Minutes of the Faculty Senate

September 4, 2001
Student Commons Forum Room, Academic Campus

Present:


Faculty Senate President, Dr. Bob Andrews, called the first Faculty Senate meeting of the year to order at 4:06 p.m. The new President introduced himself and welcomed new and returning Senators. Donna R. Brodd, the new Interim Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, was introduced to the faculty.

A motion to accept the minutes of the May 5, 2001 meeting was made and passed.

President's Report

Dr. Andrews stated that he would continue the change instituted last year to get items for action presented early on the Senate agenda and to make every effort to end Senate meetings in a timely manner.
Dr. Andrews introduced each of the Executive Committee and Committee Chairs. The names of all officers are listed on the Faculty Senate Web page at:
http://www.facultysenate.vcu.edu/

Vice President Christina Turner presented Dr. Wes Poyner with a plaque acknowledging his contributions as President of the Faculty Senate from 1999-2001.

The President announced that the first item of business was the election of representatives to University Council.

The following nominees were presented and elected: Dr. Alan Briceland, Dr. Bob Lamb, Dr. Judy Lewis and Dr. Bob Andrews

Alternates nominated and elected were: Dr. Dianne Simons and Dr. Nora Alder

Dr. Sue Brilliant, chair of the Faculty Grievance Chair Nominating Committee, announced that Dr. Steve Price had resigned as Grievance Panel Chairperson. He had been elected to serve until 08/14/2003. The Faculty Grievance Chair Nominating Committee was presenting Dr. Michael Smith to complete the term left unfinished by Dr. Price. The election will take place at the October 2nd Faculty Senate meeting. Dr. Wesley Poynor, immediate Past President of the Faculty Senate, is currently serving as the interim chair until the election takes place.

Dr. Trani Updates the Senate

Dr. Trani stated that the major priority of the previous year had been to repair the infrastructure. He said “This was the year of our difficulties,” referring to the issues surrounding problems resulting from the Office for Protection from Research Risks (OPRR) suspension of research with human subjects in January of 2000 that resulted in a revamping of the Institutional
Research review system. VCU now has four functioning IRBs, and has received complete accreditation by OPRR and the body that oversees animal research, AAALAC. Dr. Trani stated with pride that the research budget was up 10% by the end of the year, including a 19% increase in NIH funding. The university is looking for growth of $50 million in Federal funding to reach the $200 million level. VCU has seen growth in large volume center proposals.

Dr. Trani reported that VCU in the process of dramatically increasing the science space available, including
1. Floor by floor renovation of Sanger Hall Laboratory Space.
2. Massey Cancer Center addition
3. Addition of Richmond Eye & Ear Hospital
4. Medical Sciences II
5. Medical Sciences III, which will increase wet laboratory space
   Phase II & III additions (150-175,000 square feet) to the College of Engineering Building, that will house Biomedical & Engineering and the Division of Computer Science

Dr. Trani announced the September 18th open house for faculty to tour the new Life Sciences Building and the formal opening of the building on September 20th (Note: These openings were cancelled due to the events of September 11th.)

He also shared, with pride the plans for the “Broad is Back” Block Party scheduled from 10-2 on September 26th to celebrate the opening of VCU Health Systems Sports Medicine and Student Health facilities and the Trigon Championships. The tennis tournament, which will be held for the first time in the Siegel Center will host tennis celebrities including McEnroe, Wilander, and Lloyd. A concert by “Fighting Gravity” was also planned. (Note: The "Broad is Back" festivities were also cancelled but the Trigon Tennis Tournament will continue as planned.)

Dr. Trani then provided Senators with an update on capital improvements at VCU. The Gateway Building on the MCV campus is scheduled to open the ground and first floors on October 15. The top floor is scheduled for completion by February 15th. The Gateway Building will offer 1 of 10 most advanced imaging centers in the United States. The are two additional buildings under construction in the Biotech Park. A $62 million facility will house Consolidated Laboratories and an $18 million building that will house UNOS. These buildings will increase the count of Biotech buildings in the
complex to eight, with 1400 employees, and Dr. Trani indicated that number could increase four times over the next twenty years. The construction at the VCU Health System Stoney Point outpatient facility will be complete by next Spring. This project, which is a joint venture with the Richmond Eye and Ear Hospital, will allow for same day surgery in ophtalmology and otolarongology. Another Parking Deck, with 410 parking spots will soon be underway, the foundation space of this deck will provide 40,000 square feet for School of the Arts. More apartments are planned at the intersection of Broad and Belvedere and an extension is planned for the Student Commons.

