Minutes for Meeting of November 2, 1999


President Wes Poynor opened the Faculty Senate meeting at 4:07 in the student lounge of Lyons Building on the medical campus.

The minutes were moved, seconded and approved with the following corrections: page 2, line 9, change "meant" to "met"; page 2, line 4, Contact Wes Poynor, not Sue Brilliant.

All faculty are invited to a wine and cheese reception sponsored by AAUP on Wednesday, November 3, 1999 in the Student Commons on the academic campus. Dr. Robert O’Neil of the AAUP Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure will address the group.

Senators were invited by President Wes Poynor to fill in the SWOT page at the back of the agendas and send them to him.

President Wes Poynor reported on the October meeting of the University Council. The College of Engineering Masters and Doctoral programs were approved along with the name changes for two departments in the School of Medicine. Legislative initiatives were presented and the library has its initiatives in 5th and 6th place. University President Trani has committed to keeping these two items on the list until funded. The year around programming initiative that means an increase in summer school remains an issue since fall enrollment is the critical count for university funding.
There is interest in a pilot program in one or two departments to see how successful year-round programming would be.

The Board of Visitors will be meeting November 10 and 11. The Committees meet Wednesday afternoon and the full Board meets Thursday in the University Meeting Center. All sessions, except for executive sessions, are open to the faculty. The President and Vice President of the Faculty Senate will be attending.

FERIP/FTIP update. These early retirement programs for the faculty are still waiting for the Attorney General to approve them. There is still hope they will begin this year. The Provost is committed to get FERIP started. About 40-60 faculty will be able to participate over five years. *(Note added later: faculty have been informed by Deans that they should make application for FERIP by December 15 if they are interested in the program.)*

President Wes Poynor reminded alternates they are welcome to attend the Senate meetings, but they may vote only if they are here for an absent Senator from their School or College.

The Technology Restructuring Plan is close to being released to the public. It should be out by November 15. The Provost insists that we are early in the restructuring planning process and that there will be opportunity for faculty input.

The VCU Drug-Free Schools and Workplace policy is moving forward. The Briceland report was brought to the Senate last meeting and he met with the committee yesterday. University President Trani is under pressure to implement by this spring the parent notification policy for students under 21 found guilty of intoxication. The italicized part of the policy will go forward for approval, but the rest of the policy, including the definition of "workplace" will continue to be discussed. The State of Virginia alcohol policy has exactly the same definition for "workplace." This policy is on the November University Council agenda and also on the Board of Visitors agenda next week. It we don’t put this new policy forward, the state will put together a law for all universities.

University President Trani is very concerned about enrollment. There is an enrollment shortfall this year from that which was projected, and the consequence is a budget reduction. This year there is a monetary impact on graduate programs. Because the expectations were not made clear for the undergraduate programs, the president’s office will pick up the cost. For the graduate programs, the president will pick up 1/4 of the cost and 3/4 will come from the graduate programs. For next year, Departments, Schools and Colleges need to make realistic projections of student enrollment and meet them. The out-of-state students bring more funds into the university and so
President Wes Poynor reported that University President Trani asserted that **student retention is everybody's job**. What can we as faculty do to promote retention, especially of the academically well qualified? Some students feel lost at VCU, saying it is too urban, too big and they feel isolated. If everyone would just say “hello” that would help. Some students complain there is nothing to do on weekends, that VCU is not as good a university as VaTech, UVA, and William and Mary. We need to promote good research and other faculty activities so that students are more aware of what we are doing.

**Vice Provost for Academic Affairs Henry Rhone is chairing a Task Force on Retention.** They want to get the faculty involved with their good ideas. There has been just one meeting and that one divided the group into four subcommittees that are writing reports. There will be a final report that should be on the web. The Senators had a number of ideas to put forward to the Task Force on Retention. They are listed in no particular order and have not been debated nor agreed to by the Faculty Senate.

One Senator suggested that the university give students who have a GPA of 3.0 and better a rebate on tuition. Even though finances are not the number one or two reasons for leaving, scholarships were mentioned as important for retention. Another Senator suggested that faculty should not speak badly of the University. Having a gallery of large photos of successful graduates was another idea. One Senator suggested that VCU should publicize how we compare to VaTech, UVA, William and Mary in terms of research and teaching.

Some wondered if retention is better or worse than earlier? Some thought it is getting worse while others thought that enrollment is a cyclical issue related to the economy. Another Senator wondered if there is a study of why incoming students chose VCU that might give us some clues as to why they leave. Better publicity for the guaranteed admission to medical school program was suggested. A Senator noted that in the Ad Center and computer science program students are hired away by industry before they graduate. It was pointed out that having faculty call student applicants who are not yet decided on coming could help in recruitment.

Another Senator said that student services also need to be responsive and customer friendly. They are a big part of creating a friendly environment. Faculty reported that the number one complaint they hear from students is about the dorms: it is hard to get a phone hooked up, parking is bad. Students claim they don’t have the same problems at VaTech. A Senator also stated that the way financial aid treats students is also seen as a very
big issue. Another Senator recalled that Barbara Fuhrmann did a student satisfaction survey a number of years ago. The Task Force on Retention should be sure to get a copy of her report.

President Wes Poynor said he would ask Dr. Rhone and Chip Byrd from the Institutional Research and Evaluation Office to attend our next Senate meeting to address these issues and answer questions.

Lucy Harvie introduced herself as representing the Retired Faculty Council.

Dan Ream, Chair of the Academic Support Committee is looking into classroom technology management. He is doing an assessment of the problem. He finds that the "nomadic professors" ask, "who provides the chalk? Who do I call if something breaks, or is missing?" He is looking for suggestions and ideas. There does seem to be a difference between the academic and medical classrooms with regard to level of technology. It was pointed out that the College of Humanities and Sciences technology committee did an assessment last year. The School of Education is doing some research and can provide some data. The issue is quality, not necessarily quantity. It was noted that there are few services provided by the central university in support of the faculty; the departments handle phones, mail, and technology. Because of the competition for resources, that sets up squabbling among the departments. There are no incentives to do technology-enhanced classes because of the lack of equipment in the classrooms. In how many classrooms could one do a PowerPoint presentation?

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:40.

Next meeting is at 4pm on Tuesday, December 7 in the Forum Room on the Academic Campus.

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Neil W. Henry
November 23, 1999