

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SENATE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
April 20, 2018

The committee met six times during AY17-18 with various UConn administrative leaders, with a focus on university units that have been/are undergoing major changes. Invited guests included: John Volin, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs; Pamir Alpay, Executive Director of the UConn Tech Park; Gregory Bouquot, University of Connecticut Registrar; and Kent Holsinger, Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School.

Overview

Some Key Issues that Emerged

- Challenges of maintaining and coordinating key student academic support and enrichment services in a time of reduced resources throughout the university
- Need for continued and enhanced support for development and maintenance of instructional skills to promote retention of junior faculty
- Pressure of teaching quantity vs quality and long term cost implications of those pressures
- Restructuring of Graduate School functions to transition Registration/audit functions to Registrar's Office: transfer is ongoing, may result in development of new efficiencies and best practices
- Innovation Partnership Building (IPB) business plan and effective communication resources are needed in order to build partnerships
- Challenges of maintaining a competitive recruitment strategy and training environment for graduate students - tuition waivers, training grants, fellowships, summer support

Priorities for 2018-2019

- Office of the Vice President for Research
- Representatives of undergraduate and graduate student government (joint meeting)
- Directors of Regional Campuses (joint meeting)
- Determine ways for committee to have more practical impact. Invited guests will be requested to prepare a primer for the committee to review in advance to encourage more productive and engaging conversation.

Key points of discussions with each guest of the committee

Guest: John Volin, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs (October 27, 2017)

The organizational structure of Academic Affairs is somewhat complicated and involves multiple overlapping organizational charts. Some key units include the Institute for Student Success (including ACES, First Year Programs, CAP, LSAMP and other related programs), the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, the Honors Program and other enrichments, and Regional Campuses. Some of these programs emphasize building supports for success, especially among freshman and transfer students, first generation students, and students from under-represented groups. The university recognizes that these are groups of students who may face particular challenges navigating their educational path at the University. Other programs emphasize enrichments to the educational experience (such as the Frontiers in Research series that gives students throughout the university an opportunity to share their research). Nonetheless there are areas of overlap (e.g., the ISS is under 3 different organizational charts) and maintain clear communications among the various departments and

units is a challenge. One of VP Volin's goals is to make sure that right and left hand know what they are doing. A related goal is to try to reduce redundancies and look for synergistic opportunities.

In light of limited resources and regular budget cuts in the past decade (with no end in sight), the services offered by units like CETL are vulnerable to budget cuts. CETL actually brings in funds, but they go into the general fund which is used, in part, to absorb university-wide cuts. Given all the important services provided through academic affairs, and the realistic assessment that additional cuts are something that we need to be expecting, the VP for Academic Affairs spends considerable time looking for ways to preserve those services. Some of this work is fundraising, especially for scholarships and other forms of financial aid, including aid for DACA, first gen, and under-represented groups.

A strategic initiative focusing on retaining our stellar assistant professors was described by VP Volin. It focuses on mentorship and advising, which tends to be somewhat variable at UConn, with pockets of excellence, but not a lot of consistency. The university has joined with the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity and now offers their mentoring/advising program to all new faculty as they come in to the university (doing this via CETL). This program is also available (free of charge) to ALL faculty; several in attendance who are familiar with the program commented on its value.

The VP for Academic Affairs office also handles the Regional Campuses. VP Volin has been travelling around to the various campuses. The regional campuses have been hit (and potentially will be hit further) particularly hard; there is a lot of work to be done there.

It was noted by the committee that the faculty retention issue is particularly important and that budget issues have had a negative impact on recruiting. There is no clear resolution in sight for this set of challenges. Another challenge that is raised by the budget situation is renewed pressure to solve problems by asking tenure track faculty to teach "more." Academic Affairs has been trying to communicate that the benefits of such a strategy are far outweighed by the costs of that change. This is a message that needs to be conveyed to the legislature and more broadly to the State. It is also important to communicate that research instruction (undergraduate) would be lost along the way. As a research intensive university, research and research instruction are central to our mission and are a key differentiating feature between UConn and other institutions that do not have research and research education as a central feature of their mission. The university should focus on the importance of better communicating what we do - to our students, to the legislature, and to the public at large.

Finally, several issues emerged regarding relationships between Schools/Colleges and the Regional Campuses. For example, there is some perception that standards may be lower at regional campuses. This may affect students and may affect ability to recruit strong faculty to positions on those campuses. One recommendation for combatting this is to develop more of a "partner campus" mentality rather than "central campus and junior campuses." Also, we seem to have moved away from the "expanded major" approach at Regional campuses. The move has been to specific foci for various campuses – it is the responsibility of Departments and Colleges to make arguments to support foci at a particular campus. Sources of pressure for campus expansion also sometimes come from regional political groups.

Guest: Pamir Alpay, Executive Director of the UConn Tech Park (November 17, 2017)

Dr. Alpay summarized the history of the Innovation Partnership Building (IPB). The IPB was certified for occupancy in October and now provides both tenant and lab space. IPB has

advanced engineering and other tools in order to interact with industry. Some tools, such as those related to electron microscopy, are the only ones available for use in New England. The IPB encourages interdisciplinary engagement that will build interactions between the university and industry. Ten companies are currently in the tech park with expectations to grow. Firms such as United Technologies, Eversource Energy, and other small firms have relations with the IPB.

