Meeting, April 1 2003
Student Commons Academic Campus

Agenda

Approve March Minutes
Opening Remarks - Bob Andrews
Election of Officers nominees listed below)
  Judy Lewis, President
  Fred Certosimo, Vice President
  Dan Ream, Secretary
  Bob Lamb, East Campus Representative
  Pat Cummins, West Campus Representative
Report of Nominating Committee for University Grievance Panel Chair
  Nominee, Wes Poynor
Language for a nonvoting representative to the VCU Board of Visitors (below)
Informational Items
  VCU Life Sciences Academic Unit, V.P. Tom Huff (below)
  Silent Auction to Support VCU Child Development Center
  Rebuilding Together
  Timely Election of 2003-2004 Senators
New Business

Minutes of the Faculty Senate

April 1, 2003

Forum Room, Student Commons
President Bob Andrews called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

The March minutes were approved as written.

President’s Comments

- Bob reminded Senate members to support the silent auction on April 3 for the VCU Child Development Center and to participate in the Rebuilding Together project on April 26.
- He asked senators to encourage their units to have timely elections of Senators for 2003-2004.
- He announced that faculty and staff can find information concerning open enrollment options for health care on the University Human Resources web site.
- Bob talked with the chair of the Academic and Health Affairs Policy Committee of the VCU Board of Visitors, as well as President Trani and Provost McDavis, about the language concerning the request for a nonvoting faculty representative to the Board of Visitors.
- Bob reviewed the history of the Research Data Policy and gave an update on its progress. Dr. Trani, Dr. McDavis, Mrs. Messmer, Dr. Torr, and Dr. Andrews discussed the wording in the Research Data Policy. Bob thinks the language of the policy is now at an acceptable level with the exception of the language that says all research data belong to the University. Many of our faculty members do not believe that University ownership of all research data is necessary and that it runs counter to Dr. Trani’s desire to encourage entrepreneurial activities. Also, the current language is especially troublesome as there is no clear definition of what University ownership means relative to the use of research data by individual faculty. Dr. Torr is to look at the policy
language in comparison with policies in other institutions. Officially, the Research Data Policy is tabled at the University Council’s Academic Affairs Committee.

- The **Conflict of Interest Policy** is the next issue in this area that the Senate will need to work on with University Administration.

**University Grievance Panel**

The Nominating Committee presented **Wes Poynor** as its nominee for chair of the University Grievance Panel. The election for this position will be during the **May meeting**, at which time Senators may make other nominations.

**Officers for 2003-2004**

The slate of officers for Faculty Senate for 2003-2004 as presented by the Nominating Committee was unanimously elected. The officers are the following:

- **President**, Judy Lewis
- **Vice President**, Fred Certosimo
- **Secretary**, Dan Ream
- **East Campus Representative**, Bob Lamb
- **West Campus Representative**, Pat Cummins

**Faculty Representative to VCU Board of Visitors**

In his opening remarks, Faculty Senate President Andrews reviewed and updated the Faculty Senate request for a nonvoting faculty representative to the Board of Visitors. Currently, faculty can attend meetings of the Board of Visitors and raise their hands to request to speak at these meetings; but officially they do not have a voice. **Dr. Wes Poynor moved that Faculty Senate supports a nonvoting faculty representative to the VCU Board of Visitors and supports the concepts in the proposed language concerning this issue. The motion was unanimously passed.**

**Commendation Resolution**

**Faculty Senate passed by voice vote the amended resolution below** that thanks Governor Warner for his courageous comments concerning actions taken by the Board of Visitors at Virginia Tech.

*Whereas the Board of Visitors of Virginia Tech voted to remove*
affirmative action protection from admission and hiring decisions; voted to remove sexual orientation from protection against discrimination in its non-discrimination statement; and voted to restrict certain controversial topics from being presented on campus; and

Whereas the Faculty of Virginia Tech have expressed concern that these decisions were made unilaterally and without appropriate advice and consent from individuals and constituencies outside the Board of Visitors and without previous input and discussion to the Board of Visitors; and

Whereas these actions are seen as threats to constitutional freedoms of the citizenry of Virginia; and

Whereas Governor Mark Warner spoke to raise concerns about these actions and requested that the Board of Visitors re-visit their decisions;

Therefore be it RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate of Virginia Commonwealth University shares Governor Warner’s concerns and thanks him for courageously speaking out on behalf of the citizens and the academic communities of Virginia.

Bylaws Review Ad-Hoc Committee

Dr. Dianne Simons, Chair of the Credentials and Rules Committee and the Bylaws Review Ad-Hoc Committee, distributed proposed revisions to The Bylaws of the Faculty, the Standing Rules of the Faculty Senate, and the Faculty Senate Leadership Guidelines. She gave an overview of the revision process and asked Senators to review the proposed revisions that will be discussed at the May Faculty Senate meeting.

