

Fairmont State University Board of Governors—Enrollment, Housing & Student Life Committee

Thursday, October 10, 2024
219 Hardway Hall and Teams
Meeting Minutes

Present

- Board Members: Ms. Jennifer Kinty, Miss Riley Neal, Mr. Lance Puccio, Mr. Drew Paton
- Administration Members: Dr. Mike Davis, Dr. Brian Selmeski, Dr. Janna Bredeson, Mr. George Wolf, Ms. Alicia Kalka, Ms. Cheryl Lewis, Mr. Spencer Flanagan, Ms. Tish Cavicchio, Mr. Jeremiah Kibler, Dr. Heath Howard

Present via Teams

- Board Members: Mr. Jason Pizatella
- Administration Members: Ms. Heidi Aloe, Ms. Jessie Sharps, Ms. Haley Cochran

Absent

- Board Members: Ms. Wendy Adkins, Mr. Jon Dodds

Call to Order:

Ms. Jennifer Kinty called the October 9, 2024, Enrollment and Student Life Committee meeting to order at approximately 9:05am.

The meeting agenda was flipped. Student Affairs presented first.

Student Affairs

- **Student Affairs**
Dr. Bredeson discussed the initial fact-finding phase for new professionals, housing occupancy rates, and the importance of retention.
- **Housing Updates**
Dr. Bredeson talked about occupancy this week in history beginning with FY23 at 65.9% FY24 at 70.9% and currently FY25 at 86.5%. Room renewals for 25-26 are underway, with 145 students already renewed. Focus groups are being conducted to improve housing experience so we will start with Pence Hall. Mr. Puccio commented we are moving in a good direction considering Prichard is significantly down with Middle College being housed there.
- **Facility Projects**
Dr. Bredeson reported we are identifying capital projects for summer 2025, including timelines and logistics for moving students.
- **Prep work for Engage Platform**
Dr. Bredeson discussed the introduction of the Engage platform to track student involvement but not only with Student Affairs. We are looking at how that engagement is across the campus. There will be a lot more information, on-boarding and education as we get ready to pilot the Engage platform.
- **New Student Programs**
Dr. Bredeson reported we are assessing and integrating various new student programs to ensure a connected process for student engagement, making sure there are different touch points and keeping them engaged.

- **Middle College Collaboration**
Dr. Bredeson talked about collaborating with Emily Swain to provide different opportunities for collaboration for all students on campus, especially focusing on middle college students.
- **Ongoing Programming**
Dr. Bredeson discussed our upcoming programming beginning with Up All Night (November) and formalizing the Falcon Fanatics program to support all sports, not just football.
- **Housing Occupancy**
Discussion on current and future housing occupancy, including contingency plans for overflow. Mr. Puccio followed up with a question about our housing from the last committee meeting and being full. Dr. Bredeson clarified that we were full when the academic year started. Looking ahead Jeremiah is working on exploring some different options.
- **Middle College Housing Agreement**
Ms. Kinty mentioned Prichard not being completely utilized and talked about there being room there to do something with the Middle College Academy. Dr. Selmeski mentioned Prichard Hall is reserved for Middle College students as per an agreement with the Department of Human Services. As the cohort grows, because we'll have more students in January and August you'll see an increase in occupancy. Ms. Kinty asked the length of the agreement for Middle College. Dr. Selmeski responded that the agreement is a two-year pilot program.
- **Assistant Vice President Search**
Dr. Bredeson talked about the ongoing searches for AVP of Wellness & Housing, and AVP of Engagement & Activities.

Key Points

1. Occupancy rates have risen each year, indicating improved retention.
2. A soft launch is planned for spring, with a full launch in fall.
3. The agreement is for a two-year pilot program.
4. Positions to be filled by the end of the year with a start date in January.

Enrollment Management

- **Enrollment and Retention**
Mr. Wolf discussed the total undergraduate enrollment, focusing on new and continuing students, and the importance of retention. Increasing enrollment, we need to look at not only recruitment, but also the retention side. A couple percent improvement in your retention across each class will change your overall enrollment significantly faster than bringing in 30, 40, 50 new students.
- **Enrollment Trends**
Mr. Wolf presented the enrollment trends from 17-18 to 18-19, noting the largest decline post-COVID and the lack of recent increases. Mr. Puccio asked if we were trending upward until COVID, Dr. Howard indicated we have been declining in enrollment for over a decade. Mostly in WV Regional Institutions. Dr. Davis added the decline slowly started in 2008.
- **Undergraduate Enrollment Breakdown**
Mr. Wolf indicated he wanted to break these into the major components of the undergraduate enrollment including transfer, readmits, and first-time freshmen.
- **FAFSA Completion**
Mr. Wolf spoke about the importance of FAFSA completion for students to receive federal and state aid, and the impact of recent changes in the FAFSA process. Dr. Selmeski reminded the board that some of the requirements were loosened by Governor Justice to complete the FAFSA and receive more state aid.

