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May 5, 2014 AASU Faculty Senate Special Session Minutes

Armstrong State University

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Armstrong Atlantic State University
Faculty Senate Meeting
Minutes of May 5, 2014
Student Union, Ballroom A, 3:00 pm

- I. Senate President Baird called the meeting to order at 3:04 pm (see Appendix A)
- II. Senate Action
 - A. Remarks from Dr. Linda Bleicken, President
 1. Aware of campus frustration regarding recently announced changes. Apologized and accepted responsibility for her actions leading to these concerns. We all love Armstrong and wish the best for Armstrong.
 2. Sometimes there is a misperception that reserve on her part indicates a lack of caring, but this is not the case. Family background and other life experiences have resulted in appearances of stoicism at times. Has tried to work with us to enhance areas of strength for Armstrong.
 3. These have been trying times: decline in state funding and enrollment. Have maintained stability and increased our cash balance and financial stability
 4. Accomplishments:
 - i. Donor relationship building has reached all time high
 - ii. Enhanced profile with state legislators. Have gained funding for buildings and positive regard for items brought forward
 - iii. Strengthened community relations as well
 5. Enrollment
 - i. Enrollment and retention are keys to our future, especially with state funding dropping to under 50%
 - ii. Enrollment declines for the past three years
 - a. Fall 2011: 2.5% due to drop graduate enrollment
 - b. Fall 2012: 0.7% drop
 - c. Fall 2013: 4.5% due to lower high school graduation rates. Other USG institutions also saw drops in enrollment.
 - iii. Circumstances in Enrollment Management (EM) have not helped this situation. EM issues included a lack of data-driven decisions, limited use of technology, limited inter-departmental communication, no accountability, and no overarching plan to address issues.
 - iv. Change was need to address these areas and to align resources to achieve desired enrollment outcome. Did not truly understand extent of issues in EM until this past fall.
 - v. Corrective Actions
 - a. Improved data integrity through coordinated efforts of EM and ITS staff
 - b. Banner revitalization. Previously used as an afterthought. Too many paper-based processes. Does not fault Admissions personnel, but staff not trained in use of technology and/or were using convoluted workarounds
 - c. Evaluated processes used in Admissions, Financial Aid (FA), Registrar, Bursar, and advisement of Nontraditional students
 - i. Created Enrollment Project Management Team to address and improve processes

- ii. FA staff has received customer service training
- iii. FA is major factor in student retention
- iv. Registrar will now be linked directly to Academic Affairs
 - 1. DegreeWorks software will be used to improve student advisement process
- v. Learning Support students will now be advised directly by colleges instead of a standalone office. System is not yet perfect. Issues in this area accumulated over time, so will take time to address.

6. Academic Affairs

- i. Three of four college Deans will depart for unique reasons
- ii. Dr. David Ward has been asked to serve as interim Provost
- iii. Discussion of interim Deans in College of Science and Technology (CST) and College of Liberal Arts (COLA) are ongoing with announcements being made by end of the week
- iv. Change can create momentum and opportunity
 - a. Recent changes in Student Affairs and Advancement has led to unprecedented success

7. This is a turbulent time, but we will all come out the other side. The outcome will depend on if we can work together to find the best pathway forward. There will be negative consequences for all of Armstrong if we do not work together. Will derail enrollment, fundraising, and essential relationships built over past five years. Forgiveness asked for upset created by her. It has always been her intention to find a positive way forward. Regrets if this has inadvertently upset the institution.

B. Question and Answer Session with Dr. Bleicken (See Appendix B)

- 1. President Baird remarks: Questions received from faculty have been distilled into three summary questions. The sub-questions can hopefully be addressed in a follow up email from President Bleicken. Questions from senators written on note cards were also collected.
- 2. Question 1: As the president, are you not accountable for this failure to establish stability in leadership across the institution? It is apparent that campus confidence in upper administration leadership and general morale among faculty and staff are at an all-time low. Even students are openly starting to express concerns over our state of leadership dysfunction. What exactly are you planning to do to restore morale and confidence in upper administrative leadership?

