

Minutes of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences

The College of William and Mary

February 5, Millington 150

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

Before business commenced, Dean Feiss yielded the floor to Chair of English Terry Meyers, who paid tribute to the late Frank Evans, Professor Emeritus of English, who passed away on January 20. He asked the faculty to adopt the following resolution (it passed on unanimous voice vote),

"Resolved that the Faculty of Arts and Sciences is saddened by the death of our colleague Frank Brooke Evans III and asks that the Secretary of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences convey to his family our appreciation for his dedication to his students, to his profession, and to the College. We recognize in his life a life well and fully-lived and join in mourning his passing."

I. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the December 5, 2000 meeting were approved with a correction (inserting the word "not" in a sentence on whether failing grades alone qualified as grounds for late withdrawal).

II. Report of the Nominations and Elections Committee

Election to the Faculty Assembly:

Area I candidates: (One 3-year term)

X Jonathan Arries (Modern Lang. & Lit.)

Catherine Levesque (Art and Art History)

Area I candidates: (One 2-year term)

X Colleen Kennedy (English)

Area II candidates: (Two 3-year terms)

X Robert Archibald (Economics)

Chandos Brown (History)

Michael Deschenes (Kinesiology)

X Larry Ventis (Psychology)

Area III candidates: (Two 2-year terms)

X Keith Griffioen (Physics)

X Margaret Saha (Biology)

In Area I, Colleen Kennedy is running unopposed because she was elected Vice President of the Assembly for 00-01, and so will serve as President for 01-02; the two-year term helps ensure continuity during the Assembly restructuring.

In Area III, both are ending terms on the Faculty Assembly shortened to two years by circumstances. The Assembly requested they be returned for continuity in time of restructuring; the Nominations Committee chooses to have each of them stand unopposed.

Election to the Faculty Affairs Committee, Chair:

Katherine Kulick (Modern Lang. & Lit.)

III. Reports of Administrative Officers

Provost Cell opened with comments on the College's recent decision to impose a temporary hiring freeze. She apologized for the fact that her office's memo on this issue went out by regular mail rather than electronically, with the result that many faculty first learned of this item when reading about it in the press. She noted that this freeze only affects hires in this fiscal year and thus does not affect faculty hires which would only take effect after July 1. The reason for this measure is the cold weather, unexpectedly high energy bills for the College, and thus a one million dollar shortfall in the current budget. There are no painless remedies, especially given that 40-85% of the budget is salaries (cuts in Departmental Maintenance and Operations allocations would hardly be a more attractive option). She pledged that the administration would continue monitoring this situation and seek to fix it. If the budget gap can be closed by July 1, the hiring freeze will be lifted, but if not there is no guarantee that additional steps may yet need to be taken.

In response to questions as to whether hiring of students who receive summer money would be affected, she said that the freeze affects only those items under the Education and General budget. Also in answer to a question she agreed that earlier notification

would have been desirable and said it was difficult to provide alerts as to exactly where the freeze will affect faculty support (for example, whether positions in Information Technology will not be filled) as the picture changes. In answer to another question, she noted that the costs associated with Project ARIA had no impact on the shortfall as they are in a separate pot. As to the impact of this shortfall on concerns about the wages of classified staff, she alerted the faculty to a forthcoming statement by the President.

On other budget issues, the Provost reported that the Senate's most recent proposal restores funding for Millington Hall renovations and that both chambers are offering more support than the Governor's version (the House has offered \$3.8 million and the Senate \$4.4 million). In addition, both houses have included funds designed to increase base pay: the House is proposing to meet 10% of the deficit and the Senate 15%. But the latter chamber's assumptions, she noted, include a freeze in the Governor's proposed car tax reduction: since the House has not, there is a gap between the two and it will go into reconciliation. She expects a compromise between both chambers and the Governor, who favors a 70% cut in the car tax.

In answer to a specific question, she echoed concern about the fact that the Governor's budget envisions cutting back on the State's contribution to employee retirement plans. She has not yet seen a sign that either house proposes to restore those funds. If so it would be a serious problem.

In response to the request for an update on Project ARIA, she noted that it has had to be slowed down given rapid cost increases and how the scale of funding would affect the budget. The College is working with SAP and on financing. It is also looking at options for the student information system. The College's experience in this connection is not atypical, she added.

IV. Report of the Faculty Affairs Committee

Professor Will Hausman reported that its experience with the difficult process of getting post-tenure review policies written and approved, combined with discussions of the joint appointments policy, led FAC to act on a request from the Dean to look into several related issues: a) how internally-consistent is each department's personnel procedures (on tenure, promotion, merit, post-tenure review, etc.); b) how consistent are these procedures with general Arts and Sciences policy; and c) how consistent are they with College-wide policies as outlined by the Provost's office.

