

**OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF VISITORS
Student Enhancement & Engagement and Digital Learning Committee
Thursday, September 12, 2024**

MINUTES

The Student Enhancement & Engagement and Digital Learning Committee of the Board of Visitors of Old Dominion University was held on Thursday, September 12, 2024 at 12:15 p.m. in the Board Room of the Broderick Dining Commons on the main campus of Old Dominion University. Present from the committee were:

Susan Allen, Chair
Robert S. Corn, Vice Chair
Brian E. Campbell
Jerri F. Dickseski
Andrew Hodge (*ex officio*)
P. Murry Pitts (*ex officio*)

Additional Board members present were:

Dennis M. Ellmer
Dr. Stanley Goldfarb
E.G. (Rudy) Middleton, III
The Hon. Ross A. Mugler
Bruce L. Thompson
D.R. (Rick) Wyatt

Also present were:

Karen Andrewlavage	Susan Kenter	Tina Russell
Evelyn Ashley	Lisa Kivin	September Sanderlin
Alonzo Brandon	Kate Ledger	Ashley Schumaker
Melissa Colangelo	Tatyana Lobova	Dwayne Smith
J. Christopher Fleming	Chrysoula Malogianni	Fred Tugas
Kenneth Fridley	Donna Meeks	Bridget Weikel
Anna Marie Ginder	Ashley Miller	Johnny Young
Melanie Graham	Kimberly Osborne	
Dennis Gregory	Brian Payne	
Raquan Griffin	Pearson	
Brian O. Hemphill	Stacey Purcell	
Brandi Hephner LaBanc	Chad A. Reed	
Aaron Karp	Ron Riffle	
Amber Kennedy	Nina Rodriguez Gonser	

Chairperson Susan Allen called the meeting to order at 12:22 PM.

APPROVAL OF THE June 13TH MINUTES

A motion to approve the minutes of the June 13, 2024 meeting was made by Mr. Pitts and seconded by Mr. Corn. They were approved by all members present and voting.

REPORT OF VICE PRESIDENT OF STUDENT ENROLLMENT, ENGAGEMENT & SERVICES

Chairperson Allen then asked Dr. Hephner LaBanc to begin the presentation.

Vice President Brandi Hephner LaBanc provided an overview of the Division of Student Enrollment, Engagement & Services (SEES). She noted that SEES had recently expanded due to the merger with EVMS, with new additions including the Webb Student Center, Monarch Dining, Chartway Arena, University Village Bookstore, Monarch Card & Mail Services, and the Campus Life Services central office. These expansions have broadened SEES's scope, further enhancing its capacity to support student engagement and services across campus.

Vice President Hephner LaBanc explained that SEES had undergone an eight-month strategic planning process, which provided an opportunity to revisit and align the division's vision, mission, and goals with ODU's institutional strategic plan.

She outlined the core mission of SEES, which is centered around the mantra "Get, Keep, Graduate." This mantra encapsulates SEES's efforts to recruit students (GET), support them through their academic journey (KEEP), and ultimately guide them to graduation (GRADUATE).

To enhance student engagement and success, SEES has adopted several care and service standards. First, staff are encouraged to be present and actively engage with students, as even small gestures can foster a sense of belonging. Second, the division empowers its staff to influence students' experiences by being intentional in their interactions, even if they are unable to directly address students' questions. Finally, SEES staff aim to predict and anticipate student needs, staying one step ahead to provide timely guidance and resources. The use of enterprise solutions like Salesforce, along with leveraging institutional knowledge, plays a key role in supporting these efforts.

SEES has identified four key areas of focus. These areas include the Student Experience, which involves recruitment and retention strategies such as the development of a strategic enrollment management plan and the implementation of career competency measurements aligned with national standards. The second area, the Employee Experience, emphasizes the recruitment and retention of staff. SEES is working on creating a specific onboarding process to help new employees feel connected and supported early in their employment. The third area, Well-Being, seeks to deepen SEES's well-being initiatives across the campus, with the goal of achieving national recognition as a Health Promoting University. The final focus area, Resource Stewardship, aims to improve student success through the effective use of qualitative and quantitative data. This involves adopting new technology and aligning the division's budget and personnel with strategic initiatives that demonstrate high returns on investment.

