Minutes

GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

May 27, 2020

The Governance and Administration Committee of the Board of Visitors of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University met on Wednesday, May 27, 2020, at 2:30 p.m. On this date, the Commonwealth of Virginia was operating under a state of emergency as declared by Governor Northam due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This was an entirely electronic meeting held via Zoom videoconference to conduct regular business as permitted by legislation passed by the General Assembly on April 22, 2020, and signed into law by Governor Northam. A quorum of the Governance and Administration Committee was present on the videoconference.

Committee Members Present: Mehul Sanghani (Chair), Dennis Treacy, Jeff Veatch, Horacio Valeiras (Rector)

Other Board Members Present: Ed Baine, Shelley Butler Barlow, Greta Harris, C.T. Hill, Letitia Long, Chris Petersen, Preston White

Also present on Zoom: Whit Babcock, Lori Buchanan, Al Cooper, Karen DePauw, Corey Earles, Kari Evans, John Ferris, Michael Friedlander, Bryan Garey, Rebekah Gunn, Kay Heidbreder, Chris Kiwus, Sharon Kurek, Angie Littlejohn, Scott Midkiff, Kenneth Miller, Kim O’Rourke (Secretary to the Board), Charlie Phlegar, Dwayne Pinkney, Menah Pratt-Clarke, President Timothy Sands, Lenore Schatz (Captioner), Tamarah Smith, Brad Sumpter, Don Taylor, Jon Clark Teglars, Tracy Vosburgh, Melinda West, Brad Wurthman, Chris Yianilos

In addition, 36 members of the university community and public viewed a live stream of the videoconference on YouTube Live.

OPEN SESSION

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks. Mr. Mehul Sanghani, Chair of the Governance and Administration Committee, welcomed committee members, guests, and invited participants.

2. Consent Agenda. The committee accepted and approved the items on the consent agenda.

    a. Minutes of the November 18, 2019, Meeting
b. Resolution for Approval of Appointment to the Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority Board

3. Update on Administration and Operations Transformation Initiative. Senior Vice President and Chief Business Officer Dwyane Pinkney provided a brief update on the Institutional Excellence Roadmap and the progress of the initiative since the last briefing at the November meeting. The first phase, Organizational Design, has by and large concluded, and implementation of identified projects are currently under way. Despite changes that have had to occur in response to COVID-19, the university has been able to respond quickly and effectively, while also maintaining operations and continuing transformation efforts. In some ways, these responses have actually provided excellent opportunities to accelerate some projects identified in the first phase.

Dr. Pinkney then introduced Vice President for Finance Ken Miller, Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer Scott Midkiff, and Associate Vice President and Chief Facilities Officer Chris Kiwus to discuss specific initiatives occurring in their respective areas as a result of the ongoing transformation.


The Finance areas have been working over the course of the past several years to make process improvements to reduce the amount of time necessary to complete certain tasks. To date, they have implemented electronic bill pay in the Bursar’s office, as well as implemented Hokiemart for supply purchasing, which allows departments to buy products online from 57 percent of vendors utilized by the university. However, 43 percent of vendors are still issuing paper invoices, and, as the majority of those vendors are small, locally-owned businesses, it is not plausible to ask them to move to automated invoice processing. Therefore, there was still a need to manually process paper invoices. In 2018, the Finance Department hired Ernst & Young to benchmark key processes and make recommendations for improvement, the results of which were presented to the Board in August of that year. Findings concluded that the university was functioning as best in practice in many areas, except for Accounts Payable which was still highly paper-based. Since these findings were released, the department has been working on implementing a Robotic Process Automation (RPA) program to make the invoicing process more efficient. Project leaders, Director of Finance IT Brad Sumpter and University Bursar Melinda West worked closely with the Division of IT to develop these programs. As a result, A.P. Bot and A.R. Bot are the first of six total robotic process automations to be launched in the university’s Finance Department. A.P. Bot will digitize the current paper invoicing process and A.R. Bot will handle automated identification, reconciliation, and posting of bank deposits. It is anticipated that the two bots will save 2,000 business hours once
they are launched in the spring. The automation of these processes is not meant to replace current employees, but instead to lift the burden of mundane tasks in order to provide more job enrichment and satisfaction. In addition, moving to an automated system will also increase the capacity for reporting and analytics. However, a governance process still needs to be put in place and security structures need to be developed to insure data remains secure. It is also projected that once processes are established in the Finance areas, RPA will then be utilized in other departments. Additionally, the software utilized is UiPath, which has a partnership with William and Mary to allow students to utilize the technology for educational purposes, meaning there could be a future academic impact as well.

