

**Virginia State University Board of Visitors**  
**Executive Committee & Strategic Plan Advisory Group**  
Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, September 6, 2018

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Huron F. Winstead, Rector, called the meeting of the Virginia State University (VSU) Board of Visitors (Board) Executive Committee and Strategic Plan Advisory Group to order in the Board Room of Virginia Hall, Room 310, on the campus of Virginia State University at 1:42 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

A quorum was present.

*Committee Members Present:*

Mr. Huron F. Winstead, Rector  
Mr. Charlie Hill, Vice Rector  
Ms. Thursa Crittenden, Board Secretary  
Ms. Pamela Currey, Chair, Academic & Student Affairs  
Mr. Michael Flemming, Chair, Facilities, Finance & Audit  
Ms. Jennifer Hunter, Chair, Institutional Advancement (*electronic means*)  
Mr. Glenn Sessoms, Chair, Personnel & Compensation (*electronic means*)

*Other Board Members Present:*

Dr. Valerie Brown  
Mr. Xavier Richardson  
Mr. Gregory Whirley  
Ms. Gabrielle Wilks

*Administration Present:*

Dr. Makola M. Abdullah, President  
Dr. Donald Palm, Provost/VP, Academic Affairs  
Mr. Osubi Craig, Spec. Asst/Dir., Govt Relations  
Dr. Annie C. Redd, Board Liaison

*Legal Counsel Present:*

Ms. Ramona L. Taylor

*Other Staff Present:*

Ms. Sharon Taylor, College of Business  
Mr. Travis Edmonds, IT Dept.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The Committee approved the agenda as printed.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

Approval of the April 12, 2018 meeting minutes was postponed until the September 14, 2018 Board meeting.

## DISCUSSION

Dr. Palm presented an update to Board members on the Strategic Plan and the Bold Steps, which included the following:

- Strategic Planning Timeline (5 Phases)
- Expectation(s) of the Board
- Opportunities recommended from the Board
- Service Maturity – Academic Affairs
- Industry Structure Map – Academic Affairs
- Context Map – Academic Affairs
- SPOT Analysis – External and Internal Perspective
- SPOT Analysis Emerging Themes
- Town Hall – Focus Groups – Questionnaires
- Strategic Development Process Outline
- Elements of the Vision
- Vision
- Five Bold Steps
- Proposed Bold Steps
- Mission

Dr. Palm indicated that the Strategic Plan Steering Committee looked at the maturity over time, if they are still relevant, things we would like to implement in the future; for example, distance education, online programs, and more masters programs. Below are some of the opportunities:

- Look at current services to see if they are still relevant and change services around
- Look at industry – suppliers, technologies, new entrants, players, key customers, offerings, channels, trends, substitutes, and challenges
- Competing factors, such as: trends, political factors, economic climate, metrics, technology factors, customer needs, and uncertainties

The Steering Committee engaged VSU Alumni, VSU Leadership, VSU Faculty, VSU Staff, and VSU Students for the SPOT Analysis (*Strengths, Problems, Opportunities, and Threats*). The SPOT Analysis created a wealth of data. The themes that emerged from the data are:

1. Marketing Communication/Branding
2. Academic Programs
3. Enrollment and Recruitment
4. Student Engagement
5. Communications Outreach/Service
6. Faculty/Staff Recruitment and Development
7. Enhanced Infrastructure and Technology
8. Research
9. Financial Aid/Affordability

Town halls and focus groups were held to engage internal and external stakeholders to ensure input from all stakeholders.

- External Perspective – VSU Alumni Chapter members, Foundation, Real-Estate Foundation, and Athletic Boosters
- Internal Perspective – VSU Board of Visitors, Leadership, Faculty, Staff, and Students
- Questionnaires were used to determine where VSU should be 5 to 10 years

We must figure out:

- What is our organization's Value Proposition?
- What it will take to meet our Vision?
- Will our organization change to accomplish the Vision?
- What are new KPIs?
- What action will we take to achieve the plan?

The Steering Committee wants input from the Board on the Bold Steps they developed; information from this meeting will be used to develop a SMART action plan for November. The six elements around the vision were pulled from information collected over the past couple of months with regards to the elements that would help support a vision for VSU. These are all working documents, suggestions, and fluid. Next we need to develop 5 Bold Steps to get to the Vision.

The Elements of the Vision include:

- Brand drives engagement with VSU
- Sustained academic excellence
- Ensure affordability with high ROI
- Provide an exceptional student experience
- Internally aligned to drive efficient and effective execution
- Environment supports the needs of the VSU community

### **Proposed Bold Steps**

What do we have that is different in order to achieve the 5 Bold Steps?

1. Define our Brand
2. Define Value Proposition
3. Invest in Programs/Faculty
4. Communicate ROI to Investors
5. Focused Revenue Improvement

Dr. Palm indicated that he needed to get a green light on the Bold Steps today so the Steering Committee could move forward. He also reminded the Board members that they could change the Bold Steps today as needed.