- **Recruitment Events**
Ms. Kalka gave an overview of some recent recruiting events including 37 college fairs, 31 high school visits in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, and three community engagement events that have already happened or are upcoming.
- **Campus Visit Experience**
Mr. Wolf talked about the importance of campus visits in recruitment and retention, and the need for the entire university to be engaged in creating a welcoming atmosphere. Mr. Puccio talked about being a Fairmont Senior Alumni, being bussed here and visiting campus is what made him decide to come to Fairmont State.
- **Metro Rate for Out-of-State Students**
Mr. Wolf discussed the potential benefits of implementing a metro rate for out-of-state students to make Fairmont State more competitive.
- **Inquiry Pool and Yield Improvement**
Mr. Wolf reported on the need to build a larger inquiry pool and improve yield by intensifying recruitment efforts through the summer.
- **Financial Aid Strategy**
Mr. Wolf indicated the need for a stronger aid outreach and better presentation of financial aid packages to highlight value and affordability.
- **Retention and Student Success**
Mr. Wolf talked about the integration of student success teams earlier in the process to improve retention and ensure expectations are met.
- **Technology Utilization**
Mr. Wolf talked about the underutilization of CRM and other technology tools, and the need to maximize their potential for better decision-making.
- **Staffing Update**
Mr. Wolf announced Jason McCoy as the new Assistant Vice President for Student Services.
- **Dual Enrollment Growth**
Mr. Wolf stated we need to make a larger effort to grow dual enrollment across the state.

Key Points

1. Need to implement new strategies to improve enrollment.
2. Enrollment has been declining for over a decade, and retention needs to be improved.
3. All segments need improvement with specific strategies to be discussed later.
4. We need to push FAFSA completion earlier and improve financial aid messaging.
5. Efforts are being made to increase recruitment through various events and community engagements.
6. Campus visits are crucial for higher attendance and yield.
7. Metro rate could attract more out-of-state students and improve affordability.
8. Strategies to be implemented to increase inquiry pool and yield.
9. Financial aid letters need to be modernized, and value driven.
10. Retention strategies need to align with recruitment efforts. Efforts to be made to fully utilize technology tools.
11. Jason McCoy joins the Enrollment Management leadership team.

Student Recruitment and Retention Strategies

- **Dual Enrollment**
Discussion on the benefits and challenges of dual enrollment programs, including the need to recruit these students heavily and maintain communication with them.
- **Recruitment Strategies**
Mr. Wolfe emphasizes aggressive recruitment strategies, including recruiting current students from other universities and maintaining communication with students who have gone elsewhere.
- **Staff Development**
Mr. Wolf spoke about the Importance of reducing turnover and maintaining consistency within the enrollment division. Mention of hiring new staff and the need for staff development.
- **Cost and Experience**
Mr. Wolf discussed the importance of being an affordable institution and providing a valuable experience to students. Mention of personalized recruitment packages.
- **Marketing and Proof Points**
Mr. Wolf talked about the need for strong institutional proof points to aid in recruitment and marketing. Importance of showcasing academic and engagement opportunities.
- **Merchandise and Branding**
Mr. Wolf also talked about the production of branded merchandise like t-shirts and plushies to aid in recruitment and student engagement.

Upcoming Initiatives

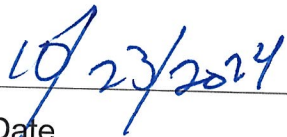
- Soft launch of Engage platform in spring, full launch in fall.
- Focus groups for housing improvements to be completed by late January or early February.
- Facility projects for summer 2025 to be identified and planned.
- AVP searches to be completed by the end of the year with a start date in January.
- Implement new strategies to improve enrollment.
- Push FAFSA completion earlier and improve financial aid messaging.
- Increase recruitment through various events and community engagements.
- Implement metro rate for out-of-state students.
- Build a larger inquiry pool and improve yield.
- Modernize financial aid letters and focus on value.
- Align retention strategies with recruitment efforts.
- Fully utilize technology tools for better decision-making.
- Next full board meeting on October 23rd.

Adjournment

Jason Pizatella adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:59am



Jason Pizatella, Committee Chair



Date