b. **IT Strategic Plan and COVID-19 Response.** Scott Midkiff discussed COVID response efforts of the Division of IT, as well as the continued progress of the IT Strategic Plan.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the university had to quickly shift to all online courses, and move 80 percent of its workforce, including the Division of IT, to work-from-home status, all while understanding that health and safety were of the upmost importance. As a result, Technology-enhanced Learning and Online Strategies (TLOS) created self-paced video tutorials, support videos, and instructional sites to aid faculty during the transition, bringing in over 1,200 workshop participants, with 2,199 self-paced tutorial users, 5,009 support videos watched, and 3,640 faculty members using the “Move Your Course Online” site. From March 11 to May 1, the university saw the creation of 1,004 new Canvas courses, over 46,000 instructional videos uploaded, and an average of over 3,000 daily Zoom meetings, not including those on the Zoom account that had to be created specifically for maintaining compliance with HIPAA regulations for personally identifying information (PII). As employees and students moved off campus, there was a need for increased Virtual Private Network (VPN) capacity, as well as loaner computers, and continued user support. Wi-Fi was provided in certain parking lots for those who did not have Wi-Fi access from their homes. In addition, the division also had to assist in adapting paper-based processes to digital versions, along with other enterprise system changes. The Division could not have successfully accomplished this shift so quickly if not for its employees, partnerships with IT personnel within other departments, and the technology and systems that were already in place prior to the pandemic. Working to accomplish these tasks was not without cost, as investments had to be made in VPNs, the accessibility checking tool, CALM, domain-specific tools such as those related to virtual labs, and the hours it took to make the shift a possibility. Response efforts also provided insight into how to look at more virtual learning opportunities for faculty while building expertise internally among faculty members and those who support them. Throughout all these efforts, the division still continued its work as outlined in the IT Strategic Plan. For example, the division is actively working to enhance data management through the modernization of the existing Data
Warehouse to Data Lake, which will provide a flexible and secure way to provide data and predictive analytics. The division is also moving forward in the creation of the Data Governance Council, although efforts have been slowed due to COVID, in order to move the Division into a more strategic position rather than simply transactional. They are also working collaboratively with the Senior Vice President and other areas to identify and prioritize existing and upcoming projects.

c. **Procurement Center of Excellence.** Chris Kiwus discussed the Procurement Center of Excellence.

The university currently designates about $100 million a year to capital construction contracts. For the past 15 years, these contracts have been delegated to a team within Facilities consisting of three full-time employees and one half-time employee. Upon assessment by the Deloitte team as part of the transformation initiative, the Procurement Center of Excellence was introduced to model best practices, increase efficiencies, and allow a strategic approach to procurement, as well as enhance customer service. In response, the Associate Vice President and Chief Facilities Officer met with the Director of Procurement to discuss options. As a result, Facilities transferred contracting personnel to the Procurement department in January of 2020, along with oversight of the Construction and Professional Services Manual, and all active and future capital procurement projects. This change not only increases efficiencies and improves stewardship by providing more checks and balances, but also allows for cross-training and career development for both the contracting personnel and the 23 individuals within Procurement.

4. **InclusiveVT Update.** Menah Pratt-Clarke, Vice President for Inclusion, Diversity, and Strategic Affairs, provided an update on InclusiveVT initiatives.

Dr. Pratt-Clarke reviewed the goals of the Strategic Plan and InclusiveVT, which include increasing representational diversity and cultural competency, as well as addressing critical societal issues impacting humanity and equity. The university is continuing its efforts toward diversity integration in departmental strategic plans, working with diversity directors, who are now present in all colleges across campus. Diversity integration efforts will be considered this year in the PIBB budgeting model employed in the academic areas. There are several resources and programs to promote diversity and inclusion for students, such as the Student Opportunities and Achievement Resources (SOAR) program, the Black College Institute, Cultural and Community Centers, and financial support. These programs continue to grow, as the Black College Institute received 755 applications in 2020, and had 450 rising high school juniors and seniors in total attend virtually. The Office for Inclusion and Diversity hosted the Faculty Women of Color in the Academy Conference this past spring. Despite having to do so virtually due to COVID-19, 350 women attended. Other initiatives related to faculty include the Future Faculty Development Program and the
Target of Talent Program. In terms of outreach, InclusiveVT began hosting the Making the Chair Fit InclusiveVT Conversations, continued offering scholarships, and received gifts to SOAR and OID. Scholarship applications have increased, as this year the department received 500 applications for the five that are available, making it a goal to raise funds in order to offer more in the future. Inclusion and Diversity education around campus has also increased, having yielded 17 micro-learning videos with 16 presenters, 14 downloadable discussion guides and 1,210 views since July 2019.


