Council Minutes

Executive Committee of the Department Heads Council

325 Burruss Hall

8-9:30am

October 6, 2015

Attending: Stephanie Adams (Engineering Education); S. A. Ahmed (Biomed Sciences & Pathology); Jackie Bixler (Foreign Languages & Lit.); Kevin Concannon (School of Visual Arts); David Cox (Chemical Engineering); Greg Daniel (Small Animal Clinical Sciences); Ron Fricker (Statistics); Paul Herr (Marketing); Matt Hulver (HNFE); Nancy McGehee (Hospitality and Tourism Management); Nancy Ross (Geosciences); Rick Rudd (Agriculture & Extension Education); Bob Smith (Sustainable Biomaterials); Joel Snodgrass (Fish and Wildlife Conservation); Anisa Zvonkovic (Human Development); Jack Finney (Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs); Sherwood Wilson (Vice President for Administration); Lance Franklin (Director of Environmental Health and Safety); Chris Kiwus (Associate Vice President and Chief Facilities Officer).

- Not in attendance: Henri DeHan (Architecture & Design);

Rapporteur: Maureen McCusker

8:30am Maureen McCusker and Jack Finney entered session.

Discussion of Title IV Training

Last year, Virginia Tech was assessed on its Title IV processes, and there were some processes that the assessors felt could be improved. As a result, Virginia Tech was placed under a “resolution agreement.” As part of this agreement, the University was told what it had to do in order to comply with training procedures. Thus, in October/November of 2014, Virginia Tech was required to comply with the training by the end of January (three months). Virginia Tech will continue to follow this process until told otherwise. Note: Virginia Tech is not on the “bad list,” it is just one of the institutions that they think can do better. With regard to training: the Office of the Vice President for Administration is conducting training for all the new hires, but the Department Heads are responsible for ensuring all previously employed faculty, staff and graduate students are hired.

Discussion of Class/classification

Virginia Tech currently houses over 2100 university staff, and 3500 of this staff are “Classified Staff.” On July 1, 2006, Virginia Tech underwent a Higher Ed reconstruction, which allowed institutions to create their own classification. This process resulted in the addition of “University Staff” classification. All staff members hired since then are “University staff,” not “classified staff.” The biggest distinction between “Classified Staff” and “University,” is that the state mandates funds for the former but not the latter. However, this year, the state dictated
what Virginia Tech could and could not do with regard to salary increases for those who staff who were not “Classified.” This resulted in a financial advantage for the “Classified Staff” but not for those who were renamed “University Staff.” The hope is that this year there will not be the same imbalance.

Discussion of Safety and Training (Initiated by Lance Franklin)

In 2009, there was a death in UCLA, as a woman was working with dangerous chemicals and caught on fire and died. Since then, Virginia Tech been making sure that students are receiving safety training. Last year, the University trained over 21,000 persons, and this year, the University has already surpassed 10,000. There are two types of programs:

- Programs oriented toward those who have the safety knowledge but not the reflexes or skills
- Programs oriented toward those who have reflexes and skills, but maybe not the knowledge.

Sherwood Wilson noted that it is the responsibility of the PI and/or supervisor that their people are equipped and protected. This is very key for audits, as PI’s need to know what is required for training purposes.

- **Department Head comment:** Last year, it seemed like training was not coordinated
  - o **Mr. Franklin response:** Virginia Tech’s training is very coordinated, but there are so many trainings needed to be done, so it may seem uncoordinated at times.
- **Mr. Wilson question:** What is the minimum skill training that everyone needs to have?
  - o **Mr. Franklin response:** The minimum all depends on the field and domain (chemical, laser, safety data sheets).

Discussion of Facilities (Initiated by Chris Kiwus)

**Painting:** When it comes to painting, the University uses a university painting contract with an outside organization.

- o **Mr. Wilson comment:** There is a schedule for painting; every room is on a room-painting schedule.

**Cleaning:** Virginia Tech handles cleaning itself (i.e. no external contractor like painting). Although there has recently been a cut back on the number of housecleaners, each department, building, or college has a point person who handles cleaning.

- o **Mr. Wilson Comment:** If it is a teaching lab or classroom that needs to be cleaned, it will be cleaned on a schedule. However, if it is a research lab, it costs have to be passed on and contracted. This contract has been bonded and contracted because of regulations by the state that require that all cleaning be regulated by space and facilities.
  - o Ex: Burruss was closed for four days recently because a faculty member nailed something in a wall and drove asbestos.
- o **Department Head Comment:** One issue is that we cannot know if the contractor is doing adequate work.
  - o **Mr. Wilson Response:** Chris Kiwus’ new hire is in charge of making sure the work is sufficient.
• **Department Head Comment:** since there is a research overhead on grants that is supposed to cover these costs, why do Departments have to pay for them. When individuals file a grant and when the lab floor needs to be cleaned, the 60% overhead should cover this. Just to let everyone know, there will undoubtedly be some questions about this at the Forum on October 12.