### **Questions and Comments from the Board members**

- Has the team put together a working Mission that fits into the Vision?
- Why do we want the word "diverse" into the mission?
  - Cause is the Mission and Effect is the Vision
- Where in all of this can I see, touch, and feel student success?
  - Student success is extremely important
- Where is the connection to the Vision, Mission and Bold Steps?
- Where is the driver or the cause to create achievement?
- The Bold Steps represent the Mission (the cause) and drive whatever we aspire to achieve
- As a simple vision, how do I make students finish in 4 years?
- Strategy is what takes you there
- The consultant asked "Who are our customers?"
  - It was determined employers
- Align University strategies and priorities with need of the Commonwealth
  - Students who are employable based on the needs of the Commonwealth
- Students are not majoring in areas needed in Virginia and employers are seeking graduates outside of Virginia
- There is no conversation about what employers need
- Should be talking to employers to see what they want

- The Vision needs to go beyond output to impact (outcomes)
  - May have a lot of VSU alumni unemployed
  - Impact is what investors and corporations look for
- Recommend talking to parents (major investors)

Dr. Palm indicated that we were drilling down the actual plan itself as far as the student experience and asked the Board members what they would like to see. The responses from the Board members included:

- Producing employable students
- Students prepared to go to graduate school
- Must be able to tell corporations what offering is different
- What are we producing that aligns with what their needs are
- Optimizing student success for work and life and have specific strategies

Dr. Palm indicated that there has been conversations about preparing students for career. The question was asked “How do you get there to make that happen?”

- Need to talk about majors and what we are teaching students
- Don't want to manage ourselves out of business because students are underemployed
- External stakeholders and employers, (i.e. C-Camp, Rolls Royce, and career expos)
- Have Industry councils in each college to provide information to the faculty/Dean on what students need to be employable
- May not get what we are looking for from some employers
- Can get data from VEDP, VEC, Workforce (Megan Heeley), Elevate VA (Sara Dunnigan) , demand projections, degrees needed, certificates needed – data coming out this month
- Strong infusion on what the Board thinks
- Students will be applying for jobs that don't exist
- Be prepared for what can and can't define
- Think about cause and effect
- Build relationships with businesses and be nimble
  - By 2050 current jobs will not exist
- Recommend stay close to employers (businesses of the future)
- Think different about the Vision and Mission (i.e. Amazon and retail)
- Consider new responsive innovative programs and faculty to deliver those programs

#### **Questions from the Board members**

- What are the determinants for success regardless of employment opportunities for student and citizen success?
- What do we know about human beings that can lead to citizen success? We want students to be successful when they leave VSU.
- How do we measure it since we have the ingredients?
- Get ready for learning, adapting, and making things better
- How many have degrees?
- How many get jobs in their fields?
- Why aren't they getting jobs in their fields?
- What percentage of students are underemployed based on their training?
  - Would not be surprised if the State does not start to measure it
- Are we graduating students that are employable with average incomes?

### Recommendations from the Board members

- Teach critical thinking and analytical skills appropriate for any setting (determinants of success)
  - Students can make it in any environment with right skills
- JMU has a cutting edge program they developed with SCHEV Council last month with wages of graduates by program 3, 5, 10 years out
- Adhoc committee on data and policy
- Wages of institutions by programs 5 or 10 years out
- Help students manage expectations in terms of employability
- Must redefine and remodel themselves to be employable
- Look at how much graduates make
- Salaries depend on economic background of parents
- We must lead the data conversation of family income
- Recommend Bold Goals rather than Bold Steps
  - Don't see any as Bold or Steps
- Steps need to accomplish Bold Goals
- Bold Goals – Build steps to achieve goals, for example
  - Increase endowment in next 5 years to \$300 million
  - In 5 years we will have an incoming class with an SAT/ACT score in 3<sup>rd</sup> quartile
  - In 5 years we will produce a Rhodes Scholar
- After the Bold Goals you build the steps to achieve the goals

### The Strategic Plan

- Looked at the old plan's 5 key focus areas to build a plan
  - Goals, objectives, strategies
- Which area relates to focus area?
- Look at sustained academic excellence
- What does it take to get there and how will we get there?
- Focus area – focus to obtain academic excellence
- Affordability – student experience
- Tweak wording of “environment of VSU” to include corporate community, and issue jobs
- Got to have academics, support, finances, administrative, get from jobs
- For all the work we have done going forward are we going to pursue something different?
  - All of that drops your Vision statement
- We have the raw materials, and all we have to do is rework, rethink and digest
- Student experience is a part of what we do
- Primary mission is student focused
- Exceptional student experience
- From recruitment to becoming an alumni
- On the old strategic plan those circles would be objectives under academic support
  - Increase revenue
  - Endowment money (scholarships)
  - Exceptional student experience (ACE, tutoring)
  - Continuous improvement (effective execution – How do you reinvent yourself?)
  - Communicate ROI
  - Invest in faculty/staff
- The issue missing is jobs
  - Students have to have internships, externships, and jobs when they graduate
  - Career enhancement is missing

