

Good afternoon colleagues and welcome to the Academic Affairs Mid-Year Update. With all the important work happening on campus, particularly around the Strategic Plan in which Academic Affairs plays a substantive part, I felt it important that you have opportunity to hear what is happening, and to expand on some of the themes President Helldobler spoke to the other day in his State of the University Address. Before I begin my remarks, we have placed in the chat a Qualtrics link and QR code, a means by which you can offer comment on something that you hear today from us and resonates for you, or a question for which we can get back to you in coming days if you provide your email.

To start, let me reinforce President Helldobler's central point of his address, optimism. Indeed there is much that suggests we are on a positive bounce back post-pandemic. Prospective student interest in WP is up, continuing students desire in greater numbers to return and complete their degree, a new marketing firm is serving the University, and we have new VPs for Finance and Enrollment Management with talents

to aid our future strength and growth. And we have a blueprint to grow and strengthen the University through the new issues based Strategic Plan.

For this mid-year update, joining me are the associate provosts – Dr.'s Sandy Hill, Jonathan Lincoln, and Kara Rabbitt. They will discuss particular matters within their responsibility areas. I will be providing context elements and touch on a few items you will hear more about from them. To start, I wanted to tell a demography story. What you see here is the US population pyramid from 1983. I picked this year because it is more or less when the average aged faculty member and administrative leader at WP was an undergraduate. The bulge is at the largest age demographic of 20-24. In brief, the final baby boomers and early Generation Xers were in college. I call this the “Tail end of higher ed’s golden age” because it came on the heels of generally good times for higher ed and long term growth in traditional-aged students. This year was instrumentally important for a second reason, the national report entitled, *A Nation at Risk*. This national imperative for educational reform launched our country on a quest to address systemic problems with schools and colleges, efforts that

continue to this day, some aspects for ill, and others for good. A shout out to Dr. David Fuentes for reminding me of this monumental report. In this next image, I fast forward to 2023. As you will see, there is a very different shape. Here the bulge is for persons 30-34, as well as persons nearing retirement age. Given this shape, I call today's moment, "The age of adult students, international markets, and jobs serving seniors." WP Online is roaring forward with respect to the adult part as you will hear from Dr. Rabbitt; we have opportunity to grow the international piece for which I look forward to collaborating on with our new VP of Enrollment Management who brings talent in this arena; and we all must recognize that those post-WWII babies are now in need of health care, or will soon, and anything linked to it is where the most jobs are. Here in New Jersey, the big bulge is with the about to be retiring group, reinforcing how important health care in our state is, and is about to need to be on steroids. And, the traditional aged college student group is quite contracted.

With that as backdrop, I shift now to what I never grow tired of sharing, the five goals of the Division of Academic Affairs. These have not changed since I arrived in 2019, and 4 of

them link to key KPIs for the University. The first, student enrollment, for us focuses on the “what” of academic affairs – our array of program offerings that attract prospective students. Note that for this one, I make clear that it is BOTH degree and non-degree offerings, as well as for-credit and not-for-credit. One of the pillars of the Strategic Plan is Alternate Credentials, something that I will speak a bit more to in a moment, but that Dr. Lincoln will elaborate upon. The second goal is student success. Here reside the metrics of retention and completion, but also of course and program performance, factors in the wheelhouse of faculty to impact. I’ll have more to say on this in a moment. The third goal is resource generation. Here we emphasize non-tuition revenues from activities linked to faculty scholarly and service success, namely grants and contracts that serve research and/or community benefit purposes. It also emphasizes fundraising efforts from alums and others to advance important department, college, or university priorities. The 4<sup>th</sup> goal is Investment in People. Here we emphasize what provides faculty and staff meaning in their work, and achieved through opportunities for professional growth and development. Finally, the 5<sup>th</sup> goal is resource

stewardship. The fact that we now have a smaller footprint of persons employed by this university has been an unpleasant and painful exercise, something that I have detested above all others. Yet, we sought to do it as humanely and transparently as possible, and now three years later, we are in a much stronger and sound place from which to build. We also continue to be vigilant in using bounded resources wisely among an always competing array of needs.

I'd like to take just a few minutes to relay examples of activities in these various areas. They don't capture all that is occurring, but hopefully are representative. First with regard to student enrollment, there is high activity right now in the colleges working on an array of certificates, more than 60. In other cases, badges are being explored. It will be a busy Spring as they find their way to Faculty Senate. In addition, I am pleased to announce that following consultation with the department, college, and Faculty Senate, we are moving ahead with shifting the Department of Nursing to a School of Nursing as of July 1, still within the College of Science & Health. The Nursing Program is now larger than one, and nearly two colleges, and is at the forefront of our efforts to address health

care needs in New Jersey where nursing shortages and impending retirements require an antidote. Part of the duties of the school's founding associate dean will be an external one – forming partnerships with large health care providers in the state, including with respect to building a pipeline of clinical nurse faculty and clinical site opportunities.

