

Minutes

Lowcountry Graduate Center Supervisory Council Meeting

Thursday, April 30, 2020

ZOOM Web Conference

10:00 - 11:30 am

Supervisory Council Members Present Via Web Conference:

Lisa Saladin – Provost, Medical University of South Carolina

Sally Selden – Provost, The Citadel

Fran Welch – Interim Provost, College of Charleston

LGC Staff and Others Present Via Web Conference:

Godfrey Gibbison – Dean, School of Professional Studies, College of Charleston

Robin Hanckel – Executive Administrative Assistant to the Provost, Medical University of South Carolina

Nancy Muller – Director, Lowcountry Graduate Center; Associate Dean of the School of Professional Studies, College of Charleston

Call to Order

Shortly after 10:00 a.m., the scheduled meeting of the Lowcountry Graduate Center (LGC) Supervisory Council meeting was called to order by Council Chair Saladin. Saladin noted that the meeting notice was in accordance with South Carolina's FOIA.

Minutes

Saladin asked if there were any corrections to the minutes. Welch made the motion, seconded by Selden, that minutes of the January 15, 2020 meeting be approved as written. Approval was unanimous.

Saladin asked permission to slightly rearrange the agenda to focus first on the two most critical topics; namely: future space for housing the LGC and renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) due to expire June 30, 2020 after three years following its January 30, 2017 issuance.

MOU

Saladin opened discussion by saying that she had only minor wording changes she wishes to see in the current document, particularly around the Director and the role of the Director.

- It was agreed that dates in §1.0 and §2.0 needed to be changed with the update.
- It was agreed the language in §5.3 (b) should be changed from “Approve.....” to read “Participate and approve....”
- It was agreed the language in §5.9 should be changed to read “approved and officially appointed by the Supervisory Council....” Saladin offered to redraft §5.9 accordingly.

Selden stated that Gen. Walters had reviewed the document and had no changes. Welch said she had the document reviewed by President Hsu’s Chief of Staff at the College of Charleston, and he offered no changes.

Selden commented that she wanted to see more explicit language regarding work on a strategic plan and offered to draft new language for insertion in a revised MOU.

Selden then asked about the intent of § 9.0 pertaining to public relations and advertising. She asked Muller if she is following this requirement in writing. Muller responded that she always seeks permission and clearance of any language used in the LGC’s web site regarding an individual institution’s program, although this is not so formal but rather via email exchanges with program directors. She added that the LGC does not advertise programs per se but rather leaves that to the institutions. Selden asked if all three provosts need to approve every such request, as the MOU language suggests. It was agreed that an institution needs to approve only content related specifically to its own institution. Gibbison explained that the language in this section really pertains to the use of logos, referred to as “representations.” Muller said she always obtains authentic and authorized logo images for use on the LGC web site directly from an institution’s marketing staff.

Saladin then pointed out all the names need to be changed in §13.0 and typed on the signature page, as names and titles have changed since January 2017.

She then addressed the term implicit in the dates stated in §18.0, stating that she was fine with extending the term another three years. Selden and Welch both agreed.

Selden asked who bears the cost of moving furniture, fixtures and equipment and related office materials associated with the LGC, referencing §5.3 (c). Welch said she couldn’t find anything on this matter from Business Affairs at the College of Charleston. Gibbison said he was fairly certain that College of Charleston had paid the moving expense from International Boulevard, based on his recollection, to the current 3800 Paramount Drive location. Muller agreed. She added, however, that in the previous location, much of the newest purchases of furniture and IT upgrades had been entirely paid for by the LGC, based on what she was told when she was hired, even though the campus was shared with the College of Charleston. Gibbison said that much of this physical property was moved to the new location, although any new purchases of additional desks for offices and classrooms for 3800 Paramount had been paid for by the College of Charleston. Muller stated that the LGC should pay for its relocation as a future standalone entity and has the funds to do so. Gibbison agreed. She added that the LGC only needs a fraction of everything that is on the North Campus in its future home. Saladin agreed, reading from the MOU that this section reads “total costs” and that should include the cost of moving. Muller said that the business manager, Donna Johnson, at the North Campus would have the historical

records, if anyone, on these co-mingled assets. Selden asked about unwanted items, upon closure of the North Campus. Saladin responded that it is considered “surplus” property of the state and available to any institution. Welch agreed, once it had been determined who needs what in the new location as the two entities are de-coupled.

