Minutes of the Faculty Senate

April 2, 2002

Forum Room, Student Commons


Absent: Costanzo, Diegelman, Kennamer, Rife, Seago, Wood

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 pm.

Minutes from March Faculty Senate meeting were approved.

President of Faculty Senate Bob Andrews reminded members that several Senators’ terms will expire this year. These Senate members should inform their divisions of needed elections so the names of new Senators can be forwarded to Faculty Senate in time for the fall semester. Diane Simons has already sent letters to Deans reminding them of the Senate seats up for election this year, but Senators should make sure the process has started in their schools and colleges.

Bob Andrews announced to Faculty Senate members that a committee working on
University General Education requirements has met and its recommendations are out. Please notify your Deans if your units have not received this information; Faculty Senate wants to make sure that all academic units and faculty have the occasion to offer input on the proposed requirements.

In regards to the request made by Faculty Senate to Dr. Trani that a faculty member (the past president of Faculty Senate) have a seat at the Board of Visitors meetings, Bob Andrews did meet and talk with President Trani about the matter. It was pointed out that George Mason University tried and failed to have a faculty member placed on their Board of Visitors. Not wanting to have the same experience as George Mason University, it has been agreed that this issue should be taken up with the new Rector of the VCU Board after he assumes that responsibility to see how best to proceed. Dr. Trani said to Bob Andrews that it is more important to faculty to have input within the administration i.e., President’s Council. The Faculty Senate will pursue efforts to make sure that faculty and Faculty Senate do indeed have a credible voice that can be heard within the Administration and the Board of Visitors.

Neil Henry passed along to Bob Andrews a request to look into how fire drills at the University are scheduled. There have been problems, for example, with fire drills interrupting classes during tests and exams. An inquiry was made to see if drills could be worked around test and mid-term exam times. This cannot be guaranteed. The requirements state that drills have to be during the academic year when everyone is here. Having the drills just during the start of the semester cannot be assured because drills in the dorms take place early fall and there is not enough time to also do the classrooms before the start of tests. Having fire drills at the start of the winter semester is not acceptable because it would put people out in cold weather. Fire drill times cannot be advertised. However, each drill is organized through building coordinators so faculty concerned about a scheduled test in a course can provide the dates of tests to the appropriate building coordinator. Bob will confer with Neil to see if something about fire drills should be placed on the Faculty Senate web page.

Wes Poynor distributed ballots for the election of Faculty Senate officers. The term of office for each position is one year. For the past eight years, presidents of Faculty Senate have served two years in a row. A call from the floor for nominations in addition to those recommended by the Nominating Committee was made. Following no further nominations, the ballot was distributed and then counted. Results: Robert Andrews, president; Christina Turner, vice president; Peter Kirkpatrick, secretary; Judith Lewis, East Campus representative; Dan Ream, West Campus representative.
The next item of business was budget reductions in library funding. Wes Poyner illustrated the devastating effects the reduction is going to have on VCU Libraries. Of the $544,000 reduction, $200,000 will be in personnel: loss of student workers and hourly positions. The library will undoubtedly have to reduce its hours and schedule over the next two years. It is reported that no faculty positions will be lost. 60% of the reductions, $344,000 dollars, are of serious concern to the faculty since these are aimed directly at journal subscriptions. All print journals will be discontinued if they have electronic versions. VCU will cancel its membership in the Research Library Association. In the next two years, between 1,000 and 1,200 journal subscriptions will be eliminated. 300 journal titles will be lost quickly, immediately. It was noted that the Medical Library houses 70% of journal subscriptions within VCU Libraries. The reductions will translate into an overall cut of 7% in all publications and more specifically a 14% cut of all journal titles. Monograph acquisitions will also be reduced.

The University Library Committee is working on a resolution. The fear is that even if VCU Libraries were to get the money back in the future there would remain a two-year gap of books that were not and could no longer be acquired. Wes Poyner indicated that reallocation has to take place within General Funds. Senate members discussed their concerns about the proposed cuts and their impact on research and teaching within the University.

