

LONGWOOD UNIVERSITY

BOARD OF VISITORS

December 3, 2021

Minutes

Call to Order

The Longwood University Board of Visitors met on Friday, December 3 in Radcliff Hall. The meeting was called to order at 1 p.m. by Rector Pia Trigiani.

Members present:

Pia Trigiani
Larry Palmer
Polly Raible
Cookie Scott
Eileen Anderson
Fabiola Carter
Shawn Smith
Rhodes Ritenour
Katharine Bond
Ricshawn Roane

Also present:

President W. Taylor Reveley IV
Justin Pope, Vice President and Chief of Staff
Cameron O’Brion, University Counsel
Larissa Smith, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Tim Pierson, Vice President for Student Affairs
Louise Waller, Vice President for Administration and Finance
Victoria Kondon, Vice President for Strategic Operations
Michelle Meadows, Director of Athletics
Cameron Patterson, Executive Director of the Moton Museum
Lee Bidwell, Faculty Representative
Anne Patterson, SGA President
Burt Hazlewood, Longwood University Foundation
John Daniel, Longwood Real Estate Foundation

Rector’s Welcome and Approval of Minutes and Consent Agenda

The Rector welcomed those in attendance, in particular Rhodes Ritenour on the occasion of his first Board meeting. She said October was a banner month for Longwood, with the opening of the Baliles Center and groundbreaking for the Joan Perry Brock Center. She thanked Joan Perry Brock in particular for her visionary support of Longwood, and helping the University serve as a

convener and provide new experiences. She summarized a list traits of Joan of Arc that can be a model for Longwood, including belief in mission, and leadership by example. She said we need to encourage others to follow that example, sharing the good news that Longwood is doing her best and reflecting the best in all of us.

The Rector asked President Reveley to introduce members of the Human Resources office, with thanks for their exceptional contributions to the University, these past years especially. He said HR staff have been “truly some of the heroes through these Covid years,” and also the labor-intensive transition to Cardinal software, and a wide array of challenges for faculty and staff from an employment standpoint in the pandemic. Louise Waller noted HR impacts all parts of the University, and expressed her gratitude for their exceptionally positive work ethic, uncomplaining in the face of change and challenge. She asked each member to stand and be named and recognized by HR Director Lisa Mooney: Reggie Marsh, Jeannie Hayden, Heather Staylor, Rhonda Golden, Becky Williams, Kim Witcher, and Frances Huddleston. There was a round of applause, and the Rector extended her personal thanks as well.

Victoria Kindon provided an introductory overview of the Longwood Black Alumni Association and its partnership with the University. She noted it has grown to more than 660 members, and it provides support to students. Since 2019 the group has raised more than \$47,000 for the Dr. Teresa Clark Scholarship Fund. Recently, it has worked with the University to develop an affiliation agreement, signed by the LBAA and University in September. She introduced Dr. Ericka Brown-Meredith '95, assistant professor of social work, who highlighted some of LBAA's activities and accomplishments. She noted the importance of supporting students of color in terms of retention and student success. The affiliation signifies the University's commitment to diversity and student success, she said, while paving the way for future mentorship, volunteer opportunities, social capital and other forms of support. She described recent Reunion activities, and a number of academic and social support efforts, as well as mentorship work, underway by the group. She thanked the Board for the opportunity to be acknowledged by the University and its work in partnership. Ms. Kindon added the work has been deeply rewarding for her and the University more broadly, and commended in particular LBAA President Dr. James Trent '91. She asked the Board to recognize and celebrate the work of the Longwood Black Alumni Association as well as its affiliation.

The Rector commended the work and partnership of the LBAA. She asked for a motion to commend the Longwood Black Alumni Association and to ratify their affiliation. Ms. Scott so moved, noting her pride in doing so as Longwood's first black alumna. Mr. Smith seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously.

