

West Virginia State University Board of Governors
Erickson Alumni Center, Grand Hall
January 28, 2015
Minutes

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Susman was unable to attend until later in the afternoon due to a scheduling conflict. Dr. Smith called the meeting of the West Virginia State University Board of Governors to order at 4:01 p.m. and chaired the meeting until Chair Susman arrived.

Present: Ms. Guetzloff, Dr. Guetzloff, Mrs. Jarvis, Mr. Konstanty, Mr. Lipscomb, Mrs. Pitchford, Dr. Smith, Mr. Susman, Mr. Swingle, Dr. Thralls, and Mr. Williams. Several members of the administration, faculty, and staff were also present.

2. Verification of Appropriate Notice of Public Meeting

Mr. Swingle motioned to verify the appropriate notification of the meeting, and Mrs. Jarvis seconded the motion. The motion carried.

3. Review and Approval of Meeting Agenda

Mr. Williams motioned for approval of the agenda as presented, and Mr. Swingle seconded the motion. The motion carried.

4. Roundtable Discussions

Dr. Smith said the meeting was being held in accordance with West Virginia Code to provide an opportunity for campus constituent groups to share their thoughts and ideas about the University. Each group was allotted time on the agenda to participate in a roundtable discussion.

- Item 4.a: Dr. Smith welcomed the faculty members in attendance. She noted that Dr. Guetzloff was teaching and would attend the meeting after class. Dr. Smith acknowledged Faculty Senate Chair Dr. Ruhnke and opened the floor for discussion. Dr. Ruhnke said there are many positive activities occurring on campus, which are largely attributed to the turnover in the administration during the past few years, including the academic deans. However, he said one of his concerns with this type of turnover is that the individuals likely do not know each other well, which could negatively affect certain areas that otherwise flow seamlessly in terms of operations when there is a long-term association with colleagues. Dr. Ruhnke said the University is in the final stages of reviewing the General Education curriculum, which has not been revised since its adoption in the late 1980s. The Faculty Senate and Dr. Jayasuriya will dialogue about the curriculum before it is voted on, and it is anticipated that the new curriculum will be implemented in fall 2015.

Chair Susman thanked Dr. Ruhnke for his comments and apologized for arriving late. Mr. Konstanty asked Dr. Ruhnke for an example regarding his earlier comments on potential negative effects from turnover. Dr. Ruhnke said one example is that a student may enroll, never attend a single class, and want to withdraw. The existing

grade appeal process and such instance would not be a normal appeal, because there was no attempt by the student to earn a grade, and individuals who have worked together for many years are more familiar with addressing these types of situations.

Mr. Williams asked about the general sense of working conditions, the number of faculty, students, etc. Dr. Vaughan said faculty members are committed and extremely student-oriented. Faculty help students in any way possible so they can stay in school and complete their degree program; they build relationships with most of their students, and understand their situations and know their challenges. Dr. Vaughan said the workload and expectation on faculty impact time for research, teaching, and class preparation. He feels there is a strong sense among faculty that there are too many distractions (i.e., committees, events, orientations, etc.) Dr. Ford added that faculty members agree with the importance of committees and events, but they prefer to keep their focus primarily on students. Dr. Ruhnke said it also takes various amounts of time to assist students and help them navigate through their program, which is important in order to help the students succeed, as well as meet the University's mission, but it also takes away time for class preparation, research, etc. It is not possible to plan time that will be spent assisting students because it is always a case-by-case basis. Dr. Vaughan said there is also a concern that resources will be decreased further for smaller academic programs, such as political science. Another concern is the number of adjunct faculty. While it is understood that adjunct faculty allow flexibility for class schedules, there is concern that this could eliminate the need for the number of full-time faculty who could be on campus on a daily basis to help with the workload and assist students.

Dr. Thralls asked if the faculty look positively upon the program review process and if they feel it is of value to the faculty and their time. Dr. Ford said the process has significant value and provides an opportunity to assess the strengths and weaknesses of academic programs over a five-year period. Yet, there is a level of stress, because faculty are asked to be brief, but there is a lot of information to provide to show the value of the program. Dr. Harper agreed with Dr. Ford's comments. Dr. Ruhnke said it might be beneficial to evaluate the preparation for program reviews to make the process more informative.

Mr. Williams thanked Dr. Ruhnke for his earlier comments about interaction with students to ensure they are receiving assistance. Mr. Lipscomb said that level of attention and focus is what helps make the University student-centered. Dr. Palubinskas said many faculty physically walk students through the process to ensure they receive the assistance needed and that type of dedication shows that faculty support them. Mr. Lipscomb asked about ideas for how to reduce the amount of time faculty spend assisting students. Dr. Ruhnke said it is partly a matter of planning and better communication among the various departments and offices. He said a webpage or list with information about who to contact for specific issues and how they can be contacted immediately to assist a student, or at least make sure the individual is aware of the issue so it can be addressed, would be helpful. Dr. Vaughan agreed with this

suggestion, but noted there will continue to be instances where students need a personal connection to the faculty.

Chair Susman commended the faculty for their dedication to students and thanked them for all they do. He said students often comment about how they love the University's faculty and what they learn from them. President Hemphill said when he was offered the presidency at the University there were two things that confirmed his decision – the quality of the faculty and research. He said he is proud to say those two things still stand true nearly three years later.

