. We have 10 years, therefore, to re-structure and find new revenue courses. We must operate under the assumption that we are being de facto privatized.*

(3) As state appropriations fall, will we gain more freedom to operate as a result? *The short answer is ‘No.’ The President is not optimistic about getting out from under state regulations entirely. The state, and indeed the federal government, are likely to continue to regulate higher education in significant ways. Despite reductions in state and federal allocations for higher education, the appetite for intervention in higher education isn’t diminishing—and it may well be getting stronger. For example, the federal Higher Education Act expires soon, and outside forces are getting ready to gerrymander the higher education landscape. Some of the proposals developed in think tanks and foundations would dismantle higher education as we know it. We need to listen to these proposals. And we need to know who the driving forces behind such proposals are. The Gates, Lumina, and Kresge Foundations, in particular, are activists in this arena. And they are devoting large amounts of money and time to re-thinking the landscape of higher education. We need to understand this shift in policy-making.*

(4) To what extent can we control our tuition structure? And can managing the tuition structure make a significant difference? *The Metro and Non-Resident tuition rates are under our full control. The In-State tuition rate, however, is controlled by the state. Our potential students and their families are more price-sensitive than in the past, too. Now, when we raise tuition rates there’s no guarantee that the result will be a significant revenue increase. We face limitations, as a result, on our ability to raise funds via tuition increases. The President then raised the issue of the “MU Sticker Price.” What would the tuition price be if we dismantle all institutional financial aid and scholarships? If we price ourselves fully and accurately in this way, would this help us gain students and revenue? Marty Laubach responded by noting that with our given tuition structure, in light of increased price-sensitivity around the country we should be flooded with students. The President responded by saying that *potential students and their parents, paradoxically, do not seem to be checking out the MU Financial Aid Portal**

very carefully. At this portal we do advertise the net price of attending MU. Evidently, our attempts to market our net price are not resonating with our potential clientele.

(5) Can we give “returning students” (those who’ve dropped out and now would like to come back) some sort of tuition discount to come back? This led to a discussion of managing financial aid in a way that promotes the overall institutional goal of retaining and graduating more students. *The President noted that the number of credit-hours completed in Years 1 and 2 are highly correlated with degree completion. The WV Promise Scholarship does have a credit-hour completion requirement attached, but many of our own scholarship programs don’t. In short, we currently don’t have funded scholarships that tie success-predictors (e.g., credit-hour completion at the lower level) to the money. We need to re-think financial aid to align our scholarship programs with the institution’s degree-completion goals.* Richard Kravchak asked about the relationship between degree-completion and our tuition structure: Which cohort of students (in-state, metro, non-resident) has the lowest retention and completion rates? *The Metro Cohort. This cohort faces a very low entry-bar, namely a 19 on the ACT—which may be one contributing factor.* Could we then raise the bar, bring better-prepared students to MU from the designated metro area, retain more of them to degree-completion, and thus actually lower the tuition rate?

(6) Can we advertise in ways that help us compete effectively with schools in Ohio and Kentucky? How best can we advertise? In what ways are we currently advertising in the local/regional market?

(7) Another funding/revenue topic raised was MU’s investment strategy. How much control do we have over our investments? What is our strategy? *The President highlighted the distinction between the Foundation and the University. The University follows the BOG’s approved investment policy, which is very conservative and focused on the preservation of capital—and has been granted authority by the state to manage up to \$60 million of its own funds this way. Legally, the Foundation is a separate entity, and pursues its own investment strategy—which is more aggressive than MU’s. Given that the Foundation must adhere to an annual “spend rate,” it requires a higher return on its funds than MU does, hence the more aggressive strategy.*

(8) When it comes to performance-based funding, should not the K-12 system be subject to it as well? If the K-12 system is not able to produce college-ready students for us, and if performance-based funding is set up at the university level only, would that not set us up for failure? If higher ed is going to be subject to performance-based funding, we’d like the state to consider implementing the same type of funding model in the K-12 system.