VCU Life Sciences

Dr. Tom Huff, Vice Provost for Life Sciences, gave a slide presentation on the VCU Life Sciences Academic Unit. His presentation was followed by faculty input and questions. The Life Sciences Unit has a link on the VCU Web home page.

Announcement: Look for an e-mail from University Libraries concerning journal cancellations.
Proposed Language for a
Nonvoting Faculty Representative to the VCU Board of Visitors

The VCU Board of Visitors will appoint a nonvoting faculty advisory representative to the Board of Visitors to serve a similar function as the current student representative to the Board of Visitors. The role of the faculty representative to the Board is to be available to communicate faculty perspectives on issues considered by the Board that affect faculty. The term of service will be the 12-month period coinciding with the fiscal year. This representative will be selected from the members of the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate for the upcoming academic year. Strong consideration should be given to the immediate past president of the Faculty Senate. The representative should not be an untenured tenure-track faculty member.

Justification: Official faculty representation completes the team approach to information gathering for decision making by the Board of Visitors. It is important for the Board of Visitors to be aware of all major perspectives within the university when making decisions, and one of those is the faculty perspective. Faculty members are responsible for the university’s primary products of teaching, research and service. In addition, the faculty representative will facilitate communication of Board decisions to the faculty.

Members of the VCU Faculty Senate are elected by their fellow faculty to represent them at the university level. Each spring, the Faculty Senate elects members to leadership offices, and these individuals constitute the Senate’s Executive Committee for the academic year that begins in mid-August. The six members of the Senate Executive Committee are the east and west campus representatives, secretary, vice president, president and immediate past president. Hence these faculty members are
selected by their colleagues based on their service in the Senate and should be knowledgeable of faculty perspectives. The immediate past president is generally the one with the most experience representing faculty perspectives.

**VCU LIFE SCIENCES**

**March 27, 2003**

Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) proposes to create a new academic unit, VCU Life Sciences, in response to the need to prepare students for the anticipated growth in new life sciences jobs in the coming decades. The skills identified for these jobs require highly interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary approaches, often falling between the boundaries of traditional academic disciplines. Also, the way that the life sciences are understood and taught is likely to be fundamentally different, with increasing emphasis on systems biosciences as an important complement to more traditional, purely reductive approaches. VCU is responding to this need by taking advantage of VCU Life Sciences as an existing university-wide matrix academic organization in teaching, research and public service to make it a formal academic unit similar to a University center with academic programs. However, VCU Life Sciences would not have the ability to grant tenure, but as a matrix academic organization would work with existing tenure-granting units to recruit faculty to accomplish its mission. The objective of Phase II of VCU’s strategic plan, approved by the VCU Board of Visitors in 1993, specifically outlines the need to bring VCU’s major academic and administrative divisions together to work on mutual initiatives that will accomplish VCU’s goal of national leadership. Certainly, the vision behind VCU Life Sciences is a direct response to this objective.

**Resources:**

VCU Life Sciences capitalizes on a 10-year infrastructure investment on both campuses of $400 million in life sciences facilities, including the $27 million Eugene P. and Lois E. Trani Center for Life Sciences. VCU Life Sciences encompasses the resources and interests not only of the Academic and MCV campuses, but also the Virginia Biotechnology Research Park, and the Rice Center for Environmental Life Sciences, a gift of 342 acres overlooking the James River in Charles City County. In addition to these resources and interests, VCU Life Sciences also encompasses and financially supports a number of centers and facilities that are central to its mission. These include the Center for Environmental Studies (CES) that emphasizes the importance of the life sciences through innovative environmental and ecological
research, hands-on teaching and community service all of which will be substantially enhanced with the addition of the Rice Center when fully developed, and the Center for the Study of Biological Complexity (CSBC), that oversees the bioinformatics curriculum and research development through an integrative, interdisciplinary approach. The mission of the CSBC is to apply the principles of complexity to contemporary biological problems in all aspects of research and scholarly activity. The Nucleic Acids Research Facility and the Mass Spectrometry Center for the Study of Biocomplexity both support research specific to the CSBC. Plans are underway to create a Proteomics Center at VCU, which will be an important factor in allowing VCU researchers to remain competitive in the post genomic era.

**Academic Programs:**

VCU Life Sciences seeks to establish new degree programs that directly address the need to prepare students for the exploding growth in careers in the life sciences. VCU Life Sciences also recognizes the need to be sufficiently flexible in its offerings so that the programs will be equally attractive to students and future employers in this rapidly emerging industry of the life sciences. Therefore, VCU Life Sciences will offer degree programs that include bachelor’s degrees, combined bachelor’s-master’s degrees, master’s degrees, and doctorate degrees.

