Minutes

MEETING SEPTEMBER 7, 1999

LYONS BUILDING STUDENT LOUNGE

Present were: Abbey, Bilyeu, Briceland, Brillant, Burton, Byles, Chatterji, Coleman, Contos, Corey, Costanzo, Dolan, Festa, Forsyth, Garcia, Heldberg, Jackson, Kester, Kirkpatrick, P., Kirkpatrick, MA, Koerin, Leone, Merchant, Moon (alt.), Moxley, Nadder, Olbrisch, Page, Palmer, Parham, Peel, Peng, Phillipsen, Pitts, Poindexter, Poynor, Ream, Ripley, Roberson, Rossi, Seibel, Shaof, Simons, Spottswood, Swteel, Szari, Turner, Vallarino, Van Tuyle (alt.) Weaver, Webb, Whitehead, Wu-Pong, Yarowsky,

Absent were: Abubaker, Alder, Canavos, Fauri, Klinker, Liberti, Malloy, Nixon, Schmitt, Wooldridge

The meeting was opened at 4:00 by Faculty Senate President Wes Poynor

The Minutes of the May meeting of the Senate were adopted as mailed and on the web page.

President Poynor welcomed the Senate back for the new academic year. He asked the incumbent Senators to welcome the large number of new Senators to our group. Dr. Poynor then reminded the Senate that we are engaged in the serious business of "shared governance" of the University, that it is a responsibility and a privilege that we must take seriously. As part of this responsibility, the President of the Senate is now a sitting member of the University President's Council and the Senate is involved with setting legislative priorities of the University; both of these new developments are due to the fine work of our past president, Terry Oggel.

Vice President Sue Brilliant discussed the various committees and asked Senators to express their preferences on a hand-out sheet before the end of the meeting.
Senator Alan Briceland was appointed as Parliamentarian.

An Election was held for four University Council representatives from the Senate: President Wes Poynor and Vice President Sue Brilliant are automatically representatives from the Senate. Senators Alan Briceland and Susanna Wu-Pong were nominated as representatives, and Rich Costanzo as alternate. There were no further nominations from the floor, so the above were elected unanimously.

Two candidates were presented as Chair of the University Grievance Committee to finish the term of Mary Clements who has left the university. Steve Price from the department of Physiology was elected.

Terry Oggel who was president of the Faculty Senate for the past two years has been appointed as an administrator and has decided not to take on the position of Past President. Senator George Moxley, Senate Vice president in 1998-99, was elected to assume the position of Past President on the Executive Committee.

Kathleen Scott, Chair of the University Substance Abuse Committee, presented for faculty input an amended university policy statement on alcoholic drinking and other substance abuse. She received a number of questions and comments. Questions included: does this policy apply to students in study abroad programs where countries may have different laws concerning legal age for drinking? Why is the definition of drug stated so broadly that it could include sugar, caffeine and nicotine?, How does one define impaired and who determines if an employee is impaired from taking over the counter or prescribed drugs? What is the difference between an official and unofficial activity? Is a faculty party at a faculty member's home an official activity? If one works at home does that home become a workplace and therefore it is a violation of the policy to have alcoholic beverages at a faculty member's home? It was pointed out that using the term alcohol to mean alcoholic beverages could be misunderstood to include ethanol that is widely used in laboratories, thereby subjecting employees who possess the alcohol to be in violation of the policy and subject to disciplinary action. Some found the notification of parents of violation of the policy intrusive of privacy and offensive. If parental notification is dangerous to the student, then the administration can elect not to do it. Senators and faculty are encouraged to send their comments to Kathleen Scott at kscott@saturn.vcu.edu.

It was moved, seconded and passed by the Faculty Senate with one negative vote to send the policy to the Academic and Professional Status Committee for further study and then to come back to the Senate with recommendations.
John Ulmschnerider, the new Executive Director of the University Libraries was introduced on his first day on the job. He expressed his deep appreciation of the support of the Faculty Senate and for their report on the state of the library which was developed and passed last spring. The report was sent to the administration over the summer and has resulted in a request to the General Assembly for more funds. John Ulmschnerider asked that people send him (John_Ulmschnerider@vcu.edu) their opinions of what the library needs to do and what it is doing well. In answer to a question, he pointed out that Cabell and Tompkins-McCaw libraries are actually very tightly bound and share services in order to take advantages of economies of scale. He delayed the search for a new director for Tompkins-McCaw so that he could participate in the recruitment. John Ulmschnerider pointed out that more books are being printed than ever before, but that there is also more scholarly work in digital form. The library will continue to grow in both areas. With more resources available, it becomes increasingly necessary to consult a librarian for assistance in accessing the materials.

