

University Faculty Meeting

Friday, October 6, 2023

Agenda:

1. Updates and overview: Board of Trustees, Enrollment, and Finance (President Chris Roellke, SVP of Enrollment and Marketing Jeff Gates, and CFO Jeremy DiGorio)
2. Updates on special committees, with information about 3/2+1 (Provost Elizabeth Skomp and Faculty Senate Vice Chair Steven Smallpage)
3. Discussion of the Critical Thinking GLO and Senior Project (UGEC members Tom Vogel, Harry Price, Mayhill Fowler, Christopher Bell, Amy Smith, John Rasp, Anthony Hose, Melissa Parks, and Megan O'Neill)

The meeting was called to order at 12:02 by Provost Elizabeth Skomp.

Provost Skomp briefly reviewed the above agenda.

1. Updates and overview: Board of Trustees, Enrollment, and Finance (President Chris Roellke, SVP of Enrollment and Marketing Jeff Gates, and CFO Jeremy DiGorio)

President Roellke gave a brief overview of the ICUF (Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida) Presidents' meeting, highlighting the organization's advocacy across Florida and the \$3,500 EASE grants received last year. (Stetson now holds annual Capitol Days in Tallahassee, and those days are well represented by alumni from both the DeLand and Law campuses.) President Roellke stressed the value of higher education in Florida, particularly noting the \$16 billion of economic impact it has across the state. He further remarked that private colleges like Stetson are being recognized for their return on value in higher education.

President Roellke also touched on how Florida has exceptional challenges and headwinds with a number of conventions and groups pulling out of the state. However, President Roellke shared that the campus feels different from the pandemic times and the incoming class is very energetic, engaged, and happy to be here. He then shared results from a class survey that showed students are feeling welcomed and inspired at Stetson University.

President Roellke shared that the board will soon be visiting campus and are looking forward to meeting with students. He thanked faculty for their support of the strategic plan and all they do for the institution.

Jeff Gates shared his excitement for recruitment efforts for Fall 2024 and encouraged faculty participation in open house events. Despite inclement weather, 67% of registered prospective students attended the September 30 open house, and attendance numbers were the highest recorded since the pandemic began. The next open house will take place on October 28.

Jeff invited faculty to participate in "Divisionals"—collective meetings with Marketing, Admissions, and Financial Aid—and share stories of how students are engaging with their departments in and out of the classroom as we prepare to create "slicks"—1 page marketing stories focusing on each program we offer.

ERM is focusing on building a funnel and raising Stetson's visibility. Operational campaigns opened in August, which is earlier than previous years. ERM is also reaching out to schools and school counselors through updated lists.

As of October 6, submitted applications are up 19%; early decision applications are up by 200%. An enrollment forecast should be available by late October or early November. We are using a county-by-county projection model, to allow for more targeting and granularity with the data. In addition, we are examining models that allow for focused out-of-state recruitment and are using "Market View" data for projection. Our international recruitment is working with new initiative groups to provide additional financial support while also targeting more international students who may have less need. ERM also seeks to create a more transfer friendly experience at Stetson, as the number of transfer students is increasing across the country.

Decreased melt in summer 2023 may be partially attributed to summer orientation. Melt is high among our commuter students. In response, we are shifting the way that those students interact with Stetson, showing them what we have to offer, how they can be involved, and that they are valued.

Jeremy DiGorio shared that he and his team are working on rebranding their department as "Finance and administration" with more focus on divisions and teams. He believes this shift will align the division with Stetson's strategic plan.

While the collaboration across the university is energizing, we are facing some challenges this year. In particular, our smaller incoming class size this fall is creating challenges for the FY24 university budget. Additional challenges to the budget include a hike in insurance prices in Florida and an increase in food and travel spending.

Reasons for optimism include preliminary recruitment indicators and a record-setting fundraising year. Many of the funds raised are planned giving; however, some cash gifts will be used to supplement the budget where needed. Due to budgetary challenges Jeremy and his team are working with senior leadership to find cost savings and operational expenses that can be reduced. There will be no layoffs; however, they are looking at current vacancies to see if they need to be filled immediately or if there is room to wait on those searches.

Campus and student experiences are critical. Space utilization is important from both a budgetary standpoint and a vibrancy standpoint. We can look forward to receiving a report from PAGE at the end of the year on our campus space usage. Looking forward, we are hoping to generate more revenue from the Tampa Law Center and find ways to use that space for camps, conferences, and certificates.

