

**Minutes of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences
The College of William and Mary
November 6, 2007
Millington 150**

Dean Laurie Sanderson called the meeting to order at 3:37 p.m.

I. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the October meeting were approved as posted.

<http://www.wm.edu/asdean/faculty/documents/minutes/20071002.pdf>

II. Reports of Administrative Officer: Provost Geoff Feiss

Provost Feiss said that there was no new budget news but added that the current year's \$3 million budget cuts were likely to become permanent pending the Governor's presentation of his new budget on December 17-18 and the General Assembly's consideration of it in January; however, he said that different sorts of cuts would be required under such circumstances. He said that the type of cuts to be made would be discussed with the BOV. He then reported on progress being made in the web redesign project, headed up by Susan Evans of IT. He also reported on progress being made on the Faculty Handbook revisions requiring BOV approval. He said that he expected to be able to present the revisions to the BOV in February and that a new Handbook would probably be in place by the end of the 2007-08 academic year. The Provost then reported that the Internationalization Task Force would hold its first meeting in November and that the Working Group on Civic Engagement had produced a draft, currently under review, which states the need for more stable sources of private funding for our endeavors in this area and suggests that efforts should be made to cut down on duplicate programs and expand where possible.

The Provost then turned the floor over to Faculty Assembly President Alan Meese (Law School), who reported on faculty concerns about the new online bias reporting system. Meese prefaced his comments by stating that the faculty had not been consulted about the new policy and website (launched in August) and that potentially serious problems with the system had only come to light as a result of a recent item in the Flat Hat. Among the potential problems cited by Meese were the anonymous nature of the reporting, the investigatory role the system gave to the Diversity Committee, its definition of incidents of bias in terms broader than those used in the Faculty Handbook, its broad and perhaps selective definition of the notion of "hostile" words, and the fact that the keeping of records on reported incidents was a personnel matter requiring special authorization that had not been duly conferred. Meese said that it was felt that the new system amounted to the making of new personnel policy, something over which the Diversity Committee had no jurisdiction.

Meese then said that the Executive Committee of the Faculty Assembly had met with the President and the Diversity Committee to find out how the new system had come about without the proper consultation of the faculty and what would be done to address the problems. Meese said that the Executive Committee requested a retraction of the policy and website until a more inclusive discussion could be undertaken. He reported that the President had declined to take the website down but expressed a willingness to change some of the language and to invite a Faculty Assembly review of website. According to Meese, several new versions of the website's language have since been produced and discussed. He said that the most recent draft included no provisions for investigative powers regarding the faculty, narrower definitions of bias, and confidential rather than anonymous reporting. He said that the President wanted a revised website to be up and running within a few days and that the Faculty Assembly would begin conducting a ground-up review of the policy and website at its November meeting. He said that this review would include bringing in administrators responsible for the website for the purpose of asking them about their rationale as well as practices at other institutions.

Meese then invited the faculty in attendance to share their opinions on the topic. Gene Tracy (Physics) noted that focus group studies have indicated that incidents of bias were underreported on campuses and said that he viewed the new system as a good faith attempt to address this. Silvia Tandeciarz (Modern Languages and Literatures) said that she and her fellow members of the Diversity Committee never thought of themselves as making new policy but simply as creating a new mechanism for a process that was not visible; however, she acknowledged that the website was not very clear. Terry Meyers (English) pointed out that the President took responsibility for the website but did not see it before it went up. Will Hausman (Economics) wanted to know which administrator(s) knew about and approved the site. The Provost responded that the Diversity Committee was co-chaired by the President and Multicultural Student Affairs Director Fanchon Glover but said that he did not know who wrote or approved the website language; he added that the original focus had been on

student behavior but had been broadened to include faculty. Anne Rasmussen (Music) wanted to know where the pictures on the website came from and how it was decided which groups would be represented. Meese responded that the pictures were from the Diversity website, which contains a link to the reporting system. Connie Pilkington (Psychology) asked what would happen to the reports if there were no investigative power associated with the system. In response, Meese offered that the Diversity Committee could make referrals to the proper authorities and perhaps serve in an advisory and counseling capacity. Terry Myers related that he recalled the President's having indicated that the website came from the Office of Student Affairs.

