

## Provost Report to Faculty Senate

September 2021

### Census

Each term, the 10th day of class marks the day for official reporting of institutional data, including student enrollment, student credit hours, student retention, and other key performance metrics. This year Census Day was Friday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Total student enrollment is 11,877, down 3% in comparison to Fall 2020. This is the first Fall term where total enrollment declined since 2015. Resident (on-campus) enrollment declined 5.5%, whereas distance (online) enrollment increased 6.3%. Total student credit hours, which is utilized to calculate state funding, declined 5.2%, in comparison to Fall 2020. First to second year retention was 74.7%, down from 81.4% last year. A bright spot was transfer student enrollment, up 11.9% in comparison to Fall 2020.

The Fall 2021 census report, along with other beginning of term reports are published on the Office for Institutional Planning and Effectiveness (OIPE) Data page, <https://www.wcu.edu/learn/office-of-the-provost/oipe/institutional-research/index.aspx>.

### Faculty Diversity Pilot

We are launching a pilot Faculty Diversity Officer (FDO) program to identify faculty from across the institution that have a strong commitment to advancing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and a willingness to serve on faculty search committees. FDOs will serve with a particular focus on the entire search process through an “EDI lens.” The initial cohort of FDOs will receive implicit bias and search committee diversity training and support from Human Resources. The cohort will also meet regularly as a group to share issues, lessons, and challenges and to build a network of support and community. The FDOs must be engaged and empowered to have a meaningful voice at the table and participate in faculty searches from crafting postings, reviewing applications, screening candidates, performing interviews, checking references, and making recommendations.

We are currently working with the deans to identify nominees for the initial cohort and welcome faculty from all academic disciplines. FDOs intentionally bring an outside perspective to searches and so they may often/typically be assigned to committees whose discipline does not align with that of their own. To be clear, this is not a proposal to ensure BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) membership on every search committee and to add to the cultural taxation that BIPOC faculty face. Rather, we hope that majority faculty who are willing to potentially be challenged in this effort and to step out of their comfort zones, step forward in this important university service to help advance efforts to increase faculty diversity at WCU.

### College of Engineering and Technology Dean Search

The search committee for the Dean of the College of Engineering and Technology is comprised of the following members:

- Patrick Gardner, Mountaintop Distinguished Professor/Director of RAPID Center, Search Committee Chair
- Marissa Blair, Student Representative
- Brittney Buchanan, Executive Assistant to the Dean, College of Engineering and Technology
- Bruce Gehrig, Joe W. Kimmel Distinguished Professor/Interim Associate Dean, Kimmel School of Construction Management
- John Hildreth, Joe W. Kimmel Distinguished Professor/Interim Director, Kimmel School of Construction Management
- Sudhir Kaul, Professor, School of Engineering + Technology
- Wes Stone, Professor/Director, School of Engineering + Technology
- Yanjun Yan, Associate Professor, School of Engineering + Technology

On September 20<sup>th</sup>, the Provost charged the committee and set the search schedule. The committee will develop the advertisement, which will be shared with the College and advertised broadly. I extend special appreciation to Dr. Chip Ferguson, Interim Dean, and the entire college for their efforts to support each other and continue their academic focus this year. A new dean is expected to begin July 1, 2022.

### **Nontenure track faculty**

We continue to implement the new non-tenure track faculty promotion process. Deans are currently reviewing the list of eligible faculty identified by the Provost's Office and Human Resources. Once the list is finalized, faculty eligible to apply for promotion in this first cycle will receive notification from the Provost's Office. Those notifications will be sent by October 1<sup>st</sup> and will include information on the salary increase that accompanies promotion. College-specific application deadlines and review processes are determined at the college level and will be communicated to eligible faculty in due time.

### **New Travel Regulation (RS)**

In order to better support employee professional travel, the Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance Mike Byers is conducting a review of travel policies and practices. The initial discussions will be internal, but there will be opportunities for faculty input. The goal is to identify ways that the Travel Office can enhance customer service and adapt to best support faculty and staff travel.

### **Moore Building (RS)**

In both the House and Senate versions of the budget, WCU has received capital funds to renovate the historic Moore building. In order to begin thinking about which units might relocate to Moore, Facilities management has engaged a design firm. This firm will lead discussions with faculty and staff in various units concerning space needs, instructional spaces, parking, and other matters related to the renovation. While no final decisions have been made, units tentatively identified as potential Moore tenants include the Graduate school and Research, International

Programs and Services, the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning, the Department of English, and the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice.

### **2022-2023 Interdisciplinary Campus Theme**

The 2022-2023 interdisciplinary campus theme, a connecting topic for campus conversations, curricular, and co-curricular connections, and enrichment, is **Mental Health** and planning for the theme will begin later this academic year. Dr. Ericka Zimmerman, School Director of Health Sciences has agreed to serve as co-chair of the Steering Committee. Please contact Carol Burton, Vice Provost, if senators are interested in serving or recommending others to serve on the committee. Full membership, including the other co-chair, will be announced shortly.