Board of Trustees: Enrollment and Student Services Committee
May 12th, 2025
Sandridge Banquet Room
Minutes

I.   Call to order: 12:06 p.m. by Chair, Bill Dunnavant

II.   Roll Call: Present – Bill Dunnavant, Penny Roberts, Alyson Quinn (Zoom)

Absent – Jimmy Baker, William Richardson, Mac McCutcheon

Attendees: President Catherine Wehlburg, Alyson Gill, Patrice Broaden, Richard Collie, Helen Crider, Amy Garrison, Derrek Smith, Michael Radden, Mark Gale, LaShanda Chamberlain, Rachel O'Sullivan, Keith Ferguson, Katia Maxwell, Morgan Stanford, Dave Ragsdale, Emily Jackson (Zoom), Sandlyn Fultz (Zoom), Kathryn Doaty (Zoom), Magen Johnson (Zoom), Bethany Jackson (Zoom), Trish DiLullo (Zoom), Johnnie Lundin (Zoom), Gabrielle McGraw (Zoom), Chris Latham (Zoom), Diann Hammon (Zoom), Alyson Knox (Zoom), Kim Dunnavant (Zoom), Student Success Center (Zoom), Tricia Oleyte (Zoom), Beth Jenkins (Zoom), Jordyn Lee (Zoom), Dalton Turner (Zoom), Joseph Colunga (Zoom), LoAmmi Richardson (Zoom), Donna Holland (Zoom), DJ Doorenbos (Zoom)

III. Approval of Agenda: Roberts motioned to approve and Quinn seconded, all in favor, none opposed

IV.   Approval of July 19, 2024 Minutes: Roberts motioned to approve and Quinn seconded, all in favor, none opposed

V.   New Business:

   a. Summary review of external consultant findings
   b. Expansion Athens State Advanced Workforce Program (Discussion)
   c. Developing AI-Powered Enrollment & Marketing
   d. Implementing Unified Scholarship Leverage Model
   e. Expanding Regional Reach
   f. Adopting HyFlex Learning Across All Programs
      i. This past March, Scott and his colleague were here to meet with Enrollment Management and were charged with giving a review of Enrollment Management, they spent two days on campus and had many meetings with members of the team.
      ii. Scott has been here for about a month and is working on a Strategic Enrollment Plan that was a result of these findings, and he's also continued to meet with team members to get insight and other ideas to build this plan.
      iii. The plan is data driven with the goal of growing enrollment to 5,000 by 2030 in mind.

    iv.   Key Recommendations include: optimize CRM, remove Enrollment barriers like transcript delays and schedule dilemmas, secure gaps in Enrollment, shift to AI driven operating system, leveraging scholarships, drastically increasing response times, offer clear pathways for staff advancement, etc.

    v.   Athens current upper division model only serves 20% of the undergrad market, so diversifying the students we target and serve will be necessary. We also need to meet workforce demand for aligned credentials.

    vi.   Launch a cross-divisional SEM working group based on robust data reporting systems that we build. We need to restructure the enrollment leadership and improve our response speed, which is where automation can come in.

    vii.   Forecasted impact: 10-15% enrollment increase, retention stabilization of ~85%, cost per lead cut 50%, at least 35 new employer partnerships per year, and $5 to $7 million revenue increase.

    viii.   Plan rolls out in four phases over 18 months
1. Phase 1: SEM Committee, leadership change, automation, call center
2. Phase 2: HyFlex planning, marketing, employer outreach
3. Phase 3: AI Workforce systems
4. Phase 4: Evaluates results and make changes, deepen relationships with region and employers

    ix.   Next steps: Coordination across Enrollment, Academics, Marketing, and Advancement

