

Minutes of the Meeting of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences
December 4, 1990

The meeting was called to order by Dean David Lutzer at 3:30pm in Rogers 100.

Minutes of the November 11 meeting were approved without correction.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Dean

1. Reminded the audience that only members of the Arts and Sciences Faculty may vote at the meeting.
2. Told the Faculty that grade-sheet deadlines for Fall term courses were critical to the orderly processing of student grades by the Registrar's office. In particular, for the convenience of the Faculty, Campus Police are empowered to accept grade sheets in off hours. Also, there will be a catch-all deadline of 9am January 2 for the benefit of those needing extra grading time.
3. Introduced to the Faculty Andrew Langer, representative of the SA, and Rochelle Bures, a student member of the Educational Policy Committee.

Mr. Langer took the opportunity to correct his earlier announcement in the Meeting of November 11 regarding Ribbon Week. Contrary to that advice, Ribbon Week is actually being observed as he speaks, Mr. Langer reported.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

The Provost, Mr. Schiavelli, gave some details regarding the current budget turmoil. The university has been asked by the Secretary of Administration to formulate contingency plans for a further \$1.5 million budget reduction during the '91-'92 academic year. These plans would entail a rank-ordered list of line items against which the reductions would be taken. There will be a public statement by the Governor on December 17 regarding the level of tax collections and corresponding budget constraints. The Provost said that education does not appear to have a high priority with the governor, but that more guidance about future allocations of state funding in higher education would probably come from the Commission on the University of the XXI-century.

Mr. Delos wondered about the minuend for the \$1.5 million subtrahend. Mr. Schiavelli said that the current (reduced) budget is the target for further cuts.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Nominations and Elections

Mr. Zelder, chair of the committee presented its nominations for the Faculty Affairs Committee. No nominations came from the

floor. Robert Welsh and Richard Kiefer were subsequently elected.

Mr. Zelder then nominated John McGlennon as Chairman of the Faculty Affairs Committee. There were no further nominations, and he was elected.

Faculty Affairs

Mr. Eckhause, chair of the committee proposed a motion to the floor:

- i) The (6 member) Committee on Retention Promotion and Tenure should hereinafter consist of 2 members from each of the three academic areas of Arts and Sciences, and
- ii) No department of the Faculty should have more than one member on that committee.

Mr. Eckhause emphasized that no disrespect should be imputed to current members of the RPT committee who were all doing superb jobs. Rather, FAC felt that RPT would find its difficult task easier if its makeup were more representative of the Faculty's range of disciplines.

Mr. James Harris asked whether the restriction on duplicate departmental membership would preclude the election of a member of the Dean's department. Mr. Eckhause said it would not. Mr. Kiefer pointed out that there are other Faculty committees where representative membership is important. Mr. Eckhause said this was true, but the case for the requirements of the motion in the instance of RPT was much more compelling. Mr. Delos asked how the rule would be enforced since floor nominations to RPT are freely made and voting cannot be controlled ballot by ballot. Mr. Fuchs said that a standing rule takes precedence over an individual election, and the Dean explained that election instructions could be fixed to compel the desired configuration.

The motion passed.

Mr. Eckhause next said that the Dean had asked the advice of FAC regarding the merits of faculty merit evaluation for the past year in view of the fact that financial rewards for merit will be minimal at best. Mr. Eckhause reported the sentiments of FAC to the effect that

- i) Merit evaluation is a Good Thing,
- ii) Retention Tenure and Promotion decisions may rely on such evaluations,
- iii) Salary recommendations are based on a 3-year average of merit evaluations so that, depending on how long the drought lasts, future monetary rewards might redound to those deemed meritorious this year,
- iv) There is always chance that a windfall will make a raise pool available so a merit evaluation could come in handy.

Mr. Kreps, speaking on behalf of the departmental chairs, said

they thought that an "update" of the files would serve in lieu of a full blown evaluation. Moreover, he said, any raise pool should first be used to reconstruct the original '90-'91 salaries before any "new" increments are contemplated.

Mr. Eckhause responded that FAC feels that substantive commentary on members of the faculty by their current department chairs is a crucial ingredient in evaluation and that an updated vita would not be satisfactory. He expressed some sympathy for the second of Mr. Kreps' notions.

Mr. Grant made a still more radical defense of merit evaluation: In the event that further salary cuts are to be made, perhaps demerit decreases would be in order. Mr. Eckhause said that no matter how attractive such a procedure might seem, the Governor would never allow anything but a uniform (percentage) state-wide salary decrease.

Mr. James Harris said that departments have varying procedures for evaluations and that chairs might like to have choices for short-cutting the evaluations as long as the points mentioned by Mr. Eckhause are satisfied. Mr. Eckhause said that FAC feels that whatever methods of evaluation were used last year should be invoked again this year.

Educational Policy

Ms. Ventis, reporting for the committee, introduced Mr Grant, a former member, who, she said, would give a brief history of Latin Honors proposals. Mr. Grant, being brief indeed, said that such a proposal had been made some years ago by the Faculty to the Board of Visitors. The Board had rejected the proposal. In 1986, Mr. Gerald Johnson had investigated the reasons for the rejection to learn that the BOV was worried about diluting the significance of Phi Beta Kappa awards and also had not discerned a strong Faculty sentiment on the matter.

Enter Mr. Grant, who, before gaining election to the EPC in 1986 had made a campaign promise to work for Latin Honors. He took up the cause by investigating relationships between Latin Honors awards and Phi Beta Kappa election at various institutions comparable to William and Mary. He found a high level of coincidence between the two, and felt that this experience at other schools would convince the Board (as well as members of the Faculty) that the two kinds of recognition can coexist.