With regard to the student success goal, I am pleased to relay that across the colleges, 1<sup>st</sup> year fall to spring retention was up 1.1%, a critical metric going forward. In addition, every department now has specific goals and action steps around student success and course performance, designed to focus energy, to reflect on progress annually, and to recalibrate going into a next year for ongoing progress. Finally, the Faculty Senate has been actively engaged in the development of a Faculty as Mentor model, a means for creating intentional student connection, and faculty partnership with a student's professional advisor. This Spring the Faculty Senate will also be engaging the topic of teaching effectiveness and how it might be systematized with best practices across the university.

In the area of Resource Generation, the COE recently received a major US-DOE grant of \$1.6 million to establish one

of just 12 Centers of Excellence in the US, and the only HSI in our region. This grant is focused on preparing and graduating more students of color to be teachers in high need schools. On a fundraising note, we just dedicated a new and exciting electronics resource center in the Library thanks to a generous gift by a member of the Martini family, the same family for which the Martini Room in Hamilton Hall is named. On the certificates front, the Cannabis Research Institute at WP partnered with a healthcare consulting firm to develop high quality self-paced training for pharmacists and nurses around medical cannabis. It launched this past fall. We are a first mover in this space, I believe nationally. With respect to Investment in People, Dr. Hill will be elaborating on the new Faculty Research & Grant Incentive Program launched last spring, and with expanded funding support this spring. We also had a successful inaugural Wellness Day in October, a tradition that will continue, and a highly attended 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual What Works for Student Success Conference. We are exploring ways to involve other institutions in the state in this Conference, starting with our friends at Passaic County Community College, an institution

who educates many of the students who go on to pursue bachelor's at WP.

In the Resource Stewardship arena, one of the ways we eased the need for further layoffs was through a separation opportunity program for faculty and staff that will realize an approximately \$1.8 million salary cost reduction from the Division over time. These are good people no longer with us, or who will be transitioning away, and we deeply appreciate their service to WP. This has not been an easy time. Another way we have been resource stewards is through careful management of the course schedule – offering what's needed based on demand, rather than just rolling the schedule. I know this is a contentious topic at times, but close coordination between Chairs, Deans, the Provost's Office, and the Registrar frankly realized many millions in savings, and in turn, enabled preserving jobs.

I covered a lot in that last slide, and now want to lighten things a bit by returning to the subject of certificates. One of the pillars of the new Strategic Plan is Alternate Credentials. More than 60 certificates are in development across the colleges as I mentioned; each department is envisioned to have



at least one – a way to provide value not only for current students on a pathway to a degree, but also of non-students who would like to receive it for work or personal reasons, and some might then matriculate into a degree program. Here’s a Word Cloud representation of the draft titles for these certificates. It is an eclectic array given varied department and college missions, the size of the words reflecting this. Some themes pop, however, as it relates to the kinds of things external communities, as well as our own students, will likely be attracted to. However, there are small words here too that are also exciting opportunities.

In closing, I want to return to the topic of Student Success, the most important activity of this university. We launched the new app based tool called Navigate for our students this fall. Thank you to the many across campus, particularly Linda Refsland, who has led this important effort, and the success teams that are critical to it. Because the concept of a success team is so important, I wanted to reinforce a point made by President Helldobler last week in his address. He said this, “First and foremost is the Student Success Team. This is the organizing principal for our approach, consisting of a professional staff

advisor, faculty mentor, financial aid advisor, a career development professional, an academic support coach, and potentially others, like athletic coaches, student club advisors, and residence life staff.” [pause] Colleagues, student success is a team and relationship sport. Students don’t “win” in college by doing it on their own. They succeed because there are key people on their metaphorical sideline who have their back, coaching them on the skills of hard work that college requires, and quieting those moments of self-doubt. Faculty mentors, when they launch this fall, will be a crucial new component. Thanks, in advance, to the Faculty Senate that will be considering a proposal from the ad hoc committee charged with developing the model. These additional elements are also central to our student success strategy going forward, and ones the President also referenced last week. I urge you to read and consider them; this powerpoint will get posted to the Provost’s Office website early next week.

With that, I turn things now to Dr. Sandy Hill.