A northern division of the Medical School has been established in partnership with Fairfax Hospital providing VCU with another campus and the Qatar campus was approved by SCHEV. It still needs final approval by Legislature. That campus is currently providing programs in Communication Arts & Design, Fashion Design, and Interior Design. The first VCU diplomas are scheduled for next May.

Senators were extended a personal invitation to attend Convocation and to join with the President in recognizing their distinguished faculty colleagues being recognized for the achievements.

**Report on Admissions**

Sam Messmer, Vice President for Outreach, shared admissions information. VCU saw an increase of an additional 72 students freshmen and transfer students this year. Total reenrollment is expected to hit 24,500 once off campus enrollment figures are completed. The increase in enrollment has occurred with a concomitant increase in SAT scores. This is the highest enrollment in VCU history, with the largest freshman class.

VCU has posted 1/3 of the growth among 4-year Public Institutions in Virginia. Amongst this year’s entering freshmen students 1 in 5 is enrolled as a Life-Sciences student. Ms. Messmer stated that VCU has made a "serious push in Northern Virginia" to attract good students and that she felt that VCU had "made significant headway in this tough market." She provided senators with the actual figures and stressed that while it is a positive sign that applications are up, VCU must increase the number of students accepting our offers of admission. She shared with obvious pride that "We are turning down students with credentials that we accepted several years ago. We are much more selective than we have been in the past." VCU has grown its freshman class by 1000 and has included fewer students from the lower quartile, who score under 900 on their SAT scores or whose GPA ranking is in the lowest quarter of their high school class.) She stated that VCU was getting most of its students from the
middle and upper quartiles making this years entering class "a dramatically better class than five years ago."

Dr. Trani invited questions and Senator Briceland inquired about the $600,000 reversion of budget for the School of Humanities and Sciences. Dr. Trani replied that due to no tuition increase or state money due to budget impasse in state government that money had to be given back to the state. He reiterated that the administration was pleased that VCU's mean SAT score 2 years ago was 1002, and the current mean is 1040 but asserted that VCU would always be a school that provides opportunities to students like “the Flowers Twins,” first generation college students from the Richmond area, who although they did not have excellent high school grades or SAT scores, were admitted to VCU and went on to earn doctorates and establish academic careers.

President Trani also shared with senators that VCU was giving the Honors Program "a home." The Provost had visited the Honors Programs at University of Alabama Birmingham and Florida International University and will model the new residential program after these programs. The new Honors Dorm will be housed on Floors 3-7 of the former Capitol Medical Center, purchased by the University. The dorm will accommodate 175 freshmen Honor Program participants. The Provost will appoint faculty to review the report on the Honors Program that has indicated that some changes need to be made to this program. The addition of this Honors Dorm will fulfill an identified goal listed in the 1993 Strategic Plan calling for a "focused dormitory."

**Announcements and Business**

**Dr. Chris Turner**, Senate Vice President, asked Senators to complete a form indicating their preference for Senate Committee assignments.

**Dr. Dianne Simons**, Senate Secretary, asked Senators to check the roster and notify her of any errors in departments, addresses, telephone numbers, or e-mail addresses.

**Dr. Bob Andrews** informed Senators of the University's efforts to initiate the "Early Alert" Program. This program, which targets early intervention to assist first year college students who need help making the adjustment to the academic requirements of college is a recommendation from the Retention Plan developed by the University last year. Letters will be sent to the home addresses of individuals not performing well academically.

Dr. Andrews asked for a volunteer from the Senate interested in serving on the United Way/ Combined VA Campaign, Wednesdays at noon, alternate campuses. Senator Suzee Leone volunteered.
Dr. Andrews reminded Senators continuing their terms and informed newly elected Senators that the **Honor System Review Committee** had presented its report at May Senate meeting. Senators were asked to review the report and to come to the October meeting prepared to discuss the recommendations. **Dr. Alan Briceland** distributed copies of his concerns about the report's recommendations and asked that Senators please review it prior to the October discussion.

Dr. Andrews stressed to Senators that a major portion of the October 2\(^{nd}\) meeting would be dedicated to discussion of Honor System Review Committee's Report. The report is available online at [http://www.students.vcu.edu/rg/policies/rg7honor.html](http://www.students.vcu.edu/rg/policies/rg7honor.html) Senators were encouraged to contact their constituencies and solicit faculty input in regard to the recommended changes prior to the next meeting.

