Minutes of the meeting of February 3, 1998
Student Commons Commonwealth Ballroom


Absent: Barsanti, Hawkridge, Malloy, Merchant, Mouser, Ripley, Tipton, Webb.

1. The meeting was called to order at 4:05 pm by President Terry Oggel. The minutes of the December 2 meeting were approved as distributed.

2. Oggel explained the procedure by which the Faculty Senate would contribute to the development of priorities and recommendations with respect to the Strategic Plan, which was adopted at the January meeting of the Board of Visitors. A meeting of administrators and faculty in January has already begun this process. In order to provide feedback to the Provost in a timely manner five working groups of senators have been formed, and the chairs of those groups will report back to the Executive committee of the Senate at its February 17 meeting. Recommendations will then be sent on to the Provost. In this way we feel that the views of faculty can influence the final set of priorities.

3. The Student Government representative to the Senate, Anna Hong, was introduced.

4. A nominating committee for 1998-99 officers, consisting of Bob Andrews, Dan Mouser, Stan Strong and Susan Robinson was proposed and appointed.

5. John Guthmiller distributed forms requesting senators to list their state representatives, and urged us to participate in the effort to develop stronger ties and good communication between faculty and legislators.

6. Lucy Harvie reported the Credential Committee's recommendation for apportionment of senators in 1998-99, based on the current composition of the faculty. It involved no changes from this year's apportionment. The report was accepted.

7. Linda Harber and Cindy Andrews, of the Office of Human Resources discussed the recent reorganization of the office, which utilizes customer service teams.
with a generalist orientation. The University's Mediation Program was also discussed, and faculty were encouraged to volunteer to participate as trained mediators.

8. Vice Provost for Academic Affairs David Hiley spoke on student enrollment, present and projected. He noted that the "performance funding" proposal which had been part of outgoing Governor Allen's budget would use graduation rates and retention rates as criteria for additional resources for colleges and universities. Since transfer students are not used in these calculations, they can give a misleading evaluation of our performance. [NOTE: This performance funding scheme is not part of the budget that was approved this year, but is quite likely to be included in some fashion in future budgets.]

The report of the Task Force on Retention will be released next week, and it will include several initiatives, including formation of a Center for Student Support that will bring several existing programs together under the Academic Affairs Office. Courses that are critical to the success or failure of many students will be targeted for advising and other support resources. [A link to the report will be provided as soon as it is available.]

9. Jan Lewis introduced Vice Provost for Information Technology John Dayhoff and Sherry Mikuta, representing the Executive Budget Committee, to speak about the status of the proposal to institute a technology fee. The subcommittee, which has held open forums on both campuses and attempted to get a wide sampling of student opinion, will report to the EBC at the end of February. Any recommendation for a fee would then have to be approved by the Board of Visitors. The bill presently before the General Assembly merely would give VCU authority to set such a fee. Several questions were raised about how the money raised from such a fee would be spent, and its relationship to school and departmental budgets. Dayhoff emphasized that while there would be a substantial amount of money raised by --- say --- a $50 fee for all full-time students, it would be small fraction of all the money the University spends, and needs to spend, on technology. Several questions were raised, including how funds could be used to give disabled students appropriate access to computing services. Oggel is a member of the committee that is making recommendations about the policy.

10. Katherine Cauley reported for the task force on 12 month operation. They have surveyed department heads and a student survey of opinion about summer study is underway. Their report to the Senate will be ready in April.

11. Charles Byles discussed the interim report on a Senate sponsored mentoring initiative, which had been distributed to all senators. He pointed out that there are already some 240 students involved in a mentoring system of one form or another, and that the task force would pilot the Senate's program this semester
with a dozen freshmen who were on academic warning.

12. Mike Spinelli described the old (1994) draft plan for an "early retirement" plan and promised a report, complete with recommendations, from his committee very soon. He emphasized that any such plan would have to be financed within a school's existing budget. Details such as eligibility and the process for selecting faculty if there are more applicants than the school can afford are still being worked out.

13. Oggel noted that the March meeting of the Senate would feature an address by President Eugene Trani and recognition of past presidents of the Faculty Senate.

14. The meeting adjourned at 5:30