



Academic Affairs Committee

September 28, 2021

Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dean Priddy (Chair); Margaret S. Benjamin; Mona Edwards; Betsy S. Oakley; Hazael Mengesha

MEMBERS ABSENT WITH NOTICE: Tim Rice

OTHERS PRESENT: Chancellor Franklin Gilliam; Provost Debbie Storrs; Cathy Akens, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs; Tina McEntire, Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management; Andrew Hamilton, Associate Vice Provost for Student Success and Dean of Undergraduate Studies; Waiyi Tse, Chief of Staff; Kelly Harris, Assistant Secretary to the Board; and other members of the administration, faculty, staff, and general public.

PROCEEDINGS:

Chair Priddy called the meeting to order at 1:45pm

The roll call was read, and a quorum was confirmed.

Chair Priddy welcomed new BOT member Hazael Mengesha to the meeting.

On roll call vote, the minutes of the March 16, 2021 Committee meeting were unanimously approved with no additions or corrections.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

AAC – 1 Fall 2021 Enrollment Update Brief (McEntire)

AAC 1.1 Fall 2021 Enrollment Update Brief Presentation

Tina McEntire, Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management, gave a brief overview of Fall 2021 enrollment. This fall we increased freshman enrollment by 111 students (4.6%) by focusing on outreach to prospective students, improving visits for prospective students, and optimizing financial aid packages. We also increased graduate enrollment by 2.4% overall. Since 2016, we have increased graduate enrollment by 14.5%.

Some areas of concern are the decline in new student enrollment in Fall 2021 at the undergraduate level. We were down 5.8% in continuing enrollment which is a direct result of being down 600 new students in Fall 2020. Another area of concern is new transfer students. We saw nationally and at the UNC System level fewer students transferring from one 4-year institution to another. We also saw a significant decline in transfers from the NC Community Colleges; those were down 17% in overall enrollment. The pandemic had some impact on this, and students stopped out at the community college level without plans to return to higher education in the future. We are taking steps to improve our community college transfer enrollment, including outreach to community colleges. Hosting community colleges and school counselors on our campus is a goal for next year, but the declines will continue to impact us. We also saw fewer non-degree seeking and readmits to the institution; we also think this is pandemic related. At the graduate level the concern is new graduate enrollment, where we saw a decline of 8.3%. We will see that play out next year in our continuing graduate enrollment.

When you have a decline in student head count it often leads to a decline in student credit hours (SCH). We are funded by our SCH generation and are down 5.5% in our fundable SCH. We were down less at the graduate level - just 2.0%, which is good because typically those credit hours are funded at a higher level.

Fifty-three percent of our enrollment is comprised of continuing undergraduate students. New and continuing graduate enrollments have much smaller percentages of students but are important because they are funded at a higher rate.

Based on early projections, it will likely be two to three years before we may return to pre-pandemic levels. Enrollment Management looks at multiple levers, including engaging with prospective students such as high school seniors, incoming freshman, student success, retention rates, and how to pull levers across the enrollment spectrum. We were not forming relationships with high school students early enough and have since done a lot to increase outreach to sophomores through seniors and their families. Building these relationships now sets us up for success in 2-3 years when those students graduate high school. McEntire also wants to focus on bringing school counselors to campus by hosting a large workshop in the spring. We are planning a joint workshop with NC State and Wake Tech for school counselors; if successful, we will replicate it in Mecklenburg and Guilford Counties. We have also vastly improved our campus visit experience this year, restructuring it to highlight the beautiful areas of campus.

AAC – 2 Integrated Student Success (Storrs)

AAC – 2.1 Integrated Student Success Initiative Update Presentation

Provost Storrs reviewed UNCG's student success initiative, which has been a focus for some time. Given the enrollment situation, much of our effort must be focused on making sure students don't stop out. Stop outs occur for many reasons: academic challenges; paying for college; family responsibilities; sense of belonging; work-school balance; mental health. There are also other reasons tied to the pandemic – such as the impact it has had and will have on college preparedness.

Likewise, we had a freshman class with a very different first-year experience because of COVID, so we are doing outreach to make sure they feel integrated and connected to the campus community. Since 2016, we have lost 8,146 students who were in good academic standing to stop outs; 71% of those students did not go to another institution.

The importance of acquiring a four-year degree has been much debated recently. Data shows that those who don't go beyond a high school diploma earn less than those who go on to get a four-year degree. For example, men with a four-year degree earn on average \$1M more over a lifetime than men with high school diplomas. The cost of getting a college degree at UNCG is quite affordable. A college degree also ensures we have engaged citizens - there is data that shows that people who are more educated are more likely to vote, and be engaged and volunteer in their communities. They are also more likely to exercise, not to smoke, and go to their children's parent-teacher conferences. There is also a clear business case for retention; revenue is lost when students stop out. For example, retaining just 50 more students would add almost \$500,000 in revenue.

Dashboards have been developed that are real time and give administrators tools to be successful. For example, one of the dashboards has to do with grade distribution. This allows department chairs to know quickly what grades students are earning in the courses faculty are teaching. This in turn allows deans and department chairs to make data informed decisions.