The committee discussed long-term success metrics and graduate student involvement. The IPB is anticipated to be a center of activity that encompasses not merely a single building but becomes a hub for the university. In that way companies will be fully involved in the university environment as IPB solves the problems they are facing. The plan is then to establish partnerships that help develop their next products, specifically ideas and concepts that they can develop with our assistance. Specialized instruments and expertise will help industry and faculty work together in the long-term.

Regarding graduate student involvement, graduate students can use the equipment at any time. Students can get training to use these instruments. Prices for using machines will be reasonable, and the IPB is in the process of establishing hourly rates. Scholars are also in place in conjunction with firms that support six graduate students.

There is currently no uniform business plan, which Dr. Alpay is hoping to change in the next few months. The IPB needs to establish prices for rent, expertise, research scientists and related expenses. The IPB is also establishing an operational plan, budget, and arrangements with schools and departments to help the IPB sustain itself over the long term.

Regarding expansion of IPB to other sciences, the IPB is currently providing physics faculty vibration-free space. There is an interest in engaging chemistry faculty as well as reaching out to the UConn Health Center and other constituencies in the coming months.

The IPB is also engaging in outreach to other companies to expand their partnerships. Town relations also need to be developed. There are concerns that about housing and off-campus space needs that might impact the surrounding community.

Dr. Alpay noted that the IPB needs to build its publicity, marketing, and communication resources. A capable center such as IPB needs to disseminate to the public what it is doing. Opportunities for publication and promotion are needed in partnership within the highest levels of administration.

Guest: Gregory Bouquot, University of Connecticut Registrar (January 26, 2018)

Gregory Bouquot, Registrar has been in this role since September 2017, although he has worked in this office for a number of years. This year, the Registrar's Office took on the registration/audit functions of the Graduate School. There were initially some concerns about what that means and how the transition would work. The Registrar's Office will provide some additional resources since the Graduate School was understaffed in this regard. The Registrar's Office will now take on graduate certificate and graduate degree Audit functions formerly handled by the Graduate School. A challenge is that there are differences in the organization and flexibility of the Graduate School in comparison to undergraduate studies, and the Registrar's Office and Graduate School are coordinating to smooth the transition. This includes transfer of records, documenting auditable requirements, and so forth. Some of the existing Graduate School staff are working in the Registrar's Office on this transition. They

haven't had a full cycle yet, it will be important to see what kinds of obstacles arise in this Audit process. The Registrar's Office is working closely with Kent Holsinger on these issues.

In discussion of this transition process a number of questions and concerns surfaced about challenges that have come up and about which Graduate School functions will be shifted to the Registrar's Office and which will remain with the Graduate School. The discussion of these issues included the following:

- For faculty who are now being directed to the Registrar's Office about graduate student issues, it isn't always apparent who to communicate with at the Registrar's Office regarding Graduate School questions. The Registrar's Office plans to cross-train *all* of their degree auditors to be able to answer both undergraduate, graduate, and certificate program students, with the goal of easing this problem.
- Regarding functions, the Registrar's Office will do registration, enrollment, auditing, plan of study, transcripts, catalog. They will *not* do admissions, this will continue to be handled exclusively by the Graduate School. Also, Dean of the Graduate School will have sign-off authority to waive requirements as appropriate, particularly in the case of items that are flagged during a degree/certificate audit process.
- The Registrar's Office has been reviewing points of difference between Graduate School and Undergraduate Studies practices in managing enrollment, degree plans, audits and so forth. They plan to work on these challenges and develop some best practices for these processes.
- The move to online forms and approvals/signatures is something that the Registrar's Office generally supports and would like to facilitate. There have been mixed reviews about requirements for wet signatures.
- There was an extended discussion of current practices, best practices, and the role/function/timing of plans of study for Graduate Students.
- The Registrar's Office emphasized that this a work in progress.

Other functions of the Registrar's Office include: Records & enrollment services; grade changes, permission numbers, warnings, etc.; degree auditing & NCAA Certification; plan of study troubleshooting, advisement reports, NCAA eligibility, ROTC verifications; scheduling of courses – and finals, permission numbers, room scheduling

The committee raised some questions about several of the Registrar's Office functions and practices, including the following:

- Determinations to list a course as distance learning, online, hybrid/blended, service, lecture, seminar, etc.: This is not determined by the Registrar – it is determined by the department. The Registrar can provide definitions of the different formats, but the department should determine how a particular course should be classified. (Peter Diplock's office is where the "definitions" reside.)
- "Preferred name" for transgender students: Currently, there is a problem with PeopleSoft (Preferred Name) feeding the original name to external sources; the Registrar's Office is working to resolve this issues.
- Faculty would find it very helpful to be able to print out the photos of all students in a class. Currently this is not possible. The Registrar's Office will investigate whether it is possible to provide this functionality.