- i. President Bleicken's Response: Ultimately she is accountable for what goes on at university. However, leadership is a team sport. She looks to leadership team for contributions. We have had leadership issues at a couple of levels. VP leadership has been stable, notwithstanding some rough starts.

a. Regarding College Deans

- i. Has limited influence at Dean's level
- ii. Does not meet with Deans on an ongoing basis like the Provost does
- iii. COE search started later than it should have and failed to yield a successful candidate. We will have interim Dean in the mean time
- iv. Dr. Gregerson (current CST Dean) received a very

- attractive offer that we could not compete with
 - v. Dr. Barrett (current COLA Dean) received an offer to return to her home state at a liberal arts institution
 - vi. Drs. Adam and Ward are meeting this week to discuss interim Deans for CST and COLA
3. Questions 2: How do we address retention and recruitment of quality employees when long-time employees are summarily dismissed and humiliated in the process?
- i. President Bleicken's Response: Looked very closely at Admissions area. A new organizational chart (see Appendix C) has been developed for Student Affairs that incorporates Financial Aid, Admissions and Graduate Admissions.
 - a. Office of Adult and Nontraditional Students
 - i. Worked with 122 students along with a 62+ Program
 - ii. Had a full time director, assistant and a part-time assistant managing limited number of students
 - b. Graduate Enrollment Services
 - i. Internal audit in June 2013 revealed that applications were delayed, poor communication with applicants and too much use of paper based forms
 - c. Admissions
 - i. Enrollment counselors were deployed somewhat randomly and without specific recruiting territories
 - ii. Atlanta was only stable territory
 - iii. Admissions processors were not working in a coordinated fashion
 - d. Changes made
 - i. Reorganized positions based on functions
 - ii. Cross-training of processors will allow greater flexibility during critical times
 - iii. Source of frustration for all Enrollment Management personnel is a lack of a plan or someone they can request help from if overloaded. They were being pulled off current tasks to work on other things.
 - iv. No additional funds required for restructuring, although we have unintentionally saved \$27,000
 - v. Registrar now reporting directly to the Provost
 - vi. Financial Aid and Admissions now report to Student Affairs
 - 1. Better alignment since these two areas are essentially based on service to students
 - 2. Majority of USG institutions place all or part of their EM areas in Student Affairs
 - 3. Enhanced efficiency and morale expected since these areas have been working without a plan or advocate in many cases
4. Question 3: Are you planning on increasing the overall percentage of funding allocated to "instruction" over the next year? While administrative turnover and staff instability are concerns, what are your plans for addressing retention,

recruitment, and support of quality faculty?

- i. President Bleicken's Response: We have increased the number of full-time faculty since she has been here and with fewer students. We have converted some of our temporary positions into lecturer positions. This allows these individuals to be employed for up to three years at a time with the option for reappointment. Speaking to morale, we continue to move forward with bringing faculty up to the 90% CUPA average. The 0.7% merit increase from the state will be boosted (based on efforts of her leadership team) up to a 2% merit raise. These funds will be allocated by the Deans in coordination with Department Heads. It is not the only approach, and in the coming weeks, would like to address any other issues that stand in the way of making us successful. In spite of talk of low morale and concerns, our student's accomplishments are notable and happen as a result of great teaching and help from staff.
5. Question from the floor for President Bleicken: Regarding Can you specifically address Question 2.b and d.?
- i. President Bleicken's Response: There was a rumor that Chief Wilcox escorted the recently affected employees to their cars, but this was not the case. They had the opportunity to wrap up and leave.
 - ii. The question really deals with the prospect of being escorted to your car by Chief Wilcox when you are laid off. This creates a climate of fear on campus among staff. It is not clear why he has to do that; he has done it before. Dealing with Mrs. Scott's situation, we talk about making Armstrong strong, working hard, and giving the best to the community and students. She did that, as did Dr. [sic] Jill Bill. There is concern for the staff, who probably feel they do not have a voice. Untenured faculty probably feel the same way. How can we be treated in this fashion? It is humiliating and dehumanizing and does not serve Armstrong well.
 - iii. President Bleicken's Response: Those two individuals were not escorted by Chief Wilcox. At her request they were not. When an employee has access to sensitive data as these two individuals did, it is important from a fiduciary responsibility to this institution, that we not allow private data to be possibly compromised as individuals are leaving. This is part of the reason that this is a fairly formal process. No one was paraded through the office or anything of the sort.
6. Question from the floor: Regarding the Faculty Salary Study, what are the conditions for the same study to be used for another round of possible salary adjustments next year? Also, what is the status of the Part-Time Faculty Salary Study?
- i. President Bleicken's Response: Yes, we committed to looking at salaries each year. Hopefully we will get to the point where all salaries have been appropriately adjusted. This is an issue at other system institutions. We have especially focused on enrollment this past year due to its impact on revenue. The Part-Time Salary Study has been approved for next year.
7. Question from the floor: You said you were working towards the 90%, is there a timeline for this?
- i. President Bleicken's Response: Yes, for faculty by August 1. Faculty below 85%, have already been adjusted up to 85%.

