

VSU Department Heads Council Meeting
Bailey Science Building, Rm. 3026
Minutes – November 28, 2006 - 3:00 pm

Attendees: Chet Ballard, Jim Baxter, Carl Cates, Ed Chatelain, Fred Downing, Mike Griffin, Diane Judd, Rey Martinez, Blake Pearce, Jim Peterson, L. Wayne Plumly, Mylan Redfern, Paul Riggs, James Shrader, Mark Smith

Guests: Louis Levy, Greg Henderson

> The meeting was called to order at 3:02 pm by Chairperson Carl Cates. The first order of business was consideration of the October 31, 2006 meeting minutes. After a correction of the spelling of one name, the minutes were approved. Dr. Shrader was thanked and complemented on recording the minutes.

> The first item for discussion focused on undergraduate advising procedures and issues. Advising procedures differed across colleges and departments. Dr. Redfern commented that she had two dedicated advisors for majors in her department and faculty did not directly advise students thus there were no advising issues. Dr. Smith noted that graduate assistants handled advising in his department. Dr. Cates said that the Success Center Graduate Assistant Advisers served as “screeners” to check the students’ qualifications and conducted initial advising. Dr. Smith observed that in his opinion most faculty members wished to keep advisees. Dr. Baxter noted that first year advising was fairly easy with regard to course taking but then advising transfer students required more complex advising. Dr. Pearce commented that graduate assistants were used for advising and students who were under probation or suspension were contacted and advised. His graduate assistants also worked with faculty regarding student advising folders. Dr. Plumly said that faculty in his department worked directly with majors once they reached junior and senior level status. Each faculty member in his department had 20 to 50 advisees. Dr. Plumly also noted that one advantage of faculty directly advising students was to get to know the students which in turn helped faculty members in the writing of letters of recommendation and making professional contacts. He commented that the relationships formed between faculty and advisees positively impacted student retention.

Dr. Cates asked for how many advisees were being served per dedicated advisors and/or faculty. Dr. Redfern said that her two volunteer dedicated advisors were each advising approximately 75 students. Dr. Judd commented that her department was advising students from their freshman through senior years and each faculty member advised approximately 100 students with no course load adjustment. She noted that this situation made for a very intense time in the weeks prior to the beginning of preregistration. Dr. Riggs commented that each faculty member in his department advised approximately 75 students. He also said that graduate assistants advised freshman students and were doing a great job. Dr. Plumly observed that having advising loads of 100 made for a very difficult situation since advising was more than simply recommending course taking, but rather should involve a mentoring relationship. Dr. Redfern noted that her advisors begin planning with students four weeks prior to preregistration. Dr. Pearce agreed that faculty

in his department provided a “specialized” advising for students who needed a different type of connectivity with the department. He mentioned that graduate students were proving initial advising to majors but then were advised by faculty members for the rest of the program.

Dr. Cates asked if there were any examples of best practices or useful advising techniques. Dr. Judd commented that advising was taking place in classrooms for junior and senior students who were enrolled in class blocks. When asked about meetings with majors, Dr. Pearce noted that it was very difficult to get students together for a meeting. Dr. Baxter mentioned that an end of the term get-together was held for Senior majors. He also noted that today’s student was not the “traditional” student of the past. Many students held jobs, were very active and did not have a lot of free time. Many also commuted to VSU. Dr. Ballard observed that we really had an “open system” since once the flag was lifted to allow students to register, they could enroll in whatever they wanted. Dr. Plumly noted that prerequisite courses acted as a controlling enrollment variable. He also commented that course sequencing also acted as a control since the consequences could be devastating if a student did not enroll in a class when advised since the course might not be offered again for some time. Dr. Griffin said that one graduate student advised all the majors in his department. He also noted that if the numbers of majors increased then there could be problems. Dr. Martinez commented that each faculty member in his department advised between 20 and 45 students depending on the degree program. There was an effort to try to equally assign students to advisors across programs since faculty believed advising load was an issue of fairness. He also noted that advising was taken into consideration of a faculty member’s workload at many institutions.

Dr. Cates asked for examples of student advising records. Many department heads commented that individual advising sheets were completed to record the advice given to students. Students were also asked to sign the sheet at the conclusion of the session. Dr. Riggs said that a “comment card” was used by faculty members to make notes about advising sessions. It was generally agreed that such records were very important and were vital during student appeals.

> The next item on the agenda was an update by Dr. Louis Levy, Vice President for Academic Affairs. Dr. Levy announced that President Zaccari had been asked to chair an Advising Task Force for the University System of Georgia. All 35 member institutions were represented and Drs. Sheri Gravett and Marsha Krotseng from VSU were members of this task force. The general charge for the task force was to develop a set of outcomes and parallel tasks of responsibilities/activities for faculty and students alike with regards to the advising process. Dr. Levy stressed that this was not to be a “model” to be applied uniformly at every institution, but rather a set of events or “best practices” that should occur at different times to help in advising students during their college experience.

