

Minutes of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences

The College of William and Mary

April 4, 2000, Millington 150

The meeting was called to order at 3:35 p.m. by Dean Geoffrey Feiss.

I. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the March 14, 2000 meeting were approved as posted.

II. Faculty Affairs Committee

Professor Barbara King presented FAC's report (Chair Will Hausman was out of town).

She began by mentioning the Committee's recent meetings with Deans Volp, Crotty and Watkinson regarding student cheating, a topic about which some faculty voiced concern earlier this semester. In that conversation, FAC was told that the honor system is working, and yet it may still be possible that infractions are rising: it is possible that the Honor Council's standard for protection of student rights (guilt "beyond reasonable doubt") may be too high. The prospect of a faculty-student dialogue on how if at all to modify the system was raised, and FAC may draft a statement to that effect for the faculty meeting to as a whole to discuss.

At the same time, those with whom FAC spoke also stressed the advisability of faculty making their expectations clear to students each semester in class, on syllabi and/or on exams. It was also emphasized that individual faculty should not take matters into their own hands in cases of suspected cheating, as there is a growing trend toward involvement of parents and lawyers. A member of the faculty suggested that the Provost formally convey that point to all faculty--that is to say, that there are legal issues involved, and that the College may not be in a position to offer legal assistance to teachers who attempt to resolve a case of suspected cheating on their own.

King also expressed FAC's gratitude to those faculty--a clear majority--who, when contacted as to their interest in serving on appointed committees, agreed to do so.

The main agenda item from FAC was the posted report on joint appointments. Before discussion began, in answer to a question, Dean Feiss noted that there were currently about 15 such continuing positions in Arts and Sciences, several with fixed terms. The number is not enormous, he said, but increasing. One appointment even involves three units.

Professor King briefly outlined Sections I (background) and II (definitions), before moving to III (guidelines). Subsections III A and III B evoked no comments. The main item of significance in developing Part III C, she noted, was defining what constitutes "essential governance" for faculty on joint appointments. A member of the faculty stressed that chairs are obliged to educate faculty in their departments and on personnel committees as to what expectations are outlined in specific memoranda of understanding so that people with more than one assignment are not held to additional or irrelevant expectations in the area of service.

Subsection III D (evaluation) outlines, among other things, the home department's responsibility in tenure and promotion processes for joint appointees. Professor King and Dean Feiss stressed that this unit does oversee the preparation of a dossier but does not have sole responsibility for the decision: others are involved in the evaluation. Dean Feiss mentioned that individual units will need a policy on how to handle joint appointments: at the very least a home department will need to provide a forum for the host to provide input, especially in cases of disagreement.

A suggestion was made that departments might prefer retaining the flexibility to spell out such procedural arrangements in each individual memorandum of understanding for a specific appointee rather than have a blanket policy. Dean Feiss stressed the importance of consistent procedures, while agreeing that some substantive items would indeed be left to the MOU.

Another faculty member stated the view that there should be joint appointments only in cases where the person has degrees (at least at the Masters level) in both disciplines involved; where the person publishes in the academic journals of both fields; and where the two units feel that they have enough in common to conduct personnel decisions jointly. If there is genuine unity, such things would be possible; if not there should be no joint appointment.

Another faculty member stressed that this draft document should be shared with those faculty holding such appointments for their comment; Dean Feiss noted that this has been done.

Discussion then turned to Parts III D 3-5 (merit, tenure, promotion procedures). It was noted that a person with a joint appointment should consult with his/her home and host department on application for a Faculty Research Assignment. In response to a question as to how much of this procedural guidance applies to merit and promotion, as well as tenure, Dean Feiss said that it might be possible for an individual MOU to specify that merit, for example, would be evaluated only by the home department. He conceded that these procedures may mean additional work for departments and chairs in particular. With regard to Subsection III E, he noted that the Dean is also called upon to be involved, but as an arbitrator, not as a "super chair," making merit decisions as such. The ideal would be that two or more units would come together on one result, one document. The Dean will decide only in cases where disagreements between the home and host departments appear unbridgeable.

In answer to the questions, the Dean noted that chairs of a host department/unit will lack (for reasons of privacy) access to relevant information affecting merit decisions in a joint appointee's home department (e.g. such as intra-departmental involving equity considerations). This fact will need to be taken into account in dealing with merit pay decisions.

Professor King noted that a final vote on the document will take place at the May meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 4:15

Respectfully submitted,

Clay Clemens

Associate Professor of Government

Secretary's Note: Congratulations to Dick Kiefer and Chemistry, which won the Secretary's Sweepstakes: four out of the Department's five tenured/tenure-eligible faculty under the age of forty were actually in attendance at the March meeting, and the only one who could not make it had a teaching conflict at that time. Moreover, an additional Chemistry faculty member who had just days earlier reached the critical threshold of forty was also there! Constrained budgetary resources sadly make it impossible to issue an appropriate prize, but the Secretary would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Department (and, of course, taking an active part in faculty governance is its own reward, so all others are urged to emulate Chemistry's example!)