The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) was passed by Congress, to provide emergency paid sick leave or expanded family medical leave for university employees from April 1 through December 31, 2020. The act gives the university the option to exempt health care providers and emergency responders under their employ. Peer institutions such as UVA, VCU, and William and Mary have already implemented said exemptions. The Division of Human Resources recommends implementing the exemptions at Virginia Tech, with the caveat that paid sick leave under FFCRA will be available for exempted employees in the case that they should contract the virus or require quarantine in order to stop the spread of the virus. To date, Human Resources has utilized the FFCRA benefit for 51 requests, two-thirds of which were under the paid expanded and medical leave benefit for childcare. Enacting the exemptions will ensure the continuity of operations necessary to protect the public at this time.

6. NCAA Regulations and Wi-Fi in Lane Stadium. Athletics Director Whit Babcock introduced Senior Associate Athletic Director for Internal Operations Angie Littlejohn and Senior Associate Athletic Director for External Operations Brad Wurthman, who provided an update regarding the NCAA name, image, and likeness regulations, as well as discussed Wi-Fi in Lane Stadium.

Currently, the university is permitted to utilize the name, image, and likeness of its student-athletes for commercial purposes, such as on tickets, posters, social media, etc. Other charitable, educational, and/or nonprofit organizations can use them as well under specific circumstances. However, non-student-athletes have the ability to promote brands and other merchandise with their name, image, and likeness for profit if they so choose, while student-athletes are prohibited from doing so. On April 29, 2020, the NCAA approved rules and guidelines that would allow student-athletes to receive similar opportunities to that of their peers. Such guidelines include maintaining an emphasis on education, creating a clear distinction between collegiate and professional athletics, and ensuring that students are not employees of the university, and that compensation for play and recruiting enticements are prohibited. The NCAA, along with the ACC, is currently communicating with Congress to create a federal law
that would supersede state laws related to name, image, and likeness, and that would also provide protection against legal proceedings while also adhering to the rules established. The anticipated results of this NCAA change include increased compliance monitoring and reporting, as it is not likely that students will receive a deal related to name, image, and likeness until they arrive at Virginia Tech. However, recruitment issues that could arise remain a large concern.

Connectivity in Lane Stadium is currently limited, despite the increased expectation of fans to have network access regardless of location. As a result, fans are unable to utilize their smart phones or devices as they would like, and the university cannot offer mobile ticketing options. Therefore, the integration of wi-fi into the stadium would not only increase the mobile experience for patrons, but also create the opportunity for seamless logistics for games, graduation, and other events. Installation of wi-fi would require approximately $5 million to complete, and the investment still needs to be found. However, adding wi-fi would result in additional revenue from users and sponsors, as well as reduce printing prices with mobile ticketing. Additionally, it also helps maintain safety, as it will decrease person-to-person interaction and ensure connectivity should an emergency arise.

7. **Board Self-Assessment Results.** Mr. Mehul Sanghani called on Kim O’Rourke to discuss the results of the 2019-20 Board Self-Assessment.

This is the second year that the Association of Governing Boards has assisted in the Board Self-Assessment. There was 100 percent participation of the Board members, the constituent representatives and the eight administrators that work most closely with the Board. The survey consisted of both numerical and open ended questions. In general, the Board continues to function well, and has seen a number of improvements since its last assessment. Areas related to ensuring that the university maintain high quality talent should remain a focus for the upcoming year, as well as the university funding model, affordability, diversity, and the overall educational value of Virginia Tech. The Board also plans to maintain its stance on hearing all sides for critical issues before making decisions. Issues that have been addressed are those related to succession planning, having relevant data and relying on dashboards and metrics to help inform decisions, as well as the administration being held accountable for risk management. New goals for this year include recovering from the impacts of COVID-19 and adapting plans based on lessons learned.

8. **Future Agenda Items and Closing Remarks.** Mr. Mehul Sanghani discussed future agenda items, including an update on the Operations and Administration Transformation Initiative, and wi-fi in Lane Stadium. He then offered closing remarks and request a motion for adjournment.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:31 pm.