

Chair's Report
November 2020
Submitted by John Smith

Every month I've referenced Groundhog Day in my report. I really wish I didn't feel like doing the same thing again. Recognize anything here?

Provost Search: This week we will conclude the four, on-campus visits by the final candidates for the provost position. I hope you have been able to attend the open forums for each candidate. The search committee will meet shortly after the final candidate's visit. Please send me any comments you have for any of the candidates as soon as possible. I want to make sure and have the broadest range of representation possible when I go into that meeting. I will say that I am happy with the strength of the pool and feel like we are bringing four qualified candidates to campus.

Remote Work: I have met with the deans and vice presidents on at least four occasions, encouraging them to continue to consider allowing as many staff as possible to work remotely. I have also emphasized to them that with in person learning being completed before Thanksgiving, there may be additional staff who could work remotely until the end of Winter Break. That said, the ultimate decision on who can and cannot work remotely rests with the deans and Vice Presidents, many of whom have delegated that responsibility to supervisors in their units.

If you or any of your constituents feel like that could apply to them, then please have a conversation with the immediate supervisor requesting to work remotely. If the request is denied, a staff member can of course ask their supervisor to explain their rationale for the decision. If the staff person does not understand or agree with the rationale, they also may escalate the request to the dean/vice president level (if the dean/vice president is not the immediate supervisor). The dean/vice president is the final authority on these decisions and they cannot be grieved, per the policy.

New Housing Project Approved: At the BOT meeting last week we voted to approve a new housing project that will be on the south side of campus, across

from the basketball, volleyball, lacrosse practice facility on Floyd Street. The project will be a 3P (public, private partnership). The university will not be taking on financial risk with the project. Athletics will have slightly less than 50% of the beds in the facility for student athletes whose practices are in the center across the street. NCAA regulations prohibit a residence hall from having 50% or more athletes as residents. I am excited about the potential this new facility will have. Putting a residential component along Floyd Street with the other improvements that have already been made there, will likely create an anchor for other improvements. I could easily see some food businesses or other student-centered businesses becoming interested in the area.

Covid Dashboard: The University has received a number of requests to revise the content of the covid dashboard. We are happy to report Robert Goldstein, Vice Provost for Academic Planning & Accountability, is heading up a group to do that. That area includes Institutional Effectiveness which is the assessment arm of the university and is the right coaching place for this project. Jason Beare will represent the Staff Senate on this ad hoc. We are happy to have someone with his research and scientific awareness in that role.

<https://louisville.edu/coronavirus/dashboard>

Enrollment Update: Enrollment is up 3.7% over last Fall. We are happy to report that African American enrollment is up 3.2% and that retention has improved from 80 to 80.9% Retention of underrepresented minorities rose from 75.4% to 79.2%. Our graduation rate projection is 60.4%. That would be an increase from 58.6%. That may not sound like much but it takes a tremendous amount of work from a lot of people to move the needle that much in some of those areas. Many of those are staff and I am happy to continually make that point in my multiplicity of meetings.

New Spring Students: There are 447 new students registered for the Spring semester. That is a little more than normal. These students, in normal circumstances, are coming into a situation with unique challenges. Everyone else on campus will have at least a semester under their belts. It is enough of a challenge to be one of a couple thousand new people at the start of the Fall. It is another all-together to be one of a much smaller group in the Spring. Anything

any of us has a chance to do to help any of our new students have a great experience pays off in the retention and enrollment areas we talked about above.

I am looking forward to not including this statement in one of my reports. I still say the biggest thing that I find hard to deal with is the fact that we don't know when this is going to be over. It would be so much easier to say "just stick it out until the end of June, July or whatever and everything will be OK" but we just don't know that. The un-certainty of the entire Covid-19 scenario is hard to deal with mentally.

Now, more than ever, what you do makes a real difference in the lives of people. Thank you for all you are doing. I hope it doesn't come off a pretentious for me to say I am proud of our group and the individuals that comprise it.