

Bold choices ahead

By Karla Kraynak Bruno

WILLIAMSBURG

At a Board of Visitors retreat last Friday and Saturday at VIMS and in Blow Hall, William & Mary President Taylor Reveley laid out serious plans for rearranging the financial structure at our beloved college.

The retreat featured a closed session on Day 1, which senior staffer Brian Whitson assured me would be about "contracts and services." In later, open discussion, it came out that the Visitors had "just voted on" increasing student enrollment by 200 students, thus bringing in an extra \$3 million.

W&M has caved to pressure from the governor to increase student enrollment at state universities, despite Reveley's commentary that upping student enrollment gets a uniformly "glacial" response from faculty, students and alumni.

And rightly so. It is a threat to the very nature of our small, liberal arts college and, more important, represents that Band-Aid approach. Yet it is apparently going to happen anyway, unless they change their minds by Oct. 1.

A second closed session for discussing "fundraising" occurred on Day 2. Reveley's focus on development (aka fundraising) is right and proper in light of W&M's goal to be as self-supporting as possible. As far as I could tell, they really did talk about fundraising in that session and did not vote on something unrelated.

Meanwhile, tuition hikes

of 3% for returning students and 5% for new incoming students that were adopted in April could be scrapped in favor of some combination and permutation of "Ten Alternatives" as presented by the provost, Michael Halleran.

Reveley's emphatic directive, "These are *not* proposed changes!" notwithstanding, the board is supposed to ponder them and give "concrete answers" to Reveley and Halleran between now and Sept. 19 when they next meet.

The final decision in the form of the six-year financial plan is due Oct. 1.

Based on Visitor Todd Stottlenyer's closing remarks that "There is a lot of work to do between now and September" and "We need a global list of Gives and Gets," presumably all further discussion will take place over the phone one-on-one.

I hope they all remember that meeting more than one-on-one in any format constitutes, by law, a Board of Visitors meeting that requires giving public notice and permitting the public to attend.

The Ten Alternatives for Restructuring Finances at W&M (choose one or more):

1. Do nothing differently.
2. Find revenue in technology.
3. Increase student-faculty ratio.
4. Hire a different kind of faculty.
5. Reduce investment in financial aid.
6. Raise tuition on professional and graduate programs.
7. Reduce/eliminate undergraduate programs.
8. Create a surcharge on

selective undergraduate programs.

9. Modify athletic programs.

10. Reduce Student Life activities.

Numbers 1 and 2 strike me as unrealistic in the extreme. Number 3 is a done deal already. But the remaining choices could prove substantive and lasting.

My favorite line all weekend came from Halleran:

"We could modify Gateway?"

Instead, the Visitors should consider requiring all administrators to cut 10% out of their budgets. Right now and forever.

Halleran could show true leadership by taking a salary cut that would take him out of the category of highest-paid administrator. No one, not even President Reveley, makes more money at W&M than Halleran.

And, lastly, diversity programs and the questionable Community Service Minor should be eliminated as non-academic luxuries, and all monies gained therein should be transferred to the Fundraising Department.

If the Board of Visitors shows guts, intelligence, and leadership in their choices — and Reveley stands united with them through the onslaught of unhappy whining sure to follow — substantive change for the good will take hold, heal a cancerous wound, and benefit the entire college community for years to come in the form of financial independence and prosperity.

Karla Kraynak Bruno '81 was the only person not on staff or on the Visitors in attendance at the retreat.

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