**Academic Rights and Responsibilities Document**

Dr. Andrews called on Past President of the Senate, Dr. Wes Poynor to update Senators on a project that he has been working on for the last 4-5 months to get the Academic Rights and Responsibilities document made available online. This document, which is considered to be a part of faculty members contract with the University is aged and could only be obtained by requesting a copy through the Provost's office. As such, this is the only major policy affecting faculty that is not on the Web. Provost McDavis and Ruth Ann Bowman have assured Dr. Poynor that the document will be made available on the Web. AAUP has updated policies since this document was written and these need to be taken into consideration. Dr. Poynor stated that "We want to be Proactive." This document needs to be shared with faculty. Dr. Poynor expressed that the Senate "needs to look at it and determine if we want to change it.” He shared with Senators that there are at least two levels of policy. One that goes through university governance structure, including the Faculty Senate and University Council and approval by the Board of Visitors. Dr. Poynor clarified that the Faculty Senate is not a governing body, but that University Council is. Things that are passed by University Council and the Board of Visitors are binding. The other type of policy implementation is policy that is put in place to conform to state law (such as Human Resources policy- Computer Use policy for the state). Dr. Poynor expressed feelings that "faculty are different than any other state employees" and the Faculty Senate has a role in maintaining a watch of policies affecting faculty.

**Senator Dan Ream**, Chair of Academic Support Services Committee presented a progress report from his committee. For the benefit of new Senators Senator Ream shared the history of the Committee's work, which included a Spring 2000 survey of faculty that revealed that they were largely dissatisfied with their teaching environments. This was an initial effort to gather data on this issue and the survey used Faculty Senators and a snowball sampling technique. It did not randomly sample from
The Committee has investigated the cost to conduct a survey that has stronger data collection methodology. The Survey Research Lab estimated the cost at $17,000. However, Chip Byrd of the Office of Institutional Research, which operates under the supervision of the Provost’s Office has agreed to incorporate questions on this topic as part of an overall Faculty Survey to be administered this fall. Senator Ream noted that Provost McDavis has responded to the Faculty Senate Resolution that resulted from the original survey over the course of the last year and that there has been significant progress in the areas of concern identified by the Faculty Senate. Senator Ream stated that "This is a nice story that the Senate can tell." The Senate acted and “the President and Provost are on our side” in attempting to address the areas of concern.

Dr. Andrews announced that an e-mail message had been sent to faculty from Dr. Trani over the summer concerning the development of the VCU Code of Ethics. Senate officers, Dr. Poynor, Dr. Turner, and Dr. Andrews met with the committee that developed the document and expressed their concerns in regard to issues affecting faculty. The document is currently being revised and it will come back for wider Senate review later in the year. It will not be rushed in order to make the November Board of Visitors meeting, as originally planned.

Dr. Turner reported that she had been contacted and had met with members of Vice President Don Gering's office, who indicated an interest in working more closely with the faculty on formulating the VCU legislative agenda for the coming year. The University will, no doubt, endorse efforts in the General Assembly's to establish the $200 million base adequacy funding identified by the study that they commissioned to examine funding for higher education in the state. Funding for VCU Libraries and maintaining faculty salaries at a minimum of the 60% level of the national averages will also be priorities. Dr. Turner indicated that since the General Assembly addressed the issue of indigent funding, that issues of importance to academics could now be considered in the University's legislative priorities.

Dr. Turner also announced that American Association of University Professors (AAUP) chapters and the Faculty Senate of Virginia had agreed to work more closely, sharing minutes of meetings and sending representatives to meetings of the other organization.

Suzze Leone and Nora Adler will be the VCU Faculty Senate representatives to AAUP.

Dr. Turner shared with Senators that the Faculty Senate of Virginia was in the process of organizing an election forum and requesting that the two gubernatorial candidates respond to a set of questions oriented toward Higher Education issues. (Note: The date and time have been announced. This forum is scheduled for October 16th from 9 am to 4:30 pm on the campus of Virginia Union University in Richmond.) Senator Patricia Selinger inquired as to the Faculty Senate of Virginia's response to the
Senator Patricia Selinger inquired as to the Faculty Senate of Virginia’s response to the dissolving of the Faculty Senate at Virginia State University. The Faculty Senate of Virginia passed a resolution denouncing the dissolution. The AAUP may also put Virginia State University on an AAUP censure list, which could impact the hiring of new faculty.

Dr. Judy Lewis acknowledged Wes Poynor's efforts in attempting to obtain University permission for the President of Faculty Senate to send broadcast e-mails to all faculty. Permission of the Provost is required for any e-mail communications going out to all university faculty. Dr. Poynor shared that he is working on establishing and "Email tree" consisting of members of the Executive Committee and other Senators who have lists of all faculty in their School. Dr. Poynor was quick to point out that we were approaching the need in a different way and that the Provost was "supportive of what we’re doing."

All Senators were encouraged to create an e-mail distribution list of faculty members in their respective school for the purpose of sharing Senate information and soliciting feedback in regard to Senate issues.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Dianne F. Simons, Ph.D., OTR
Faculty Senate Secretary-Treasurer