



## Academic Affairs Committee

September 30, 2022

### Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 9:45 a.m. by Governor Stancato in the Student Center Ballroom. Secretary Miller called the roll. A quorum was present.

**Committee Members Present:** Governors Busuito, Gaffney, Kelly, Stancato, and Thompson; Jennifer Lewis, Faculty Representative and Brad Roth, Faculty Alternate Representative; Mannat Bedi, Student Representative and Batsheva Khaimov, Student Alternate Representative

**Also Present:** Governors Barnhill, Kumar and Land; President Wilson; Provost Kornbluh; Vice Presidents Burns, Ezzeddine, Johnston, Lanier, Massaron, Schweitzer, Staebler, and Wright; and Secretary Miller

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES, JUNE 24, 2022**

**ACTION:** Upon motion made by Governor Thompson and supported by Governor Kelly, the minutes of the June 24, 2022 meeting of the Academic Affairs Committee were approved as submitted.

Governor Stancato advised the committee that Provost Kornbluh would be joining the meeting virtually to listen in, and that Vice President Ezzeddine will be coordinating the presentations for today's committee meeting. VP Ezzeddine introduced John Corvino, Dean of the Irvin D. Reid Honors College, for a presentation and update on the college.

### **PRESENTATION: HONORS COLLEGE**

Dean Corvino thanked the Committee for the opportunity to speak about the Honors College, where he has served as Dean for five years. He has a lengthy history at the University, where he has served as a faculty member for the past 25 years. The Honors College has about 2200 students, with majors across the curriculum. Honors is not a major, so students in Honors have a home college, such as CLAS, Engineering or Nursing. The Honors College uses its partnerships with the other schools and colleges to create a rigorous academic experience for high achieving students to challenge them and help them realize their full potential. In terms of structure, there are both departmental honors students, who pursue honors in their major, and the University honors program, where students are required to take 28 honors credits of the 120 credits required for



graduation. Honors credits are enhanced versions of courses they are required to take for graduation. Dean Corvino described some of the foundational courses the Honors college provides to its students, including a course, Honors 1000, and foundational seminars on a variety of topics, all of which emphasize core writing and research skills, and thematically connected to the city or urban issues. The curricula also includes a field learning course, a service learning or Study Abroad course, and a research project or internship co-op/practicum. Honors classes are offered in departments in a number of schools and colleges, and provide a small rigorous academic community for these students.

In terms of demographics, 401 students enrolled in the entry level course this year, up from previous years. The college has 12 National Merit Scholarship finalists, twice their usual number. The college also created a new engagement program over the summer to connect with students and get them excited about the fall semester. The college focuses its entry course on providing students with a sense of the history, politics, and current challenges facing Detroit, and individuals' roles in affecting change.

Honors also offers a number of special programs. Among those are a leadership program sponsored by the Applebaum Philanthropy, and a summer tech program, which has been held for the past 3 years. It began with Microsoft, then went to Quicken/Rocket, and it is now the Rocket Summer Tech Internship Program. About 6 to 10 students participate in any given year, and the work focuses on coaching DPSCD high school students in computer programming, technology, website design, professional skills, in partnership with Rocket companies. This program has many positive outcomes. It impacts DPSCD students, who may have learned of an aptitude in technology; it may help recruit some outstanding students to Wayne State; it provides leadership experience to Honors students in coaching these students; and it also provides Honors students with a connection to Rocket Mortgage and some of the partner companies who are involved in this program. There are potential growth opportunities here as well.

Dean Corvino next spoke about a fundraising initiative he launched, called the Finish Line Fund, which provides scholarships for Honors students, 70% of whom go on to graduate or professional school. Many honors students work extra hours or take on extra jobs to balance their needs, and through this fund, the college has been offering \$1000 scholarships to as many students as they can. They have been building an endowment as well as allowing donors to give money directly to students, so that it flows through immediately. The first year, six scholarships were distributed, and 10 were distributed last year. He and his team have also been working to increase their fundraising efforts, which have gone up steadily. Scholarships have a profound impact, and the Dean stressed the importance of these dollars to the students.

