

Notes on the Informal Conversation

March 25, 2010

Sponsor: Faculty Affairs Committee of Arts & Sciences
Present: 25 faculty from A&S and the Schools; 2 members of the BOV
Place: Blow Hall 201
Time: 5:15-6:30 PM

Agenda Items:

(1) Reappointment of President Reveley, and (2) Threats to the College's non-discrimination policy.

Berhanu Abegaz (Chair of FAC) introduced the members of BOV and FAC. He also introduced the agenda items with a preface that FAC has the mandate to ensure active participation in the governance of the College. He noted that the process for making important decisions such as those on today's agenda should be open, transparent, deliberative, and timely.

Gene Tracy (President of the Faculty Assembly) provided the background for today's meeting by noting that faculty were concerned that they would not be able to have a meaningful input into the BOV deliberations on the reappointment of the President if such decisions are made over the summer. He also noted that, while there is a broad-based support for President Reveley, there are concerns with the term of the appointment and a need to ensure that he gets the strongest faculty endorsement possible in light of the uncertainty surrounding the College's finances.

With that, the floor was open for comments and questions. Here is a brief summary of the discussion.

I. Decision-making Processes and Procedures:

1. The BOV needs to be proactive and to institute a transparent process for making important decisions. Lack of effective and timely communication between the BOV and the university community has preserved a measurable residual trust deficit that arose primarily from the circumstances under which the presidency of Gene Nichols was terminated.
2. The BOV members agreed with the above sentiment and noted that the discussion on reappointment is in its very early stages.
3. Several members of the audience underscored the need for instituting a system for reviewing senior administrators, including the president, on a regular basis (say, on a three-year cycle). This way, senior administrators will be able to receive meaningful feedback on what works and what does not

while reassuring key constituencies we have institutionalized an accountable governance system. The informal annual review of presidents (including self-evaluation) and the state-of-the-College speeches at the beginning of the academic year are useful but inadequate substitutes for systematic reviews that embody clearly identified goals and metrics.

4. The BOV members asked the faculty to recommend a workable procedure and forward it to the BOV for full consideration at its summer retreat—preferably after filtering such proposals through Faculty Affairs and the Faculty Assembly.

II. Reappointment:

1. It is highly advisable:
 - a. For the BOV to map out the preferred timeline for the term of reappointment and for conducting the external search, and to obtain a quick feedback from faculty on President Reveley's performance via online surveys and speaking to key committees; and
 - b. For President Reveley to hold something like a town-hall style presentation where he outlines his vision and plans for the College for next five years or so. By making his goals known in concrete terms, perhaps in the context of strategic planning, he would in effect address the question of why and how long he should be reappointed.
2. With regard to President Reveley's reappointment, faculty attitudes may be grouped into two, both of which commend the President for his performance so far: (1) because of the fact that his presidency was tainted by the way it started, it made it imperative that President Reveley is well-advised to come out among the faculty so that we will get to know him better; (2) his appointment will be widely supported by the faculty, although many will have serious reservations about a term that is longer than three years.

III. Non-discrimination:

1. It was noted that the College's non-discrimination policy regarding sexual orientation does not include explicit language referring to protection of transgender and transsexual persons.
2. The carefully crafted statement issued by President Reveley affirming the College's commitment to non-discrimination received strong endorsement from the faculty present and the BOV members present at the meeting. Several speakers urged the BOV to endorse the President's statement, and also to stand firm in resisting such politically-motivated attacks for the good of the College.