- Item 4.b: Chair Susman welcomed the classified staff in attendance. He also acknowledged Mrs. Jarvis for her service as the classified staff representative on the Board. Chair Susman opened the floor for discussion and asked Classified Staff Council Chair Tom Hunt for general comments. Mr. Hunt said the majority of comments and feedback from classified are concerns as it relates to the reduction-in-force and if there will be additional reductions in the future. Chair Susman said tough decisions had to be made as the state budget cuts continue to be mandated each year, coupled with the significant loss of revenue from the separation of the community and technical college. President Hemphill said much consideration was given during discussions about how to bring revenue and expenses inline despite the budget reductions from the past few years, as well as cuts expected next year. He met recently with the vice presidents regarding actions that will need to be taken this spring for another rescission, and the ground rule he made clear was that there are to be no additional layoffs this year.

Mrs. Squirts asked about performance-based funding and how the University compares to other institutions in the state. Chair Susman said there are many components that have to be considered regarding performance-based funding. He said a working group was appointed to review an outcomes-based funding model and discuss how it could be executed. Dr. Guetzloff noted that the University is at a disadvantage in terms of performance in graduation rates, because transfer students cannot be included in the data submitted to the Higher Education Policy Commission. Mr. Peggs asked if the number of transfer students has continued to increase. President Hemphill said the University continues to see growth in that area and, although the number of transfer students does not help with graduation rates, it does help in the area of degree production. Chair Susman said the University is also beginning to reclaim students from counties that it has not had enrollment from for many years.

Dr. Thralls asked about the morale of staff on campus. Staff members in attendance said the morale is low primarily due to layoffs and outsourcing; however, most staff understand these actions were taken, because of continued legislative budget cuts. Mrs. Jarvis agreed with the statements about the morale and fear of losing jobs. There was a consensus that staff also see the positive changes on campus with the new facilities, academic programs, etc. and these will help boost morale. Mrs. Jarvis said moving the offices for financial aid, admissions, etc. to where the registration

and cashier's offices are located has helped immensely with servicing students, as well as providing a better connection and understanding among those particular staff.

Chair Susman said the Board and administration knew the decisions that were made would impact morale, and now it is part of their duty to show why the decisions were made and how they helped the institution overall. He said President Hemphill and staff are at the Capitol almost daily during the legislative session on behalf of the University. Dr. Thralls said decisions to reduce workforce is never one the Board wants to make, and he hopes staff realize the value and importance of what they do and how the Board appreciates them.

Mrs. Jarvis said she received e-mails from staff for the roundtable discussion. One staff member asked why the University does not offer an opportunity for employees to sell unused sick leave. Chair Susman said there was a one-time sick leave buy-back at one point. There was also an option to trade in sick leave toward insurance when retiring, but these are no longer options due to changes in state law that are dictated through public policy.

Chair Susman thanked the classified staff members for attending the meeting. He said the Board would follow-up with President Hemphill to discuss how to help boost morale, as well as ways to communicate information on the results of decisions that have been made regarding budget reductions.

- Item 4.c: Chair Susman welcomed the students. He noted that SGA President Simms-Davis could not attend due to a scheduling conflict, and is being represented by Ms. Hightower. Ms. Hightower expressed her appreciation for the opportunity for students and the Board to dialogue. Several student-athletes said they appreciate President Hemphill being supportive of athletic events and seeing him on the sidelines or in the stands during games. Chair Susman asked if student-athletes have tutoring and other support mechanisms to help with their academics. Students said there are many services provided, and coaches, faculty, and staff are supportive about attending class and maintaining academic priorities. Dr. Thralls asked how residence students feel this year compared to last year. Students said the atmosphere is better and the new facilities have helped improve the college experience, along with the academic experience. The new residence hall and the way it was designed have also helped freshmen become acclimated. Mrs. Pitchford asked if students feel safe on campus, and students said they have always felt safe and comfortable. Chair Susman asked the students for their feedback on the recent Wi-Fi upgrades. Students said they noticed an improvement and wireless connection is stronger in classrooms, with the exception of the third floor in Ferrell Hall. However, there was a consensus among the students that the connection is still slow in the new residence hall. Students said the financial aid process has greatly improved, and they like how the area in Ferrell Hall was centralized to bring those offices closer to better serve students.

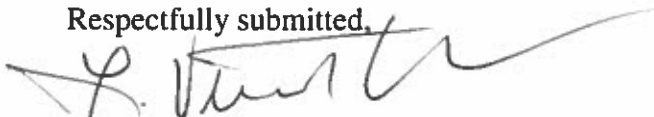
Chair Susman said the Board heard from faculty and staff earlier about the amount of time spent assisting students who are having issues registering, applying for financial aid, etc., and he asked students in what other ways could the University help in terms of recruitment and retention. Students said granting more leniency regarding their bills would be helpful to students who do not have excessive financial means, but are able to pay in installments over a longer period; many students do not return because of holds on their accounts and not being able to register. Mr. Williams noted there are other entities, such as the Foundation, that can assist with paying balances so students may register. Additionally, President Hemphill said a list of students who have balances, and are in good academic standing, is reviewed at the end of each semester to provide financial support through the Presidential Scholarship fund. He encouraged students to reach out to Ms. McCarthy regarding their situation so she can look for helpful resources.

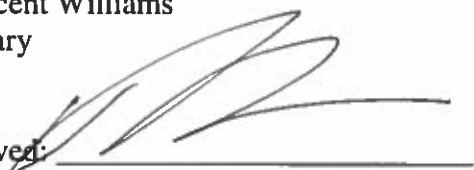
Chair Susman thanked the students for attending the meeting. President Hemphill said the vice presidents have been working on issues and ideas shared during the forums he held with students last semester. Updates on those items will be provided during a follow-up lunch on February 17, 2015 in McGhee Suites, and he encouraged the students to attend.

5. Next Meeting Date
January 29, 2015

6. Adjournment
With there being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


L. Vincent Williams
Secretary

Approved: 
Tom Susman
Chair