Vice President Hephner LaBanc then provided an overview of the SEES organizational structure. SEES is comprised of 33 departments and employs approximately 370 full-time staff, along with overseeing nearly 300 contract employees. The division is organized into several areas, including Enrollment Management, Student Engagement, Campus Life Services, and Administration & Strategy. SEES budget totals \$83.7 million. Nearly half (47%) of this is allocated to the Housing & Residence Life operation, an auxiliary unit funded through student room charges. With the incorporation of Auxiliary Business Services, now known as Campus Life Services, approximately 73% of the division's overall budget comes from student and other fees, while the remaining 27% is derived from tuition and state funding.

Vice President Hephner LaBanc introduced Ashley Miller, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management, to present on Fall 2024 on campus enrollments. AVP Miller provided an update on the first-time freshmen funnel, highlighting a slight increase in applications but a decrease in the number of admits as part of strategic class shaping. The admissions rate for this year was 90.4%, a minor decrease from 90.9% the previous year. Confirmations were lower this year, but registered student numbers remained steady, partly due to a lower melt rate. This success is attributed to campus-wide efforts, including orientation, advising, and housing. The profile of incoming students remains similar to last year, with an increase in students receiving Pell Grants, potentially due to the new FAFSA changes.

One hundred valedictorians and salutatorians were admitted as Dominion Scholars for the Fall 2024 class. Additionally, the introduction of a renewable transfer scholarship led to an increase in applications, submissions, and confirmations of transfer students. The graduate student funnel showed significant growth in applications and admits, with a notable rise in international students, who are traditionally more challenging to yield.

SEES is partnering with Encoura and Eduventures who are providing additional insights on the enrollment landscape. Encoura's Mindsets segmentation tool will be utilized to better understand incoming students and tailor communications. For Fall 2025, a new team structure incorporates enrollment marketing and analytics. Furthermore, the team has taken over the senior search process, increasing student name purchases and expanding outreach territories.

AVP Miller noted that ODU is working to retain graduating seniors by offering direct admission into graduate programs if criteria are met. This year, that program resulted in 92 enrollments across 15 programs. International efforts include expanding recruitment in Africa, and they have seen increased applications from this region.

ODU's campus-based student population is approximately 15,100, which excludes ODUGlobal and legacy EVMS students.

Vice President Hephner LaBanc then introduced Dr. Evelyn Ashley, Senior Associate Vice President for Student Engagement. She discussed the New to Blue program, a revamped orientation that begins with the Explore Your Kingdom online course, continues with on-campus experiences like Discover Your Pride, and concludes with webinars before the first day of classes. This initiative aims to provide a streamlined experience for new students as they transition into university life. Explore Your Kingdom is the online orientation component that engaged 2,685 students. Discover Your Pride, the on-campus experience, involved 14 in-person and 4 online sessions for students, parents, and their supporters. It introduced the concept of

“success teams,” encouraging students to build a support network tailored to their needs (e.g., on-campus, military, international) to aid their success. 1,427 students created a success team, with the most popular blueprints being On-Campus (182) and First Generation (67). AVP Ashley noted that plans are underway to integrate success team creation into the registration process to familiarize students with the concept earlier. Rule Your Dominion occurred between the students’ Discover Your Pride participation and their first day on campus, offering webinars to further prepare students.

AVP Ashley also spoke about the changes to the Academic Convocation. It was redesigned to be more engaging, moved outdoors and emphasized community over formality. Faculty and staff wore casual attire instead of traditional regalia, and students were given challenge coins symbolizing their commitment to graduation. The convocation was followed by a community barbecue, part of The Monarch Experience (TME), a four-week series of events designed to help students connect with campus life. In total, TME featured 109 events, 16 departmental partners, and over 7,000 check-ins at SEES events, with 2,586 unique student attendees, and 57% of attendees participating in more than one event.

AVP Ashley concluded by playing a video that highlighted the many activities students had the opportunity to participate in as part of the New to Blue programs.