Turning to the faculty, Dean Corvino advised that, through the Provost's Pathways to Faculty program, they will be bringing on 2 faculty fellows who will be with Honors for 2 or 3 years and will then eventually be transitioned into tenure-track positions in the University. Nadiya Nacorda Loving is a Detroit artist whose work focuses on her family's experience of displacement and challenges related to changing communities within



Detroit. She'll be eventually going to the Art and Art History department. Erfan Saidi Moqadam is an anthropologist from the University of Kentucky, working on the experience of Iranian Americans in the south. He's interested in translating that to the experience of Iranian Americans in Metro Detroit, particularly focusing on racial identity. In terms of goals for the coming year, Dean Corvino spoke of growing recruitment efforts, especially on attracting Detroit students to the University, utilizing both the Heart of Detroit scholarship program, and finding private scholarship funds to offset housing costs for students interested in living on campus. He also hopes to work with fellow Deans on creating pathways for Honors students into the university's graduate and professional programs. He sees the recruitment of these strong students into WSU graduate programs as very good for the university, but also as an extraordinary recruiting tool for undergraduate students, who may see a new pathway towards Law School or Nursing through the Honors program, for example. Finally, he hopes to build the endowment, over the next 4 to 5 years, to \$1 million, with a goal of raising \$250,000 in the coming year. Dean Corvino concluded his presentation, and the floor opened for questions.

Governor Kelly asked about the percentage of honors students who have student loans, the potential incentive for students to receive merit scholarships, and the potential interest of donors towards such scholarships. Dean Corvino advised that the % may be harder to identify because it is difficult to separate out students with departmental honors affiliation, as they belong to another school/college. He added that in talking with donors, part of their interest is to give students the incentive to stay the course through the full four years of the program. He added that costs do go up for students in their junior and senior year, and they have additional expenses as they are preparing for the job market or for graduate or professional school. Governor Thompson expressed interest in the Pathways to Faculty program, and asked for additional information on that initiative. Dean Corvino advised that the program is a partnership between the Graduate School and the Provost's office. A new aspect to the program is the Provost's initiative with respect to diversifying the faculty, and Honors is a pilot for that initiative this year. The college cast a wide net for interest in applications, initially as a post doc/pre-faculty fellows program. He shared some of the strong applications received with department chairs at the university, to see if there might be a match with a university department who may have potential future interest, and some departments expressed excitement and strong interest in these potential applications. They were initially going to select one individual as a "pre-faculty fellow", but two of them turned out to be very strong, and with the Provost's assent, both were hired. Provost Kornbluh added that the goal of the Pathways to Faculty program is to hire 25 early career faculty members over the next 5 years. The university is focusing on faculty members who make the curriculum on the campus much more inclusive, with research areas focusing on the city of Detroit, who are interested in interacting with diverse groups of students and the community. He added that these two faculty are the first two that came out of national searches. There are two other Pathway to Faculty fellows this academic year, one in Oncology, and one in Social Work. Five departments have been authorized for searches for the coming year, and the next round of applications will begin soon. The applications need to center on how this will build a much more inclusive department. The proposal also needs to include a strong mentorship program. The goal is that for this post-doc period, the university helps them



get started at Wayne, with the goal for all of these faculty to be tenured. He added that departments are very excited about this program. In response to a question from Governor Thompson, Provost Kornbluh confirmed that any college can apply to this program.

He further explained that they want the departments to commit to these urban career scholars and make sure their careers start well. The Graduate School is crafting a mentorship program for these new faculty, which includes mentors from within the department, from the university and from outside the university, helping them to start their career off on the right foot.

Governor Stancato asked about initiatives the college may have to grow Detroit students. Dean Corvino advised they will be speaking with Detroit high school advisors about the Honors program and its opportunities; they are working on targeted social media campaigns that can be shared with high school advisors; and they are working on fundraising for housing scholarships, with the idea that if students are on campus, they will be more involved in campus life, have fewer distractions and will not be worried about commuting during bad weather days. Governor Stancato asked whether recruitment in Detroit includes all high school students, not just those from DPSCD. Dean Corvino advised that they work with the Admission's Office, which helps coordinate these efforts. VP Ezzeddine added that their recruitment covers all schools – they work very closely with DPS, and with inner ring suburbs as well. Dean Corvino advised that they have had very strong students in recent years from U of D Jesuit and other private, parochial and charter schools.