5. Dan Holbrook sought to focus the discussion on a bigger issue, by arguing that for at least the past 15 years MU’s long-term strategic approach and direction simply hasn’t worked. We need to focus our attention on the “product” we offer. And that is the services provided by the faculty to students, to help them succeed at MU and in their post-college careers. Anything we do must be good for our undergraduate students. We need to pull resources out of things we do that are not good for our undergraduate students, and reallocate those resources towards what we know to be good for our undergraduates. In the process we’ll have to confront the issue of what makes an MU education “distinctive.” Once we know what’s “distinctive” about the product we offer, we can then align our resource-allocation strategy accordingly.

The President responded by agreeing with Dan's point—in part. We shouldn't forget the benefits to students of student-to-student interaction as well as faculty-student interaction. Then the President re-cast Dan's point in terms of "value creation." What value are we creating for students, and how can we maximize it?

6. This statement became the springboard to a new topic, voiced by Marty Laubach: As we seek to improve the value MU offers our students and to re-position ourselves strategically for the next 10 years, "What does the Administration want from the faculty?"

The President responded by saying that we all have to embrace the challenge, not run from it, and work together. We might all be able to help the state government find new revenue sources, for example. More generally, we need to work with the Legislature to help align the tax system with the structure and functioning of the WV State Economy—as it exists today. Is "lobbying" the right word here? The President suggested that a better word would be "advocacy."

Discussion:

(1) All agreed that communication is key, since we all have to cope with the next 10 years together. *The President emphasized that we need, together, to rethink our entire financial model. What are we doing today that we are not going to do in the future? We need to prioritize our actions and our expenses (e.g., our financial aid resources) in light of our answers to some big questions: What is the core of Marshall University? What is the core of the Marshall Experience? What is the value of a Marshall education?*

(2) As one example of his desire to facilitate the communication necessary to grapple with these questions, the President has announced on Friday, October 11 the faculty be brought together to set up some sort of Planning Group to engage in and contribute to the planning needed to prepare for the next 10 years. The President also hopes to meet with the faculty college-by-college to discuss the planning effort before us—and learn how best to engage faculty, disseminate the needed information, and facilitate the communication necessary to make our planning efforts a success.

(3) Jane Hill raised the issue of planning and working together not just at the macro/institutional level but also at the micro day-to-day operational level. She proposed we form a micro planning group, as a companion to the aforementioned macro planning group, to study functionality (or the lack thereof) at the classroom level. We need to improve the environment that students and faculty have to operate in, on a day-to-day basis. With the extrinsic rewards of doing our jobs and educating students flat or declining, we need to find ways to increase the intrinsic rewards. We must identify the inefficiencies that impinge upon the faculty's ability to do their jobs and upon the students' ability to get the most out of the education we offer. To our knowledge no such group has ever been set up, nor have the "mundane" day-to-day nuts-and-bolts problems we have to deal with at the classroom level ever been given much respect or a full hearing.

a) All agreed that these micro issues generally dominate Council of Chairs meetings. The Council of Chairs could therefore contribute significantly to the university's overall planning and strategic re-thinking effort by serving as the body that (1) identifies the critical micro issues that must be tackled to improve day-to-day functionality and (2) brings them to the attention of the upper administration. The President asked the Council to get started on this as soon as possible. How should we organize

ourselves for this effort? That's up to us. To whom should we report? The traditional, standard reporting tree goes from Chair -> Dean -> Provost -> AA -> President. Council members noted, however, that this system does not work very well. Especially when we report and seek solutions for micro day-to-day processes and problems. So, after identifying the critical micro problems impinging on day-to-day functionality, we will take them directly to the President. The President will then get the people and groups together who can develop solutions.

b) Several members noted the importance of staff in this endeavor. Secretaries at the departmental level struggle with these micro problems daily in their attempts to keep departments functioning effectively. Our secretaries have a wealth of knowledge concerning the dysfunctionality pervasive at the operational level and will definitely be consulted as the Council begins its work.