Dr. Bridget Weikel, Associate Vice President for Well-Being and Belonging, then provided an overview of the Office of Intercultural Relations (OIR) noting they host over 100 programs annually, including cultural celebrations and educational workshops. Participation in these programs has grown from 3,000 students in 2021 to over 6,000 in the last academic year, highlighting OIR’s role in enhancing students’ sense of belonging. OIR serves various student populations, with a significant focus on international students, who represent about 5% of ODU’s student body.

AVP Weikel highlighted the Monarch International Newcomer Transition (MINT) program which was launched in Fall 2021 to support new international students in their academic, social, and cultural adaptation. MINT’s strategic timing, two weeks before the start of the academic year, ensures that students receive dedicated support before orientation activities. The program is built on strong partnerships with over 80 ODU departments and local community organizations, providing students with a comprehensive support network.

MINT is grounded in four pillars: ODU and U.S. Living Essentials, Navigating Academic Life, Social and Cultural Inclusion, and Blueprint for the Future. Since its inception, MINT has seen steady growth in participation, increasing from 34 students in 2021 to 61 students in Fall 2024. The program’s success is also reflected in student feedback, with 100% of participants feeling welcomed and connected. MINT students are significantly more engaged on campus and demonstrate higher academic performance compared to their non-MINT peers.

The long-term success of MINT participants is evident through their higher engagement levels and academic achievements. MINT students are 23% more engaged on campus and maintain higher GPAs than their non-MINT counterparts. Bridget emphasized that the success of MINT not only benefits individual students but also strengthens ODU’s commitment to an inclusive campus environment.

REPORT OF VICE PRESIDENT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION & TECHNOLOGY

Vice President Nina Rodriguez Gonser noted two items for discussion: Fall 2024 enrollment information and ongoing initiatives relating to the educational experiences of students from the Digital Innovation area. VP Rodriguez Gonser introduced and recognized two faculty members whose work would be featured: Master Lecturer Aaron Karp from Political Science and Geography, and Dr. Tatyana Lobo from Biological Sciences. She thanked them and emphasized the importance of faculty collaborations in creating exceptional learning opportunities at ODU.

Vice President Rodriguez Gonser then provided a preliminary overview of the Fall enrollment figures, noting that numbers will continue to fluctuate until the final census. As of last week, there was an overall 5.3% increase in online enrollment compared to last Fall, with the most significant growth seen in the undergraduate population, which increased by 8.2%. Continuing student enrollment was up by nearly 8%, which is particularly encouraging given the high number of graduates in the Spring. The Vice President noted that this increase most likely reflects the positive student experience in online classes.

Vice President Rodriguez Gonser highlighted the importance of new students for institutional growth, that starts with the conversion of inquiries into applications. There were 3,830 applicants, representing a 16% increase over the previous Fall. Among these, there was a notable 32% rise in freshman applicants, a group that, despite not being a primary target, seems to reflect increased comfort with online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the focus remains on growing the transfer student population, which saw a healthy 22.3% increase. Graduate student applicants increased by just over 6%, and continued growth in this category is essential for solidifying a new baseline of success.

In terms of student conversions, nearly 1,600 new students registered for Fall, marking a 4.2% increase over last year. All student categories surpassed last Fall's enrollment numbers, which is an encouraging sign of growth across the board. One of the key performance metrics, the conversion rate from applicant to registered student, was nearly 42% this Fall. This data will inform the continued refinement of digital marketing efforts to reach individuals most likely to enroll.

Vice President Rodriguez Gonser also reported on the success of new merit scholarships launched for online students. These scholarships, even at modest amounts, have proven effective in encouraging enrollment, with 70% of awarded students enrolling. Specific scholarships such as the Future Shapers for technology-related programs and the Social Good campaign for students in teaching and community-impact roles were particularly popular. Additionally, the Finish Line campaign offered scholarships to undergraduate students close to graduation who had not yet enrolled, resulting in another 112 students continuing their education at ODU. These initiatives will be reviewed and refined for future recruitment cycles.