8. Question from the floor: The last part of Question 1 did not seem to be answered. What exactly are you planning to do to restore morale and confidence in upper administrative leadership? Mainly, we hear that a lot of changes have happened, and not just these recent ones, that is concerning people. It is that a lot of changes are happening and we do not hear about them until a random and vague email is sent out. This seems to be a big faculty concern. When we do ask about it, we get a very vague answer. What are we going to do to restore morale and confidence in upper administrative leadership?
 - i. President Bleicken's Response: We have stable leadership with the exception of the Provost. However, moving forward, Dr. Ward (interim Provost) is a dynamic person, and we will be looking closely at what the plan is for Academic Affairs. She has yet to see an Academic Affairs plan for the five years she has been here. It is not clear what Academic Affairs wants to do. How are the goals of Academic Affairs linked to institutional goals? They must be clearly derived and shared with faculty. Just like EM staff felt like they did not have a plan or goals, faculty need to feel that there is a plan also. She cannot make that plan; she can only support it. From a morale standpoint, a piece of the morale rests with us (faculty). It rests with our collaboration with her, the Provost, Deans, and Department Heads. In areas where there is a focus, we have made progress. The Bachelors of Science in Business Economics (BSBE) was a goal not only of Economics, but a goal of hers. She felt Armstrong had been unfairly treated by USG. It was in her determination that we would figure out a way to make the degree happen. The BSBE was made possible by talented faculty and a focused chair. Their work resulted in an increase in enrollment in a Business Economics track, which gave us a case to present to BOR. It was one of the few programs approved this year. A top to bottom plan in needed to define what we want to do in Academic Affairs.
- C. Motion for Executive Session of Faculty Senate made by President Baird to discuss leadership concerns. All non-senators were asked to vacate the room. Senators-elect were invited to stay for the session. Subsequent Faculty Senate discussion has been archived and can only be approved in a subsequent Executive Session of the Faculty Senate.

III. Meeting adjourned at 5:10pm.

Yours faithfully,
Wayne Johnson
Faculty Senate Secretary

Faculty Senators and Alternates Attendance (Updated: 01/20/14)

Department	College	# of seats	Senator(s) and Term Year as of 2013/2014		Alternate(s)	
Adolescent and Adult Education	COE	2	Regina Rahimi (3)	x	Rena Tyger (Kathleen Fabrikant)	
	COE		Ed Strauser (3)		ElaKaye Eley	x
Art, Music, Theatre	CLA	3	Angela Horne (3)	x	Karl Michel	
	CLA		Deborah Jamieson (1)	x	Emily Grundstad-Hall	
	CLA		Elizabeth Desnoyers-Colas (1)	x	Megan Baptiste-Field	
Biology	CST	3	Traci Ness (2)		Sara Gremillion	
	CST		Brett Larson (1)	x	Jennifer Brofft-Bailey	
	CST		Kathryn Craven (1)		Aaron Schrey	
Chemistry, Physics	CST	3	Brent Feske (2)	x	Brandon Quillian	
	CST		William Baird (3)	x	Jeff Secrest	
	CST		Catherine MacGowan (3)	x	Will Lynch	
Childhood & Exceptional Student Education	COE	2	Barbara Hubbard (2)	x	Patricia Norris-Parsons	
	COE		Anne Katz (1)	x	Glenda Ogletree	
Criminal Justice, Social, & Pol Science	CLA	2	Katherine Bennett (2)	x	Daniel Skidmore-Hess	
	CLA		Michael Donohue (3)	x	Dennis Murphy	
Communication Science & Disorders	CHP	1	Maya Clark (3)	x	April Garrity	
Computer Science & Info. Technology	CST	1	Ashraf Saad (2)	x	Frank Katz	
Economics	CLA	1	Nick Mangee (1)	x	Yassi Saadatmand	
Engineering	CST	1	Wayne Johnson (3)	x	Priya Goeser	
Health Sciences	CHP	2	Leigh Rich (2)	x	Joey Crosby	
	CHP		Janet Buelow (1)	x	Rod McAdams	
History	CLA	2	Chris Hendricks (2)	x	Michael Benjamin	
	CLA		Jason Tatlock (3)	x	Allison Belzer	
Library	CLA	1	Melissa Jackson (2)	x	Ann Fuller	
Languages, Literature, Philosophy	CLA	4	Bill Deaver (1)	x	Nancy Remler	
	CLA		Dorothee Mertz-Weigel (3)	x	Chris Baker	
	CLA		Beth Howells (3)	x	Tony Morris	
	CLA		Erik Nordenhaug (2)	x	Richard Bryan	
Mathematics	CST	3	Michael Tiemeyer (2)	x	Greg Knofczynski	
	CST		Paul Hadavas (1)	x	Tim Ellis	
	CST		Joshua Lambert. (1)	x	Jared Schlieper	
Medical Laboratory Science	CHP	1	Denene Lofland (1)		Chad Guilliams	x
Nursing	CHP	4	Deb Hagerty (2)	x	Carole Massey	
	CHP		Jane Blackwell (2)		Luz Quirimit	
	CHP		Jeff Harris (1)	x	Jill Beckworth	
	CHP		Amber Derksen (1)		Cherie McCann	
Physical Therapy	CHP	1	David Bringman (2)	x	Nancy Wofford	
Psychology	CST	1	Wendy Wolfe (3)		Mirari Elcoro	x
Radiologic Sciences	CHP	1	Shaunell McGee (1)	x	Rochelle Lee	
Respiratory Therapy	CHP	1	Christine Moore (3)	x	Rhonda Bevis	