Dr. Levy commented that the “budget presentation” was being developed based on the strategic planning goals established for VSU.

Dr. Levy then responded to a question regarding the planning for and progress of future facilities and space. He noted that the new student health and wellness center facility was to be built and located across Georgia Avenue where the current Parking and Transportation offices are currently housed. Two new two-story "academic buildings" were planned to be built next to the President's home. No decisions had been made yet regarding the utilization of that new space. Dr. Levy made assurances that faculty would be involved in the planning of the utilization of those new spaces. The student "Honors House" was planned to move to the former President's home and then to Reed Hall to establish a special living community. He announced that the renovations to Brown Hall were completed and invited everyone to come and take a look. Dr. Levy commented that several parking decks were in the planning stages. One was planned to be behind Centennial Hall and another one or two on the Oak Street Parking Lot. Another deck might be built behind the University Center or near the reconstructed Student Union. Dr. Levy stressed this was a dynamic planning process. He commented that he expected that funding for "Phase II" of the renovations for Nevins Hall would be up for approval during the next legislative session. The construction of new facilities on the North Campus was expected to get underway as previously announced as part of the Health Care initiatives. Dr. Levy emphasized that these projects did not mean other new programs would not be supported. For example, new programs in Dance, a doctorate in Public Administration, and degrees in the Health fields were being supported. Dr. Levy noted that VSU's and Valdosta Technical College's articulated associate degree program in Dental Hygiene had recently passed an accreditation review and how this partnership was unique and well placed VSU in preparing students for the health professions.

Dr. Levy responded to a question regarding consideration for designing larger classrooms to allow for more faculty office space in the new facilities by saying that faculty and department heads were to have direct input in the design of these new spaces. If the input recommended such designs then certainly consideration would be given.

In response to a question regarding the summer budget, Dr. Levy commented that the figures would be sent soon and likely would be close to last years' summer budget including raises.

Dr. Levy announced that the faculty salary equity plan was completed and the results of the study of staff salary equity were expected to be submitted very soon. Once the staff salary equity study was in hand, then both recommended amounts (faculty and staff) would be taken together to formulate the final salary equity strategy based on projected revenues for the Spring of 2007. Dr. Levy commented that equity salary adjustments were a high priority. Additional priorities were more funding for faculty development and travel, and for the second year student retention program.

Dr. Levy said that USG Chancellor Davis visited VSU first in his second round of visits to higher education institutions. He hoped that the Chancellor had been positively impressed with what he saw here during his first visit, which then prompted him to make VSU his first return visit. This second visit went well.

In response to a question regarding prohibitive policies regarding paying for moving expenses for new faculty hires, Dr. Levy noted that such expenses could be reimbursed from Foundation funds, but in his opinion such action was not a good precedence. He commented that such action must be considered on a “case-by-case” basis. The challenge would be from where would such funds be taken? Deans would need to be consulted regarding if other funding sources might be available. Dr. Levy recommended looking at salary negotiations a possibility to address such concerns. However if such an action would mean whether a good candidate accepted or rejected a job offer, then all options should be explored.

Dr. Levy commented on the changing of the commencement ceremonies. Efforts were being made to proactively discourage disruptive and offensive oral expressions during the ceremonies. Meetings with student groups had taken place to discourage “barking” and “cat calls”. The ceremonies themselves were to be more decentralized and shorter in length. Audience seating was being changed to bring attendees closer and reduce anonymity. He expressed a hope that these changes would make the ceremonies a more pleasant experience.

In closing Dr. Levy congratulated the Dewar College of Education and programs in Speech Pathology, Marriage and Family Therapy, and Social Work for successfully passing recent accreditation reviews.

> The next item of business concerned the setting of a special Council meeting for consideration of the newly proposed Faculty Evaluation Model. The Council agreed to have a working lunch on January 5, 2007. Dr. Cates agreed to speak to Dr. Levy regarding the luncheon arrangements.

> The next agenda item concerned issues with Banner and/or email services. Greg Henderson from Instructional Technology responded to a concern regarding unsuccessful attempts to use Banner to email students in classes. Mr. Henderson commented that if the class size was over 100 then perhaps there might be problems. If the class size was not the case, then perhaps transmission problems might be related to using the “Thunderbird” browser. If that browser was being used, then he recommended trying a different browser to access Banner. Several Department Heads commented that they had not experienced any such problems.

In responding to a question about the possibility of getting a “majors email group”, Mr. Henderson noted that such a group could be built. He noted that Banner did have the capability of selecting a department and then pulling majors’ addresses together. He also said that such an email listing could be provided to each department. All expressed a desire to have such a listing.

Mr. Henderson responded to a question regarding the possibility of extending the time period for Department Heads before being “timed out” of Banner by commenting that for security reasons Banner 7 timed out equally for everyone and no exceptions could be made.

> Finally, Dr. Carl Cates was recognized for having recently been selected at the “National Communications Administrator of the Year” by the States Advisory Council of the National Communication Association.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:43 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Reynaldo L. Martinez Jr.