**VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH
BOARD OF VISITORS**

**STRATEGIC TASK FORCE**

**3:00 PM – 4:30 PM**

**DECEMBER 1, 2020**

**ELECTRONIC MEETING**

**MINUTES**

**DRAFT**

**STRATEGIC TASK FORCE MEMBERS PRESENT ELECTRONICALLY**Mr. H. Benson Dendy III, *Chair*

Dr. Gopinath R. Jadhav, *Vice Chair*

Ms. Pamela K. El

Ms. Carolina Espinal

Mr. Keith T. Parker

Mr. G. Richard Wagoner, Jr.

Ms. Karol Kain Gray, *Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer*

Dr. Meredith Weiss, *Vice President for Administration*

**STRATEGIC TASK FRCE MEMBERS NOT PRESENT**

Mr. Edward L. McCoy

Dr. Gail Hackett, *Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs*

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Mr. Jacob Belue, Esq., *Associate University Counsel*

Ms. Chelsea Gray, *Assistant Secretary & Board Liaison to the VCU Board of Visitors*

Ms. Karen Helderman, *Executive Director for Audit and Compliance Services*

Dr. Tomikia LeGrande, *Vice Provost for Strategic Enrollment Management*

Ms. Pamela Lepley, *Vice President for University Relations and Chief Communications Officer*

Dr. Mandara Savage, *Executive Director of Online@VCU*

VCU students, faculty and staff and members of the public via livestream

**CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Mr. H. Benson Dendy III, *Vice Rector*, called the meeting to order at 3:01 pm. Ms. Chelsea Gray conducted a roll call to see who was present. The meeting was being held in accordance with HB29, Governor's Amendment 28: Allow policy-making boards to meet virtually during emergency declarations. The meeting was held by electronic communication means via Zoom. The public was able to view the open session of the meeting via livestream at <https://mssvideo.vcu.edu/BOV>.

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

Ms. Chelsea Gray, Assistant Secretary and Board Liaison, reminded the Board that written comments were to be received prior to the meeting via an online portal and that no responses were received. She then reminded the Board that there would be a public comment session at this meeting and that in accordance with the published procedures for public comment, no one pre-registered to speak.

**ENROLLMENT**

Dr. LeGrande provided an overview of the enrollment figures from Fall 2020 focusing on the one-year retention gap and the impact of COVID.

VCU is experiencing a 7.2% reduction in spring enrollment for continuing undergraduate students especially with Freshman and Sophomore students. Dr. LeGrande is working directly with the Deans from each school to develop specific action plans with metrics to increase enrollment figures for the spring semester.

For the first time, VCU is offering a “J” term for those students who prefer a more compact class meeting schedule (4 weeks vs 16 weeks) which will provide an option for those students falling behind schedule after experiencing difficulty with online education and COVID19 related issues. Some J terms may begin in March to offer breaks for those students who may need more of a break between semesters.

The University is working on a strategic communication plan to offer guidance and assistance to those who need help. Student Services will be highlighted to ensure students of available resources.

The University is offering several enrollment initiatives for Spring 2021 enrollment:

* Maximizing COVID Care Relief Funding
* VCU Cares Campaign – to ensure students are being communicated with about resources available for student mental health and well-being during COVID.
* Schools will be reaching out to students who have withdrawn to encourage continuance of their education and to assist those struggling.

**Recruitment:**

With the change in the national landscape within all of Higher Education due to COVID, the Common App for all Freshman is down approximately 60%. VCU is experiencing a 14.5% decline in new applications but remains focused on the yield from applicants versus just volume of applications. VCU has removed the requirement for test scores as it remains difficult for high school seniors to take SATs, etc. Student notifications were provided two weeks earlier than previous years and the enrollment process has been simplified requiring less paperwork for students/parents of accepted students. Financial aid counselors are being assigned to all accepted students immediately to avoid enrollment delays. A copy of Dr. LeGrande’s presentation is attached hereto as ***Attachment A****.*

Mr. Dendy thanked Dr. LeGrande for her presentation.