Before leaving the topic of the MOU, Muller asked if the designation of fiscal agent needs to be addressed, noting the College of Charleston was originally designated the fiscal agent at a time when many more undergraduate and graduate classes were on the shared campus elsewhere in North Charleston with the LGC. Welch replied that now is not the time to change agents, although she is not opposed to The Citadel becoming the new fiscal agent. Gibbison agreed by saying that the LGC is “under the radar” just now. Saladin agreed and said that it is safe just now as a line item in the College of Charleston’s budget, adding this topic can be addressed at a later date. All concurred.

Selden’s last question regarding the MOU was whether the LGC name itself should be changed. She commented on the recent, favorable article about the LGC by the *Charleston Business Journal* in which “workforce development” was cited as a key facet of the LGC from its beginning. She wondered aloud if the name should be changed to “The Lowcountry Graduate and Workforce Center.” This could expand some opportunities strategically. Welch expressed the belief this could be done unofficially without changing the language of the MOU. Saladin said the language in §3.0 Purpose and Objectives could be used without changing the name of the organization. Muller commented that taglines after a name can be helpful in achieving this objective. She noted the broadly stated purpose of the organization that has existed since its beginning encompasses “the economic, business development, and social needs.....” It seems, she said, this could include education for enrichment and lifelong learning of the entire local population, not just those of the employed populace. Saladin said this is the kind of question best addressed in a strategic plan. Selden said we can work on the language of this section after the new strategic plan is completed.

Saladin asked that everyone making edits send all inputs to her and her executive administrative assistant Robin Hanckel in one week, by May 6th. Welch said she would like to send a draft incorporating all the changes to Dr. Suzanne Austin, the incoming provost at the College of Charleston, beginning officially in that role July 1, 2020.

SPACE

Saladin asked Welch to present the status of the North Campus and the question of future space for the LGC. Welch shared that Chief of Staff, Paul Patrick, is working with the leasing agent of the property in North Charleston to enable the College of Charleston to be released from the 3800 Paramount lease effective June 30, 2020, a year ahead of its expiration. She added this may not ultimately be possible but that is President Hsu’s goal. This would necessitate new space for the LGC by July 1st. Welch said different options are being explored because “there are a lot of moving pieces.” She said that at the present time, the best option looks as if it is the Zucker Education Center at Clemson University Restoration Institute (CURI) in North Charleston on the former Navy base property. To learn more about its feasibility, she added she

has scheduled a 2 p.m. call with Provost Bob Jones at Clemson that same day (April 30, 2020). In her initial conversation with him, Jones was “very interested” in the idea, as there are finished classrooms and unfinished space available for more classrooms. Saladin questioned the wisdom of rushing now to move the LGC somewhere by July 1st on the basis of hope that the College of Charleston can terminate the lease on June 30th. Selden said if this happens and The Citadel has F2F classes second half of the summer term, The Citadel can accommodate these classes temporarily on its main campus during the summer. Welch clarified this space consideration is strictly for the LGC, separate from the SPS.

Saladin asked Muller to share the program needs for instructional space at present through the LGC portal. Muller explained, based on her review of the course schedules and recent conversation with Project Management program director, three to four classrooms are needed each weekday evening Monday - Thursday by The Citadel. Muller said that the Zucker Education Center has five classrooms at present, based on her understanding. All five are fully utilized by Clemson for its graduate classes Monday – Thursday evenings 5:30 – 8:30 p.m., the exact same window of time when The Citadel’s Project Management classes are held at the LGC. She added that this is one of two “anchor” programs at the LGC, the other being the MSW program from the University of South Carolina. It also needs 3 – 4 classrooms but the majority of these classes are held on Saturdays. She did not know how USC might react to the idea of the LGC hosting its programs on a satellite Clemson campus, given the rivalry. She expressed concern this could drive USC to move its MSW program downtown to join Darla Moore School of Business around the corner from the College of Charleston’s main campus. Welch said that we first need to hear what Provost Jones has to share, as he knows more about the future use of the CURI site.

