Meeting Minutes, Tuesday, February 3, 2015, 4-6 p.m., Student Commons Theater, MPC

Attendance:
Present: Alcaine(EDU alt for Xu), Alford(ARTS), Alvarez(HAS), Andrews(BUS), Artello(WS), Baranoff (BUS), Bedell(StAff), Brookman(SOM), Brown(NUR), Cates(UC), Colello(SOM), Davis(VCU-L), DeAngelis (ARTS), Dragoescu(SOM alt for Sabik), Easley(ARTS), Falyar(AHP), Fauri(SWK), Freyer(ARTS), Ghaphery(VCU-L), Hargraves(EDU), Honnold(HAS), Hylton-Gravatt(CHA), Jones(SOM), Kaziewicz(UC), LaRose(SOM), Lee(BUS), Lister(SOM), Lotze(HAS alt for Crislip), McVoy(SOM), Nadpara(PHA alt for Morgan), Nicholson(HAS), O’Connell(SOM), Ottens(SOM), Patton(ARTS), Pellegrini(CHA), Puris(SOM), Rapchick(StAff), Rector(HAS), Rhodes(EDU), Robnault(EDU), Rodriguez(HAS), Saladino(HAS), Secret(SWK), Seinfeld(SOM), Shriar(WS), South(HAS), Street(HAS), Totah(HAS), Vijayakumar(BUS alt for Smith), Wayne (EGR)
Absent: Bachmann(SOM), Carroll(SOM), Chen(EDU), Chestnut(HAS), Coble(DEN), Conlon(SWK), Dodson(SOM), Gannaway(SOM), Harrison(HAS), Hobgood(SOM), Israel(ARTS), Jallo(NUR), Marinello(SOM), Octave (DEN), Parsons(SOM), Ratliff(SOM), Sims(HAS), Smith(UC), Wagner(AHP), Weaver(SOM), Wickham(SOM), Zhang(EGR)

Procedural Items: President J. Nicholson called the meeting to order at 4:05 and welcomed President Rao, members of the Faculty Senate and other university faculty.

President Nicholson asked for a moment of silence to remember Dr. Thomas Huff, vice provost for life sciences and research at Virginia Commonwealth University.

S. Street presented the Reapportionment Report for Academic Year 2015-2016 which had been e-mailed to faculty senators and passed out at the current meeting. Street highlighted the following: the apportionments remain relatively unchanged except that the College of Humanities & Sciences gains a Faculty Senate seat while University College loses a seat; the average total faculty representation is 1 Senator for approximately every 40 faculty members; the School of Engineering gained a Grievance Panel seat while University College lost a seat. The full report is available on the Faculty Senate Website http://www.facultysenate.vcu.edu/.

M. Secret presented the slate for the Faculty Senate Nominating Committee and asked for nominations from the floor. The following senators were elected to the Nominating committee: Bob Andrews (Business), Kristine Artello (Wilder School), Etti Baranoff (Business), David Fauri (Social Work), Rosalyn Hargraves (Education/Engineering), Carmen Rodriguez (H & S).

Address by President Michael Rao: J. Nicholson introduced and thanked Dr. Rao for his continued support of the Faculty Senate and noted the collaborative work between the Senate and the administration, particularly with regard to the university budget and university strategic plan Focus Quest.

