



## BOARD OF GOVERNORS

### STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

April 28, 2017

#### Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 11:39 a.m. by Governor Trent in Room BC of the McGregor Memorial Conference Center. Secretary Miller called the roll. A quorum was present.

**Committee Members Present:** Governors Busuito, Gaffney, Nicholson, O'Brien, and Trent; Naida Simon, Faculty Representative, Louis Romano (sitting in as the Faculty Alternate Representative); Stuart Baum, Student Representative.

**Committee Members Absent:** Sameen Akhtar, Student Alternate Representative

**Also Present:** Governors Dunaskiss, Kelly and Thompson, and President Wilson; Provost Whitfield, Vice Presidents Decatur, Hefner, Lessem, Staebler, and Wright; and Secretary Miller

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES, March 24, 2017**

**ACTION:** Upon a motion made by Governor Gaffney and supported by Governor Nicholson, the minutes of the March 24, 2017 meeting were approved as submitted. The motion carried.

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#### **PRESENTATION: UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT SUCCESS**

Provost Whitfield asked Associate Provost Monica Brockmeyer to begin the presentation on this annual report to the Board. Ms. Brockmeyer gave a brief outline of the topics she will cover, which include graduate rate and retention numbers, a look at transfer students, and FTIAC (first time in any college) students and the initiatives that are in place for these students. The first chart examined the percentage of first-time, full-time students who return in the second year, which has been improving on a fairly steady basis, moving from 77% last year to 82% this year. The average first to second-year retention numbers for Michigan public universities is 79%. The University's strategic plan target is to reach 85% by 2021, a goal well within reach.

The university's 6-year graduation and retention has also shown growth over the last 5 years. Five years ago the 6-year graduation rate was 26%. A Student Success Initiative was implemented at that time, and for the 2010 entering class, that number has risen to 39%. This is far below the State of Michigan average of 66%; looking forward, the strategic plan set a target of 50% by 2021, and they expect to see continued growth in these numbers. The expected

target for this year of 41% is well within reach, and Ms. Brockmeyer feels that number may be exceeded by a noticeable amount.

Ms. Brockmeyer next discussed 2-year FTIAC retention rates by sub-populations. The 2<sup>nd</sup>-year retention rate for African American students has improved from 57% in 2010, to 71% for students who entered in 2015. Other population groups have more mixed results, with almost all showing improvement from 2014 to 2015. While the rates have improved for African American and Latino students, they still lag behind white students and the overall retention rates.

The university is working aggressively to close those numbers. In terms of graduation rates, the data were summarized in a graph breaking down graduation rates by race and ethnicity. The charts show significant increases in the graduation rate for African American students, with the rate more than doubling from the 2005 cohort to the 2010 cohort. The overall rate is still too low, and the University is making considerable investments to improve this area. African American female students graduate at a higher rate than African American male students. The rates for Latino students have been up and down, as have been the rates for non-U.S. citizens.

Next, data were presented illustrating the impact of student success initiatives on students who are Pell eligible, where most increases were shown in first to second-year retention rates. Steady and positive growth was shown in 6 year graduation rates for Pell students over the last 6 years. Improvements in financial aid policy and practice, the availability of a financial literacy program, as well as other initiatives that benefit other aspects of the student experience for Pell students have helped in this area. Six year graduation rates moved from 18% for students in the 2006 cohort to 31% in the 2010 cohort.

The University has partnered with the Educational Advisory Board (EAB) to improve its business processes across the student experience. Initiatives include the Warrior VIP (Vision and Impact) program, a new initiative to support students who are academically most vulnerable. The EAB is a technology and educational research company, and more than a quarter of U.S. undergraduates attend institutions served by the EAB. Initiatives that fall under this umbrella include AdvisingWorks, a new advisor scheduling and note software that allows predictive analytics and proactive campaigns to reach out to students more effectively. A mobile app will be rolled out this summer to help students navigate the institution. A dashboard for Deans and Chairs will help them allocate resources effectively. Over the course of the 3-year partnership, the university will be examining the entire student experience, including advising, financial aid processing and management, the student services center, student communication, and the academic pathways through the curriculum. The Warrior VIP program has emerged as a coalition of various support programs, including APEX, Comerica Scholars, the Center for Latino/a American Studies, grant funding programs such as BUILD, the Rising Scholars Program, the McNair Scholars program, and the Network, a mentoring program for African American male students. While all of these programs target various groups of students, the effort now is to coalesce them together and make sure they are assisted in reaching the students they aim to support, and that they have the resources they need to succeed. In terms of newer tools, the mobile app, called The Guide, will provide individualized pathways for VIP students.