#### **PRESENTATION: UPDATE ON FALL ENROLLMENT AND SEMESTER START**

VP Ezzeddine provided an update on enrollment for the Fall Semester. As had been discussed and anticipated, the university has seen declines in enrollment for the Fall 2022 Semester. The university is down approximately 4.4% at the undergraduate level, 6% at the graduate level, and 2.7% at the professional level. Credit hours showed a similar decline, 4.7% at the undergraduate level, and 4.2% at the graduate level. He advised that there are some positive measures to report. International enrollments are up 8.8% overall, and new students are up 11.4%. He advised that the university has seen increases in most of the colleges and within those colleges, there are also some programs with higher enrollment with others, all of which reflect trends seen across the country. Programs such as public health and computer science are doing well, and others are not. He advised that the university needs to examine its offerings to make sure it is meeting demand, and respond to curriculum adjustments moving forward. In terms of professional enrollment, the Law School is up, and the decline in Pharmacy and the School of Medicine is less than 1%.

Moving to some trends noted for the incoming class, about 50% of the applications were test optional, a trend they expect will continue. About 43% of those students enrolled at the University. They are watching this cohort of students carefully to see how they are performing moving forward, and how they are progressing towards degree. The grade



point average and the test scores are also consistent, down slightly, impacted they believe by student preparation during the pandemic.

In terms of diversity, there have been declines across all demographics. African-American students are down 5.6% over the same period last year; white students are down 8.3% compared to last year. The distribution of students is consistent with previous years. WSU students continue to come from the immediate region and the university still recruits primarily from the tri-county region for both FTIAC and transfer students. VP Ezzeddine indicated that this is an area where they want to expand, and he is investing in staff, with plans to add out-of-state recruitment to their efforts.

On a continued and very positive note, the university's six-year graduation rate continues to improve, this year reaching 60.3%. Last year, that number was 55.8%, and ten years ago it was at 27.6%. He advised that this is an area of continued major focus, and they will continue to invest in it. These are very positive trends, with even 4 year and 5 year graduation rates also improving.

In terms of the path forward, VP Ezzeddine expanded on the enhanced recruitment efforts, advising that they are working with schools and colleges to embed recruiters with specific schools and colleges to make sure they are working closely to target specific programs to promote. They will be working with Marketing & Communications on these efforts. International recruitment will continue to be a focus. They have increased their presence in India, China and the Middle East. They are also reviewing their financial aid strategy to ensure resources are optimized. A consultant has been retained to provide recommendations on how to hone student support and maximize its impact. A new initiative to look at online and certificate programs has been launched, for a completely online program. Many deans have embraced this project, and the university will be launching some of those programs in January. This is to provide an appealing alternative, especially to individuals who are looking for opportunities to rescale or upscale. Another focus is on adult engagement. Many adult students start at the community colleges, and the University will work with its community college partners on these efforts.

Governor Kelly asked whether the pandemic subsiding has impacted students returning. VP Ezzeddine agreed, and confirmed that international students are a portion of these returning students. He added that the U.S. government has been working to alleviate issues with the backlog of visas for students wishing to study in the U.S. and that has helped. Graduate enrollment at the masters' level has increased almost across the board. President Wilson added a clarification to the discussion, advising that with respect to continuing students, there does appear to be more disinterest in continuing to persist, and that minorities are more impacted than non-minorities. Governor Kelly thanked President Wilson for sharing his perspective, as she feels that the extent of the decline in enrollment is masked by the pandemic.

VP Ezzeddine advised that some schools have offset their losses with new students, and that this is affecting not only higher education but workplaces as well. It is a trend they are hearing across the country. Governor Kelly asked whether long term, enrollment has



become one of the major challenges faced by the University? VP Ezzeddine agreed, and that is part of the impetus of the review of the curriculum and offerings. The value of a 4-year degree, graduate degrees, and the impact of social and economic mobility are all pieces of this discussion.

