Minutes of the February 2, 1999 Meeting

Student Commons Forum Room


Elected Senators Absent: Contos, Cook-Tench, Elliott (sub Corey), Gilson, Grant, Guthrie (seb McKelvey), Klinker, Nixon, Pitts (sub Byles), Stastny, Swafford (sub Lawson), Vallarino (sub Rutan), Welch, Wooldridge.

1. President Terry Oggel called the meeting to order at 4:00. Minutes of the December meeting were approved as distributed and posted on the Senate website.
2. A good wishes card for Lucy Harvie, who is recuperating from surgery, was circulated for signatures.
3. Secretary Neil Henry announced that provisional agendas of upcoming meetings would be placed on the Senate Meetings page, and that minutes would be posted on the website but not mailed out before meetings. News and supplementary announcements from President Oggel will also be placed on the Senate website, as they arise.
4. Oggel introduced Linda Harber, Executive Director of Human Resources, to spoke about the new Virginia Sickness and Disability Program. Current faculty who are in the VRS retirement program have until March 31 to decide whether to move to the new program or remain in the current system. Participants in an Optional Retirement Program (e.g. TIAA-CREF) are not eligible for the new program. Harber advised faculty to hand-walk the forms which were mailed out by the state to the HR office to insure that they are processed on time, since the March 31 date is a firm
one. She noted that VCU needs to certify to the state that an effective program for using and keeping track of sick leave is in place for nine-month faculty, in order for transfer of accumulated sick leave to be allowed.

The Human Resources benefits webpage provides an overview of the program, and a links to a VRS FAQ page. In addition, several additional open meetings have been scheduled for anyone who has questions about the program. *(Note: March 1, 2-4 in the Student Commons Commonwealth Ballroom; March 3, 2-4 in Sanger 1-044)*

She then introduced Linda Morton who fielded several questions from Senators. She emphasized that a person choosing the new program could apply accumulated sick leave days to VRS service credit, or to extend the time eligible for 100% disability coverage, but could not split it between the two. One aspect of the program is that all medical information is handled by a private company, CORE, rather than VRS. In response to a question Morton stated that there were no incentives for CORE to deny coverage, and there was a clearly defined appeal process via VRS. After six months, when the long-term disability program starts, faculty will be paid by CORE, not VCU, and will have to pay the state's share of medical insurance. Retirement is mandatory at age 65 for someone who is receiving disability pay, but he or she would get VRS retirement credit for the time on disability.

5. Vice President George Moxley, for the Executive Committee, moved that the nominating committee for next year's Faculty Senate Officers be composed of himself, Ardyth Lohuis, Joan Pellegrini, Lisa Shoaf and Stan Strong. The slate was adopted without objection. The committee will report its nominations at the March Senate meeting, at which time nominations may also be made from the floor.

6. Earle Coleman, Student Affairs Committee chair, introduced SGA representative Maria Michaels who distributed copies of a proposed University Creed. This had been approved by the SGA and Faculty Senate endorsement was requested before bringing it to the University Council. The idea was to have a policy statement that was positive rather than the usual negative rules. Spirited discussion ensued, culminating in the recommendation that the items in the draft be simplified in order to emphasize the point that these were not --- by themselves --- to be interpreted as legal rules of behavior. *(Note: The draft was subsequently revised and approved by the SGA and will be brought to the Senate March 2 for approval. The new version is included below.)*

7. Coleman then brought up a proposed modification of the disruptive
student policy which had been suggested by Dean of Students Bill Duvall. The problem is that of how to deal with a student who is disrupting a class day after day. The present policy gives the faculty member the authority to have the student removed from the class when a disruption occurs, but to deal with a continuing problem requires a series of hearings that would usually take several weeks. The proposal is to make forced withdrawal from the class with a mark of W or F a permissible penalty, and to make appropriate provision for a speeded up hearing process.

Senators discussed the proposal, and emphasized both the need to provide due process for the student who is charged and protection for the teacher and other students in the class. The issue was referred back to the Student Affairs and Professional Status Committees.

8. Ardyth Lohuis presented several proposals for changes to the Bylaws of the Faculty. After discussion and a minor amendment, these amendments were passed and will be presented to the Faculty for approval. NOTE: The ballots have been distributed and will be counted by the Secretary on March 22.

9. Charles Byles discussed the status of the Student Mentoring Program which was begun last spring. Based on experience with the first group of students and mentors, the program has been linked to the Turning Point program for students who are on academic warning. This provides more structure to the program, which now consists of 19 mentors and 33 students. He thanked the Senators who are serving as mentors, and encouraged others who are interested in becoming mentors to get in touch with him.

10. Robert Downs reported on the recent retreat called by President Trani and Vice President Dewey to examine trends in research funding. While total research funding at VCU continues to increase, our position with respect to the federal monies that have placed us in the top 100 (Carnegie I) institutions has slipped in the past few years. Downs urged the senators to contact him and the Research and Academic Programs Committee about specific ways in which the University infrastructure needs to be repaired in order to improve the rate at which we attract research dollars. It was suggested that Vice President Dewey be invited to the March meeting of the Senate to discuss these issues further.

11. Mike Spinelli reported that the state had not yet approved the early retirement proposal. NOTE: It was subsequently reported that the Attorney General would not take up the issue until after the General Assembly session was concluded. Updates can be found on the Senate homepage.

12. Kathleen Cauley reported that the survey of academic campus faculty on
year round programming would be sent out momentarily. She urged senators to return the survey and encourage colleagues to do so. She also reported that the University Calendar committee was not going to recommend any radical changes in the calendar. The two campuses would continue to start the semesters on different days.

13. After some additional remarks by senators and President Oggel the meeting was adjourned at 6:05pm.

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY CREED

PHILOSOPHY FOR AN ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

Academic institutions exist to discover, advance, and transmit knowledge and to develop in their students, faculty, and staff the capacity for creative and critical thought.

At Virginia Commonwealth University, members of the academic community exemplify the following guidelines of behavior:

1. To demonstrate academic integrity.
2. To respect the rights and property of others.
3. To conduct oneself with integrity.
4. To honor others' opinions.
5. To uphold freedom of intellectual inquiry.
6. To value the diversity of all persons and to strive to learn from the differences in peoples, ideas, and cultures.
7. To uphold the right of all persons to be treated with dignity and respect at all times and to refrain from all forms of intimidation, harassment, or discrimination.
8. To demonstrate intellectual courage in all situations that demand it. This encourages the public expression of one's firmly held, reasoned views on educationally, intellectually, and socially important issues--even when some views are unpopular.

Adopted by the Academic Campus Student Government Association, December 6, 1993
Revised March 4, 1996
Approved by the Faculty Senate, June 4, 1996
Revised September 14, 1998
Revised by the University Council's Committee on Student Affairs, December 3, 1998