The Gateway Course initiative is a project where the university will partner with 7 other Michigan colleges and universities to create and implement an evidence based plan for improving teaching, learning and success in high failure gateway courses. This examines courses that large number



of students take and whether they can be improved to help more students be successful. Some of the courses examined are those that are most predictive of whether a student will actually graduate in 6 years. Improvements in those courses can help improve graduation rates overall and help to narrow achievement gaps. Math 1050 (college algebra), for example, is a critical course for STEM majors. There has been support from the Math department to look at that course. The other Michigan universities that are part of this partnership are also examining this course at their institutions, and are developing a plan for innovation. This is a three year process for improvement. A new set of dashboards will help the university look deeper into which courses are gateway courses that may serve as barriers for students. As work on these initiatives continues, the focus is on goals for 2021, while closing graduation rate gaps.

Governor Trent opened the floor for questions. Mr. Baum asked for clarification as to whether a student, once in the cohort, needed to be full-time every year, or just in the first semester? Ms. Brockmeyer indicated that it is just in the first semester – once a student joins that cohort, they become part of that group, which is monitored over time. Mr. Baum asked whether the drop-off in graduation rates after 6 years is because of students dropping out, or graduating within 7 or 8 years. Ms. Brockmeyer indicated that it is both, that students continue to graduate out into 8, 9 or 10 years, but the University has not yet exceeded a 50% graduation rate. President Wilson added that he believes the University will surpass the 50% goal prior to 2021, but advised that the 50% goal is generally the benchmark for high performing, public, urban universities, and that suburban schools have a different student profile. He added that the rate of improvement seen puts WSU in the top 5% of all universities nationally for rate of improvement in 6-year graduate rates. The University was recognized by the APLU (Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities) this year as a finalist for degree completion, one of 3 universities to be so recognized.

Professor Romano asked how many of the students graduating in December 2016 or May 2017 passed the math competency requirement. Ms. Brockmeyer advised that the math competency requirement was suspended in 2016, and it did not have a material impact on the graduation rate last year. She did not have the data for the current year. Professor Romano suggested that it would be important to examine this issue, given the rationale explained for dropping the math competency requirement was that it was a detriment to graduation. Ms. Brockmeyer responded that when the math competency requirement was suspended, it impacted relatively few programs on campus because the majority of the curriculum had other requirements for mathematics. The new General Education Reform initiative will include a quantitative experience which replaces math competency, and is targeted for fall 2018. Professor Romano reiterated his request for the number of students who passed the math competency requirement this past year; Ms. Brockmeyer agreed to provide this data. Governor Kelly asked whether it was too early to know the true effect of dropping or suspending the math requirement. Ms. Brockmeyer concurred, indicating that data for students graduating this year won't be available until after September. Governor Thompson asked about the rate of improvement in 6-year graduation rate for African American students. Ms. Brockmeyer advised that for students entering in 2005, the 6-year rate was 7%, and for students entering in 2010, graduating in 2016, that number rose to 17%. The rate of improvement for African American students is greater than the rate of improvement overall. Governor Thompson how this compares to other institutions implementing similar programs; Ms. Brockmeyer did not have that data but will look at it. Governor Thompson asked for further details on how the work with the EAB and the VIP program described will help improve retention and graduation rates for African American students. Ms. Brockmeyer advised that these programs are part of a larger effort that also includes the Office of Multi-Cultural Student

Engagement, mentoring programs, learning communities, academic pathways, and financial aid availability, among others that will help to remove barriers for African American students and others, and help improve student success.

Professor Romano commented on the success that Athletics has had with graduation rates for student athletes, and wondered whether there were some initiatives that could be replicated elsewhere in the university. Ms. Brockmeyer responded that athletics aggressively monitors the performance of their students, and uses advising rapidly to assist students in need. The new *AdvisingWorks* program from EAB will help put similar measures in place. The coaching staff are also concerned about student well-being, and a mentorship program across the university will help fill that role.

Governor Thompson asked about a realistic goal for African American student graduation rates; Ms. Brockmeyer indicated that the university very much wants to close the graduation gap among racial and ethnic groups, and to hit its goal of 50% for all students. President Wilson concurred, and indicated the University will do everything possible to achieve that goal. Mr. Baum asked about opportunities for students to self-identify a need for assistance, and Ms. Brockmeyer responded that students will be able to enter programs that are part of the EAB coalition.

Governor Trent asked about the ratio of male to female advisors, given that there is a large demand for male advisors, and it is a field where these roles are filled by more women than men, and asked if there was a plan to address that issue. Ms. Brockmeyer indicated that one option for addressing this issue is to move towards a team approach for students, rather than a single advisor. She provided an example of a group called the Network, a group of African American men who are providing mentoring with African American male students, and mentoring can help to fill a need in this area. Governor Thompson asked, given the initiatives outlined, when the Board would learn about what is working and what is not working? Ms. Brockmeyer indicated that perhaps in approximately 8 months or so, when they will first see a reduction in holds, and see students registering for the winter semester at a higher rate. They may also be able to see whether the gap is starting to close for African American and other groups.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Julie H. Miller  
Secretary to the Board of Governors