Saladin asked about other alternatives. Welch said that Plan B is a move to Trident Technical College. Saladin commented favorably and mentioned its ample parking. Selden agreed. Welch said that she will email the two provosts (Saladin and Selden) as soon as she has more details from Clemson. She added that the LGC is then going to have to take a serious look at next year’s budget with a plan for de-coupling LGC from the SPS.

Saladin asked Muller to share a “pro forma” financial statement of FY 2020 – 2021 prepared for the meeting. Selden asked about the small increase in appropriations, and Muller explained that the College of Charleston had received this year a 2% increase from the state and the interim CFO Dawn Willan instructed this should be allocated to the LGC revenues as well, since it is a line item in the College of Charleston’s budget. Saladin asked Muller to walk the group through her assumptions on classroom, office, and common space requirements. Muller said she had contacted one of the largest commercial real estate firms in Metro Charleston regarding options and costs. Using the blueprint for the current building and course offerings of anchor programs and others, Muller estimated the LGC needed no more than 12,000 – 15,000 ft² depending on configuration and office requirements. She pointed out this is in line with data generated and previously shared with the Supervisory Council calculating the LGC’s current usage of the North Campus. She said there are at least several options of Grade A commercial space in Faber Place

and surrounding office parks very near the North Campus likely available for \$25/ft² including any retrofit by the lessor.

Selden then asked about personnel expense being so much higher. Muller said she did not yet know how much of her compensation will be absorbed by the College of Charleston for her teaching and other duties once she is split from the SPS, so she conservatively assumed 25% even though in the current FY it had been changed to roughly 50-50. Selden questioned the 20 hours assumed in the pro forma for a librarian and the business manager, saying it is not necessary. Muller explained she merely used the same assumptions in place for the North Campus, as the LGC and the College of Charleston in recent years had shared 50-50 the personnel costs of the librarian, the IT manager, and the business manager.

Saladin said if the Director can function with half her time spent on the LGC, it should be kept there. She said she could not justify 50% of a FT business manager's time devoted to the LGC.

Welch agreed and said this needs some study. She said she would like to recommend a budget for FY 2020 -2021 after the future space is determined. Welch said there needs to be additional programming. Muller agreed, explaining that the pro forma for this meeting was developed simply to illustrate the LGC's ability to pay for a future location separate from the SPS, while conservatively estimating personnel and other expenses. The pro forma was not intended to represent next year's proposed budget.

Saladin asked Welch the timeframe of the College of Charleston for an LGC budget for FY 2020-2021. Welch explained that the College of Charleston's Board of Trustees will vote on a resolution that it will have a "continuous" budget for the first quarter of the new FY. A firm annual budget will not be established until October 1st due to the uncertainties surround the COVID-19 virus pandemic. Space dictates what the LGC establishes for its budget, she stated.

Saladin said that given the circumstances, maybe a year or two is better for the term of the MOU, as opposed to the earlier recommended three years. She added the new strategic plan could alter the future need for space. On the other hand, it may be determined in this planning process the LGC should simply return to the state the money it has been given especially given the new ways that COVID-19 has informed higher educational instructional structure for the future. On further thought given the meeting discussion, she expressed the opinion that language changes in the MOU should await the new strategic plan and that the current document should be extended one year through a simple addendum agreement. Selden agreed, saying we need to be careful before we start paying for new build-out at CURI or anywhere else. Welch said she agreed with that completely, expressing the need to meet again soon.

Saladin then asked that the current year's financial statement be presented by Muller. Pointing to personnel expenses in the table, Muller stated that the LGC is covering 48.8% of her compensation. She noted a slightly higher than budgeted fringe factor, increased to 40% for permanent staff. She pointed out as well the 50-50 coverage of the North Campus librarian, IT manager, and business manager as stated earlier. In explaining further, she said that no new proposals for grants from the member institutions were received in recent months by the LGC to consider. This positive expense variance, coupled with reductions in travel expense and other

expenses largely due to COVID-19, resulted in an estimated surplus for the current FY year of approximately \$58,000.

