Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
February 3, 2009 4:00 PM
Student Commons Theater, Monroe Park Campus

Present:

Absent:
Ben-Ezra, Betzhold, Bukaveckas, Camden, Chadha, Coggins, Coogle, Falcucci, Fowler, Gill, Green, Huband, Lee, Nguyen, Marshak, Norman, Richardson, Rowe, Schreffler, Seibert, Sterling, Sweeney, Williams, Zhao

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

I. The minutes of the December meeting were approved with the correction that the meeting was held at the Lyons Building Student Lounge and addition of one attendee.

II. The Nominating Committee for 2009/2010 Officers was elected. Members are: Dan Ream, Kathy Murphy-Judy, Robert Andrews.
III. The Faculty Senate Reallocation Report was presented by Dr. Scott Street, Chair of the Credentials and Rules Committee. The report was approved unanimously. The report is appended to these Minutes.

IV. A call was made by the Chair of the Credentials and Rules Committee, Dr. Scott Street, for review of the Bylaws and Standing Rules of the Faculty Senate as required by the Senate By-Laws. He asked that comments on suggested changes be submitted to him by 3:00 PM on Tuesday, February 17th.

IV. Presentation and Discussion with VCU President Eugene Trani

In his final appearance before the Faculty Senate prior to his retirement this summer, Dr. Trani made comments and responded to questions that had been submitted by Senators in writing and then from the floor. He indicated that it has been an interesting, if difficult, year. He mentioned that VCU is “in a good place” right now.

Specific items addressed in response to questions follow.

1. The budget review and reduction process will be addressed using the 20-20 Strategic Planning Committee which will look at academic and non-academic cuts. Vice President for Finance John Bennett addressed state processes and the Stimulus Package which was still an unknown factor. He mentioned that in addition to cuts this year, there may be a $30 million cut next year plus rising costs. Dr. Trani thought there may be no new construction, but may be protection of student aid. The cuts will be difficult, but we will not need to go to financial exigency or dismissal of tenured faculty.

2. His latest book is in press and will be translated into Chinese and Russian, being due in May 2009. He is working on two other books and will teach honors courses.

3. Regarding a raise of $50,000 for former Governor and Mayor
Wilder he indicated that he had an appointment since 1994, President Train said that the original appointment in 1994 was for $100,000 and that was reduced when he became Mayor. He is in his office everyday. The averaged distinguished professor salary (of which there are 7) is $170,000.

4. Regarding significant challenges for VCU in next five years, he indicated: 1) budget for the next 3 years, 2) the relationship between the Health System and the University have to be maintained, 3) media issues of local print journalism and new media forms being explored.

5. Regarding community outreach programs, especially the Community School for the Performing Arts which was ended, President Trani responded that it was Department of Music and School of the Arts decision to focus resources elsewhere and that they had been successful in that, as reflected in national rankings.

6. Regarding a question regarding VCU not having a new library, he replied that a new library was spared from cuts this year and that the VCU Vision 20/20 Plan provided for resources. Building expansion of Cabell Library is second on the list for the Monroe Park Campus when funds become available, with the General Class Room building first. He indicated he took issue with the question.

7. Regarding VCU as a green university, President Trani pointed out that he thinks every student could be given a permanent e-mail address and that we have “silver” award buildings on line and coming on line. The VCU web page has information on sustainability.

8. A question regarding the quality of e-mail service for faculty was raised in the questions list. Vice President for Finance John Bennett answered that the were 50 million e-mail messages per week and that we have made progress. There is excessive storage in the system, and using the delete button would help. There is 98% availability of e-mail
service. Vendors are being reviewed for providing permanent student e-mail accounts (this will lighten the load on the system).

9. Regarding the future of humanities in higher education, President Trani mentioned that he was a historian. The College of Humanities and Sciences working on an interdisciplinary center and several activities. We will not have individual departments based Ph.D. programs, but rather interdisciplinary ones.

10. Regarding the Faculty Senate resolution to adopt guidelines for the conduct of academic investigations, he indicated we are state agency and regulations of the Commonwealth apply. Fact finding is a first step, but the resolution of this protecting rights of the accused is in the planning stages. The Rodney Monroe case is being pursued in the Board of Visitors in terms of a process with due process regarding revocation of a degree policy and procedure. SACS and JLARC reviews are done with it. The threat to tenure was inappropriate.

11. Regarding parking for faculty and staff, he indicated we have doubled spaces from 6000 to 12,000. The building cost of a parking space is $20,000.

12. Regarding the Lumpkins Jail dig in Shockoe Bottom being an educational opportunity, he said felt that the opportunity was really a faculty interest question, and this area would eventually provide parking, having several limitations for building. He also mentioned W. Grace Street about which there had been rumors concerning VCU. VCU is not purchasing on Grace east of Lombardy except the former Ukrops Building; the VCU Foundation did buy the Ukrops market lot on W. Grace, but we are not going west of Ryland.

13. Regarding the 2008 Faculty Senate Resolution to Support Amendment of VCU’s Reaffirmation Statement of the Equal Opportunity Policy to include Gender Identity and Gender Expression,
he indicated we have asked the Attorney General to review this for action.

14. As to his most prized accomplishment, he indicated that it has been good relations with students and faculty. It is a great university with a lot of invested people and we can listen to them.

15. In response to a question about Chief Fuller of the VCU police he said that there would be a criminal investigation and that VCU will not interfere in any way with that. Provost Gottfredson spoke of the process and mentioned that academic degree processes at VCU mentioned in the press were not related to the criminal investigation.

14. Finally, Dr. Trani responded to several questions from the floor: 1) he affirmed the importance of VCU Hospitals and Health Systems offering services and research opportunities, 2) he said that during the budget reductions consolidations at department and division levels are possible, as are reassignments, but that he is not going to reduce tenured faculty, but that there may be fewer collateral and adjunct faculty. While in the past there has been concern about the number of collateral and adjunct faculty, this may help us now. Provost Gottfredson then referred to opportunities for looking at our curriculum models and delivery. President Trani indicated we would not grow through increased admissions in the Freshman class but that we may grow through retention. He thought the biggest change since he came was that we are a true university.

Having no further questions from the audience, the meeting was adjourned at 5:45PM.