Governor Thompson asked if VP Ezzeddine had a sense as to why students of color are more impacted. VP Ezzeddine advised that there are a number of factors, including cost of attendance versus lost earning income, there are anxiety and mental health issues that are not being addressed, along with the perceived value of pursuing a college degree. In a recent conversation with a Detroit high school principal, he advised that when their students were interviewed, 47% indicated that they were not interested in going to college. He sees that as a serious issue. Governor Stancato added that some corporations are now looking beyond the 4 year degree, and are considering experience in some of their areas. In response to a clarification from Governor Thompson, VP Ezzeddine added that for students of color who are already enrolled at the university, the issues are really the same, the cost, not wanting to add to their loans, the ability to earn wages right now. These are the same issues.

Provost Kornbluh added that the larger issue is with getting students into college, not only here but across the country. He explained that there is a real difference among different types of institutions. Some flagship universities have bigger classes than they've ever had before, yet a lot of regional universities and especially community colleges have lost 20, 25, 30% of their students. Wayne State has held its own, and hopefully with the enhanced efforts in recruitment and admissions, will be part of the group that does better rather than worse. He added that the university is still underinvesting in admissions staff, and they are ramping up their investment. The emphasis will be on getting students started, either as freshmen, or as transfers in from community colleges.

Governor Gaffney commented that this will be an important issue for the Board's consideration in the coming years. He added that there will be fewer students available across the country each year, and that competition is going to continue to strengthen, impacting that balance of having enough students to support institutional growth. He spoke about the difference an additional 200 students would make on the bottom line, and on growth for the institution. He asked the administration to continue to keep the board abreast of the efforts that have been discussed, and to ask the Board for additional resources in this area when needed. He suggested that the university's important initiatives can be supported by small increases in enrollment (3-5%) each year. He looks forward to working with everyone on these efforts.

### **Semester Start**

Next, Dean of Students, David Strauss, provided some highlights on the start of the semester. The University saw a record turnout for the annual Festifall and New Student Convocation, which were held in late August, and for many students, it was their first visit to campus. It was an exciting day for all who attended. Next, he highlighted the work of the Campus Activities team, which planned more than 70 events for the start of the Fall



Semester. He provided photos and brief highlights on the Team's Thursdays in the D programming, where students go out into the city and experience social/cultural activities, and the Week in the Mitten, where they travel all around the state. These two programs had been on hiatus and are back this year. The turnout for these programs was larger than expected. Dean Strauss was also happy to report that there are now 483 registered student organizations. He believes this shows how energized students are, that they want to be back on campus, and they want to be together. Student organizations are where students find community. Funding requests from student organizations are also up, and he advised that everything is booming. Students are engaging with athletes on Warrior Wednesdays, and the Team partnered with several of the university's new restaurants to include food at these events. Dean Strauss added that students like free food, and the turnouts for these programs were very impressive, with more than 400 students attending each of the ones scheduled. He also provided highlights for the annual homecoming weekend of activities.

Students have been very engaged on voting initiatives, and two campus vote project fellow have been funded to work on these initiatives. The university received a grant from MTV to promote early voting. They are very proud that Wayne State University was recently named 1 of 230 institutions among 850 that were reviewed named as a best for college student voting by Washington Monthly. The university also ranked highly on the National Survey of Leadership Voting and Engagement, a nationwide study of student voting. WSU ranked above the institutions participating in every single category. WSU also has two students on the Michigan Collegiate Student Advisory Task Force, sponsored by the Michigan Secretary of State.

Finally, the W Food Pantry continues to thrive and is heavily utilized by our students. Dean Strauss thanked Housing and Dining for the Warrior Meal Share program where students can donate meals they're not using. These meals are banked and then given to students in need of meals. The Warrior Wardrobe is busting at the seams. The wardrobe collects gently used clothing; students in need can come in and drop off, or pick up needed items, and give back by volunteering. The Wardrobe also carries hygiene and household items. Finally, Dean Strauss advised that the Student Center is bustling with activity, and students are really making it their center.

**UPDATE ON FACULTY HIRING, 2021-22 – This item was postponed to a future meeting.**

## **ANNUAL STATUS REPORT ON ACCREDITATION**

This is an informational report, and there were no questions.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:51 a.m.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julie H. Miller". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

Julie H. Miller  
Secretary to the Board of Governors