Welch said that the LGC needs a strategic plan going forward. She added her excitement about CURI because of the extra space available to build out additional classrooms. Still, it was noted we have to be good stewards of the money from the state.

Muller added that more needs to be understood regarding SACS requirements for a free-standing entity, such as librarian requirements. She shared that in previous SACS visits for program accreditation for the College of Charleston, USC, and SC State, questions were asked about access to the on-site librarian support and ratio of PCs per student. On the otherhand, some of these staff support services could represent a carryover from earlier years when the College of Charleston had far more undergraduate and graduate classes on the shared campus in North Charleston. She acknowledged technology may have rendered these past requirements obsolete. Selden agreed, saying we have to demonstrate access to these resources regardless of where they are housed.

Saladin said that each institution needs to investigate its own accreditation requirements, not just those of SACS. Selden agreed, noting the MS in Project Management is under the accreditation standards of ABET. Gibbison explained that requests for accreditation approvals are submitted to SACS as an “off campus” site. As such the site is approved for a program of the institution.

Saladin closed the discussion on SPACE to assign responsibility for location options to Welch. She committed to investigate any legal issues to extending the MOU one year through an addendum. Saladin asked that all three provosts investigate their individual accreditation issues that could influence personnel (and other expense) requirements of the LGC in a new location without SPS. She added that all will work collectively on the development of a budget for FY 2020 – 2021.

LGC Director Evaluation

Although not on the meeting agenda, Saladin said Muller’s annual evaluation as the LGC Director needs to be scheduled with all provosts via ZOOM. She asked a self-narrative plus 2020 – 2021 goals be included. Selden asked that the narrative by Muller also address her job description.

When asked, Gibbison said the College of Charleston staff are evaluated on a calendar year. Saladin asked Muller to convert all her documents to an academic year for the performance appraisal, covering the period from July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020. Muller said she had previously shared documents on a calendar year but will reconfigure them to an academic year, as requested. A meeting will be scheduled in late May.

Remaining Agenda Items

Muller thanked Selden for commenting on the very positive article by the CBJ of the LGC. She added that the LGC has posted positive blogs supportive of programs at the LGC and supported them with social media posts to enhance public awareness of the LGC. Website traffic remains

up by nearly 100% over prior year, according to web site analytics. Much of the program inquiries continue to be driven to the institutional landing pages for applying. Other charts and documents in the meeting packet are those routinely supplied throughout the year, such as the competitive report. She noted that the number of individuals taking classes at the LGC and completing graduate degrees and certificates in the 10 most recent years exceeds 1,500.

She focused attention briefly on the Bishop Gadsden proposal provided among documents for the meeting. It developed at the request of its Board Chair and CEO prior to COVID-19. Muller explained the affluent community is merely looking to the LGC to play an umbrella role to allow it to organize lectures on campus weekly as a lifelong learning “school.” She acknowledged all three member institutions already have relationships with Bishop Gadsden. Gibbison mentioned the College of Charleston’s lecture series specifically. While Saladin initially said she didn’t see a fit, she concluded we should tell Bishop Gadsden that the Supervisory Council wishes to defer a decision until it concludes work on a new strategic plan for the LGC. Muller replied that the Bishop Gadsden campus is on lockdown anyhow due to COVID-19 and nothing is allowed in terms of on-campus visitors.

Closing Remarks

Selden asked who has the authority to open the LGC portal. Saladin said she will investigate this with her legal team, as MUSC is already opening its on-campus instruction for the dental practicum beginning next week. Muller said the LGC always follows the policy and decisions regarding closures and openings of the College of Charleston, so the LGC too is closed at present. Gibbison said the North Campus building is completely closed. Nobody is in the building.

Election of Chair

Selden nominated Saladin to be re-elected as Chair of the LGC Supervisory Council. It was seconded by Welch. Saladin said she would be willing to serve as Chair for one more year for continuity. Selden expressed her willingness to serve afterwards, recognizing Welch will be replaced by still another new member, Suzanne Austin. All three agreed to this arrangement.

Saladin adjourned the meeting, stating that she and Hanckel will search for a meeting date of the Council to discuss future space and separately to review Muller as Director.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:30 a.m., as scheduled.

May 3, 2020 NJM