Armed with this account, Ms. Ventis moved that the Faculty adopt a program of Latin Honors to be awarded to approximately 15% of the graduating class. Grade point cutoffs for Latin honors would be set to designate approximately 3% of the students cum laude, 5% magna cum laude and 7% summa cum laude. Current levels for these percentages would be grade point averages of 3.5 for cum laude, 3.65 for magna cum laude, and 3.80 for summa cum laude.

Although gradepoint averages for these percentages might vary slightly for Business School students, the same cutoffs would be used for all students. The award would be signified by an appropriate sticker placed on the student's diploma.

Mr. Grant remarked that among schools he had studied, there is some variation in the way in which Latin Honors are awarded.

Mr. Von Baeyer asked whether there is any student support for the proposal. Ms. Bures said that a majority of students supported the idea, though they would like lower grade point cutoffs. Mr. Langer said many of the students think that Latin Honors are already in place. And, on a different subject, he said that Area III students think their courses are harder so that some recognition of this fact should be made.

Mr. Schwartz expressed support for the idea of awarding Latin Honors by percentages. Mr. Grant said that in some institutions, fixed grade-point levels determine the percentages not the other way around. Mr. Schwartz repeated that fixed percentages are better identifiers of good performance and account for lack of grade inflation at the College. Could we assume that these percentages will not shift? Ms. Ventis said they would probably shift slightly. Mr. Schwartz expressed the hope that the catalogue description of the awards would specify fixed percentages of Latin Honor awards. Mr. Grant said this was a minor quibble. A somewhat flexible range of grade-point averages would almost certainly be used, with fixed percentages determining where the cutoffs would be placed. The Registrar, Mr. Savely, said that Dean's List membership is currently fixed by percentile and the requisite GPA fluctuates mildly in a range between 3.5 and 3.6. The Dean agreed that his List is determined by percentile.

Mr. Schifrin had misgivings about the proposal. He said that such awards are redundant since the combination of GPA and class standing used to bestow Latin Honors is information already available on the student's Permanent Record Card. He wanted to know how students of high academic standing are damaged by the absence of stickers on their diplomas. Ms. Bures said there is no damage, but that a hard working student deserves a sticker. Mr. Langer concurred: The College does not inflate grades and this fact should be observed.

Mr. Edwards said that first consideration of such proposals should account for what benefits the institution. Latin Honors is a device that is fine for schools that don't have strong academic reputations. But such awards would emphasize a flavor at the College that we don't particularly like suggesting that it is a place where unimaginative students grind away at their work for the sake of marks on a piece of paper. Ms. Ventis demurred: Students here do work hard and they deserve recognition. Mr. Edwards' thesis is invalid anyway said Mr. Grant. He asserted that we would

be in very good company with other schools awarding Latin Honors. But Mr. Edwards protested this interpretation of his remarks. He intended no slight to any other institution he said, and only wished to say that circumstances here do not warrant a change at this time.

Mr. Winter added his voice in opposition to the proposal. William and Mary, he said, is what it is. There is already too much emphasis on GPA among students. Latin Honors awards simply repeat what is already available in the students' records. Why should the College suffer the cost and complexity of these awards? Mr. Winter said that the earlier discussion of details of the award mechanism is already an indictment of the proposal: It is a bureaucratic fiddle with little benefit to students or the institution.

Mr. Holmes weighed in on the other side. Our non-inflationary grade policies should be recognized he said. But Mr. Archibald said that Latin Honors given 15% of the students devalue the remaining 85%. Mr. Palmer claimed that GPA differentials are too delicate to support the weight of Latin Honor decisions. Precisely, said Mr. DeFotis, turning the argument around. Graduation prizes already are given to students who are indistinguishable from their competitors. We need ways of recognizing a larger number of good students. Mr. Wiseman agreed and said that if the students want this, and it is no real burden to the institution, why not do it?

Mr. Axtell saw a link between the current proposal and the issue of faculty merit evaluation. He claimed that those who oppose the Latin Honors proposal are logically bound to oppose unfunded merit evaluations.

Mr. Krakauer spoke in opposition: students are already too concerned about grades. But Mr. Grant said that grades do motivate students and that they will learn more by striving for Latin Honors. Regarding Mr. Archibald's comment, he said that any sort of academic award to one student "devalues" the work of others, so that, by Mr. Archibald's reckoning, we shouldn't be giving the Lord Botetourt Medal. And anyway, what's wrong with motivation?

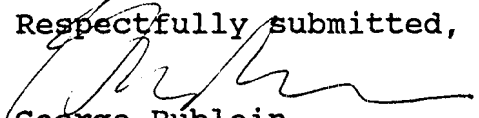
Mr. Hall pointed out that the local newspapers often mention Latin Honors in listing hometown graduates and that the resulting personal gratification cannot be replaced by inferences made from the student's permanent record card.

Mr. Livingston said that according to his calculations only about 7% of the students receiving Latin Honors would not receive departmental honors. Mr. Hoak wanted to know how to interpret this arithmetic for partisan purposes. Mr. Livingston said that he favored the proposal, and the 7% was only for the Faculty's reference.

The question was called and passed by a 44 to 28 margin.

After Mr. Holmes congratulated the Faculty on its energy and wit in debating this important proposal, the meeting was adjourned at 4:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,



George Rublein,
Secretary to the Faculty