



Student Life & Enrollment Joint Committee Meeting

Date: Thursday, December 11, 2025
Time: 11:00 a.m.
Location: Boyd Conference Room

Members Present: Ms. Cathy Deeb, Chair – Student Life; Ms. Christina Sammarco; Mr. Ronald Shidemantle.

Virtual: Mr. Jack Sheffler, Mr. Randy Price

Guests: Mr. Josh Grubb, Mr. Richard Livingston

1. Welcome

- Ms. Cathy Deeb called the meeting to order and confirmed that Mr. Anthony Tolley would not be present due to end-of-year obligations.

2. Encoura Enrollment Audit Update

Mr. Ron Shidemantle and Ms. Christina Sammarco provided the Encoura Enrollment Update Audit. Encoura is a vendor supporting student recruitment, to perform a comprehensive enrollment audit at no cost to the University.

Audit Process:

Over two days, Encoura conducted interviews with various stakeholders (executive leadership, Business Office, Marketing, Financial Aid, Registrar and a student focus group). The goal was to evaluate challenges and identify actionable recommendations to optimize the University's enrollment operations.

Key Findings:

Students expressed strong pride in the institution and a positive enrollment and recruitment experience.

Staff levels in student support functions are lean compared to peer institutions.

There is a critical need for improved alignment and collaboration among Admissions, Financial Aid, and the Registrar's Office, reinforcing the strategic plan's call to consolidate these functions under a new Vice President for Enrollment Management role.

Current financial aid awarding practices risk over-awarding certain groups (notably athletes) and limit overall yield optimization. Strategic improvements in financial aid modeling are underway.

The Graduate MBA Program was found to operate in a silo, with limited integration and marketing. Efforts to improve interdepartmental collaboration and distinct MBA marketing materials are progressing.

Alumni have only limited involvement in recruitment; growing participation and partnerships is stated need.

- Immediate Recommendations:
 - Include merit-based scholarship information in acceptance letters (currently underway, involving coordination with Financial Aid and IT).
 - Enhance campus visit experiences with more user-friendly website resources and potential hotel partnerships.
 - Systematize cross-training among Admissions, Financial Aid, Athletics, and Staff.
 - Develop a student-friendly billing rubric for clarity on student accounts.
 - Plan and coordinate an "Admitted Student Day" with faculty and financial aid participation.
 - Continue improving new student checklists and orientation resources.
 - Identify and plan for increased housing capacity while improving communication around housing options.
 - Increase campus-wide visibility and awareness of enrollment goals.
 - Incorporate graduate program processes into recruitment communications and feature more student testimonials in marketing.
 - Address delays in financial aid and transcript evaluation, both of which negatively impact time to admission and enrollment.
 - Consider adopting automated transcript evaluation software to decrease processing times.
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- Phase I Recommendations:
 - Prioritize creation of a strategic financial aid awarding model.
 - Conduct a communications audit and enhance CRM usage.
 - Focus marketing on high school sophomores/juniors within a 100-mile radius, and increase parent engagement.
 - Automate transfer credit evaluations.

The full Encoura audit report will be made available to the Committee, but not published with the public minutes.

3. Current Enrollment Update

Ms. Christina Sammarco reported on the following:

- Applications and Acceptances (Fall 2026):
 - Applications are up 31% compared to the previous cycle.
 - Accepted new and transfer students are up 72%.
 - 313 prospective students, families, and teachers visited campus in the past month—a significant increase noted from events such as Open House and targeted high school visits.
- Enrollment Counts:
 - Current official enrollment stands at 1,400 students—a 6% increase year-over-year.
 - Full-time equivalent (FTE) is 8% higher than last year.
 - Minimal net student loss since October; the fall-to-fall retention rate remains a focus area.
- Efforts to enhance recruitment and yield continue, including personalized communications and improved applicant follow-up.

4. Housing and Residence Life

Mr. Richard Livingston reported on the following:

Current Housing Numbers – MEC/Cottages/Quality Inn

- Total housed students: 276
 - MEC (Main Hall): 221 students (119 on third floor, 102 on fourth floor)
 - Cottages: 11 students
 - Quality Inn: 44 students remain (original number in fall was nearly 70; proactive moves are ongoing)
- Efforts to relocate students from the Quality Inn to on-campus housing are facing some student and coach resistance, particularly concerning triple-occupancy arrangements. Nevertheless, contract terms are being enforced and consolidation processes are ongoing.
- Some female bed availability at MEC is being considered for consolidation to optimize occupancy.

- Students are being encouraged to consider Tiffany Manor, an off-campus housing option with financial benefits, especially for upperclassmen. Tiffany Manor currently houses a significant number of students, with some expected to pay only minimal rent due to federal subsidies.
- 118 student-athletes will remain in campus housing during the winter break across several teams (basketball, wrestling, track & field, baseball, softball).
- Meal services will cease at a set date; coaches are expected to coordinate food for remaining students.
- Health and safety checks, as well as proper storage arrangements for student belongings over the break, are in place.
- Students are required to vacate the Quality Inn for the break; storage has been arranged on campus.
- Housing applications for spring are expected to increase; management remains complex due to late applications and uncertain student return rates post-break.

Tiffany Manor Update

- The University continues to pursue acquisition of Tiffany Manor, with appraisals and municipal negotiations in progress. A phased approach may allow for earlier use of some units before full acquisition, enhancing capacity and affordability for upperclassmen (Juniors and Seniors).

Registration and Holds

- Registration for spring is complicated by over 120 students with financial holds on their accounts, who are unable to register until balances are cleared.
- Strict enforcement of registration holds is new this year, with multiple deadlines and increased communication to encourage timely payments and FAFSA completion.
- Planned improvements in billing and award notification timelines (targeting April/May) aim to assist students and support earlier registration in the future.

The committee expressed consensus that the Encoura audit provided valuable external validation of known challenges and priority areas.

Members agreed that student involvement in the audit process was beneficial.

The need to prioritize investment in transcript evaluation automation was emphasized.



Mr. Randy Price made a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 12:19 PM.