FAC's review, he said, indicates that some departments do indeed have internally inconsistent personnel procedures and that some are even openly following unapproved policies. As a result, he said, the Dean—with FAC's approval—will be contacting chairs of the departments in question, asking them for responses by October 1, 2001. Consistency, he noted, is necessary for many reasons, including the protection of untenured faculty members. Any changes must receive approval from the College's Procedural Review

Committee. Hausman said it makes sense for departments to want greater internal consistency among their personnel procedures. In reply to a request for that departments be provided with all necessary documentation on College-wide policies, he said that such information is already available in the Chairs' manual.

As the same time, it was agreed that College and Arts and Sciences need to build in greater institutional memory. Each committee chair should write down standards and guidelines for his or her successor. Dean Feiss said that FAC will do that to help ensure greater continuity. Provost Cell noted her surprise that Procedural Review Committee chairs do not pass on a file to their successors. Dean Feiss thanked FAC for undertaking the mind-numbing work of this review.

V. Report of the Educational Policy Committee

Dean Watkinson reported on EPC's review of the College Computing Proficiency, the first conducted since the 1993 curriculum revisions that included a concentration specific proficiency (CCP). Its general aim was to ensure that Arts and Sciences graduates had a certain level of skill with a) programming, b) electronic composition of material or c) retrieving/processing information via computers (in setting their proficiencies, most departments chose to focus on the third criteria).

Dean Watkinson reported that most departments are meeting the goal of the CCP but noted some concerns: that it has not kept up with the skills of incoming student, that it doesn't meet the challenges of the decade, and that it doesn't lend itself to assessment (a concern also in connection with State Council requirements and those for accreditation by SACs, which will take place soon). EPC worries that the College has no meaningful assessment tools for the CPC to satisfy them. For example, SACS has set out standards for library computing instruction: Swem has courses that satisfy such expectations, but not all students take such classes.

She outlined proposed modifications in the proficiency. First it should be renamed the Digital Information Literacy requirement because it goes beyond mere computer searches and relates to how information is transmitted. Second, the skills of incoming freshmen should be assessed in orientation week or earlier, with workshops or on-line tutorials to help in areas where they are deficient (this would also help determine what they should be expected to know by graduation).

As for comparisons with other universities, she noted the College is ahead of the game in the sense of having instituted a requirement as early on as 1993. Many peer schools still have no requirement while some established one after the advent of the Worldwide Web. On-line modules have been developed to determine if students have sufficient literacy and they can be used.

In reply to questions, she insisted that these proposals are not meant to change the CCP's original emphasis on discipline-specific requirements. An early diagnostic, however, can have advantages. It can establish a baseline, stress ethical considerations (e.g. combating electronic plagiarism), allow for regular updating as skills of incoming students advance, and can allow for frequent integration of new applications (avoiding any need to reinvent the wheel each time). What EPC would like from the faculty, she said, is input, suggestions and assistance as the Committee could not and would not want to undertake these measures on its own.

Most faculty endorsed the idea of entry-level exposure but stress the value of retaining a discipline-specific CCP. To the suggestion that the former goal might be served by freshmen seminars, Dean Watkinson replied that these courses already take on enough, such as the writing proficiency. In response to the specific question of whether EPC is proposing a lower division computing proficiency to parallel the one for writing, she said that departmental needs and expectations in this respect are too diverse—as reflected in the wide variety of goals outlined in current CCPs: in the Humanities, web searches and word processing are sufficient, whereas the Social Sciences usually add something in the way of statistics. In short concentrators in some areas are expected to master more or different tasks. At the same time, EPC believes that if all a department expects is web searching and word processing, the earlier students master these skills the better.

Several faculty asked whether the EPC believes that computing proficiency should be broader than the current discipline-based requirement and some voiced a related concern that outside assessors should not drive curricular choices. She stressed the Committee's view that a new entry-level assessment would tell departments what they needed to know for the current CPP and so the emphasis remains on teaching in context. EPC is not telling departments what their concentrators should know but asking faculty to tell it what they feel students should know. EPC members stressed that this proposal was not driven by outside assessors but by internal concerns.

It was noted that the Computer Science department fully supports the EPC plan.

Some faculty noted a concern that incoming students often have more web experience than they do library experience and suggested expanding the printed matter requirement. A related concern was that plagiarism is not just a digital problem. Dean Watkinson replied that the freshmen seminars introduce students to library resources and provide guidance in avoiding plagiarism.

Another concern was that the policy is not explicit about implementation: this should not mean added work for faculty. Dean Watkinson replied that there will be a dedicated FTE position and that Swem Library's Don Welsh will be involved: use will be made of Swem's existing resources. Dean of Libraries Connie McCarthy noted that Swem is invested in the idea and fully agrees that the focus must remain discipline based: otherwise it risks becoming just another library tour.

The meeting adjourned at 4:50.

Respectfully submitted,

Clay Clemens

Professor of Government