President Rao’s remarks included the following:
- Acknowledgement of the loss of Dr. Huff
• Appreciation to Faculty Senate president J. Nicholson and immediate past president D. Fauri, for their leadership in collaborative work that is based on open and timely communication and information sharing
• Anticipation of the arrival of new Provost Gail Hackett and thanks to the search committee for their good work in bringing forth the best person for this position
• Appreciation to Interim Provost John Wiencek for his excellent leadership and continued partnership
• The importance of the search for Vice President For Health Services and anticipation of securing a nationally respected leader and colleague for this position; Dr. Rao will be very involved in this search; appreciation to Mr. John Duvall and Dr. Jerry Strauss for their service during the interim period
• Recognition of the progress with Quest, noting an increase in the graduation rate and an increase in students taking 15 credit hours
• Noted that the Quest plan was big and broad initially and that Focus Quest, now on the website awaiting comments, will help shape future budget decisions; the importance of the Quest Implementation Steering Committee and the need for faculty to provide feedback on the Quest website was noted
• Concerns about faculty compensation and financial support for graduate education and cross-disciplinary work
• Top priority is recruitment and retention of faculty and staff; having a diverse and internationally prominent faculty means that we will always have will always have new people joining us and some leaving
• Discussion of the compensation study, which grew out of GPI and out of Cabinet discussions re prevailing concerns about salaries; the study was completed last fall; detailed results will be shared with Deans and then the broader university community
• According to the compensation study, average VCU T & R faculty salaries are competitive with other comparable public universities; however, because VCU classification of A & P faculty is unusual, salary comparisons with other universities are difficult to interpret; there is much scatter in the compensation study data such that, even though the average looks okay, there are a large number of people who are below and large number who are above the mean; we need to engage in an equity study and better analysis to understand the compensation study data; also, suspect that that significant outliers for higher salaries may be due to ‘off-cycle’ raises; VPs will be asked to examine the off-cycle raises and to include faculty representation in this process
• Compensation is also a priority for state legislators who are considering an increase in compensation for state employees; VCU faculty salary compensation increases would be in addition to state employee increase, but it’s not clear yet how those proportions would be calculated; VCU needs a comprehensive plan for compensation that includes a new budget and a new HR model
• Continued concerns about diversity within faculty; individual unit committee actions have not produced the results that we need to address the diversity imbalances; the VPS have been charged with paying attention to hiring and retaining diverse faculty by seeking and implementing best practices for diversity; we want/need a faculty that looks like our student population; we will need a resource base so that we can competitively recruit
QUESTIONS (Q) FROM THE FLOOR and RESPONSES (R):

Q = does the faculty compensation priority include adjunct faculty; (R) = the top priority is for full time Teaching and Research (T & R) faculty

Q = what is meant by the concern for graduate student education; R = this concern comes from the Focus Quest committee about the decline in graduate enrollments; the need is for increased graduate student stipends and assistantships, particularly across disciplines

Q = will the elimination of the SAT requirement impact (decrease) the quality of students admitted and in our classes and why a 3.3 GPA for the cutoff; R = eliminating the SAT was based on the extensive literature on how students’ progress through our system; a 3.3 correlates with success, more so than does the SAT; many universities and colleges who have eliminated the SAT requirement note many successes; SAT scores don’t work for everyone, many factors are considering in admission decisions including the nature of the originating high schools and non-cognitive issues such as leadership activities; comments from parents in the community indicated that they are pleased with the elimination of SAT

Q = does eliminating SAT give rise to perceptions that we are lowering quality; R = SAT is not able to predict success very well and became an indication of cultural knowledge rather than of academic success; eliminating the SAT rises student self-esteem; we do not need to be worried about false perceptions but rather be proud and non-apologetic about this decision; we need to provide remedial help for students

Q = why doesn’t VCU have a faculty club; R = Faculty Club not that high up on the list of priorities given that we have too few square feet as it is for teaching; we are fostering our version of a faculty club with the First Friday Faculty social gatherings

Q = how should faculty respond to students with serious problems who might be in danger of harming themselves; R = we need systematic ways to deal with serious student problems which includes attending to academic structures within the schools and repeated and sustained communication for faculty about how to handle these situations; there are protocols for responding to student distress but these protocols need to be better communicated to all faculty, including adjunct faculty

Comment from faculty senator J. Cates; despite the low salaries in the University College, Cates wanted President Rao to know that he loves his job and encouraged everyone view the VCU Profiles in Learning videos about the great things that VCU faculty and students are doing.

President Rao again thanked faculty for all their hard work and reiterated the intent to show appreciation not just in words but also in the form of compensation.

Meeting adjourned 5:20.

Respectfully submitted

Mary Secret, PhD