The Rector spoke briefly about enrollment and admissions, saying the University has set an example for collaboration without tearing others down, and working with sister Virginia public universities. She said it is a period of challenging times for the nation and higher education, which highlights the value of Longwood's residential model in teaching people how to live together and to lead. She said the Board is highly focused on admissions, and commended Victoria's Kindon team on the analytical rigor and creativity of their work. She commended the recent prospective student day that attracted more than 700 attendees. She also thanked the hard-

working staff of the Admissions Office for their tireless efforts to help Longwood navigate a complex admissions environment profoundly impacted by Covid, as well as the significant changes in the use of standardized testing across higher education. She noted enrollment for the 15 public universities in the Commonwealth is down an average of 4.1 percent across the Virginia undergraduate system this year compared to 2019, the year before Covid. One close peer institution of Longwood lost 24.4 percent of enrollment, another lost 11.6 percent. Longwood, by contrast, has gained 3.2 percent over that period, which has provided relative stability, with graduate enrollment offsetting softness in undergraduate enrollment. She said the heart of Longwood is undergraduate enrollment and that she remains hopeful and positive, and encouraged by the increase in campus visitors, reflecting very hard work by the Admissions leadership team and staff. She acknowledged the hard work of faculty and the important role they play.

The Rector asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting. Mr. Palmer so moved, Ms. Bond seconded and the motion was approved unanimously.

Louise Waller addressed the proposed housing and dining rates. She said a tremendous amount of work has gone into developing the proposed rates. She noted there is substantial pressure from inflation, which stands at over 6 percent nationally, affecting contracts in major areas such as maintenance and food service. She pledged to continue to work to keep costs down, while continuing to work with students to improve housing services and be responsive to student requests. One recent example is student feedback requesting clearer information about the status of work orders, and a new app is being developed where students can track work orders. Regarding dining, she noted the goal has been to provide students with a broad range of options and price points, while not confusing them. This coming year, students who live in apartments expressed a wish for options for smaller meal plans; in response, the proposed cost for the main meal plan for apartment communities is smaller and declines by \$500 under proposed rates. However, the rates of some other plans have risen, due principally to increases in food and labor costs for Aramark.

Victoria Kindon described the housing scholarships offered by Financial Aid, to help students stay in Longwood-managed housing, and a new set of workshops implemented this fall for students to help them navigate housing options. She noted students typically do better academically in Longwood-managed housing. Tim Pierson said students often make housing decisions based on a range of factors, including camaraderie and friendships. He gave an overview of the efforts by a housing committee of staff and students to foster a culture and amenities that older students want in Longwood-managed housing. Anne Patterson noted SGA facilitated a housing town hall that President Reveley attended to answer questions. She noted a number of student-athletes and members of the Greek community had been frustrated by the announcement of the third-year housing requirement. She said the task force is focused particularly on working with Greek leaders and has a student-athlete representative, and is also making an effort to ensure a representative range of views of other student populations is taken into account. She noted the SGA is also working with the University on other student priorities, including improvements to the FAB. Tim Pierson said the goal is to create communities with

more autonomy and independence for upperclass students in University-managed housing. Ms. Raible suggested a financial-aid “deep dive” could be useful for a future meeting.

The Rector asked for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Ms. Anderson so moved, Ms. Roane seconded, and the Consent Agenda was approved unanimously.

President’s Report

President Reveley noted the world continues to navigate with uncertainty with regards to Covid. Budget-wise, he said the University is running close to projections on E&G, while running a few percentage points behind projections on auxiliary. He said the Board and University have a responsibility to spend prudently in the face of uncertainty, ensuring long-term strength and stability. Regarding admissions, he said he is encouraged by what he has seen this fall but that the landscape has been profoundly altered by Covid and the usual prediction models used by higher education are in flux. He said it will require hard work, ingenuity and cooperation across the University to bring in strong classes for the foreseeable future. Campus visits are extremely important, so it is encouraging many more students have visited campus this fall.