**A new Ph.D. degree in Integrative Life Sciences** will directly address the need to train life scientists who are able to integrate multiple disciplines, have strong technological and computational skills, and are sufficiently flexible in their training to be able to easily move among different projects and research venues. The proposal, now moving through the approval process, includes example student curricula in invasive ecology, bioinformatics, and cancer biology. The core curriculum includes courses in biological complexity and bioinformatics technologies that underpin the program’s emphasis in systems biosciences.

**A new B.S.- M. S. in Environmental Studies** will be administered through the **Center for Environmental Studies (CES)**. The CES is now jointly administered through the College of Humanities and Sciences (CHS) and VCU Life Sciences. A B.S. and M.S. proposal is now moving through the approval process as a joint CHS and VCU Life Sciences proposal. When the transition of CES to VCU Life Sciences is complete, the B.S.-M.S. in Environmental Studies will be programs of VCU Life Sciences.

**A new B.S.-M.S. in Bioinformatics,** now entering the approval process,
will be administered through the Center for the Study of Biological Complexity in VCU Life Sciences. The M.S. program has been significantly bolstered by two major extramural grants, one from the Sloan Foundation and one funded by a joint NSF/NIH grant to establish a Bioinformatics and Bioengineering Summer Institute (BBSI) at VCU. The Bioinformatics Master’s will include 3 tracks: Computational Bioinformatics, Genomic Bioinformatics, and Quantitative Bioinformatics.

These programs respond to what others and we believe will be the focus of life sciences research in the 21st century.

Research:

As a university-wide organization across multiple academic disciplines on both campuses, VCU Life Sciences has been able to approach the research and study of biological life as a continuum, extending from the smallest molecules to the largest ecosystems. These new integrative research strategies are rapidly superceding the reductive approaches to life science investigation since it is likely that purely reductive research will become less competitive in the face of these new integrative paradigms. VCU Life Sciences has focused most of its research activities in three areas:

(1) expansion of large-scale life sciences research infrastructure, particularly in bioinformatics, genomics, and proteomics, that would allow life sciences researchers on both campuses to be competitive in the “big biology” of the 21st century,
(2) leading the University’s integrative efforts to bring systems biosciences approaches and complex modeling to life sciences research, and
(3) the Virginia Rivers Initiative of the Rice Center for Environmental Life Sciences.

Public Outreach:

VCU Life Sciences has extensive public service activities, much of it focused on public education at the local, regional, and national level. The local public education activities include the VCU Mini-Med School, the Maymont-VCU Discovery Institute, and the VCU Internship in Life Sciences Entrepreneurship. Regional public education activities include The Governor’s School in Medicine and Life Sciences and outreach activities at the Rice Center for Environmental Life Sciences. National public education activities include the development of educational materials using existing episodes of the weekly public television series Secrets of the Sequence, the annual
VCU Life Sciences Survey, the We See U in the Life Sciences national life sciences career guide for middle school/high school students, and The VCU Bioinformatics and Bioengineering Summer Institute.

Faculty:

VCU Life Sciences has a cadre of currently productive faculty and professional staff on both campuses, specifically committed to its mission. These faculty and staff may be newly recruited or existing and fall into three funding categories: (1) fully funded or nearly fully funded by VCU Life Sciences, (2) partially funded by VCU Life Sciences or substantially helped in setup expenses by VCU Life Sciences, and (3) existing faculty in other academic units who significantly share in the mission of VCU Life Sciences. Most faculty will have joint appointments with other academic units within the university. VCU Life Sciences will function as a center with academic programs but will not be a tenure-granting unit within the University.

Funding:

VCU Life Sciences has multiple sources of revenue for support of its teaching and research activities: General Funds from the Commonwealth of Virginia for Strengthening Life Sciences Curricula; Higher Education Equipment Trust Fund; extramurally funded research grants, that continuing to increase; nonresident student tuition funds and charitable giving. VCU Life Sciences will act as a matrix academic organization, taking advantage of courses and administrative infrastructure that already exist and adding new core courses with funding that already exists.

Reporting:

The Vice Provost for Life Sciences directs VCU Life Sciences. The Vice Provost for Life Sciences has a straight-line reporting relationship to the Provost and dotted line reporting relationships to the Vice President for Health Sciences and to the Vice President for Research. Annual reports for FY2000-2001 and FY2001-2002 have been submitted to the Provost. Major evaluations, internal and external, will be conducted periodically at the discretion of the Provost.