

Minutes of the Meeting of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences  
The College of William and Mary  
October 7, 1997

The meeting was called to order at 3:36 p.m., Dean Geoffrey Feiss presiding.

### I. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the September 2, 1997 meeting were approved as submitted.

### II. Reports of Administrative Officers

Provost Cell announced that a document on higher education in Virginia produced by the Business-Higher Education Council was released to the press last week. Limited hard copies are available, but the document is posted on the president's Webpage. Also, charts with information on the college's new peer institutions are available.

We are beginning the third year of the Budget Policy Advisory Committee. Last year the committee got badly off schedule because of an additional stage of goal-setting built into the budget planning process. The additional stage was created in response to a mandate from the Southern Association. This addition caused problems at the end of last year, but BPAC is now back on schedule.

Dean Feiss announced that the Faculty Affairs Committee has decided to defer discussion of maternity leave, due to the complexity of the matter and unforeseen legal questions. In response to questions it was clarified that any changes in the policy stated in the handbook would need to go through the Faculty Assembly and the Board of Visitors; changes in interpretation might occur more quickly. The current policy became effective with the approval of the new faculty handbook in November, 1996.

The dean then presented a document (attached) showing "the biggest problem in the dean's office this year," namely that while much of the dean's contingency budget has traditionally been drawn from leave savings, this amount has decreased dramatically over the past few years. Meanwhile, new programmatic costs, increased needs for technical support to departments and increased maintenance & operation budgets continue to put demands on the contingency budget. The interdisciplinary programs do not have line item budgets, but are currently funded piecemeal wherever money can be found. The dean clarified that the new Anthropology Ph.D. will not go forward until and unless funds are found. The question of Faculty Research Assignment-generated revenue was raised. Each semester-long FRA generates \$15,000, but this figure often fails to cover the associated replacement costs.

### III. Report of the Faculty Affairs Committee

Professor Jack Willis reported that FAC has met weekly with the dean, and has been at work on the maternity leave policy, the joint appointment policy, the revisions to the

faculty manual, and has worked with Gary Smith, chair of the Committee on Committees, to fill vacancies on all-college committees.

Professor Don Baxter reported for the Liaison Committee of the Faculty Assembly. Prof. George Bass met with the Board of Visitors this fall, and encouraged the board to continue their practice of inviting faculty members to come and discuss their work. The faculty was reminded that, having this kind of access to the board, we should make good use of it. The Budget Policy Advisory Committee will have proposals for the next operating budget by December 1. In the capital budget, the first priority for funding is the Swem expansion project.

Prof. Baxter reported on a recent meeting of the Faculty Senate of Virginia, in which Don Beyer, former governor Baliles, and a representative of Jim Gilmore participated. The meeting focused on raising the profile of higher education in Virginia, especially in the context of upcoming elections. The state is approximately 43rd in per capita expenditures per student, but its institutions of public higher education are ranked among the best in the country. While this represents a "good deal" for the general assembly, this high standard is not sustainable at current low and unpredictable levels of funding.

Prof. Willis led discussion of the Faculty Manual. Revised sections II.A.10-16 were approved last spring; the committee now moves the revised section II.A.9., Final Examinations. The introductory paragraph stipulates that although most courses will include a final examination, courses such as seminars and studio courses are exempted from this requirement. The final sentence of the introduction allows for additional courses to be exempted, based on the instructor's judgment "in consultation with the department chair." Discussion of this new provision focused on two issues: 1) possible ambiguities in the wording of the provision, and 2) whether the instructor or the chair has the authority to decide whether a course may be exempted from including a final examination.

The committee had intended that the final decision should rest with the chair, and was willing to accept as a friendly amendment the following wording: "Faculty who do not want to give final exams in courses other than these should obtain the permission of the department chair." The question was raised as to what appeal process would be available to a faculty member in this case. Answer: Grieve the chair's decision as per the new handbook. It was pointed out that since "final exam" is not precisely defined (a final could, for example, count for .1% of the final grade) the faculty member will have the last word in any event. If we choose to leave this decision in the hands of the department, then might not the faculty member be better served by having the chair decide (so that the member will not suffer retaliation from a chair whose advice has been spurned)? Various members of the faculty spoke to the range of pedagogies used on this campus and the variety of means of assessment available in addition to final exams. Still, it was insisted, the final serves the purpose of prompting a student to restudy the material learned over the course of the semester. Required final exams might also be a means of regulating the teaching methods of adjunct professors.

