

**OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF VISITORS
Student Enhancement & Engagement and Digital Learning Committee
Thursday, June 15, 2023**

MINUTES

The Student Enhancement & Engagement and Digital Learning Committee of the Board of Visitors of Old Dominion University was held on Thursday, June 15, 2023, at 1:30 p.m. in the Board Room of the Broderick Dining Commons on the main campus of Old Dominion University. Present from the committee were:

Yvonne T. Allmond, Chair
Robert Corn, Vice Chair
R. Bruce Bradley (*ex officio*)
P. Murry Pitts (*ex officio*)
Peter G. Decker, III
Kay A. Kemper
Elza H. Mitchum
Ross A. Mugler
Maurice D. Slaughter
David Burdige (*Faculty Representative*)
Keshav Vermani (*Student Representative*)

Also present were:

Austin Agho	Kate Ledger
Alonzo Brandon	Chrysoula Malogianni
Terrence Curran	Pam Martin
Kirk Dewyea	Donna Meeks
Jerri F. Dickseski	E.G. "Rudy" Middleton
Kim Early	Alicia Monroe
J. Christopher Fleming	Tom Odom
Morris Foster	Zlatka Rebolledo
Zaria Gassaway	Chad A. Reed
Brian O. Hemphill	Nina Rodriguez Gonser
Brandi Hephner LaBanc	September Sanderlin
Larry R. Hill	Ashley Schumaker
David Hunt	Amanda Skaggs
Jaime Hunt	Christen Turney
Kay A. Kemper	Bridget Weikel
Susan Kenter	Allen Wilson
Lisa Kivin	Johnny Young

Chairwoman Yvonne T. Allmond called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

APPROVAL OF THE APRIL 20, 2023 MINUTES

Ross Mugler moved to approve the minutes of the April 20, 2023 meeting. P. Murry Pitts seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved by all members present and voting.

REPORT OF VICE PRESIDENT OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT & ENROLLMENT SERVICES

Dr. Brandi Hephner LaBanc, Vice President for Student Engagement & Enrollment Services, provided a briefing on Fall 2023 enrollment. She highlighted historical and projected Fall 2023 data related to applicants, admits, and confirmations. Overall, Fall 2023 first-time freshman applications are up 5% over Fall of 2022, an all time high. By design, the number of admits has decreased slightly from last year, to reduce the overall admit rate. Confirmation numbers continue to grow toward the freshman goal of 2,900 students, with new applications being received weekly, and admission offers being made daily.

Dr. Hephner LaBanc discussed the difficulties of the admissions landscape, beginning with the cost of higher education versus the perceived value. Many Americans are debating the affordability and accessibility of higher education and are now more than ever considering financial opportunities such as merit and aid packages, program discounts, and flat rate tuition models. Competition for enrollment has also increased due to a decrease in the number of viable college options, expanded curricular choice considerations, and implementation of test-optional programs. In addition, students are applying on average to 7 institutions, while also double and triple depositing. ODU's institutional differentiation and branding are also a challenge. A key to upcoming marketing will be the outcome of University Communication's brand study, which will aid with future recruitment efforts. ODU's location is also challenging, while it provides lucrative opportunities for cultural, civic, athletic activities, internship and career opportunities, and affordable living, the *perception* of location safety remains. Financial need also presents a challenge, with the cost of education increasing along with financial need.

Dr. Hephner LaBanc also discussed additional information on admit and yield rate for campus-based, first-time undergraduates. The goal this cycle is to decrease admit rate while maintaining yield rate. Future areas of improvement include direct entry into honors, revisions to financial aid packaging with a focus on merit incentives, and the exploration of possibilities with Phi Theta Kappa or other transfer-specific channels.

As of June 8, 2023, preliminary details on student profiles for confirmed undergraduate students by academic level have rounded out nicely. There are 11 confirmed valedictorians and 10 confirmed salutatorians for the Fall 2023 term, compared to 9 total during the Fall 2022 term, with a previous average of about 7 annually. In addition, most of the confirmed valedictorians and salutatorians are coming from the Hampton Roads area. This change is attributed to an investment and mid-stream shift in merit scholarship awards offering full in-state tuition.