7. Talk then turned to specific micro-level problems Council members encounter on a regular basis. We discussed with the President some of the problems we struggle with, such as:

a) Hiring. A year ago a major effort, designed to improve and streamline the hiring procedures across campus, was begun. That effort appears to have collapsed, and the hiring process can be currently described with words such as "nightmare" and "broken." Furthermore, some newly-hired people are not getting paid—because hiring paperwork is being returned to departments at the last minute, with revisions—which often have no bearing on the substance of the hire—being demanded. The Council began last year working with HR and AA in a spirit of optimism and cooperation. But the hiring problem has done nothing but get worse. Why?

b) On-line courses. Getting courses approved through the E-Course Review Committee has become another source of frustration. Dedicated, trained, very experienced faculty members are, for example, being told by administrators without teaching experience or faculty rank how to organize and teach their courses. Why?

c) The misallocation of faculty resources. One example is the 5-Year Program Review process. Chairs are tasked with pulling together all sorts of information and statistics that other bodies at MU are, or should be, collecting regularly. This results in a colossal duplication of effort on the part of Chairs, and every 5 years we lose months of time, time we can't afford to lose, to this effort. Why?

d) Our inability to help students. Our students are incredibly frustrated with the MU bureaucracy, and with the poor customer-service attitude they sometimes encounter. If we're going to focus on retention and graduation, then MU needs to make the bureaucracy navigable for students—procedurally and in terms of personnel. Our students are our ultimate customers, and should always be treated with respect and dignity. Too many times, here at MU, this is not understood. Furthermore, we Chairs need to know to whom we can go in order to help the students who end up in our offices after failing in their attempts to navigate the bureaucracy. Chairs spend an incredible amount of time trying to help these students get their problems solved. And since we have to deal with the same bureaucracy the students do, the result is that both Chairs and students end up frustrated.

e) One unfortunate side-effect of the problem noted in (d) just above is that sometimes we Chairs don't provide the help we could. Sometimes, under the burden of our own workloads, we "kick the student can down the road," just like the bureaucracy.

f) Students and faculty both need access to an Ombudsman on campus, an arbiter of sorts, who can provide a hearing for specific problems and find a solution. Currently no such office exists, so those confronted with bureaucratic gate-keeping that obstructs operations have no appeal.

g) Just within the last day or two several Deans appear to have begun pushing for faculty-driven recruitment efforts in the high schools. Is this a good use of faculty time? Do we not have an office dedicated to Recruitment that is responsible for organizing and managing such efforts? Are AA and the Recruitment Office talking to each other on this? This just the type of situation that confuses, frustrates, and discourages faculty.

8. The President left at just about 5 p.m. Before leaving, Matt Turner noted that a University Communicators Group is in the process of being established. Each college will be represented on it, and he will keep us posted on developments.

9. Mike then led a brief discussion about how we should proceed from here. We discussed the Ombudsman position but decided to focus what time we had left on getting ourselves organized to deliver to the President the list of key micro problems he needs to lead the university in solving. Jane Hill agreed to be the official “Assembler” of the list, and asked all members to send her the micro problems that create trouble for us and our students. **We will meet again to prepare the document we will send to President Kopp on Thursday September 19—location TBA.** On Friday September 6, Mike and Jane finalized, in an email exchange, the procedure we’ll follow. Excerpts of that email exchange are posted below:

[Mike] Please send your responses to Jane by the close of business next Friday (Sept. 13) by forwarding this email with your concerns. (That will make it easier for Jane to keep track of the email.) For those of you who could not attend, it was a very good meeting and I think we have an excellent opportunity to make progress on concerns that we have as well as those from a more senior administrative perspective.

[Jane] If you can forward this message to the [chairs] list as we discussed briefly at the end of the meeting yesterday, people can begin to submit their primary concerns to me at hillj@marshall.edu. I will, as discussed, assemble a document to be considered at a meeting on Thursday, September 19, in a location TBA.

Chair colleagues: The plan agreed upon after our productive meeting with President Kopp yesterday afternoon is that all chairs are invited to send to me by email their primary concerns about the frustrations we experience with hiring, delays and unexplained disappearances of personnel and other paperwork that our staff experience, the gaps between operating budgets and University-imposed expenses, etc.

My job will be to classify the concerns, to note how often each is mentioned, etc., and prepare a compilation/report for the Council to consider at a meeting that Mike will schedule for Thursday, Sept. 19, at 3:30.

The President specifically asked for this follow-up and wants to meet to discuss the concerns we decide to emphasize. Please take time to make this opportunity something that we can build on to improve the experience of our students, to alleviate stresses that our staff experience daily, and to make our jobs more productive and satisfying.

10. Mike closed the meeting shortly after 5 p.m.