VI.   Discussion:
a. Dr. Wehlburg mentions that changing course formats could be a longer process than is built into the timeline in the Strategic Plan, but if we start working toward this now, it is definitely something we can and should do. It will need to be an ongoing conversation between all parties to make sure that every voice is heard.
b. Dr. Gill also points out that for our Summer academies, this can be a test run to make sure what we are offering is what students want.
c. Scott agrees, and notes that the timeline is for an ideal world, and things can be flexible, but to meet a goal of 5000 we will need to be aggressive. To recruit this many students, it will need more than just Enrollment on board.
d. Bill Dunnavant asks if there is a way to integrate local businesses in these academies.
e. Rachel O'Sullivan expounds on our Strada grant and how we are currently working with industries and program advisory boards
f. Bill asks how many business/industry partners we currently have. Answer: about 65
g. Keith Ferguson explains the new position, Director of Corporations, and application review will begin tomorrow, this person will work on how we better partner and leverage our partnerships, scholarships, etc.
h. Dr. Maxwell asked: have we looked into research into user satisfaction or data from other institutions concerning AI, are we going to lose students who don't want to deal with an automated system?
i. Scott advises: we plan to roll this out in phases. The current phase is people actually calling a reaching out, and that phase will last several months as we build out our AI workforce. But yes, students will have the option to talk with a person, but these AI Agents will not be as robotic, it is more conversational AI. From other schools that he has talked to, about 80% of their communication is being handled by AI and students converse longer with the agents than with actual people. It also has the benefit of

immediate conversations, rather than having "business hours only". We will be training them over months to know things about our programs and pathways in detail with information directly from the faculty. If we can let the AI Agents handle 80% of the conversations, the other 20% can be handled with more detail and care.

j. We just need to make sure the AI Agents are trained well and stay up to date, but it has the technology to do that on its own by interacting organically.

k. Amy Garrison asked Scott to follow up on his point about expanding our reach and student body demographic.

l. 58% of the population in the Huntsville area have a Master's Degree, which is well above the National average, so we are really limiting ourself. Expanding to a four-year program would bring in more options, especially if we had more on campus options and had people on our beautiful campus. It would be hard work, but could be what we need to compete.

m. Dr. Wehlburg points out that we are offering some lower division courses, and expanding into the four-year sector will have some ramifications on the Community College partners and other Four-Year Institutions. We also would have to make our case to the state of Alabama that there are enough students for us to become another institution in that field. We could expand more on the names of students we are going to get from ACHE who have some college but no credential, and we can finetune that strategy. Venturing into the four-year arena offers some major challenges, but we can find other ways to meet needs if we need to while working on those challenge. Adult learner spaces are growing so we can capitalize on the "Enrollment Cliff" by focusing on those learners. She is very excited about these ideas.

n. Penny Roberts also echoed concerns about expanding to a four-year program, since we do have such good relationships with our Community College partners as recruiters. Also, the community may not embrace a four-year program and we may not have the students who want to stay in Athens. We still do have the legacy students whose family members attended Athens and they will to.

o. Dr. Wehlburg also notes that Freshman may not always be 18, there could be older students who are starting from the beginning their college journey and may not want a traditional four-year and we can meet that need with flexibility and connection. This is why she's very excited about Convocation in the fall to help students build relationships with the campus. We're moving in the right directions, and these difficult conversations will help us make sure we continue to do so. People should be able to voice concerns openly.

p. Keith pointed out that changing to a four-year school would require a change in legislation and the Board of Trustees will need to weigh in on that. They have the ability to do that, but will need to be on the same page and willing to tackle it.

q. Derrek Smith asked who are we actually competing against?

r. Scott answers that competition depends on the type of students. For online students, our biggest competition is the for-profit schools like Western Governor's. In our Clearinghouse data, our biggest competitor is also our biggest feeder, Calhoun, in terms of cross applications. So, it's complicated for Athens State.

s. There were some general questions about budgeting and how the funding for these projects is used long term.

t. There was also a discussion about the difference between Enrollment Marketing and Marketing the University, and we need to make sure we are focusing on that difference and building both strengths.

VII.   Adjourn: Dunnavant made a motion to adjourn at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by: Emily Jackson

Packet contents: Agenda
                     January 14th Meeting Minutes
                     Strategic Enrollment Presentation