

**OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY  
BOARD OF VISITORS**

**Wednesday, September 15, 2021**

**MINUTES**

The Board of Visitors of Old Dominion University held its annual retreat on Wednesday, September 15, 2021 at The Cavalier Hotel in Virginia Beach, Present from the Board:

R. Bruce Bradley, Rector  
Yvonne T. Allmond  
Carlton F. Bennett  
Robert A. Broermann  
Robert S. Corn  
Unwana B. Dabney  
Peter G. Decker, III  
Jerri F. Dickseski  
Alton J. Harris  
Larry R. Hill  
Kay A. Kemper  
P. Murry Pitts  
Maurice D. Slaughter  
Lisa B. Smith  
Armistead D. Williams, Jr.

Absent from the Board: Toykea S. Jones  
Ross A. Mugler

Also present: Brian O. Hemphill, President  
Donna Meeks  
Ashley Schumaker  
Allen Wilson

**CALL TO ORDER AND ACTION ITEM**

The Rector called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. and noted the need for the Board to take action on an item related to the Board's discussion in closed session at the regular meeting on September 14. Upon a motion made by Mr. Harris and seconded by Mr. Hill, the Board unanimously approved the transfer of \$100,000 for new scholarship funds in support of the University's graduate programs in higher education leadership and rehabilitation sciences (*Ayes: Allmond, Bennett, Broermann, Corn, Dabney, Decker, Dickseski, Harris, Hill, Kemper, Pitts, Slaughter, Smith, Williams; Nays: None*).

**WELCOME AND OVERVIEW**

Rector Bradley welcomed members to the Board's annual retreat and made the following opening remarks:

"The purpose of this retreat is for us to begin to think more strategically as a Board of Visitors.

"As you will recall this was one of the key areas of deficiency raised in the recent Board of Visitors survey. Obviously, as a board, we should be more about helping set strategy with Brian and less about involving ourselves in the day-to-day operations of the University.

"Now is the perfect time for us to be adjusting how we spend our time. We have a new president in Brian and if you missed his presentations in the Monarch Nation Tour I can tell you he energized and excited the two audiences I was there for. We are coming off of 13 years of innovation and progress under John Broderick's leadership and we are ready to go to the next level. Brian is the dynamic leader we need to take us there.

"I want to begin this meeting by priming the pump a little with regard to transitioning us to thinking and acting more strategically. Jeff Selingo's book, "College Unbound," is a great way to start. You will hear from Brian and Jeff shortly.

"I am going to pose a few questions and thoughts about issues I believe to be worth consideration as we think more strategically. You may or may not agree and that's fine. The purpose again is to prime the pump. To that end I will give you a copy of these remarks so you can use them to consider areas you believe require our attention.

"Over the summer I read Jeff's book as well as another book entitled, "The Innovative University," by Clay Christianson. From these two books it became clear that the business model for the successful university is changing. COVID, the impending enrollment cliff, tuition inflation and student debt are but four game changers which require our attention.

"Fundamental questions worth considering are:

What do we want Old Dominion to be known for?

How do we want to distinguish ourselves from other universities?

"We can answer these questions at least two ways. First, we can answer by identifying the areas of study in which we seek to be known for our excellence. You will hear about some of these possibilities this afternoon – maritime, public health/health sciences, coastal resilience, wind energy. Some or all of these are natural areas for us to become nationwide exemplars in.

"Here is another way for Old Dominion University to be distinguished from other universities: We can be known as the preeminent university for educating first generation college students. Of course we have a huge head start in this area. If we were to pursue this path it would impact many other aspects of our strategy, like pricing. We would need to keep tuition pricing low. On the other hand this strategy including low tuition pricing might make us more attractive to Virginia's General Assembly to provide ODU greater funding. It is consistent with Virginia's strategy to have Virginia be the best educated state in the United States. This Virginia strategy requires a higher percentage of college graduates which could play to the strength of ODU.

"This approach may require more creative pricing as well. For example, who says we have to charge the same tuition rate for every discipline of study? What if we charged the same low tuition rate for the first two years for all students? But the the price for the second two years is based upon

our cost to educate the student. For example, it probably costs us more to educate a Chemistry or Physics major than an English major. And perhaps a part of this pricing formula should be the earning potential for each major. We could begin by answering the question – What does it cost us to educate a student by area of discipline?

"Here is another possible area for consideration. Successful businesses have 5-7 key metrics. More than that is too many to keep track of and work to improve upon. We currently have too many. One of the books I referenced suggested these key metrics:

- Acceptance Rate
- Matriculation Rate
- Retention Rate
- Graduation Rate
- Tuition Discount Rate

Obviously, as important as the numbers themselves are, equally important is to examine how each area is trending over the past 5-10 years.

