

Board of Visitors
Special Committee on Research
Minutes
9:00 a.m. – 2100 Torgersen Board Room
December 3, 2003

Present: Mr. Philip Thompson, Chair, Mr. Jacob A. Lutz, Mr. T. Rodman Layman, and Mr. John G. Rocovich, Jr.

Also Present: Dr. Charles Steger, Dr. Jim Blair, Mr. Allan Bradley, Dr. Landrum Cross, Dr. Terry Herdman, Mr. Larry Hincker, Mr. Kurt Krause, Dr. Mark McNamee, Ms. Sandra Muse, Mr. Mark Owczarski, Ms. Pam Pettry, Dr. Tim Pickering, Dr. Bob Porter, Dr. Larry Quisenberry, Mr. Dave Richardson, Mr. Minnis Ridenour, Mr. Dwight Shelton, Dr. Raymond Smoot, Ms. Susan Trulove, Dr. John Wilson, Mr. Gene Broadus (WFNR), Ms. Ellen Biltz (Collegiate Times), and Mr. Kevin Miller (Roanoke Times)

Opening Comments: Mr. Thompson convened the meeting at 9:10 a.m. He mentioned he had visited with the Office of the Vice Provost for Research at the end of October. Mr. Thompson said he had been provided with a good overview of the research activities of the university and that we are off to a good start in pursuit of our goal.

Approval of February 24, 2003 Minutes: Mr. Thompson asked for approval of the minutes of February 24. A motion to approve was made and seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Overview of Research Enterprise and Discussion: Dr. Blair began his presentation by asking the question, “How can the Board of Visitors Special Committee on Research help?” After mentioning Dr. Steger’s charge in 2000 and the strategic plan goals for research and scholarship, Dr. Blair reviewed data on NSF expenditure rankings and rank history for Virginia Tech. He also mentioned the financial changes which would need to occur in order to move up in the ranks. Dr. Blair provided a suggested scorecard to measure our progress in specific areas against the SCHEV peer average and the top 30 average. Several issues were discussed, specifically personnel activity reports, citations, postdoctoral appointments, and graduate students. Mr. Thompson asked how soon the last column in the Research Scorecard can be filled in so we can have a roadmap year by year building up to 2010. Dr. Blair responded the scorecard will be updated quarterly.

Mr. Thompson summarized his response to “How can the Board of Visitors Special Committee on Research help” by stating they can and will assist with Virginia Tech’s image, funding, strategy, and policy development and approval. Mr. Lutz suggested the Board members bring their experiences from other venues and some “fresh thinking” about strategy.

Rewarding Research-Active Faculty: Dr. Blair reported on the research productivity of our faculty as a whole. Dr. Blair listed strategies needed to grow our research. The areas are: increased research-productive faculty; research reputation-publication/awards; research aligned with federal priorities; increased modern research space-build and renovate, effective utilization; increased research equipment; increased proposals to federal agencies; increased graduate students and post-docs; and increased large program proposals (>\$1M/year). He highlighted our major research initiative areas – critical technologies and applied sciences, life sciences, and arts, humanities, and social sciences. Dr. Blair offered a plan of potential solutions. Discussion followed on strategies to fund these initiatives. It was agreed incentives need to be found to recruit and retain research-productive faculty.

Sources of Research Investment: Dr. Blair suggested two sources for investment funding for research could be returned indirect and the equipment trust fund. Dr. Blair and Mr. Ridenour discussed how these resources are currently allocated and the efforts being made to change allocations at the state and university level. Dr. Blair mentioned the process whereby overhead is currently distributed on campus creates major tension. He suggested a solution might be to capture the overhead at a higher administrative level and have a process by which it is allocated and monitored. Dr. Steger mentioned the effect the budget cuts have had on operating budgets.

Process for Prioritizing Initiative Areas and Assessment: Dr. Blair presented an investment plan. He stated we need to determine how resources will be focused and allocated. Dr. McNamee informed the board members of the creation of the three administrative coordinating councils and their role in reviewing new initiatives and allocations of funding. He stated this gives us a framework in which to base decisions. Dr. Blair provided a plan on how our progress will be assessed. Mr. Thompson stated assessment is needed in all areas and directives need to be in place. It was suggested that collaboration with industry needs to be addressed. Mr. Lutz said the administration needs to measure and evaluate progress, both among departments and colleges and against external peer institutions, and proceed with the strategic vision. Dr. McNamee mentioned his desire to strengthen the departments. Dr. Steger said the administration has made good progress in attracting designated federal funds and refining our process to develop priorities for legislative actions. He mentioned he, Dr. McNamee, and Mr. Ridenour have been meeting with faculty from each of the colleges to talk about the top 30 goal with the purpose of refocusing the faculty. He said he feels the meetings are effective.

Adjournment: Mr. Thompson adjourned the meeting at 12:10 p.m.