5.5.2014/30 Minute Q&A for Dr. Bleicken: 3p-3:30p
Executive Session to follow

Please answer questions 1-3 (in bold) which synthesize the sub-questions listed below. Please respond to sub-question concerns and follow up questions at your earliest convenience.

1. As the president, are you not accountable for this failure to establish stability in leadership across the institution? It is apparent that campus confidence in upper administration leadership and general morale among faculty and staff are at an all-time low. Even students are openly starting to express concerns over our state of leadership dysfunction. What exactly are you planning to do to restore morale and confidence in upper administrative leadership?

- a) To what extent do you consider yourself to be the cause of the current vacuum of leadership at the level of vice president, dean, and assistant dean?
- b) To what extent do you consider yourself to be at fault for the loss of enrollment?
- c) Are the persons who evaluate you at the Board of Regents aware of the fact that you have established a consistent pattern of instability in leadership in all areas of the university?
- d) What are the specific criteria on which your performance appraisal is based?
- e) Are you willing to allow an administrative review of your performance by the Board of Regents?
- f) Are you aware that your actions in driving administrators and faculty and staff away from this university will have a negative impact on recruiting the pool of possible applicants for administrative positions? That is: do you know that applicants will not come here because of the reputation you have established?
- g) Are you aware of the damage that your actions have caused to the reputation and stability of this university?
- h) What indicators can you identify to demonstrate the success of your presidency?
- i) What indicators can you identify to demonstrate the failures of your presidency?
- j) What actions do you plan to take to build an administrative team that will be stable and productive? Do you think you are capable of doing this?
- k) For what reasons do you continue to employ persons who are in interim and consultant roles?
- l) We frequently hear concerns about the loss of "institutional memory" due to the turnover at the administrative level across the university. Is loss of institutional memory a concern of yours? If not, why not?
- m) In one of your first addresses to faculty and staff your first semester here, you were asked what you were going to do about the morale problem at Armstrong. At that time, your reply was something to the effect that you couldn't do anything about morale and that morale was an "individual" or a "personal" problem. Given that morale is probably lower now, do you still feel the same way?
- n) Similar to what we as faculty are asked to do, this question has to do w/ your most recent administrative appraisal evaluations. In reviewing the evaluations, it appeared that common themes were described by both faculty and staff. There same themes were echoed in relatively small administrative/staff groups such as the Advancement Office as well as groups interfacing directly with students such as Student Affairs. Assuming you have reviewed them, can you comment on the common themes you identified across the various groups during your review of these evaluations? In addition can you provide some specifics on what you will do to address the concerns expressed?
- o) You have expressed a focus on student retention, progression and graduation. Thus, it is interesting that external consultants are continually brought to campus to redesign/reorganize/etc. when all data, both internal polling and external higher education reports, suggest that the faculty and staff interfacing with students are one of the most potent factors keeping a student progressing at an institution of higher education. Aside from the obvious of redirecting monies spent on these external consults and the higher salaries given to new and replacement upper

administrators, surely there are ways for you to directly involve and increase the morale among faculty/staff. Do you have reasons for failing to directly promote senses of value with either monetary increases or other means at your disposal among faculty/staff directly versus going with the continual visits by consultants?

- p) Given that you lose confidence in your university administrators within 2 years and they "move on", how are we to have confidence in your leadership after 5 years and academic affairs leadership is decimated and our enrollment is trending down again? By your own standards shouldn't we ask you to step away from your leadership role?

2. How do we address retention and recruitment of quality employees when long-time employees are summarily dismissed and humiliated in the process?