The earlier friendly amendment was further refined, replacing "courses other than these" with "courses other than seminars, colloquia, studio, or writing courses." The committee clarified that the intention of the provision was to keep lines of communication open, particularly since the chair might be put in the position of defending the faculty member's practice. After considerable discussion the faculty voted (by unanimous voice vote) to refer the paragraph back to FAC for rewriting. A straw vote was then taken on a (hypothetical) requirement that the instructor have the chair's permission to waive the final exam in courses other than seminars, colloquia, studio, or writing courses. By a show of hands, the proposed requirement that a faculty member have the chair's permission to waive a final exam in a "traditional" course failed narrowly. FAC was thus advised that the faculty prefers that the decision regarding final exams rest with the individual faculty member (in consultation, communication, and cahoots with the chair).

Provost Cell pointed out that the current language could be interpreted as saying that final exams are unnecessary in seminars, and therefore should not be given. Further, the qualifying "such as" preceding the list of exempted courses suggests that other exempted courses exist. A possible change in wording from "are unnecessary" to "may be unnecessary" would alleviate the former concern.

Discussion then turned to II.A.9.a., Examination Schedule. Section i., Conflicts, identifies the two kinds of scheduling conflicts that may occur. It was noted that publishing a specific office number (the Dean of Undergraduate Studies) in the manual might be unwise. It was pointed out that a section of the previous manual dealing with "change of date" does not appear in the revised version. Although most of the contents of the previous version have simply been rearranged, the provision allowing a professor and class to change their own exam time does not appear in the new manual. The question was raised as to who advises the dean regarding guidelines for rescheduling. Answer: In 1982 EPC produced a list of acceptable excuses that was forwarded to the dean.

Under section II.A.9.a.ii., Section Changes, the second bullet is an addition in response to a request from the Chemistry department to EPC. A student taking an exam with another section of the same course will take the other section's final. In some Latin courses, students are currently permitted to take their own section's exam in another section's time slot, a practice that is not addressed here, since it does not fall into the category of "student requests" for section changes.

Section II.A.9.a.iii., Last Week of Classes, prohibits any type of test or examination, final or otherwise (except final lab exams), during the last week of classes. The objection was raised that this rule, which exists in part because of the large number of papers due in the final week of classes, privileges the typical schedule of humanities courses over the typical schedule of courses in the sciences. Prof. Willis responded that EPC has considered this issue and has recommended that FAC not change the policy for the following reasons: 1) the policy reduces the strain on students during the last week of the semester; 2) feedback from an exam in the last week of classes would probably not be available to students prior to the final exam; 3) under the current policy material presented in the last week of classes may still be tested on the final exam. Oral

proficiency exams in language courses present another problem, as they cannot be scheduled into the final exam block. Traditionally, Modern Languages and Literatures has requested a waiver of this rule to allow the aural comprehension component to be administered during the final class period; in effect, this has been considered a lab exam. An additional concern was raised regarding midterms. Midterm exams often account for a large percentage of the final grade, but no preparation time comparable to the reading period or protection against scheduling conflicts are provided for midterm exams. Although FAC has not addressed this question, it may be appropriate for EPC to do so.

Prof. Willis then skipped forward, briefly presenting II.A.9.c., Deferred Examinations. In 1982 EPC drafted a list of six acceptable reasons for deferring an exam. Although EPC and Dean Fowler recommended including the list in the revised Faculty Manual, FAC did not include them, since the faculty may well not agree with the entire list. We then deferred consideration of deferrals, and turned back to II.A.9.a.iv., Take-Home Examinations. Language from the previous manual stating the reasons for the policy has been removed (though the reasons remain the same). It was suggested that "take-home examinations" be amended to "take-home final examinations."

The meeting was adjourned at 5:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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