



State Council of
Higher Education for Virginia

SAC MINUTES

Student Advisory Committee Minutes Friday, March 28, 2014 SCHEV Conference Room

Members Present: Brent Ashley (Virginia Tech) ; Phillip Blevins (Appalachian School of Law), Joana Blum (Richard Bland College); Roshell Brown (Eastern Shore Community College), Jake Jedlicka (James Madison University), Niyant Jain (Virginia Commonwealth University), Danny Lee (George Mason University), and Samantha Robinson (UVA Wise)

SCHEV Staff Present: Beverly Covington, Kirsten Nelson, Kathy Robinson, and Susan Wood

Kirsten (SCHEV) opened the meeting and explained why SCHEV is working on a strategic plan.

Dr. Wood (SCHEV) introduced herself, shared her background then presented a PowerPoint regarding SCHEV's charge in the Code of Virginia to create a strategic plan for higher education in the Commonwealth.

Jake (JMU) – asked a methodology question - are we going for big ideas or specifics?

Dr. Wood – definitely big ideas. Since it's a statewide coordinating board, it has to apply to every institution.

Danny (GMU) – was involved in Mason's plan as well – Mason "IDEA"

Dr. Wood thanked Jake and Danny for sharing their experiences and commented that the plan will be an advocacy tool, for policy and budget processes.

Dr. Wood began questions of the group:

1. Please provide one example of something your institution has done to encourage your progress? Is there anything it has done to discourage progress?
 - Samantha (UVW-Wise) – regular advisor meetings. Don't have many classes at the institution, so need to be very specific about your plan because you need to know a long time in advance that you need a certain class that is not offered every semester. The advisor has to clear you to sign up for classes, so it is mandatory. Susan – that is often called "intrusive advising".
 - Niyant (VCU-Medical) – One thing that institution did to discourage was that there are so many opportunities available, e.g., research or study abroad, but they were not broadcast very well. He entered on a combined bachelor to MD

- program and found out that not many people know about it. Encouraging – as a part of that program, they made sure he was progressing through the program and fulfilling requirements. Consistent advising kept him on track to graduate.
- Danny (GMU) – Institution has encouraged by implementing a survey as a retention tool. A lot of questions asked about how they feel about Mason, what is going well, etc. You get the results and it will recommend places you can go or people to see to resolve problems. Many student positions created to allow students to work and go to class. Discouraging – the growth of the university, because classes getting bigger. Buildings always being renovated, offices moved, reorganizing. So many changes, students feel they are missing out on the traditional college experience. Susan – is the survey done once or more? Re-take every semester.
 - Roshell (ESCC) – Encourage by keeping students in the loop about jobs, internships, financial aid. There is a big nursing program at the school – the LPN program curriculum makes it hard for students to have a job while going to school and they are trying to address that. They do mock interviews. There is a college success skills course which is not that helpful for non-traditional, older students, but there are a lot of students coming straight from high school and it may be helpful to them. Discouraging – degree variety and class flexibility, because they are small. Have looked at enrollment recently and tried to determine why enrollment was down. They are working on how things are set up and offering new degrees.
 - Joann (RBC) – A lot of changes since the new president came in. Have seminars every now and then. One was with Capital One to talk about what they want to see on resumes, interviewing, first year on the job, etc. Other topics - time management skills. Also, tutoring increased. Discouraging – few degrees, but they will be adding new ones. Have big LCD screens that hadn't been used, but now being used for communication.
 - Jake (JMU) – community service learning, internships, etc. – school has been pushing students to take advantage of. Can take ideas learned in class and use in another setting. Also, social growth – being an adult and an engaged citizen. Discouraging – Sometimes we are treated as partners in learning, but other times, there isn't transparency – treated just as a student and not told what is going on or asked for feedback.
 - Brent (Tech) – Encouraging through a lot of outreach, asking student opinions. University is very willing to work with them. Added three new degrees in science focused on what companies are looking for. Discouraging – funding. The student experience outside of class. He is an out-of-state student. Academics, faculty – VT is about 100-200 faculty short of faculty from where they should be in terms of size, etc. Susan – so you are talking about student activities, financial aid, and faculty? Yes, academics are a priority, but the college experience is important too – that's what attracts people.
 - Phil (Appalachian School of Law) – regarding his VCCS experience – on the positive side, they launched a degree progress report. Negative – courses

weren't offered often. Regarding his grad level experience – it is discouraging to not have a handle on your academic progress because there are no mid-term exams.

- Niyant (VCU- Medical) – a lot of things are graded on a pass/fail basis. This is encouraging because students can focus on the work and not on the grade. The goal is to become board-certified and to ultimately pass that outside test.

