**Tim Hynes**

**Comments**

**General Faculty Meeting**

**April 26, 2017**

**Death of expertise**: Nichols writes: “all these factors have combined to create a maelstrom of unreason that’s not just killing respect for expertise, but also undermining institutions, thwarting rational debate and spreading an epidemic of misinformation. These developments, in turn, threaten to weaken the very foundations of our democracy. As Nichols observes near the end of this book: “Laypeople complain about the rule of experts and they demand greater involvement in complicated national questions, but many of them only express their anger and make these demands after abdicating their own important role in the process: namely, to stay informed and politically literate enough to choose representatives who can act on their behalf.”

William Poundstone, writing on the Dunning Kruger effect, laments “The contemporary world regards knowledge with ambivalence. We admire learning and retain the view that it is a desirable end in itself. But our more entitled side sees learning as a means to an end — to social advancement, wealth, power, something.” And in a world in which information expands, but the changing economy makes it uncertain what portions of that learning will have value, that is a cause for pause.

So for those of us who make a living trying to create the conditions that reinforce that learning is important, that learning ought to be associated with critical evaluation of data and claims, and that the hallmark of learning is associated with application and then praise of those critical processes, this has been a wild ride.

The ride will continue—but I for one am glad to have an opportunity to take that ride here.

We are increasingly committed to use of data as a part of our decisions—summer school attendance as predictive of six year graduation rates; full schedules increase rather than decrease grade point averages for most students; remedial courses usually do little to increase the chances for success in credit bearing courses.

Or as one scientist from the Atlanta march for science observed: “without data, you’re just another person with an opinion.”

We continue to work through the implications of enrollment declines--some enrollment increases for first time in 2 years—work their way through—thanks to colleagues in advising and enrollment management— Enrollment management plan—enrollments summer to summer and spring up for the first time in 4 years—some results seen by being more intentional in supporting the progress of our students

For me, the best part of our move to intrusive professional advisors based on data and analytics is that it reframes my work as a faculty member to interact with students about what they are learning, what that learning means, and what things can I do to help support student learning.

It was a year in which we found ourselves coping with budget reductions and financial challenges. But nonetheless, the gains remained significant—This is especially true about the work on our strategic plan led by a large number of our colleagues.

PACE—continues to grow as the EDGE program begins to take shape as a scalable initiative that engages academic programs in the identification of learning that can be explained by our students to have value.

Student performance increased key areas—especially in returning students, first to second year retention, and 6 year graduation rates

Evaluation of existing communication by Professor Walley-Jean and her colleagues—while work continues to be done, nearly 3 of four colleagues perceive they can get the information they need

Grant evaluation, looking at barriers to grant activity, and refocusing attention to large cross program grants that can take advantage of our mission of serving historically underserved students, in a metropolitan area, with partnership in both private and public sector arenas

Child care initiative, long in coming, has begun to take shape with the BOOST program and with work of Debra Deckner and Elaine Manglitz—8 families and 10 children subsidize this spring, with likely support to grow the program this fall through grant support

We announced last evening our first comprehensive fund raising campaign with a 12 m goal to serve as a foundation for support in coming years.

And raises are in the future for faculty and staff, and another 7 m can be invested in the Academic core for campus, thanks to the support of the Governor and the General Assembly.

I want to repeat some core values for us shared with the university several years ago:

* Presumption of collaboration
* Efforts to achieve transparency in operations
* Continual efforts of data based claims
* A commitment to strategic thinking and planning

Deloitte Center for Higher Education Excellence, cited in the most recent Chronicle of Higher Education suggested areas of activity that can contribute to university successes in changing times—and we hope we are focusing on avoiding the short term thinking –blend academic programming that focuses on lifelong learning and emerging career markets; technology purchases aimed at solving and not patching problems; enrollment plans that fully recognize demographic shifts among our students; fund raising that seeks to build the foundation and pipeline for future commitments

And these are exactly the considerations we hope to continue for the foreseeable future. Thanks for your good work, and your continued efforts to advance our core business of learning.