Minutes of the Faculty Senate Meeting
March 2 2004

Student Lounge, Lyons Building


Absent: Adyemi, Chessin, Hague, Munoz, Olds, Salandro, Thompson, Welleford.

President Judy Lewis called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

1. The minutes of the January 27th meeting were approved without revision.

2. President Lewis reported on the following…

- -- She spoke to prospective students and their parents at the February 7th Open House at the Siegel Center, where she emphasized VCU’s use of faculty in the classrooms in lieu of graduate teaching assistants.
- -- Online voting on seven proposed Faculty Bylaws changes concludes next week. They will then go to University Council, President’s Council, and the Board of Visitors for final approval.
- -- President Lewis has discussed faculty participation in evaluation of the deans and has been assured by the Provost’s office that all faculty and deans will participate in this process.
- -- Faculty concerns about library funding were re-asserted to the Provost who says that several proposals for improving this are under consideration.
• -- President Trani is holding a meeting this Friday to discuss the Student Centered University initiative.
• --The SACS Accreditation visiting team will meet with 8 to 10 faculty on March 11th and Bob Andrews and President Lewis will attend the closing meeting to hear the team’s conclusions.

3. The **Policy on Threat Assessment** was voted upon and unanimously approved.

4. The **Rules & Procedures revision** incorporating university sanctions upon those convicted of crimes was discussed.

5. President Lewis reported for Rules & Credentials chair Dianne Simons, who was absent, that re-apportionment of Faculty Senate seats next year will involve the School of Social Work gaining one seat and the School of Pharmacy losing one seat. The report was approved by vote.

6. **Nominating committee Chair Wes Poynor** announced nominees for Faculty Senate offices next year, as follows: Judy Lewis for President, Kathryn Murphy-Judy for Vice-President, Pat Cummins for Recording Secretary, Dan Ream for Corresponding Secretary, Dianne Simons for East Campus Representative, and Gary Sarkozi for West Campus representative. No additional nominations were made from the floor. There will be another chance for nominations from the floor at the April meeting.

7. **Liz Cramer, Kathryn Murphy-Judy, and June Nicholson** made a presentation for the **Senate’s Affirmative Action/EEO Committee concerning domestic partner benefits**, which is in line with the university’s non-discrimination policy.

- The School of Social Work has passed a resolution favoring domestic partner benefits, and the School of the Arts faculty is considering a similar resolution. At present, state employee benefit restrictions prevent health insurance coverage, but the AA/EEO committee proposes the granting of equal internal benefits for all domestic partner relationships, such as recreation passes or library use benefits.
- William & Mary already offers domestic partner benefits, it was noted. Economic and emotional impacts of not offering such benefits were discussed. President Judy Lewis noted that President Trani would support granting such benefits if domestic partners would file reports on their status.
- Bob Andrews discussed guest privileges at VCU recreation facilities. The supporting reason for pursuing this benefit is equity. Andrews asserted that all faculty are not treated the same since a married faculty member can obtain guest privileges for a spouse, but unmarried faculty cannot obtain such a guest
privilege. Andrews proposed that we seek to allow all faculty to be able to obtain a guest pass for a designated person for the year, which would treat all faculty the same. He suggested voting against the proposal that was presented and requested that we pursue allowing each full-time faculty member to obtain a guest pass for one designated person for a year. This would provide equity.

- Lewis supported incremental progress on this issue in the granting of university-level benefits now. It was suggested that “partners” be expanded to include disabled parents or siblings under a faculty member’s care—though only one partner per faculty member would be included. A straw vote was taken to gauge support of the overall proposal and while divided, there were more people in support of this proposal than against it.
- Further information will be distributed by e-mail and a vote will be taken at next month’s meeting.

8. The Research Data Policy was discussed. After a long review period, a vote will be taken at next month’s meeting regarding the Senate’s approval of this proposed policy. The Board of Visitors may choose to adopt it whether the Senate supports it or not. An FAQ document was distributed to clarify some questions already raised about this policy.

9. President Lewis announced that next month’s meeting will include:

   - a visit from the new director of the VCU Honors Program,
   - President Trani will present a new master site plan,
   - elections for Senate officers will be held, and
   - a revision of the Faculty Handbook will be discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:24 p.m.

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Dan Ream, Secretary

Posted by Neil W. Henry
April 2, 2004