Phyllis Self, the new Vice Provost for Academic Technology was introduced and she passed out a folder of materials explaining the reorganization of the old Office of Information Technology (OIT) last April. The strategic plan and financial plan has been completed for the office and is being used to guide policy. The library Executive Director now reports directly to the Provost. There is an ongoing reorganization of the technology group with infrastructure reporting to Vice President Paul Timmreck and user services reporting to her in the new Office for Academic Technology. There will be a greater focus on services to faculty, staff and students. Her office is located on the fourth floor of the Cabell Library. There were a lot of questions around faculty input into this reorganization and its continuing unfolding. Phyllis Self explained that she still desired to move the University Technology Strategic Plan forward to the Board of Visitors, but would see that it came to the Faculty Senate for review. She also plans to have a faculty advisory group for the office.

There was a question whether the computer labs in the Business Building being open only to business students was a balkanization of computer services? She responded that first floor computer rooms were open to all and that the second and fourth floor computer rooms were for business students only.

Provost Rod McDavis was introduced to the Faculty Senate and welcomed to VCU. He thanked the Faculty Senate for the invitation and pointed out that the Faculty Senate's work was very responsible for getting the Executive Director of the Library to report to the provost and for getting the library into the deliberations for next year's
budget. It was one of two areas where the amount requested was left untouched during the negotiations and will be forwarded to the Board of Visitors. He pledged that nothing will go forward to the Board of Visitors without faculty input. As to technology, he reported that by 2001 students will be required to have a computer. The impact on the faculty will be tremendous with regards to questions of software, access and so forth. To move forward in the life sciences, biotech, and science research, it is critical to have a strong library and total commitment to academic technology.

Provost McDavis said his philosophy is to be inclusive. He has nothing to hide and he will hand out lots of information. His priorities are to have a University Center for Excellence in Teaching. Deans Oehler (Education) and Gottfredson (Humanities and Sciences) have asked to draft a proposal. Provost McDavis said he wants faculty input. The Center will be implemented this year so that faculty have a resource to improve teaching.

- His second priority is recruiting the best and brightest students: undergraduate and professionals. We have to work together to recruit and retain. Eighteen percent of the students left this year; 400 had a GPA of 2.5 or better. We need to create environments that shows we care about the students, that we want them, that we will challenge them; and we will help them to be successful.
- Provost McDavis' third priority is university-wide retention. We need to take a hard look at the professional programs. Are they the best in the country? This effort will take the combined work of faculty, administrators, and students. He wants to create interdisciplinary, multi-disciplinary efforts and he needs and wants faculty input and help.
- Fourth, he wants to establish a new budget process that will reward departments with enrollment growth, increased quality and productivity.
- Fifth, we need to focus on diversity all over campus. We need to do more.

We have a bold agenda and VCU is poised to move higher. He promised the Senate it will get every opportunity for input. He commended the Senate for its input and focus in the past. He wants to form a partnership.

Provost McDavis reported that we have 300+ freshman more than last year and that we missed our goal of 2500 freshman by 14 students. These freshman have higher GPAs and SAT's than last year. We have lots of first generation college students; we have some marginal students, so we have to work harder to get better students. This year has been a very poor year for enrolling professional and graduate students. The numbers went down. We also have not as many transfer students.

The issue of faculty morale was brought up and Provost McDavis said he accepts that
there is a problem. He wants to do a study of faculty morale. He hears the complaints of classes which are too large and loss of resources. There is a 22 million dollar proposal for more full time teaching faculty. He also said we need to do something about the older buildings. He has spent time walking around campus, looking into classrooms and faculty offices. We need to have better working conditions. He is working on this. He said that he realizes the University made a commitment when they started the new general education requirement, but have only carried it about half-way. Now he wants to carry the program the rest of the way. We need the smaller classes to retain the students. Send him our ideas and he will put them forward. He said that we may not always agree, but he will listen with respect and will give an answer, even if it is not popular.

He admonished the faculty to remember that students come first. If the students weren't here, we wouldn't be here. Students are what a university is all about. If the students leave their classes feeling good, we won't have to spend money to recruit new students, the students will do it for us!

Faculty President Wes Poynor invited the faculty senators to stay for a reception with our guests, and encouraged each Senator to introduce him or herself to the new Provost, the Vice Provost for Academic Technology, and the Executive Director of the Libraries. The meeting was adjourned at 6:00.

Our next Senate meeting will be on October 5, 1999, at 4pm in the Student Commons Forum Room on the Academic Campus.

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Neil W. Henry

September 14, 1999