- a) According to the email sent out about the April 25 dismissals, a review of the reorganization was to take place the week of April 28 to May 2. Why were people dismissed BEFORE the review took place? When did it become policy to escort employees who have been fired/dismissed/reorganized/etc. off campus with a police escort?
- b) Recently staff members who have been laid off from their jobs have been subjected to the indignity of being escorted by Chief Wilcox from their cars to their offices to pack up their personal items and then escorted back to their cars with their boxed up personal items. This has created a climate of fear among Armstrong staff and faculty. Is this now an Armstrong policy and if it is why has it not been disclosed to faculty and staff? Isn't there a more humane way to treat people who have already been dismissed from their positions?
- c) Was there any effort made to relocate staff members that were recently "laid off"?
- d) Mrs. Lottie Scott, Director of Learning Support, has worked at Armstrong for 25 years. She was recognized in 2010 with Volunteer Service to the Community by Armstrong and as an outstanding advisor by SGA a couple of years ago. In a meeting on April 25, 2014 to announce the elimination of Learning Support, she was asked by Ms. Mariea Noblitt to leave her office at the end of the meeting by way of the "back stairway" and that HR staff was available if she had questions about retirement. However, Mrs. Scott's assistant, Barbara Baker, who was also informed of the elimination of Learning Support was allowed to stay at work for the rest of the day. Questions: Do you think this was a respectful way to treat a long standing Armstrong employee like Mrs. Scott? Why was there a discrepancy in how these two employees were treated (one allowed to stay and the other asked to leave immediately)?

3. Are you planning on increasing the overall percentage of funding allocated to "instruction" over the next year? While administrative turnover and staff instability are concerns, what are your plans for addressing retention, recruitment, and support of quality faculty?

- a) Are you planning to use the faculty salary study completed this past November NEXT YEAR for a SECOND round of adjustments to bring faculty salaries up to perhaps 95% of the CUPA mean? Is there any reason the study completed this year could not be used again for a second round of adjustments?
- b) When will official letters that notify faculty who are being brought up to 90% of the CUPA mean by salary adjustments go out? Before end of term?
- c) How many raises have you received since you came to AASU? How many "bonuses" have you received?
- d) Is it true that any raises granted in the state budget signed by Governor Deal will include a required match by each USG university? If so, what will be Armstrong's contribution?
- e) Will deans and above be included in these raises?
- f) While the governor is mandating at least 2% merit raises and UGA's plan allows for up to 8% raises, what will Armstrong's maximum merit raise be?

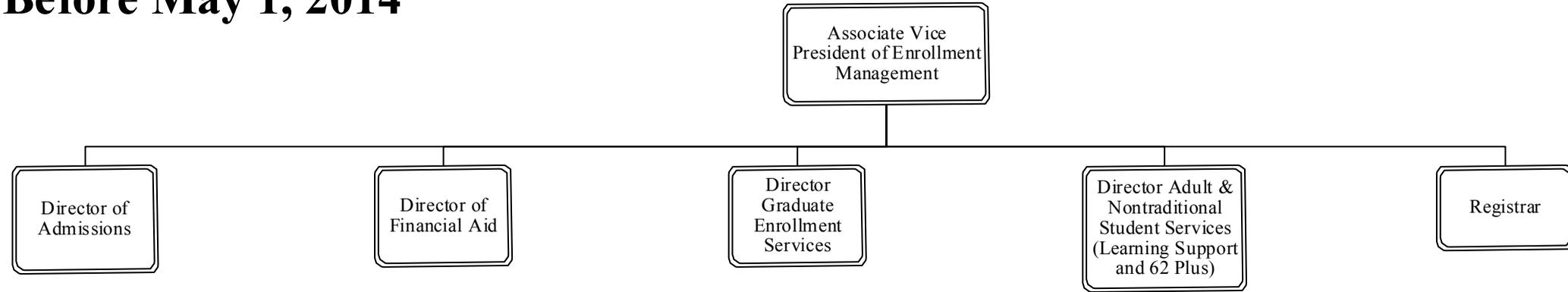
- g) Could the current mass exodus of administrators be creatively used as an opportunity to reduce administrative costs?

Questions to be addressed at later date:

1. The Graduate Affairs Council (GAC) meets monthly. College deans, the provost, John Kraft, and Jill Bell attend those meetings. Why was the plan to reorganize the office of graduate enrollment not shared with GAC? This lack of transparency fosters mistrust among faculty as well as frustration and concern in the middle of the graduate admissions cycle for fall 2014.
2. The announcement to move Fin. Aid and Admissions to Student Affairs did not include any details of how the move would actually occur (e.g., transition plan). For example, what would be the reporting structure? What is the plan to help the VPSA learn about these two groups, who both have relatively new directors? How would the relatively new VPSA handle this extra workload? Is there a timeline for planning/integration meetings w/ current VPSA staff and the Admin and F/A staff? The lack of transparency in sharing or at least suggesting there is a transition plan for this suggests a lack of longer term planning and that these decisions are being made haphazardly? Please explain why this is not the case. Have students by way of SGA been informed about this change? What was their response?
3. In light of the added responsibilities recently placed on advising center staff and testing services staff, will efforts be made to increase their compensation and support?
4. What new (not replacement) administrative positions are planned for the summer and the next academic year?
5. What consultants and consultant fees are planned for the next academic year?