Justin Pope provided an update on Covid for the semester, saying he was pleased and relieved at how the semester had played out. There have been some cases, but thanks to high vaccination rates they have been almost entirely mild or asymptomatic. Moreover, while contact tracing continues, it is clear there has been little if any identifiable spread at Longwood. He said eventually Longwood, like all institutions, will need to determine a more long-term posture related to Covid as an endemic disease, while also giving close attention to the uncertainties surrounding the emergence of the omicron variant.

Michelle Meadows and Courtney Hodges provided an update on the success of the Jerome Kersey Classic weekend, both on the court and with the energy among those in attendance. Ms. Anderson expressed that the execution of the weekend events was “flawless.” The Rector also commended the efforts of the men’s and women’s basketball teams.

Civitae and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan Updates

Larissa Smith introduced Prof. Heather Lettner-Rust, who gave a presentation on the background and progress of Civitae over recent years through to the implementation of the Symposium on the Common Good this year and the first graduating class of seniors to come entirely through the curriculum. Several Board members commended the work. President Reveley noted that he does not believe another university in America has woven into its student experience the emphasis on education for democracy as successfully as Civitae.

The President and VP for Academic Affairs introduced Director of Multicultural Affairs and Title VI coordinator Jonathan Page and JoEllen Pederson, chair of the Faculty Senate, to provide an overview of the proposed Five-Year Diversity Strategic Plan (2021-2026), with thanks for the hard work to lead its development. Jonathan Page gave an overview of the development process, including 25 focus groups and multiple town-hall meetings, literature reviews, and study of high-impact practices identified at other universities. He described the “Inclusive Excellence Model” that has helped shape the plan, with its focus on ensuring the institution employs inclusive

practices. JoEllen Pederson addressed the One Virginia Strategic Plan for Inclusive Excellence and its complementary goals, including recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce, and community engagement. She mapped out the overlapping goals between the Longwood objectives and those of One Virginia. They gave an overview of timelines and expectations for monitoring progress and accountability going forward. They thanked the full membership of the steering committee for their help, and thanked the Board for their time and involvement.

Ms. Raible commended the work of the committee and said many organizations have struggled to put diversity work into plans that can be acted upon and measured. Mr. Page said members have carefully considered questions of measurement and accountability, including the idea for a dashboard. Ms. Scott said in her experience the goal of managing conflict is an especially important one, and it's essential to help community members to conduct healthy conversations in such moments – disagreeing agreeably and educating with kindness. Jonathan Page said his office has been conducting workshops to model how to engage in civil discourse. Ms. Roane commended the plan as “audacious and ambitious” and expressed particular appreciation it resists the notion that diversity and inclusion are the responsibility of only one office on campus. Anne Patterson said she had attended one of the workshops related to the plan, and called it a very positive experience. The Rector said “It’s a plan that reflects who we are, it’s not just a checklist of tasks.” She asked for a motion to adopt the plan. Ms. Roane so moved, Eileen Anderson seconded, and the plan was approved unanimously.

Reports of Representatives of the Board

John Daniel expressed his continued appreciation to the Board and Longwood for the Baliles Center, and the continued work of the Real Estate Foundation. President Reveley also thanked the REF for being the driving force in the development of the new Andy Taylor Center.

Burt Hazlewood reported the MOU approved by Longwood’s Board has now been approved by the Longwood University Foundation Board. The search for a new executive director has been completed and an announcement is expected soon. He noted he had previously reported an endowment level of \$97 million; in fact the figure is \$101 million, as of June 30. A number of companies in investment portfolios went public in the most recent quarter, improving returns. Last year the Foundation delivered \$2.8 million to the University; the figure this year will be just over \$3 million, and next year will be about \$3.3 million. Financial aid distributions are expected to be \$2.3 million. Last year more than 99 percent of available scholarship funding was distributed, and the Foundation expects the same this year. They expect to distribute about \$2.5 million in scholarship funding next year. The Rector thanked him for his volunteer service as acting CEO of the Foundation for the past six months.