The University is planning some significant capital projects. The first, scheduled for the end of the 2023-24 academic year, includes renovations to Elizabeth Hall to add elevators and restrooms for ADA accessibility. There are also plans to increase ADA accessibility at the Edmunds Center with changes in seating, restrooms, showers, and the addition of elevators. A

more ambitious project is the potential construction of a new residence hall for first year students. Discussions about these projects are still ongoing with the board of trustees.

Jeremy concluded by reiterating that employee compensation is an institutional priority.

Provost Skomp then opened the floor for questions. Jeremy DiGorio responded to a question about whether adjunct faculty could be included in the 3% cost of living raise as they too are affected by the rising costs of living in Florida; he noted that adjunct pay is a priority to be addressed and explained that raises for current full-time faculty and staff had been prioritized, especially due to our low enrollment. Provost Skomp explained that due to the timing of adjunct contracts, increases to adjunct compensation do not align with increases to compensation for full-time employees. She reiterated, however, that discussions would be ongoing in the University Faculty Compensation Committee and that increasing adjunct pay is a high priority for summer 2024.

In response to a question about the location of a possible new residence hall, Jeremy DiGorio shared information about space on Bert Fish Drive. President Roellke noted the comprehensive residential audit that is being conducted, as residence halls are a vital factor that can affect yield.

Alan Green asked how we are addressing the challenges of a smaller than projected class size and a higher discount rate. Jeff Gates said that our discount rate was particularly high due to high need international students and stressed that we are currently focusing on connecting with students early to try and secure a larger incoming class. FASFA has not yet opened but should open by December, so we do not yet know what this class will look like financially because we do not have the data. We are hopeful that “Market View” will provide more insight. President Roellke remarked that our international student focus has shifted greatly as there are fewer international students that are able to pay the cost of higher education out of pocket. Additionally, many of our athletic teams have many international students who are receiving scholarships.

2. Updates on special committees, with information about 3/2+1 (Provost Elizabeth Skomp and Faculty Senate Vice Chair Steven Smallpage) 12:56

Provost Skomp acknowledged and expressed thanks for the ongoing work of the Generative AI Working Group and the FAR Task Force. She then introduced the 3/2+1 initiative with words of thanks to Melinda Hall and other members of the Faculty Senate and the steering committee for the work that has been and will be done. The administration and faculty support this plan, and there is considerable excitement about moving toward implementation. Given the scale and scope of the work ahead, full implementation is anticipated in Fall 2025. Interest in a possible pilot initiative for Fall 2024 will be discussed shortly. Provost Skomp then shared the steering committee’s charge: “Develop and guide the 3/2 +1 proposal toward implementation. Core considerations will include the definition of a +1, the initiative’s curricular implications (and adjustments that may be needed), how to ensure every student will have access to at least one +1 experience, and eventual assessment and evaluation plans for the initiative. Dialogue with stakeholders will substantially inform the committee’s work.”

Steven Smallpage, co-chair of the steering committee, noted this large committee includes people in different roles at the university. The steering committee met in late September and decided to adopt an inductive approach. To facilitate the first step of data collection, many communications will be sent out to survey faculty to learn about curriculum, schedules, and the perception of what a +1 will be. Some of the work ahead will involve gathering information about work that is already being done but may not be captured in a faculty member's regular workload.

Four subcommittees have each been tasked with a different part of the charge. The first focuses on the +1 and what is already being done that can match with what a +1 should be. The second subcommittee will seek to ensure that in-class workload and staffing will be addressed accordingly. The third subcommittee will focus on curriculum, and the fourth will collect policies and procedures from other universities that have gone through similar initiatives. Steven closed by reiterating the importance of dialogue as the process continues.

Provost Skomp explained that the steering committee may craft a proposal for a pilot program for 2024-25 for collaborative discussion with academic leadership; guidelines have been shared with the steering committee co-chairs. Open communication will be critical to the initiative's success—and the latter is a common goal that we all share.

President Roellke stressed the importance of the 3/2+1 initiative and its alignment with our strategic priorities. He thanked faculty again for coming to this meeting and all that they do for our students. Provost Skomp then tabled the next agenda item due to time constraints and closed with additional words of thanks to faculty.

3. Discussion of the Critical Thinking GLO and Senior Project (UGEC members Tom Vogel, Harry Price, Mayhill Fowler, Christopher Bell, Amy Smith, John Rasp, Anthony Hose, Melissa Parks, and Megan O'Neill)

The meeting adjourned at 1:15 p.m..