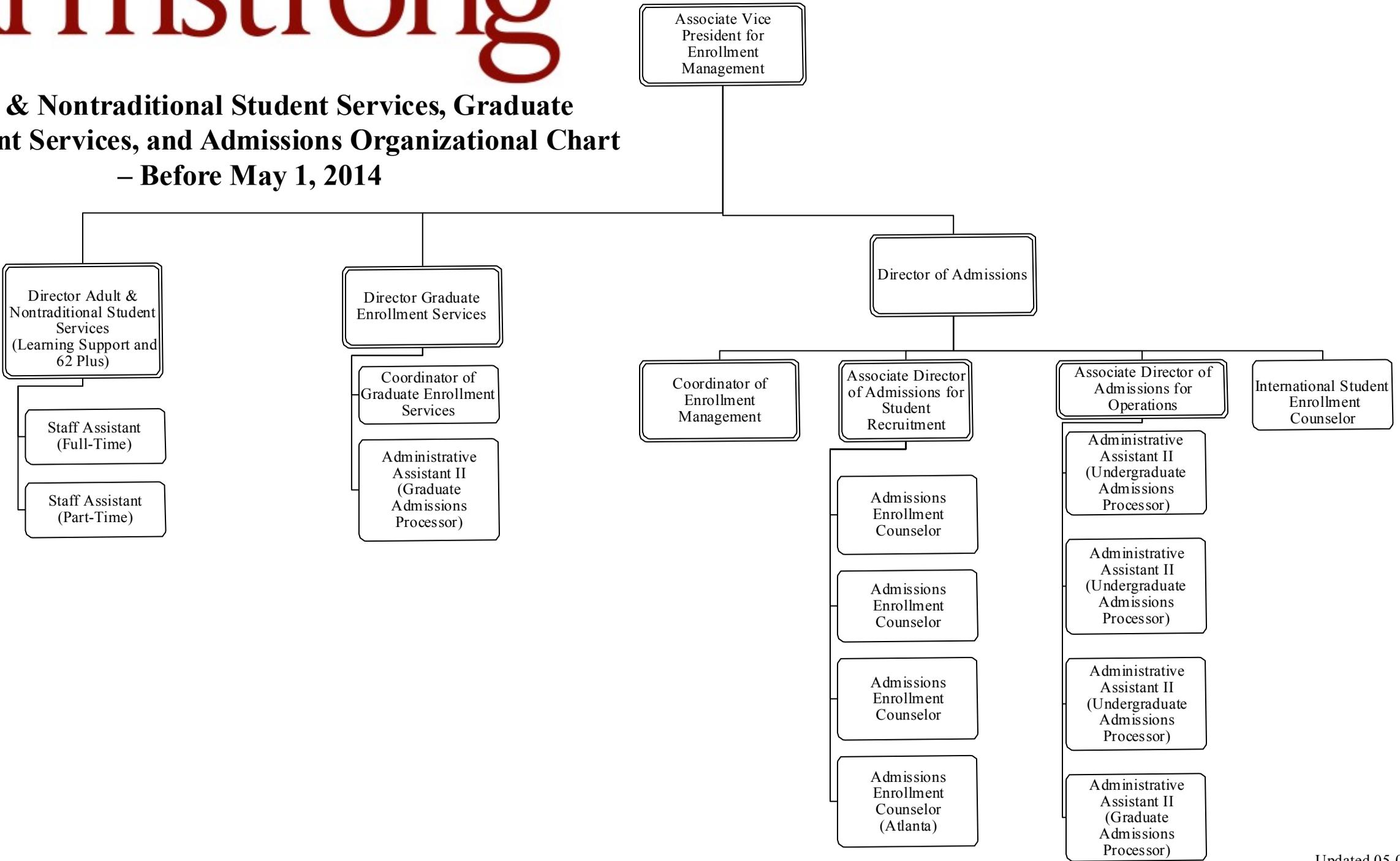
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Enrollment Management Organizational Chart – Before May 1, 2014