- How do we communicate what we are doing? (Brand)
- Some of the Bold Steps are objectives (sustained)
  - Want Cyber Security, CPA, 5<sup>th</sup> year Accounting, ensured affordability ROI
- Have an investment mindset
  - Keep tuition low
- Student centered
- Need an operational definition – goals, objectives, jobs, goals are missing
- Sometimes good things can be bad, and bad things can be good
- Information is useful but think about what is on the table
- Don't need any more data
- Test against existing Mission statement
- What have you asked us to do?
  - Do we need to revisit the Mission and change it?
  - Do we need to change or accept the Vision?
- Collect as much information as possible from stakeholders
- Use information as a process to see what stakeholders see as a Vision (overlay plan)
- Need to make sure at earlier stage are we heading in the right direction
- Do we need more time?
- How do you think we should move forward?
- What kinds of things should we be looking at in terms of time frame to capture everything?
- The Bold Steps should lead to achieving the Mission
  - Mission at the bottom
  - That will produce the Vision
- Keep it simple and precise
  - Don't want it to get lost
  - Too much information
  - Have a lot of people that must understand this
  - Clean graphics, simple statements, see connections
- Need a draft on what's proposed to do in 5 years
  - How will we match the objective?
  - How are we proposing to get this done?
  - Must put together visually

### **Concerns of the Board members**

- When are we going to expand Education?
- When are we going to do more investment analytical tools for people who want doctoral degrees?
- Must get to objectives, strategies, when, and how much will it cost, how many months, and how we will afford it
- How do we get enrollment up? (steps)
- Excluding who our target students are that come to VSU
- Students don't know how to interview, shake a hand, interact, make eye contact, or have a conversation
  - What courses are we going to teach to help students achieve the above?
  - Culturally some things will not be achieved at a school level
- Preparing for degrees
- What is our basic goal of being at VSU based on our students?
- Interviewing skills (i.e. Morehouse students) – dressed and play the role
- Confidence of students
- The Big 8 Accounting Firms are not coming to VSU to recruit students
  - Going to JMU, UVA, VA Tech
- Students come here to get a job but must prepare for employers/employment

- Not utilizing Industry Council
- Want something that is practical, can implement, make a difference
- The Dean must be out there creating relationships, not the President
- The Deans are looking at the Strategic Plan but need to be in the plan

### **Suggestions from the Board members**

- The Board would like to give Dr. Palm a chance to massage the Strategic Plan more
- Deal with the programs that we have and look to the future on how we develop these things
- Put some measures in place on how to get there
- Provide students the tools to represent VSU to bring employers back
- Must mean something
- Measurement higher and more specific for everyone including the professors and staff
- Don't have a capital plan as a part of this
- Need a destination to get there

### **Next Steps**

- Go through your notes
- Reach back in what we have and be clear on what others want (intentionality)
- What is the calendar date to provide a draft to various committees to review by a certain date by the Board?
- Write down the objectives on what we want to accomplish 1, 5, and in a 10 year period
- The calendar was submitted and reset to engage the Board
- Change the due date of the Strategic Plan from November
- Make Strategic Plan as meaningful and beneficial as possible

A member of the Board asked if SACSCOC reviewed the Strategic Plan. President Abdullah indicated that SACSCOC is only concerned with the Mission and that all of their questions are Mission related.

The importance of today's discussion was to share some of the things with the Steering Committee that the Board think is important that they did not see. In the next meeting Board members would like to see the 5 Steps and how they are being carried out at the President's and Departmental levels, and how they are tied to the Strategic Plan. Dr. Palm thanked the Board for their comments and will take their recommendations back to the Strategic Planning Committee.

### **CLOSED SESSION**

In accordance with § 2.2-3711(A)(1) of the *Code of Virginia*, Ms. Crittenden moved to go into closed session at 3:20 p.m. for discussion or consideration of special awards for services or work to be performed by the University regarding naming opportunities. The motion provided that President Makola M. Abdullah; Ms. Reshunda Mahone, Vice President for Institutional Advancement; Dr. Annie C. Redd, Board Liaison; and Ms. Ramona Taylor, University Legal Counsel, attend the closed meeting because their presence in the closed meeting is deemed necessary, and/or their presence will aid the Board in its deliberations.

Ms. Crittenden also moved to go into closed session for discussion or consideration of special awards for services or work to be performed by the University regarding recognition of a former Board member. The motion provided that President Makola M. Abdullah; Dr. Annie C. Redd, Board Liaison; and Ms. Ramona Taylor, University Legal Counsel, attend the closed meeting because their presence in the closed meeting is deemed necessary, and/or their presence will aid the Board in its deliberations.

The Board reconvened in open session at 4:15 p.m. in accordance with § 2.2-3712(D) of the *Code of Virginia*. Ms. Crittenden conducted the poll in which all board members certified that the Board only discussed business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements and which were identified in the motion authorizing the closed session, were heard, discussed, or considered in closed session. All board members present certified compliance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Mr. Winstead adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:30 p.m.



Huron F. Winstead, Rector



Date