

Academic Committee Meeting
March 26, 2020
1:00-2:15 P.M.
ZOOM

Attendees:

Bagchi, Rajesh
Boyle, Kevin
Carlson, Kevin
Dickhans, Jim
Ghandforoush, Parviz
Gnyawali, Devi
Hunnings, Kay
Khansa, Lara
Maher, Jack
McGehee, Nancy
Mitchell, Elizabeth
Russell, Robin
Singal, Vijay
Sumichrast, Robert

Absent:

Recording Secretary:

Ridpath, Kimberly

Minutes/Action Items/Announcements

Dean Sumichrast recognized committee members participating via zoom and phone. He encouraged everyone to use video conference when practical for all meetings.

Sumichrast thanked faculty in the college for sharing their expertise, including with the news media. He pointed to a summary with some examples related to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Sumichrast informed the committee that proposed changes in the faculty handbook which related to promotion and tenure have been withdrawn and will be reintroduced in the fall. Kevin Carlson described a university request for information about Pamplin's research inventory.

Status

Instruction

Sumichrast asked department heads how their faculty and students were adapting to a fully online environment. He reminded department heads to have access to the

electronic gradebook, for each course. Overall, courses are going well, and faculty have plans for evaluating performance. Some specific questions were addressed. Department heads thanked Jim Dickhans and Pamplin's IT staff, for their help supporting classes and other operations.

Operations

Sumichrast stressed the need to avoid coming into Pamplin and other Virginia Tech facilities except when operation critical. He referred to the presidential policy memorandum describing emergency modes of operations. It is likely that the Commonwealth will impose tighter restrictions on movement and gatherings. Committee members were asked to assure that all faculty and staff would be able to operate should the university be closed.

Pamplin COVID-29 Planning

Pamplin needs to plan for the impact of COVID-19 beyond moving courses online, this semester.

Budget

Sumichrast said it is almost certain the state will receive far less revenue than predicted weeks ago. Virginia will almost certainly reduce spending including on higher education. Kay Hunnings will prepare contingencies for Pamplin's operation, if its funding is cut by several percent. Pamplin must carefully consider how to maintain the quality and scope of its educational, research, and outreach programs. The Academic Committee and others will have opportunities to provide input. However, Pamplin needs to take some steps immediately and possibly reevaluate them, as more information comes available. Sumichrast said that our priority is to maintain our current faculty and staff and continue core operations. No additional long-term financial commitments will be approved at this time. In particular, no tenure track or collegiate faculty will be hired. If necessary, the college will consider hiring adjuncts and instructors, to meet student demand, for courses. The committee discussed implications of a budget reduction and posed specific questions. It will take time to understand how sources of funding will be impacted and how Pamplin can best respond.

Continued online classes

Given the uncertainty of the pandemic, Sumichrast requested that departments consider how they could continue operate remotely using online instruction into the fall semester. He stressed that this exercise was for a situation that probably would not occur. The committee discussed potential changes in enrollment and programs.

Strategic and implementation plans

Last semester, Pamplin adopted a strategic plan and is formalizing an implementation plan. With the likely budget reduction and changes in operation, these plans must be adapted. Some goals will need to be postponed or changed. Carlson discussed his plan of action going forward.

Pamplin events/meetings

Sumichrast requested input on major planned events for students and faculty this spring. He said it was important to provide a meaningful experience when a resource is allowed. Sumichrast said that Pamplin should consider personalized recognitions, when possible. The committee considered three specific planned events.

Students of Distinction

Sumichrast said three options for the students of distinction have been proposed. They are not mutually exclusive. One proposal is to send each student who would have been recognized a signed letter and gift-for example, a pen. Another option is to create a video that replaces the in-person ceremony. Elizabeth Mitchell described a draft plan that would result in a set of semi-customized videos. The committee discussed the value and difficulty/cost of the options.

Graduation

Virginia Tech will hold a virtual commencement ceremony. The details are being developed. All college deans have decided not to hold a virtual event that resembles their traditional ceremonies. But instead, offer some type of congratulations, virtually. The committee brainstormed about options with varying degrees of personalization. The committee agreed scrolling through the names at the end of the student video would be a nice gesture.

Spring 2020 faculty and staff meeting

Each spring, Pamplin's faculty and staff meet for a college update and to recognize certain accomplishments. Sumichrast requested the committee send their thoughts offline.

BIT Cyber

Pamplin's first undergraduate degree program in the Washington Metro Area, is the Cyber Option in BIT. The college plans to move forward and enroll its first students in the fall. The financial model projects surplus revenue coming to the college, to support Pamplin's operations. Robin Russell will discuss the need for Pamplin courses, other than BIT, with department heads. These courses needed are the departments

core classes and anticipate these to take place online with an instructor. Sumichrast encouraged department heads to help support this college effort.

Development (fundraising)

Elizabeth Mitchell provided an update on the status on fundraising and alumni events throughout the university. She shared information about philanthropic participation rates from various Pamplin units.

Action Items:

1. Elizabeth Mitchell will resume organizing the logistics for Students of Distinction.
2. The committee will send additional thoughts regarding spring graduation.
3. The committee will send thoughts on the spring 2020 faculty and staff meeting.
4. Kim Ridpath will schedule an additional meeting for next week.