**Recruitment Marketing Communications:**

Ms. Pamela Lepley, *Vice President for University Relations and Chief Communications Officer*, discussed the major strategies for communications for the year which include:

COVID19 Safety Communications – very positive response in how VCU has handled student safety in response to the pandemic.

Adult Learning Ad Campaign – there’s been a significant effort underway to reach adult students who to encourage completing their degree. The campaign has been successful in yielding approximately 50 new students for the spring.

Conversions to Application Page – VCU is experiencing a much greater increase in visits to website that result in conversion to applications. These are actual unique visits which result in visitors actually signing up for either more information or mailing lists which result in leads for further recruitment activities. A copy of Ms. Lepley’s presentation is attached hereto as ***Attachment B****.*

Mr. Dendy thanked Ms. Lepley for her presentation.

**ONLINE EDUCATION**

Dr. Mandara Savage, *Executive Director of Online@VCU*, presented an overview of online education activities since March 2020.

* Spring 2020 - temporarily suspended all approvals required to change a degree or certificate program to an online modality.
* October 2020 - expanded this temporary policy change to include degree and certificate programs looking to *permanently*establish an online modality (i.e., beyond just the duration of the coronavirus pandemic).
* Programs must still be approved by the appropriate university curriculum committees; however, there will be no additional steps in the approval process during this temporary change of policy.

Dr. Savage also provided an update on the Noodle contract:

* The School of Social Work could see revenue (net 50% rev share) between $1.3M and $1.75M
* There's concern with the low non-resident headcount but as marketing and branding grows, non-resident enrollment is expected to grow.
* Social Work is *expanding* the Noodle arrangement to their Advanced Standing Program.
	+ Students that major in Social Work in undergrad and can achieve their masters via an accelerated course load.
* The Wilder School could see revenue (net 50% rev share) between $235K and $300K
* Noodle wants to move towards a full Summer start program
	+ HSEP has limited course offerings during the Summer presenting a challenge in expansion

Dr. Savage provided an overview of planned actions for the spring:

* + Programs approved for Fall 2021 start (6)
	+ Programs in consultation with VCU Online (20)
	+ Continue to focus on identifying the programs most vital to our region (HD/LC)
	+ Growing programs we currently have available online (11)
	+ Focusing on program launches to enter new markets
	+ Continue expanding online program management support within VCU Online (Instructional Design Services, Online Faculty Development, Media/Web Services, Online Program Marketing and Research, Online Student Academic Support)

A copy of the presentation is attached hereto as ***Attachment C*** and is made a part hereof.

Mr. Dendy thanked Dr. Savage for his presentation.

**BUDGET UPDATE**

Ms. Karol Kain Gray, Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, provided a brief update of the budget.

Even prior to the pandemic, the university took action to reduce costs and enable unit savings:

* Savings and efficiencies from the new procure-to-pay system
* The 5-year investment cost of $3.2M, which included licensing and
* Implementation, was paid back in the first 6.3 months of operation.
* Over the next 5 years, additional hard cost savings of $16.8M are expected
* through improved sourcing and contracting, as well as, early payment
* Discounts and electronic payments.
* Bond refinancing savings of $10.8M in 2021 and $37M in the first 5 years
* Spending freeze continued (impact in FY2021 for travel = $5.4M)
* Hiring freeze started March 31st, 2020, is forecast to save a minimum of $5M through December and will contribute to overall unit reduction plans to meet current 4% targets.

Ms. Gray presented proposed tuition scenarios to the group including slight percentage increases for undergraduate tuition as well as proposed fee increases. The group felt that the legislature may impose a tuition freeze again this year and due to the impact of COVID an increase may not be appropriate. Further discussion will take place at the February 2021 board meeting and the budget review session in March 2021.

A copy of the presentation is attached hereto as ***Attachment D*** and is made a part hereof.

Mr. Dendy thanked Ms. Gray for her presentation.

**ADJOURNMENT**There being no further business, Mr. Dendy, adjourned the meeting at 4:33 p.m.