2. Affordable Access – two parts to this issue: is it affordable – is it within means? Access – who gets in?

- Phil (Appalachian School of Law) – Was a fellow in McDonnell administration. Governor McDonnell really wanted to provide community college tuition-free, but the only way to offer was to increase taxes. When you move up the ladder, it gets more expensive.
- Samantha (UVA-Wise) – there is a scholarship in the MECC area, called the AIMS scholarship. Students can go for free to MECC and if decide to transfer to UVAW, AIMS will cover T&F as well. The only setback is that it only covers what is left over from other aid, so it could help cover T&F, but still a problem to get housing, transportation, books.
- How to provide access?
- Roshell (ESCC) – If you start college while your parents are still part of the financial equation you may need financial aid but can't get it because your parents are just slightly over threshold, making you ineligible. Some are eligible but don't use what is available or don't use it wisely. Regarding nontraditional students there have been a lot of layoffs in the area and most have been able to come in and get some help. Certificate programs – these can be earned in a short time frame and the student can get back into the workforce. The only problem is that financial aid doesn't cover certificates, but luckily we have people who get grants from the workforce investment act.
- Danny (GMU) - taking college classes while in high school helps and some students come in with a lot of credits, which helps with affordability. Some students don't have that opportunity because they are from rural or very urban areas.

3. Textbook costs; any courses using digital resources?

- Samantha (UVA-Wise) – institution-wide, the institution doesn't do it, but sometimes a professor will tell you to get an older version or purchase it online and not from the institution. There is a renting option, but no university-wide encouragement for that.
- Danny (GMU) – do have rental programs and bookstore sells used books. Sometimes it is a professor who chooses a new edition. Maybe there should be more accountability for professors to choose books for strictly academic reasons. Many students are skeptical of the bookstore and will buy online or buy from each other. There is a backlash when students have to buy a new textbook. There is a lot of blame but no one has a solution.

- Roshell (ESCC) - hates the Pearson online resources – MyMathLab, etc. Costs a lot and if you don't use the entire package. Also, there no value after semester is over.
 - Joann (RBC) – calculus professor did use an online digital resource and it saved money. Thinks the movement to digital is very important.
4. Do you think institutions will be offering more distance learning? What is your experience?
- Niyant (VCU-Medical) - At MCV, all lectures are recorded. Likes that because you can pause, rewind. Can watch from home. Feels he is getting full worth from lecture by being able to take breaks.
 - Brent (Tech) – Math Emporium – introductory math class lectures are online. Material is self-taught from lectures, then go to take quizzes and tests at the emporium.
 - Roshell (ESCC) – doesn't learn very well from an online format. Depends on the person's learning style.
 - Jake (JMU) – yes, it is inevitable. It will grow. It is a way to connect and take classes at other institutions. What worries him is that legislators talk about it as "replacing" the college experience. The college experience is really important for growth and citizenship.
 - Brent (Tech) – some grad schools don't accept online courses, e.g. have simulated labs in the P.A. program that aren't accepted because there is no hands-on experience.
 - Samantha (UVA-Wise) – it is important to have the option. If you are a student who learns well that way, it is a good option, but still need to have in-person classes.
 - Joann (RBC) – important to make sure online classes are transferable. Is taking a German class online from a professor who is in CA, but it won't transfer. Standards have not been set. Susan – online classes are supposed to match the rigor of the traditional classroom experience.
 - Niyant (VCU-Medical) – If we can get online learning standards that are accepted across all institutions, that would be a nice goal. He did not learn enough about research, internships, etc. Students should be able to find out about those opportunities earlier.
5. Connections to workforce, intentional career advising. Should intentional career advising be a main focus on the part of the institution? How has your institution helped you with connections to the workforce?
- Jake (JMU) – Some programs funnel automatically to a certain job and some, like history, are more broad-based and do not. For those, the institution should create possibilities for students to connect with alumni, etc. It could be university-driven.
 - Danny (GMU) – thinks it should be a part of the state plan. Balance between finding 21st century thinkers who can handle the ups and downs of job market, and in helping students find jobs and be connected. Mason has coaching, etc.

Career planning is student affairs based. Opportunities for alumni to come in, job fairs, etc.

- Brent (Tech) – career planning is very important – that’s what attracts the best. Students who have some internship experience have an advantage over those with higher GPA’s. Need to have more than just a degree. Career services, advising, alumni – all important.

6. Lightning Round. What is your strongest message about the Strategic Plan?

- Roshell (ESCC) – don’t forget to make books affordable. They need to come up with something better.
- Joann (RBC) – new courses. Ask some industries in VA what courses would be helpful for prospective employees interested in those industries. Share courses among institutions.
- Jake (JMU) – strategic plans don’t work when the people planning them are planning for people who aren’t consulted. Keep that in mind.
- Brent (Tech) – Affordability; technology, research should remain top-notch.
- Phil (Appalachian School of Law) - Provide universal access to community colleges.
- Samantha (UVA-Wise) – don’t forget the college experience outside academics. Faculty retention. The more you can keep who really connect with students, the better the academic experience. State funding for research opportunities on STEM fields.
- Danny (GMU) – don’t forget about non-traditional, undocumented, first generation, international students. They are hit hardest, but they are also the ones who help create the economy.