Dr. Hephner LaBanc explained the operational enhancements which have been made to undergraduate, graduate, and international admissions. Undergraduate admissions has focused on targeted recruitment, strategic admissions to increase yield rate, enhanced merit scholarship, top of funnel upgrades including a contract with Niche to create a customized prospect profile database, upgrades to the campus experience, and communication enhancements. Operational enhancements to graduate admissions include 60% of decisions being made within 4 days of application submission for the MPA program, 50% of decisions being made within 5 days for the ELEC and SECD programs, and direct admissions for currently enrolled Monarchs. International admissions have seen an increase in demand for U.S. based education. To capitalize on the demand, global reach has been expanded to new markets in Africa and Europe. As a result, international admissions applications have increased.

Dr. Hephner LaBanc then provided an update on Housing & Residence Life. For Fall 2023, the residential neighborhoods have a total capacity of 4,847 beds. In addition, a pilot program for graduate housing in Nusbaum will launch during the Fall 2023 term. She noted that a sense of belonging among students is visually created within each of the residential neighborhoods through nautical community flags. Within each hall, lobbies are branded with the signs and color-coded according to community. During this year's onboarding, Housing & Residence Life will pass out nautical flag pins to students based on their respective communities.

Several financial investments have been made by facilities to enhance the student housing experience. The Powhatan II Apartments benefited from \$3.2 million in investment in utility infrastructure improvements. Interior renovations to England House, including floor replacement and paint throughout are in the completion stage. Additionally, the Village Apartment buildings 7 and 8 have an upcoming \$1.2 million project this summer with interior renovations including replacement of furniture, renovation of kitchens, replacement of flooring, and painting throughout.

She shared that marketing strategies for recruiting new and returning students included university-wide events such as Open Houses, Admitted Students' Day, returning housing showcases, and sign-up parties. Additionally, Housing & Residence Life provides frequent communication through emails, postcards, phone calls, social media, and floor meetings, and Monarch Orientation presentations and tours are shaped to market to new and returning students.

Dr. Hephner LaBanc shared current housing occupancy for the Fall 2023 term. In total, 96.76% of Fall 2023 freshman cohort applications are assigned as of the week of June 11, 2023, and 100% of the Fall 2022 freshman cohort applicants are assigned. She provided information on living learning and theme communities. Living learning communities provide a class connection, while theme communities provide housing based on student interests. As of May 2023, there are 7 communities with waitlists. A new living learning community, Emerging Leaders, targets male engagement, integrates Leadership & Learning programs, and onboards students into the first-year Emerging Monarch Fall

leadership program. Additionally, a Passport System, will be launched for 2023-2024 to encourage students to attend living learning community and general campus events.

Dr. Hephner LaBanc concluded her report by introducing the 93rd Student Government Association President, Zaria Gassaway, and Treasurer Zlatka Rebolledo Sanchez.

Zaria and Zlatka shared an overview of the organizational chart for the 93rd session, including the names and titles for each member. They have three goals for the 2023-2024 year. The first is enhancing academic support through various campaigns to increase retention rates, improve academic performance, and promote belonging. Their second goal is to upgrade student facilities, such as student lounges, recreational areas, and study spaces. They will work with student organizations to identify needs and preferences, and ensure the upgraded facilities meet the diverse requirements of the student population. Their last goal is to increase student engagement through a comprehensive calendar of events and activities that appeal to ODU's diverse student populations.

REPORT OF VICE PRESIDENT OF DIGITAL LEARNING

Nina Rodriguez Gonser, Vice President for Digital Learning, reported on the Fall 2023 enrollment outlook. Based on data from the previous week, confirmations are up 4.6%, increasing from 966 to 1042 and registrations are up 18.7% from 556 to 660 from this point in time last year. Additionally, she highlighted graduate registration has increased significantly by 75.7% from 140 last year to 246 this year. All increases were achieved while maintaining a 66% admissions rate, the same rate as this point in time last year. The conversion rate has also increased from 57% last year to 63% this year, indicating the work the Division is doing is having a positive impact.