The following motion was then put forward by the Faculty Senate:

_The Faculty Senate urges that if additional funds become available to the University, they be prioritized and assigned to the VCU Libraries in order to ameliorate the devastating impact of the proposed cuts. In addition, the Faculty Senate urges that the University adhere to the proposal for distribution of non-resident tuition revenues to the VCU Libraries as presented by the Provost to the Faculty Senate in its meeting on October 2, 2001, as well as support other funding avenues included in the VCU Libraries five-year financial plan presented to the University on November 6, 2001. To ensure a viable and strong collection for current and future generations of students and scholars, we strongly urge you to make these critical resources available to the VCU Libraries._

The motion passed unanimously.

The next issue discussed by Faculty Senate concerns the By-laws that University
Council has been revising, especially with regards to the composition of the Committee on Academic Affairs. The previously suggested 6 to 4 reduction in the number of faculty members on the committee has been dropped. There are currently no staff members on the Committee of Academic Affairs. Staff Senate would like to have 2 members on the Committee. Officer Grant Warren, President of Staff Senate, came to convey to Faculty Senate the reasons why Staff Senate suggests a change to the current composition of members serving on the Committee on Academic Affairs. Christina Turner underlined the fact that Staff Senate members are not elected but rather appointed by the Administration. Another point stressed in the comments of Faculty Senate members is that the Committee on Academic Affairs is a body that looks at the curricula, not of a direct concern to Staff. During the discussions, Faculty Senate members stated that faculty is indeed the body fundamentally in charge of curricular matters within the University. The Administration originally proposed to keep the same cap on the number of voting members on the Committee. The present Committee on Academic Affairs is comprised of the following members: Provost, 2 Deans, 6 faculty, 2 students; and serving ex officio: Vice President of Health Sciences and Director of the Libraries. Several changes have been proposed for the composition of the committee including the reduction to four faculty (this is no longer being considered), giving voting rights to the Vice President of Health Science, adding one additional voting student member and adding one or two staff persons as voting members. Following discussions in Faculty Senate on these proposed changes, two motions were put before the members of the Faculty Senate and voted on.

Motion #1: The absolute majority of voting members of the Committee on Academic Affairs shall be faculty members. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion #2: Faculty Senate does not support a change of the language and recommends that the current language of the Bylaws of the University Council be unchanged and remain the same with regards to the Committee on Academic Affairs. Motion passed unanimously.

Betty Reppert from Student Health Services and Health Promotion came to present the final version of the VCU Alcohol and Drug Policy which was brought to and recommended by the Executive Committee. Betty Reppert reported two reasons why the policy should be in place. First, it is good policy for the University to have a document concerning illicit drug use. Second, federal funding is tied to the Drug Free and Work Place Act of 1989. Federal funding states that there must be a policy for all students and employees. The policy is to be distributed every year in order to keep students and employees informed about local, state and federal drug laws. Last year,
Faculty Senate did submit suggestions to the University Substance Abuse Committee that were taken into consideration.

Faculty Senate voted unanimously to approve the policy.

The next major item on the agenda was the proposed Research Data Policy. Bob Andrews first saw the policy in December 2001 at a President Council meeting. In January, Faculty Senate voted to ask members of the Committee on Academic Affairs of the University Council not to support the policy in its current form, so it was tabled. Robert Lamb and Joyce Lloyd solicited and received feedback on the document. They reworked a draft incorporating the Faculty Senate’s suggestions about ownership. The Senate felt that retention, access and custody were appropriately addressed in their revision.

A document with Dr. Torr’s responses to questions from last month’s Senate meeting was distributed. She states in her reply that ownership is an important element of the policy and that it needs to be in place. Discussions in Faculty Senate raised questions as to “what exactly constitutes research data” and “does all research data necessarily imply intellectual property”. Agencies may consider ownership of research data from a different viewpoint. The conversations amongst Faculty Senate members about the proposed Research Data Policy ended by a motion being put forth.

The motion that Dr. Torr appoint a few people and Faculty Senate appoint members from its body representing the diverse research areas of the university to revise and refine the document was approved unanimously.

Other business during the meeting was an announcement by Dan Ream regarding responses to the classroom surveys. He asked Faculty Senate members to make sure their adjunct faculty colleagues know about the survey that can be filled out on-line.

With no other business before it, Faculty Senate adjourned at 6:10pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter S. Kirkpatrick
Faculty Senate Secretary-Treasurer (elect)

Posted May 3, 2002 by Neil W. Henry