Guest: Kent Holsinger, Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School (March 23, 2018)

Dean & VP Holsinger provided some background for discussion of changes that have been ongoing at the Graduate school during the past year. Last year, Interim Provost Teitelbaum asked Dean/VP Holsinger to reflect on the current and critical functions of the Graduate School, and which of them properly should be carried out at the Graduate School, which of those functions might be more effectively carried out by other units. The primary functions to emerge were:

- Development of social support structures and academic support structures for academic support, professional and career support, and community building
- Application, admission
- Registration, degree audit
- Administrative support for all of these functions

One important aspect of this reflection was a restructuring of the Graduate School to transition Registration and Degree audit functions to the Registrar's Office. This transition is underway. Some Graduate Student staff are now carrying out their functions in other offices. Some examples: Sandra Cyr (degree audit) sitting in Registrar's Office, Ann Wilhelm (reporting functions) now sitting with Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, Rowena Grainger (graduate fellowships officer) sitting with Office of National Scholarships and Fellowships. Graduate School is also working to separate out GA appointment and HR processes.

There was discussion of several other topics pertinent to the Graduate School:

- Support for postdoctoral fellows: The Graduate School does serve as the home for postdoctoral fellow support and concerns. It has an ongoing search for a fellowships and programming officer, who will address both doctoral and postdoctoral support issues.
- Structure and disbursement of fellowship funds: As explained, some fellowship monies are distributed by Graduate School but allocated by departments; other fellowships are directly awarded to nominees (provided by the departments); these include diversity focused and scholarly potential focused PhD and Masters fellowships. They have been restructured to be \$20,000 fellowships (\$17K during the year, \$3K during the summer) in order to be more competitive with fellowship opportunities provided by other institutions. Allocation of fellowships to departments have been pretty stable over a long period of time. It may be useful to consider what the criteria should be for divvying up the pie among departments; one possible criterion might be graduate degrees awarded.
- Fellowships as a source of support: Fellowships are a relatively smaller proportion of graduate student support than GA support (about \$3M, compared to GA support about \$45M).
- Training grants: University-wide, we don't have very many (3 in psychology and related, several in Dept. of Education, otherwise we don't have substantial support in that form). The Dean was encouraged to look into opportunities to pursue more training grants.
- Growing resources for graduate students, such as full fellowships, travel support, extraordinary research expense funds: This is an area where UConn is deficient relative to some of our aspirational peers, it has been noted in several external reviews (e.g. Psychological Sciences). Practically speaking, this is a real challenge in the face of shrinking state funding – would require some major philanthropy and large endowments which we do not currently have.

- Tuition waivers: Discussion of tuition waivers and finding ways to cover tuition (which sometimes simply cannot be waived). Some departments (e.g., Business, Math) have come up with successful solutions, others are looking into creative ways of handling this obstacle. One kind of program, primarily pertinent to international students who are looking for career training is “Optional Practical Training” (OPT) which can prepare international students to then transition into doctoral programs. This (covering tuition) is an issue for several classes of graduate students and a particular problem for Fulbright Scholars.
- Responses to lack of resources: Lack of resources has led to an emphasis on integrated programs (undergrad to grad) and other revenue-generating graduate programs. The University encourages “entrepreneurial programs.” For certificate programs this is within the purview of Peter Diplock, for Master’s programs this is not well-defined.
- Placement of graduates: Perhaps having a handle on where our graduate students go could help us to market entrepreneurial programs (certificates and master’s programs). Dean Holsinger indicated that most of the placement data for graduate students resides at the department level rather than at the Graduate School level. Since we now have a permanent e-mail address, perhaps that could be used to continuously request updates.

Fall 2017 Meetings:

September 22, 2017, at 10:00am, Hall Building, Senate Conference Room.

October 27, 2017 at 10:00am, Hall Building, Senate Conference Room.

November 17, 2017, at 10:00am, Hall Building, Senate Conference Room.

Spring 2018 Meetings:

January 26, 2018, 2:00 pm, Hall Building, Senate Conference Room.

March 23, 2018, 2:00 pm, Hall Building, Senate Conference Room.

April 13, 2018, 2:00 pm, Hall Building, Senate Conference Room.

Committee Members: *Janet Barnes-Farrell (Chair, Spring 2018), *Robert Bird (Chair, Fall 2017), Tracie Borden, Jon Clark, *Joerg Graf, Laura House, Faquir Jain, *Michelle Judge, *Louise Lewis, Carolyn Lin, Min Lin, Andrew Moiseff, Kylene Perras, Carl Rivers, Lyle Scruggs, Jeffrey Shoulson (Ex-Oficio), Gina Stuart, Nandan Tumu.
*Senate Member 2017/2018

Committee Charge: *This committee shall keep under review the general changes, actual and prospective, of the University over time and may recommend any desirable expressions of Senate opinion on these matters. The committee may also provide on behalf of the Senate an evaluation and review of specific issues and activities related to institutional advancement. The committee shall include two undergraduate students and one graduate student.*