

Summary “Coffees & Conversations” Spring 2019

In addition to hosting Spring Convocation, the president and provost once again held two “Coffee & Conversations” sessions with the college/school deans at the beginning of the Spring 2019 term for adjunct faculty.

Following is a summary of the updates and discussions.

Beth Stroble
President

Julian Schuster
Provost

Spring Convocation Recap: Although 2018 was a difficult year for the Webster University community, adjunct faculty, faculty and staff all stepped up to develop ideas to manage costs, increase efficiencies, and to explore ways to diversify the university’s revenues. This hard work has already produced significant results and millions of dollars in savings. However, more work must be done.

These competitive challenges, however, are not unique to Webster University. In fact, the evolving needs and expectations brought about by shifting demographics, changing enrollment patterns, and payment abilities are obstacles for the higher education community as a whole. We can never forget that education delivery and affordability and value are of critical importance to all of our students, who now tend to be older and more diverse. Today’s students are also juggling multiple, competing priorities like full-time employment and child care.

Following is a brief overview of the steps being taken at Webster University to address these challenges and sustain our position as the educator of global citizens for years to come.

Objectives

- 1) Short-run: Continued cost containment
- 2) Medium term: Improve operating efficiencies
- 3) Long-term: Explore and develop new paths to revenue.

The following actions, many of which have already been taken, have helped generate significant financial savings:

- 1) All decisions hiring decisions are reviewed, regardless of whether an employee is being replaced or the position is new.
- 2) Right-sized regional campuses, while closing others.
- 3) Transitioned to a new health insurance carrier, which maintained comparable benefits and costs for our employees, while providing significant savings in premiums for the university.
- 4) Significantly decreased discretionary expenses (travel, supplies).

- 5) Class scheduling efficiencies introduced, which help optimize class sizes, course offerings, and academic structure, while also involving the instructor in any changes in class size or student requirements.
- 6) Regionalized the student advising process for extended campuses. Advisors are now available via WebEX and assigned by region.
- 7) Efforts to maximize and develop new revenue sources are also underway, including:
 - a. Emphasis on fundraising to enhance scholarship offerings and foster capital improvements
 - b. Establishing the Center of Innovation and Professional Development, which will spearhead idea generation and incubate new initiatives.

Communications Survey Results

Spring 2018 and Fall 2018 faculty surveyed

- **University Communications:** Just over half, 56 percent, of responding adjunct faculty ranked university communications excellent (16 percent) or good (40 percent). Just under 10 percent of respondents reported that communications were poor and they felt on their own.
- **Town Hall Scheduling:** A new question was added to the survey to help determine optimal days and times for future adjunct faculty “Coffee & Conversations” (Town Halls) sessions. According to the survey, the most popular “time” for the events was 5 p.m. and the preferred day of the week was a tie between Mondays and Wednesdays. In the semester ahead, the scheduling of these events will be adjusted accordingly.
- **University Information:** Most adjunct faculty reported relying primarily on Webster.edu to obtain university information, with department chairs, program coordinators, and colleagues posting a strong second.
- **Adjunct Benefits:** Relatively few adjunct faculty take advantage of the benefits available to them. Approximately, 30 percent reported they had attended campus events, while just 10.5 percent took advantage of tuition remission programs. Even fewer reported they have availed themselves of professional development or conference attendance opportunities. Of those who reported not taking advantage of university benefits, 15 percent said they were unaware of them, and 14 percent said they did not have time.
- **Repetitive Questions:** Finally, several respondents question the rationale behind asking the same questions semester after semester. This approach is being taken so that significant changes or developments can be spotted early and addressed.

Upcoming Events

- **100th Commencement:** In May, the university will graduate its 100th class and bestow a diploma on its 200,000th graduate. A committee has been formed to mark these milestones by initiating some fun and interesting activities – including a design competition to create a new university seal.

The commencement ceremonies, which will again take place at the Mundy Theater in Forest Park, will be the theater's first public use since its extensive stage renovation. Watch *Webster Today* or websteradjunctinfo.org for more information.

Vincent Flewelen

Chief Diversity Officer

Vincent pledged to bring an external focus to his new role by establishing partnerships in the St. Louis community that will help students with job placement, internships, and collaborative educational opportunities. He will also be working on student retention and recruitment issues.

Already, he has worked with the School of Communications (SOC) to help organize meetings over four successive Saturdays for local high school students, the Greater Association of Black Journalists, and SOC faculty. The workshops are intended to equip students with the knowledge and insight to pursue a career in journalism and communications.

David Porras, Associate Dean

Walker School of Business & Technology

- **School Accreditations:** The Accreditation Council of Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) reaffirmed the Walker School's accreditation for 10 years. Next up on the accreditation list, the Walker School's Cybersecurity program. If obtained, the Webster University curriculum will be one of the few accredited cybersecurity programs in the country.
- **Adjunct Faculty Mentoring Program:** Finishing touches are being put in place for a new adjunct faculty mentoring program to help orient and provide support to the school's adjunct faculty.
- **Sports Management Degree:** The university now offers a sports management degree program for students.

Eric Rothenbuhler, Dean

School of Communications

The redesign of the Sverdrup building to resemble an active communications agency continues to receive high marks, and the SOC continues to be excited and energized by the upcoming collaboration with the Greater Association of Black Journalists.

Peter Sargent, Dean

Leigh Gerding School of Fine Arts

Performances: The Webster University Women's Choir performed for the Missouri Educators Conference in January.

Tom Cornell, Ed.D., Dean

School of Education (SOE)

- **Diversity:** Three of the four SOE new hires have international backgrounds.
- **Renovations:** Webster Hall construction and updates are underway, as are plans to construct a Makerspace, which, when completed, will be a local resource for the community and area educators. In addition, rooms 219 and 221 are being combined into one room, to create a new enlarged multipurpose classroom/community events space in Webster Hall 221. A new office for adjunct faculty will also be housed in Webster Hall 232A.
- In addition, a full program and curriculum review is underway.
- **New Certificates and Degrees:** A new Certificate in Dyslexia will soon be offered at the graduate level, which can also be imbedded into the master's and Special Ed curriculum. A Certificate in Robotics for STEM Educators has also been added, and a new MA in STEM Education will be available starting June 1.

Tony Wallner, Dean

College of Arts & Sciences

- The college had been working with the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) for the South Carolina counseling program and are working on a school counseling program.
- In addition to our DNAP (Doctorate in Nurse Anesthesia Practice), we offer the newly-approved completion program for DNAP.
- **Grant Writing:** Several adjunct faculty members helped the Department of Sociology and Anthropology apply for grants from the National Science Foundation, which would help increase funding for STEM students. If accepted, the grants would help with tuition remission for students interested in pursuing a career in the STEM areas.