

Fan Council Notes

Meeting 1 – Survey Review & “What is our Brand?”

Attendees

- Athletics: Eric Ward, Jess Armistead, Jen Madden, Mike Szlamowicz, John Welch
- Council: Kyle Matous, Karen Viar, Sarah Brown, Coutney Hamlett, Maggie Nguyen, Jay Hart, Kara Henderson, Danny Neckel, Mike Lewis, Todd Carlisle, Trey Kelleher
- Note Takers: Ashlee MacDonald and Tyler Sakimura
- Absent: Philip Belfield, Luke Lamberson, Andrew Wright

Overview of Fan Council

The guiding principles of the Fan Council are:

- Transparency in Decision-Making
- Focus on the Future
- Willingness to Change
- Growing Our Fanbase
- Unrelenting Desire for Success in All Facets

Additionally, it was covered how the council was selected. On the Athletics side, it is comprised of unit leaders throughout the department who touch different areas of the fan experience. Jess and Mike are Virginia grads who have worked here for a long time whereas Jen and John are relatively recent hires with experiences at other schools and Eric splits the difference as a lifelong fan whose career has been predominantly elsewhere.

On the fan side, there were hundreds of submissions, so the committee focused on diversity of response above all else to make sure as many areas of the fan experience are represented as possible. Council members will range from current UVA students through members in their 70s. Some are UVA grads and others are not. Current season ticket members (STMs), former STMs and non-STMs are all represented as well as geographic diversity relatively commensurate with the overall attendance at games.

Meeting Notes

The goal of first meeting of the fan council was to set the table for the year by introducing the council membership and establishing the end goals of improving fan experience and increasing attendance.

The presentation for the meeting covered two major survey recaps. The first was a review of the last 3 years of data for the post-game surveys, which demonstrates both positive and negative areas of the fan experience as well as trends.

Several areas such as wifi/data reception and concessions quality have frequently scored on the low end while others such as staff helpfulness and entry procedures are consistently high. While the investment in video board/sound system showed a massive gain in approval ratings, areas such as concessions wait time and in-game presentation have also shown steady improvement. Conversely, merchandise prices have shown decreasing approval ratings.

The second part of the presentation was the end-of-year survey that benchmarks Virginia's operation against the rest of the ACC. Respondents included season ticket members, individual game buyers and students commensurate with the overall attendance at games.

Several opportunities were unveiled, such as a growing percentage of attendees with children under 18 and the conference's best balance of alums and non-alums attending games. Areas such as parking proximity and concessions experience rated behind peer institutions but still rated between "Neutral" and "Satisfied" in the ratings. "Seating Location" was rated highly. The Overall Gameday Experience was rated a 4.1/5.

The meeting ended with a roundtable discussion on Virginia Football's brand. The council brought forth many different viewpoints on this, but several themes that emerged were the need to create a better connectivity between the program and community and a need to more aggressively showcase the growing resources towards football.

The first meeting was very broad to set the table for more pointed discussions but several areas were brought up, which have already resulted in changes or planned changes. Others have also been taken to the broader Athletics Department to move to exploratory meetings.

1. There was a general discussion between Karen and others regarding student attendance. Her suggestion was that the university and Athletics should work more on leaning on school pride, rather than selling particular sports or wins and losses. An example was brought up regarding Greek engagements, etc.

FOLLOW-UP – GREEK/ATHLETICS ENGAGEMENTS

Eric has done a preliminary reach out to IFC/Panhellinic to see what opportunities are available that we are not currently pursuing. There was a strong desire for coaches and players to visit Greeks, which Eric will share with IFC/Panhellinic.

2. Kara gave feedback that she passed Fan Fest several times last season and didn't know it was open for the public

FOLLOW-UP – FAN FEST SIGNAGE

Athletics will add more and better signage in the vicinity of Fan Fest to make it clear that this is free to the public, while exploring other ways to increase attention to the activation beyond current methods (Inclusion in game guide to all ticket holders, social media posts, inclusion in the master gameday timeline that goes out on social, PA reads in game).

3. Jay (Verizon) stated that one of the frustrations is inability to get radar map up to see if/when rain is coming

FOLLOW-UP – WEATHER SITUATIONS

In the event of poor reception, Athletics will explore better methods to communicate incoming weather patterns.

4. Maggie asked if there was a marketplace for Virginia fans only

FOLLOW-UP – UVA MARKETPLACE

The Athletics Ticket Office has been notified of this idea and have already been in touch with several other schools to see how we can implement this system. Ideally, we create a marketplace of verified UVA fans, so that fans who only want to re-sell to our fans can do so.

5. Kyle mentioned a frustration with the inability to stream the coaches show on Facebook each week. Jen mentioned that it was a choice to no longer have a viewable stream, as it hindered attendance, and the show was live both on the air and in the app. Kyle asked if it would be possible to archive so he can listen after the fact.

FOLLOW-UP – ARCHIVED COACHES SHOWS

Jen followed up with John Freeman, the Voice of the Cavaliers, to pull the link for this. Athletics will work to make sure the archive link is more public and linked next year. The link to the previous shows can be found here:

<https://soundcloud.com/user-953397147/sets/coachs-corner-radio-shows>

6. A discussion was brought up by several members of the committee regarding re-entry, which has not been in place at Scott Stadium since 2001.

FOLLOW-UP – RE-ENTRY POLICY

Athletics committee members briefly met to discuss the feasibility of this and acknowledge that the idea has been brought up from both the fan side and Athletics side several times in recent years. While it is unlikely that a change that significant could be put in place in time for the 2025 season, if at all, Athletics staff will hold some exploratory meetings in the near future to discuss the concept further and will plan to present the discussion to the Fan Council at a later date.

7. Mike mentioned how touchpoints such as kids carrying the players helmets off the field in his youth played a hand in those people becoming ticket buyers in the 80s and 90s. His perception of WBB and Baseball is that they really focus on the fan experience, particularly children and are really good on these fronts (the whole committee seemed to agree with this) and so we need to manufacture more of these touchpoints with Football.

FOLLOW-UP – PLAYER/FAN INTERACTIONS

In addition to Athletics forming a group to discuss these touchpoint opportunities on Grounds and on gamedays, Jen has communicated this feedback to Cav Futures to see if there are better ways we can utilize NIL appearances in this space.

April's meeting will feature a presentation from the ticket office on ticket data and will cover all facets of the ticket experience, including pricing, the annual schedule, season ticket member benefits, community ticket programs and more. The meeting will have a roundtable discussion on ideas to increase attendance.