She then shared demographic information on the incoming students and noted how they reflect the Division's target audiences. The current incoming class is 69% female and 31% male. 60% of the degree completer population are over 25 years of age, which highlights how their needs are different from more traditional students. Additionally, 43% of the population are graduate students, 39% are transfer students, and 24% are military affiliated.

Vice President Rodriguez Gonser provided data to illustrate the progress toward the enrollment goal as it relates to new, continuing, and projected students for the Fall. Given the data, the Division is already 60% of the way to their goal with new and continuing students. Additionally, the report used for this presentation indicated current registration of 3,891 students. Last year from this point in time until classes began, the Division saw an addition of 2,600 registrations. Given that peak enrollment doesn't occur until July, there is high confidence of reaching the enrollment goal of 6,450 for Fall 2023.

Vice President Rodriguez Gonser then introduced Pam Martin, Executive Director of Enrollment Marketing, and Dave Hunt, Director of Digital Marketing and Creative Director, to share information on the use of ChatGPT in marketing. She also took a moment to introduce the Division's new Associate Vice President for Marketing and Outreach, Kate Ledger.

Ms. Martin detailed the current landscape of online enrollment marketing, noting that according to Statistica, the education sector spent around \$3.87 billion in advertising in 2021. She provided some specific examples of spend volume: Southern New Hampshire University spent \$144M in advertising in 2021; Western Governors spent \$129M; and University of Maryland Global Campus announced 4 years ago that it would spend \$500M in advertising in the following 6 years, with over half of that going to digital advertising. With online enrollment marketing being fueled by dollars, data, and content, marketing at scale is critical for both success and survival. She highlighted the need to leverage algorithms to achieve higher engagement, conversion rates, campaign success, and larger enrollment numbers.

Mr. Hunt explained that ChatGPT is a large language model which is a specific category of AI products. It can understand natural language prompts, so there is no need to do any type of coding. ChatGPT can be fed information on criteria such as a brand's tone, values, and position to generate written content based on those parameters. Mr. Hunt noted some drawbacks to the program, including content that is factually inaccurate, clumsy, awkward, or artificial and noted that some human editing is still required. Therefore, created content should be thought of as a first draft. He provided examples of how the Division is using ChatGPT in their marketing efforts and showed how topics were narrowed down, to create even more relevant content. ChatGPT can also remember about 50 pages of content per conversation, allowing users to build on the previously generated content through past prompts.

Ms. Martin shared that, according to a Gartner report, by 2025, 30% of outbound marketing messages from large organizations will be synthetically generated, up from less than 2% in 2022. This indicates we can anticipate remarkable changes to everyday digital tools such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Teams, and more with AI technology. With AI's ability to understand context, style, and tone, these tools will offer intelligent suggestions, enhance language, clarify, and even provide data-driven insights to make content more impactful and persuasive. Ms. Martin and Mr. Hunt concluded their report by stressing the continuing need for oversight and ethical marketing best practices in this new arena of technological innovation.

Dr. Chrysoula Malogianni, AVP for Digital Innovation, then presented on the power of AI and how it can help faculty, staff, and students succeed in an increasingly digital world. She noted AI is not a substitute for human expertise, but rather that it complements our abilities, empowering us to work smarter, by automating routine tasks and providing valuable insights. Dr. Malogianni shared videos demonstrating how AI can make PowerPoints more interactive, create images and videos from text, and create immersive 3D experiences. For example, AI technology can be used to produce full virtual environments, where students can engage with objects or conduct virtual experiments, essentially closing the distance between face to face and online students' experiences. AI technology also allows users to create their own interactive avatar, which can assist the learner, deliver information, or engage in conversation, adding to the immersive online learning environment. Dr. Malogianni indicated the team is committed to supporting faculty in their teaching endeavors. Therefore, they are actively exploring new AI powered

technologies and planning workshops designed to support online teaching. She concluded the Digital Learning presentation with a sneak peek of ODU's Digital Twin upcoming project. The project aims to create an immersive virtual environment that replicates ODU's physical campus within the digital realm. The digital twin, supported by AI, will open new possibilities for immersive and transformative virtual environments to support online learning and establish a virtual community for online students.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.