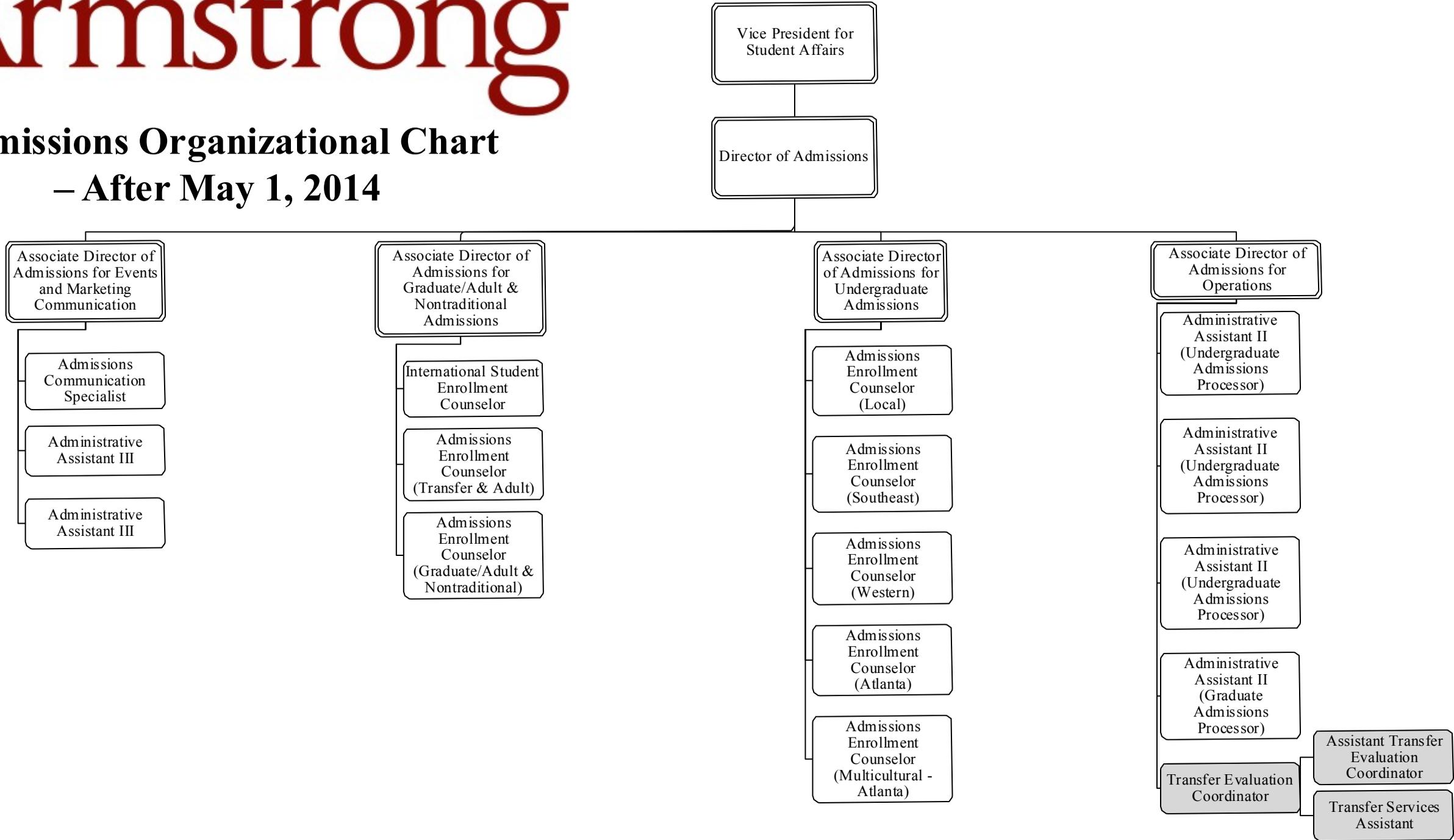
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Adult & Nontraditional Student Services, Graduate Enrollment Services, and Admissions Organizational Chart – Before May 1, 2014