9:00am Sherwood Wilson exited the session; Dr. Finney began second portion of meeting.

**Discussions regarding leave (Initiated by Department Heads)**

• **Department Head Question:** Can you talk a little about the leave report completion issues?
  o **Dr. Finney Response:** He “is on it.” There is an issue that everyone needs to fill out a leave report, but A/P do not have leave, so the question surround why they need to fill it out. Dr. Finney is investigating this concern. There are also issues related to FMLA compliance. Everyone should be doing leave reports on a weekly basis. If leave request is less than two weeks, it goes to the Dean. If it is more then 2 weeks, then it goes to Dr. Finney.

**Discussion Regarding TEM System (Initiated by Department Heads)**

The Department Heads are having trouble with it, and one said (s)he has a staff member who is about ready to quit because of the many little details and because of how complicated it is.

• **Dr. Finney Response:** He gets about four emails per day from TEM (most he’s supposed to ignore), but it is hard for him to know if the emails are just approvals or not.

• **Department Head Comment:** It seems there are a number of issues that are Dwight Shelton’s, but he is not wanting to come to the Department Head executive meetings. The Department Heads are only going to be able to interact with him at the upcoming forum with the President. Is there a way to get him to come to the meetings?
  o **Dr. Finney Response:** There are many people who work for Dwight who are responsible for these systems (e.g. Controller: Ken Miller). Dr. Finney will confirm who is responsible for what and suggests that The Department Heads bring them all in together to represent Mr. Shelton.

**Brainstorm of Who Else Should Come to the DHEC Meetings (Initiated by Department Heads)**

**Department Head Comment:** It is very important that they get someone to come talk about why the Departments have to pay for cleaning the labs, when they are paying a 60% overhead on the grants they receive.

• **Dr. Finney Response:** He will find out who can talk about their budgetary expenses for “direct.” Perhaps Dennis Dean could come.

Other options for people to bring to the meetings
  o Jill Sible (undergrad research)
Dean DePauw  
Guru Gosh

**Department Head Comment:** Dr. Finney, can you look into when/if there are other meetings when the Provost will not be able to come?
- **Dr. Finney Response:** Yes.

**Discussion Regarding the meeting on January 5 (Initiated by Department Heads)**

There have been discussions and recommendations that it be moved back because of Holiday timing.

**Discussion Regarding Destination Areas (Initiated by Dr. Finney)**

The Provost’s Office has already received three listings from Deans who have been asked to provide feedback about new destination areas & themes. The next step if that the Provost’s Office will look at them in the near future and come up with some cross-cutting themes. Dr. Finney noted that if the Department Heads are not hearing from their Dean regarding destination areas, they should ask about them.
- **Department Head Comment:** (S)He heard from the Dean, but the language was very confusing, and the term “new economies” made little sense.
- **Department Head Comment:** Similarly, it seems like there is a great about of discomfort between this new initiatives happening simultaneously: “pathways,” “new economy,” “destination areas.”
  - **Dr. Finney response:** He couldn’t agree more: we’re in the largest transition that Virginia Tech has ever had.
- **Department Head comment:** The problem is that these are happening so quickly. To be able to come up with new destination areas in two weeks is just crazy. People are not going to be able to participate, then they are going to hear from their faculty and they are going to be upset that they did not have a word in.
  - **Dr. Finney Response:** Something to know is that these are not the “end-all-be-all.” There will be many more lists and opportunities for input.
  - **Department Head Response:** That has not been communicated well, and when it says that Department funding will be linked to these destination areas, it is more difficult and concerning.

**Discussion Regarding Department Visits (Initiated by Department Heads)**

Are there any updates on when the Provost is going to visit the Departments?
- **Dr. Finney Response:** Shannon (Provost’s Assistant) is working on it. They have currently heard from all but six Departments regarding dates for visit. The process will likely take “a couple years.”

**Department Head Question:** How does Virginia Tech stack up to UVA in terms of faculty recruitment and start-up packages?
- Dr. Finney Response: Virginia Tech had a start up package in the works for a while. He thinks UVA and Virginia Tech are each always going to have distinctive programs, so he does not think it is something to worry too much about. Instead, we should be worrying more about complementarity.

9:34 meeting session closed.