Anne Patterson thanked the Board and gave an overview of a busy semester of SGA activities, including town halls, academic initiatives, and initiatives related to diversity and inclusion. She said diversity and inclusion issues have been on students’ minds, with students paying close attention to divisive court decisions nationally in recent weeks. She said students embraced traditions this fall and were grateful to be able to bring them back. A particular focus has been extra attention and funding for the current sophomore class to facilitate togetherness and activity.

Lee Bidwell said she felt some anxiety in developing her oral and written reports, and was eager to strike a balance in conveying faculty concerns regarding enrollment and stress regarding workload. She said she does not wish to be seen as criticizing colleagues, and noted her report includes a list of activities faculty are doing to be helpful. She said faculty are “willing partners” in admissions and retention, but the efforts require faculty effort and are not sustainable and will only contribute to faculty burnout. She said she recognizes the Board is looking carefully at admissions.

The Rector said “we may not be saying thank you enough to faculty, and the message I would want you to take back is that we recognize them for what they do for this community.” She said she was extremely impressed by the range and depth of offerings related to Civitae and appreciates faculty efforts to help admissions staff understand and market Civitae. She said she believes the demands on faculty are something the Board has recognized and understood throughout her seven-plus years of service, and will continue to be so. She said that unfortunately the challenges faced by higher education and the demands on faculty to be helpful with admissions were not going to disappear or change, as “we have to recognize the game of admissions is tougher than it was.” She encouraged the faculty to continue teaching quality courses that inspire young minds, and provide a distinctive educational experience for students. She said she hopes no faculty will hesitate to raise concerns they have, but also that everyone will contribute in a positive and productive way. Ms. Roane connected the conversation to the previous one regarding the diversity plan, noting its emphasis on diversity as everyone’s responsibility reinforced the notion everyone at the University is interconnected.

Dr. Smith said faculty have requested more engagement with prospective students, and gotten it. The question now is how to make those efforts as productive as possible. She said admissions continues to innovate its programs, and many of these efforts are new. She said she thinks constantly on faculty workload, and she is cognizant of the intensive efforts ongoing regarding retention, particularly in the face of the educational challenges incoming students have faced. She said, “It is our responsibility as deans and provost to work with faculty to provide the resources that they need,” and she pledged to do that. The Rector said faculty are multi-dimensional and carry so much work, and what is required is that we work together to accomplish what’s needed. Ms. Anderson said we are in the middle of a perfect storm, dealing with students who lost 18 months, which represents a major teaching challenge. That may improve, but demographics challenges are beyond our control and will persist. She said she is grateful for the admissions team and the innovation they have implemented, and we are in a much better place than years ago, thanks to the Common Application and other innovations, to face the challenges of the moment. “We’re not out of the woods yet, but I think we’ve got the pieces in place.” Ms. Raible said “the only reason I graduated from Longwood was the faculty.” She also noted that in almost every profession there is a heightened level of anxiety associated with the challenges of the moment. We all have to take care of ourselves. Dr. Pierson said in his long experience, he is aware the relationship with faculty is the number one driver of student experience and satisfaction.

Dr. Smith and Ms. Waller gave a brief overview of the Andy Taylor Center, and its role in the broader statewide early childhood initiative. The new facility will be a better resource for Longwood's academic programs, and will also facilitate collaborative relationships with on-campus resources like the Center for Community Music. The related undergraduate curriculum centers on a B.S. degree in early childhood education, a 2+2 degree. Louise Waller gave an overview of the planning and design work of the new facility and the improvements it offers compared to the Center's "starter home" across town.

There being no further business, the Rector asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Ritenour so moved, Ms. Anderson seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m. Members took a tour of the Andy Taylor Center, and a number attended the Holiday Dinner and Concert.