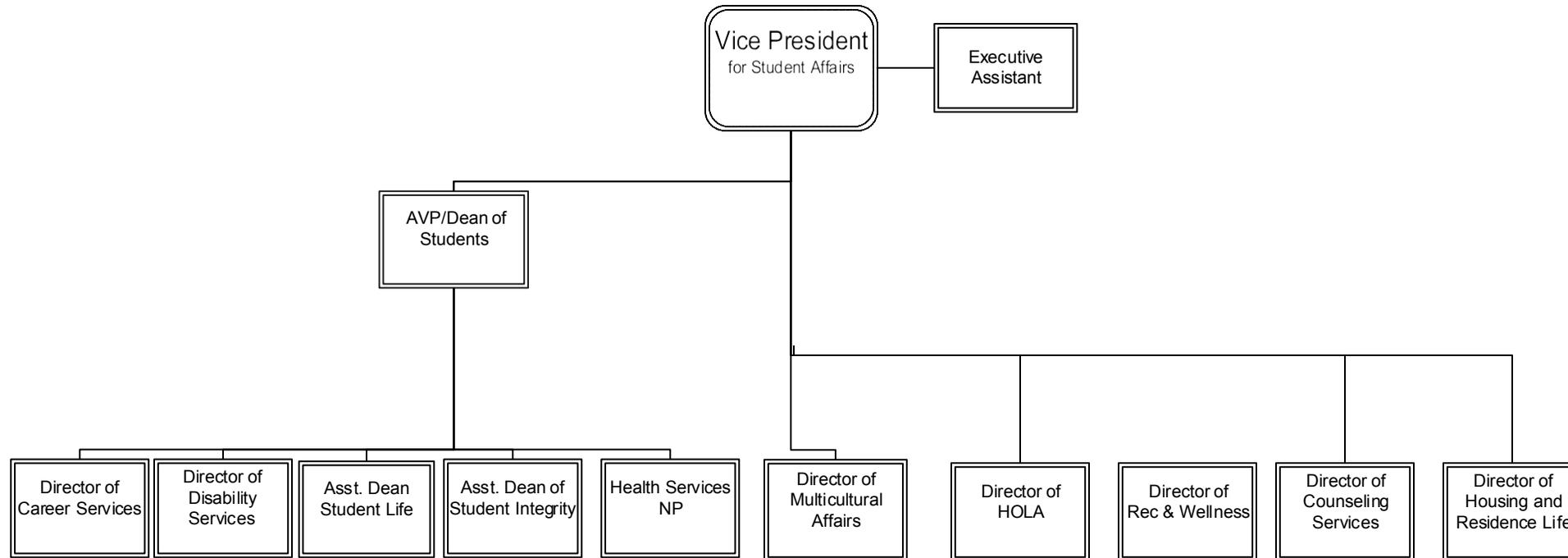
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Admissions Organizational Chart – After May 1, 2014



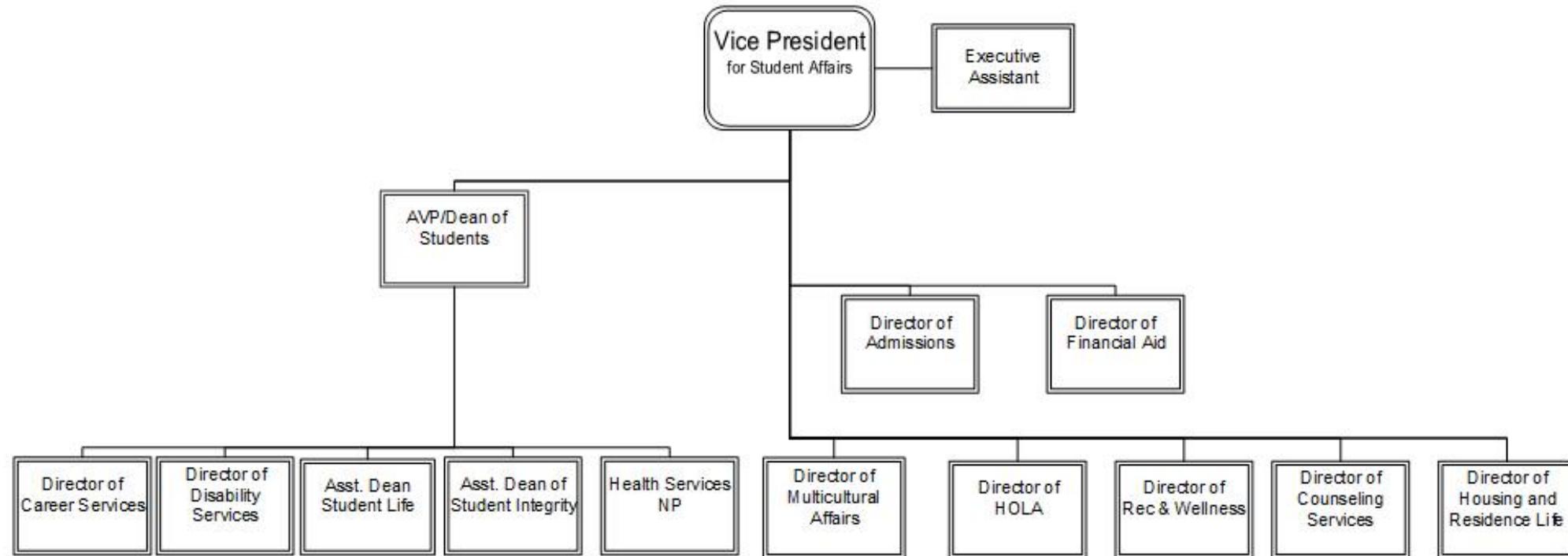
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Student Affairs Organizational Chart - Before May 1, 2014



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Student Affairs Organizational Chart - After May 1, 2014



Changes:

* Admissions and Financial Aid report to Student Affairs as of May 1, 2014