"Another potential area for exploration is how we balance the attention given instructing students vs. research. Students come to Old Dominion to receive excellent instruction. They are less concerned with research, athletics or extracurricular activities. Yet research is important because it attracts large amounts of money enabling our faculty to do important work. So what's the right balance?

"Some schools address this by prioritizing student involvement in university research. At the University of Michigan, for example, there are 1,000 undergrads participating in faculty mentored research at any given time. Should Old Dominion strive for something similar?

"Related to this, have you noticed that whenever we review recommendations for tenure that the write-ups are very heavy on the candidate's research work but very light on the effectiveness of instruction? We are overly dependent on student surveys and yet only a small percentage of the students complete these reviews. (I was an adjunct professor here for about five years about seven years ago. During that five years not once was I observed for the purpose of providing suggestions to improve my teaching.)

"Should we have more robust programs to evaluate and coach professors to be better? Teaching coaches for example?

"Here is a basic question for consideration. Perhaps as basic as you can get. What is the optimal student body size for ODU? Where we are? Smaller? Bigger? And why?

"And what are our measures of education quality? At Brigham Young University that question was answered by a task force comprised of 50 people from the Deans, Department Heads and administrators. And what percent of ODU grades are A, B, C, and D? What is the trendline?

"Last thought. Years ago a book came out entitled, "The Ultimate Question." The question is the question that is the best predictor of revenue growth for a for-profit business. Here is the question – On a scale of 0-10 would you recommend this product or service to your family and friends? If the grade is 0-6 you are labeled a Detractor. If the score is 7-8 you are indifferent. If the score is 9-10 you are labeled a Promoter. The Net Promoter Score is the percent that grade you 9-10 minus

the percent that grade you 0-6. The average score for American businesses is 5-10. But there are some including Apple, USAA and Harley Davidson who score 60-70. At our company we used this survey at all of our newspapers for readers, advertisers and employees. When I was an adjunct I asked this question of the students in my leadership class to illustrate how to use the tool. After a person provides the score there is one follow-up question if the score is 0-6 - what is the one thing most causing the low score? If the score is 7-8, what is the one thing we could do to move you to a 9-10? If the score is 9-10, what is the most important thing driving the high score? Again, this is seven years ago but a common theme semester after semester for my students was the unsatisfactory experience they had with student advisors. My point is that we might consider using such a tool regularly to measure satisfaction of students, faculty and administrators. And then address those areas needing attention, like the student advisor example with my students.

"To conclude and to be clear, these themes I have just reviewed are not meant to be a strategic planning roadmap. In fact some of these or all of them may be lousy ideas. I am simply trying to prime the pump for us to begin thinking more strategically. I am giving you a copy of these remarks to spark your thinking about what you see as the strategic planning areas needing our focus over the next few years.

"At future Board meetings we will carve out some time to focus more on strategic issues as suggested in our recent board survey. We have a dynamic, bright new leader to lead us to some exciting places. It's a great time to be a part of Old Dominion University."

## **FORWARD FOCUSED: A BOLD AND INNOVATIVE JOURNEY**

President Hemphill presented his plan for leading the University in the months ahead. He shared his Vision, Fundamental Principles, and Strategic Areas of Focus as follows:

- Vision – "Together, we will be a forward focused public research university that is both innovative and entrepreneurial as we propel ODU to national and international prominence."
- Fundamental Principles
  - Excellence
  - Transparency
  - Accountability
  - Student-Centered
- Strategic Areas of Focus
  - Research and Workforce Growth
  - Corporate/Community Partnerships and Economic Development
  - Strategic Enrollment and Renewed Focus
  - Student Engagement and Academic Success
  - Philanthropic Giving and Alumni Engagement
  - Branding, Marketing, and Communication

President Hemphill reviewed his three-phased Entry Plan. Phase One activities included those accomplished within 45 days of accepting the position of President and included conference calls with each member of the Board of Visitors; introductory calls to 20 prospective students, ten faculty members, and ten student leaders; introductory calls to ODU's top ten strategic partners in business and industry/government and military; introductory calls to ODU's top ten supporters

including alumni and donors; and conference calls (if applicable) with the Presidential Transition Team.

During his first 30 days of active employment – Phase Two – President Hemphill initiated a series of administrative meetings with direct reports to fully understand the University's action plans; reviewed budgetary projections and analyzed fall enrollment trends; met with each member of the Board of Visitors; met individually with key university personnel; met with key officials, strategic partners and community leaders; hosted Presidential "Fireside Chats" with students, faculty and staff; hosted alumni forums; and scheduled community Meet-and-Greet receptions and speaking engagements.