We have three primary strategies for 2021-22: increase faculty and academic advisors' utilization of Starfish Early Alert, a software platform used to collect information in a central location; develop an intervention plan for DFW rates in gateway/intro courses; and maximize articulated transfer credit in general education and academic programming.

We must also be cognizant of the reality the pandemic played on student mental health. The prevalence of depression and anxiety among UNCG students is above national norms and has been heightened by the pandemic. There are several initiatives underway in the Division of Student Affairs that Academic Affairs will also take part in. Deans and department chairs will establish a structure to increase faculty awareness about mental health and students in distress so faculty can help refer students for support.

Andrew Hamilton, Associate Vice Provost of Student Success and Dean of Undergraduate Studies, discussed the work he did with the Department of Mathematics and Statistics to address high DFW rates. Funding received from the Gates Foundation Frontier Set a few years ago has been used to think about how to see higher passing rates in introduction to math courses. There is a direct connection to performance in introduction courses and retention at the institution. We made it a top priority to make sure students take pre-calculus and calculus. The DFW rates were over 40% at the time. We reengineered the entire curriculum, took out several lower division math courses that students were using to stall their own progress, and provided a placement exercise which resulted in showing students where they were and increasing the number of students to successfully complete the courses. For example, in calculus we saw a 40% increase in attempts and about a 45% decrease in DFWs.

We have made key changes to address these issues, chief among them providing data to allow administrators to make data informed decisions. We also amplify messaging across campus about our DFW rates and are sending the narrative about why it is important. There are many partnerships across campus to continue this work and we are motivated and optimistic that we will see great improvements.

Trustee Edwards asked what strategies we have tried relative to who teaches introductory courses. For example, are faculty teaching both upper and lower-level courses and perhaps using terminology in introductory courses that students are not familiar with? Provost Storrs said we are providing the data because it will reveal if there is an instructor issue versus a structural issue. If one instructor has high DFW rates, support for that faculty member can be implemented, but if DFW rates are high across a section, it suggests there is a curriculum issue. Hamilton shared that the data shows structural issues that can be addressed, so we are implementing a “DFW Bootcamp” to give administrators access to DFW rates across campus and give departments an opportunity to analyze their data and execute some interventions.

Cathy Akens, Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, discussed mental health challenges and our approach to outreach. We are expanding the network of support available to students. This includes making sure faculty, staff, and student peers know the red flags, and how to make a referral, because intervention is needed early on. We received a grant from the UNC System office that will allow us to train people on campus to look for early signs and refer students to help when they need it. Students have informed Akens that this is on their minds, and they want to be involved in the solution. Students who previously had not sought mental health services are now doing so because we have implemented telehealth services.

Committee Chair Priddy asked about the data analytics and predictive modeling aspects of Starfish, whether we will get data that gives us action items, and if there is a role for artificial intelligence. Provost Storrs said we have not previously used Starfish effectively. It has an analytics module, but she has not found it helpful in her previous work at other institutions. The artificial intelligence is not quite there in terms of predictive analytics. It is more nuanced, and human analysis is needed to look at which cases are responded to. McEntire said research is being conducted to identify who our stop out students are including their demographics, where in their career they were when they stopped out, what their debt looked like, and whether they accumulated debt faster than other students. This will allow us to begin predictive analysis and see warning signs indicating those students who are at risk for stopping out.

Trustee Mengesha asked about initiatives or programs offered in terms of faculty mental health. Storrs said we spend a lot of time focused on students, but we also realize that the pandemic has impacted faculty too. Employee assistance programs are available to them, and she will have a faculty fellow focused on wellbeing who will develop a number of initiatives and programming for students, faculty, and staff.

Trustee Edwards noted the statistic that 71% of students said they have experienced higher levels of anxiety, which is higher than what our peers report. Given the demographic makeup of our student body, she inquired about the extent to which mental health counselors are trained to be culturally responsive to BIPOC students and students of different sexual orientations. Akens

said students do want to talk to someone with a common experience and we continue to recruit diverse counselors. Faculty will also receive training to create an environment in the classroom where students are willing to seek help or raise concerns.

Trustee Oakley asked if the higher statistic we are reporting could be due to the fact that we do a better job identifying our students' needs in comparison to other campuses. Akens said we do an exceptional job learning about our students by conducting surveys and participating in a few different national benchmarking surveys. In terms of tracking, we have a formalized case management process for students, tailored to their unique issues until they are stabilized. Mengesha noted that from a student's perspective, he believes the student body is more educated about mental health than other campuses and that therefore, our students seek assistance at a higher rate. Our student population has multiple factors to consider including first generation student status, workload issues, and demographic issues; investing in mental health services helps us retain these students. Trustees expressed support for continued investment in these programs and services.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

AAC – 3 Update on Research and Engagement (Shelton)

AAC – 4 Additions and Deletions to the August 2021 Degree Candidates (Storrs)

There were no questions or comments about the informational items included in the Committee's pre-meeting materials.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Kelly Harris
Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees