Minutes of the November 10, 1998 Meeting

Student Commons Forum Room


1. President Terry Ogge called the meeting to order at 4:00. The Minutes of the October meeting were approved as posted, with corrections to the attendance noted by the Secretary.

2. Camden Whitehead, the Senate's representative to the University Architectural Review Committee, showed a series of slides of current building construction. He also reported on new initiatives and changes in the Master Plan. These included:

   - Groundbreaking for the Life Science Building at Cary and Harrison is scheduled for January
   - Sanger Hall renovation is beginning
   - An Alumni House is being created on W. Franklin
   - Plans for a parking deck at 12th and Marshall have been scrapped
   - Parking areas on the West Campus will be placed on the periphery to reduce traffic in the center of campus. The plan for a deck at Cary and Harrison still exists
• Student housing is planned for the W. Broad St. block between the Siegel Center and the Fine Arts Building

Questions were raised about the impact of the student housing project on the Carver community, and he noted that an open meeting had been held for the community to review the plan. A suggestion was made that a written report on the current status of the Master Site Plan be circulated to the Faculty Senate.

3. Earle Coleman introduced Assistant Vice Provost for Academic Affairs John Borgard, who is now in charge of the Academic Success Center as well as continuing as Associate Dean of the College. Borgard distributed a handout describing the mission and activities of the Center, which "is less a place than a concept" that pulls together several existing activities with the goal of helping students attain their academic potential. Notable innovations include the summer faculty institute for faculty who teach general education classes, and the supplemental instruction program. The latter program consists of peer-led discussion sections attached to large freshman classes which have a historical record of being difficult for many students.

   Other programs include the College Transition Program (Quincy Moore) for special admission freshmen; the Academic Success Program (Joy Bressler), a series of workshops to enhance study skills; and VCU 101, which now enrolls approximately 800 of the 2200 new freshmen. He urged faculty to consider volunteering to teach a section of this class.

   In response to a question, Borgard noted that a formal evaluation of the success of these programs has not been carried out in the past two years, but that he has just written a memorandum on how such evaluations ought to be done. The budget for the Center's innovation has been drawn from funds that the Provost set aside for retention-related activities. While retention of undergraduates appears to have improved in the last two years, it is not clear yet why this has occurred.

4. Terry Oggel introduced Shyla Ipsen, the Academic Campus Coordinator for students with disabilities. She discussed her responsibilities in seeing that the university complies with the 1973 federal law commonly known as "Section 504", which requires that appropriate provision be made for students with disabilities. Ipsen stressed that students have to self-identify to faculty, but that the specific disabling medical condition must have been verified by her office (which consists of herself and two student assistants). Last year some 725 students were so identified; so far this year the total is 465.

   As an example of appropriate adjustments, she said that attendance rules would need to be adjusted if absences were related to the diagnosed disability. When special provision must be made for examinations, tests can be given at the
Center using their resources. She encouraged faculty to participate as advisors to her office.

5. A brochure "Helping the Distressed Student" was distributed, but the scheduled talk by Kristi Vera of University Counseling Services was postponed to a future meeting due to time constraints.

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- John Guthmiller reminded senators of the letter to legislators that his committee had drafted. All senators were urged to write to their state representatives. He also handed out advice from Vice President for External Relations Don Gehring on what to emphasize when contacting legislators. Delegate Frank Hall will be our guest at the December meeting.
- Sue Brilliant distributed a memorandum calling for Senate endorsement of two minor changes in the petition for amendment to the Bylaws of the School of Graduate Studies that had been submitted to the Graduate Council. Endorsement was provided by voice vote. (Dean Jack Haar was informed by email of this action on November 12. As of this writing no announcement of a referendum on the amendment has been made.)
- Earle Coleman distributed copies of a petition from the SGA calling for retention of study space on the fourth floor of Cabell Library. (On November 11 and 12, members of the Student Government Association set up tables in Cabell Library and outside the Student Commons, inviting students, staff, and faculty members to sign the petition that opposed the use of space on the fourth floor of Cabell library for OIT offices. It was reported that there were 300-400 signed letters and that copies will be sent to Vice Provost Dayhoff, Provost Harris, and President Trani.)

7. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The student and faculty concerns about campus food service were discussed at the University Council meeting November 3. President Trani encouraged members to document problems and noted that a file is being kept in the event it is necessary to cancel the existing contract with McDonalds.
- The current status of the Strategic Plan is now available online, and can be linked to from the Faculty Senate WhatsNew page.
- The Faculty Transition Incentive Plan (FTIP) was also discussed at the November 3 University Council meeting. Oggel reported that the plan will not be ready for the Board of Visitors until January, as we try to deal with the problems caused by the state-mandated cap on funds that can be
committed to the program. He described the open letter that he would be sending to all faculty later in the week, asking for opinions on whether it would be preferable to have the maximum payment available to 5 or 6 persons each year, or a lesser payment that would be available to as many as 15 or 20 persons. Developments will be posted on the Faculty Senate home page as they occur.

- Additional announcements which were suppressed due to lack of time are included below.

8. The meeting adjourned at 6:00, for informal discussion with committee chairs.

SUPPLEMENTARY ANNOUNCEMENT BY PRESIDENT OGGEL

- Publication of the newly revised Faculty Handbook is making progress. Late this summer I reviewed the final draft of the portions most directly related to faculty and at that time it was slated to be published in early September. However, at the September Board of Visitors meeting some changes were made in parts having to do with the structure of the university. These (I am trying to find out more about them) will go into effect January 1. The document's name will be changed to Faculty Guide and it will be posted on the web only, no print version--to save on printing expenses and to make it easier to update periodically. The Guide will be a reference source--with links to help faculty find information they need. This version is going through "final" editing, again, and the parts where there are changes will go back out to groups to review, including the Faculty Senate (i.e., me). According to the new schedule, it'll be available on the web "in a few weeks." The new committee we added in October (legislative relations) will be included in the Faculty Senate section.