During Phase Three, the first 60-90 days of active employment, he will have reviewed the most recent campus climate survey of all students, faculty, staff, and alumni (if applicable); met with every academic college; conducted a comprehensive campus tour of all buildings; visited all off-site educational locations; outlined strategic planning next steps and chart a course of action for its completion and tracking; launched a Student Engagement and Success Council; launched a Branding Marketing, and Communication Council; scheduled alumni meetings throughout the region and beyond; and made introductory calls with key partners of educational institutions and other entities.

President Hemphill then shared what he perceives are the challenges and opportunities ahead. Challenges include the role of the Higher Education Centers, national and global rankings and the methodology used for such rankings, improving student success, and enrollment management. Opportunities include expansion of ODUOnline, the creation of an academic medical center, maritime and coastal resilience initiatives, and the Capital Campaign.

The President reviewed the proposed strategic planning process, noting the goals and objectives, key performance indicators, timeline, responsible parties and budgetary details. He indicated that it is his plan to present the new Strategic Plan to the Board of Visitors for their approval in December 2022 for full implementation in January 2023.

### **FIRESIDE CHAT WITH BEST-SELLING AND AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR JEFFREY J. SELINGO**

President Hemphill hosted a fireside chat with Jeffrey Selingo, Editor at Large of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and author of "College (UN)Bound – The Future of Higher Education and What it Means for Students." Board members were provided with copies of the book in advance and were asked to read the book in preparation for this discussion. A 45-minute question and answer session was facilitated by President Hemphill followed by discussion with Board members that continued through lunch.

### **SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

Austin Agho, Ph.D., Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Bonnie Van Lunen, Ph.D., Dean of the College of Health Sciences and Interim Dean of the School of Public Health, provided an overview of the new School of Public Health in partnership with Norfolk State University and Eastern Virginia Medical School. They shared the background and institutional

history of the public health programs and centers at ODU, the current programming provided by each of the institutions, and ODU's faculty recruitment efforts, including the search for the founding dean.

A working group with two representatives each from ODU, NSU and EVMS are working on a Memorandum of Understanding. The aims and the key points of the MOU were shared, noting that Old Dominion University will be the lead institution with directors at each institution. The roles, responsibilities and expectations of the founding dean were shared as well as the search process and timeline. The next steps planned for the current academic year, the three-year budget plan and the Council on Education for Public Health accreditation process were presented. Issues to be resolved over the next two years include finances, workflow process and policies/guidelines.

## **MARITIME**

Morris Foster, Ph.D., Vice President for Research, and Nancy Grden, Interim Associate Vice President for the Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, presented an overview of Old Dominion University's Maritime Initiative. ODU is taking a leadership role in a coordinated, regional effort to ensure a thriving maritime ecosystem that benefits not only Hampton Roads, but the entire Commonwealth. The region's unique maritime assets and opportunities were shared, along with the goals for making ODU a globally recognized leader in maritime. 27 academic programs and 11 centers focus on maritime teaching and research, and 35 academic programs and 18 centers support maritime and coastal related teaching and research.

The roles for the Maritime Institute and ODU's channels of expertise for advancing the blue economy were shared along with the findings of an independent report. The Hampton Roads region is also pursuing the EDA's "Build Back Better Regional Challenge" with a maritime focus. Next steps, including a national search for an Associate Vice President for Maritime Initiatives, were discussed.

## **COASTAL RESILIENCE**

Morris Foster, Ph.D., Vice President for Research, and Jessica Whitehead, Ph.D., Joan P. Brock Endowed Executive Director of the Institute for Coastal Adaptation and Resilience, described what is meant by coastal resilience and the goal of moving beyond resilient projects to resilient systems to address the economic, social and environmental impacts to the region through the work of the Institute for Coastal Adaptation and Resilience.

ICAR's mission, vision and values were shared along with the administrative and operational team members. ICAR will lead in engaging communities, conducting leading edge interdisciplinary research, innovating solutions, and educating students and advancing practice. It serves as the umbrella for interinstitutional partnerships for science, policy and applications. In five years, the ICAR and Hampton Roads regional resilience hub is internationally known as a model for its work empowering and enabling the transition to a more resilient Virginia.

## **WRAP-UP**

President Hemphill expressed his appreciation to the Board members for their time and attention throughout the day's discussions and suggested that future retreats be held for a day and a half. He welcomed their feedback and asked for their support as they move forward.

Rector Bradley thanked the President for a very informative retreat. He suggested that guest speakers continue to be invited to future retreats and books that will enable the Board to stay ahead of what's happening in higher education also be considered for discussion. He noted that a new two-day format will begin with the December Board meeting to enable the Board to spend more time discussing strategic issues. He asked Board members to share their thoughts with him.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.