Looking ahead, Vice President Rodriguez Gonser emphasized the importance of ongoing assessment and improvement as they transition into the Fall semester and prepare for the next recruitment cycle. With ODUGlobal, the Spring semester also holds significance, given the non-

traditional patterns of online students. Efforts will continue to fine-tune digital marketing and focus on the most productive outreach channels.

Dr. Chrysoula Malogianni, Associate Vice President for Digital Innovation, noted she would be sharing the transformative efforts being undertaken at ODUGlobal to enhance the digital learning experience. She emphasized that the university's commitment to innovation is driven by a deep understanding of students' needs and the goal of remaining at the forefront of educational technology.

AVP Malogianni highlighted that ODUGlobal's mission is to continuously elevate the digital learning experience by ensuring courses are innovative, engaging, and aligned with student needs. She stressed that as technology evolves, ODUGlobal remains committed to integrating purposeful tools that enhance learning outcomes, improve engagement, and simplify the teaching process for faculty.

She noted that, to ensure students are comfortable in digital environments, ODUGlobal has developed comprehensive orientation modules designed to teach technology skills and boost students' confidence from day one. These modules aim to alleviate technical anxieties, allowing students to focus on their academic goals and engage fully with course content.

Dr. Malogianni explained how ODUGlobal collaborates with faculty to create immersive learning opportunities through simulations and animations. Examples included a water runoff simulation for engineering technology students and historical animations for history courses. These tools bring complex concepts to life, making learning more dynamic and memorable. Feedback from students and faculty has been overwhelmingly positive, with many citing the improved grasp of challenging subjects.

AI technologies are being purposefully integrated into course design to enhance student engagement. For instance, in a political science course, AI-driven video production was used to create engaging content with custom backgrounds and enhanced visual quality. AVP Malogianni noted that AI is not used for the sake of technology but rather as a means to enrich the learning experience and meet learning objectives.

AVP Malogianni shared that ODUGlobal is pushing the boundaries of video production by employing advanced techniques such as AI-driven facial animation and digital touch-ups. These innovations result in visually engaging videos that align with course objectives, ensuring students interact with media in a meaningful way. She highlighted that these methods capture students' attention from the start and keep them engaged throughout their courses.

AVP Malogianni discussed how ODUGlobal utilizes AI-powered tools to enhance multimedia production, such as improving audio clarity, upscaling images, and generating voiceovers for 3D animated avatars. This combination of rich media and AI-driven enhancements creates a highly interactive and immersive learning experience for students.

A core aspect of ODUGlobal's success is its collaborative approach with faculty, integrating innovative technologies that align with pedagogical goals. This partnership ensures that technology serves the learning process and enhances the educational experience. Continuous

feedback loops with students and faculty help refine approaches, ensuring that innovations meet the evolving needs of the academic community.

AVP Malogianni introduced some of the cutting-edge technologies being explored, including NPC avatars powered by large language models, immersive XR environments, and a layered 360-degree ODU campus with animation and XR elements. The ODU Metaversity and XRES Labs were highlighted as examples of how these technologies expand learning horizons, providing virtual environments where students can engage, socialize, and attend classes.

Enhancements to the Canvas learning management system were also discussed. These improvements streamline course management for faculty and create a more engaging experience for students. Additionally, faculty receive guidance to ensure that course materials meet accessibility standards, promoting an inclusive learning environment.

Dr. Malogianni emphasized the importance of faculty collaboration, with instructional designers and digital learning experts working closely with faculty to integrate technology that enhances teaching and learning. Testimonials from faculty highlighted how these collaborations have elevated teaching practices and improved student engagement.

Ongoing AI projects were highlighted, including AI-powered helpdesk support tools and sentiment analysis, as well as initiatives exploring AI-driven personalized learning systems with adaptive assessments and AI-powered tutoring. She also discussed the future development of an AI incubator to support faculty in exploring AI applications in education, fostering a culture of innovation across the university.

Dr. Malogianni concluded that ODUGlobal’s collaborative approach to digital innovation is significantly enhancing student engagement, faculty satisfaction, and learning outcomes. By thoughtfully applying technology, ODUGlobal ensures that its students receive the highest quality online learning experience.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:38 p.m.