Dean Sanderson intervened to say that further discussion of the issue would have to follow proper procedure with FAC and the FA and said that it could be put on the agenda for a future meeting of FAS, perhaps even a special meeting, if desired.

III. Remarks by Dean Laurie Sanderson for Dean Carl Strikwerda

Dean Sanderson first reported on ongoing efforts in the area of emergency planning. She said that the campus-wide system was in place and that planning discussions were now focusing on the building level (e.g. leaks, laboratory animals, special equipment, dangerous substances, and other special concerns). She said that each department and program had been tasked with preparing building-specific information, which would be discussed and eventually made accessible to the faculty at large. She then reported on progress made in the planning for Phase 3 of the Integrated Science Center and the proposed new arts complex. Dean Sanderson concluded her remarks with an update on development, including a \$1 million gift to the College's faculty-student research initiative. She also noted that representatives from the Bookstore were scheduled to make a presentation at the meeting but were not in attendance.

IV. Faculty Affairs Committee Report, Margaret Saha

Saha (Biology) reported that the current Arts and Sciences bylaws were not entirely accurate (e.g. some changes made in 2005 have not been incorporated); she added that her predecessor as Chair of FAC, Terry Myers had gone through the bylaws to uncover inaccuracies and suggest proper revisions, which would be voted on in December. She said that FAC had met with President Nichol to discuss internationalization among other issues and she invited the faculty to send her suggestions for issues to discuss at its spring meeting with him. She then discussed the College's goal of being known as the "best liberal arts research university." She also said that FAC was continuing its review of the College committee structure and workloads. Saha touched briefly on the bias reporting system issue saying that news of the website and the problems it raised came to light too late for inclusion on the present meeting's agenda. Dean Sanderson suggested that some further discussion might be possible during the time allotted for the Faculty Assembly report.

V. Report from the Committee on Academic Status, Linda Reilly

Reilly (Classical Studies) offered highlights from the written reports on the Committee's work in 2006-07, available online:

http://www.wm.edu/as/dean/faculty/documents/academicstatus/Annual_Report_2006-07.pdf
http://www.wm.edu/as/dean/faculty/documents/academicstatus/Academic_Report_2006-07.pdf

Reilly noted that 2006-07 was the first year for which Banner-generated data on academic policy-related actions was available. She added that the total number of 1400 petitions per year has been a constant for 5 years.

VI. Report from the Committee on Degrees, Dean Kim Phillips

Dean Phillips noted that Committee's annual report for 2006-07 was prepared by former Dean Ed Pratt but noted that the Committee now worked under the Dean for Educational Policy. She then proceeded to offer highlights from the written report on the Committee's work, available online:

http://www.wm.edu/as/dean/faculty/documents/committeedrees/Annual_Report_2006-07.pdf

Dean Phillips reminded the faculty that the Committee's work involved petitions for exceptions to the normal degree requirements. She said that the COD itself considered 69 requests and approved 52 for the academic year, while the Dean considered 74 requests during the year on behalf of the COD.

VII. Faculty Assembly Report, Gene Tracy

Tracy offered updates on a number of items of business before the FA: the data gathering project to be unrolled in upcoming months, the ongoing discussion of the respective roles of the Faculty University Priorities Committee and the Planning and Resources Subcommittee of FA, a development presentation by Vice President Sean Pieri, Faculty Handbook revisions, and a review of the proposed Climate Statement. The majority of the FA report time was then devoted to discussion of the bias reporting website issue. Tracy first stressed that both the President and the Diversity Committee were responsive and engaged on the issue but acknowledged that some real mistakes had been made and that further discussion was needed. He then invited the faculty offer their comments, questions, and suggestions on the matter.

Suzanne Hagedorn (English) said that the anonymity of the reporting was in obvious violation of provisions regarding the faculty and asked how it could be The Flat Hat that broke the news given that the site was first unveiled in August. She said that this raised serious concerns about the Administration's ability to communicate. Bob Scholnick (English) argued that this controversy demonstrated the need for an open written forum for news and the discussion of important issues in the wake of the termination of the print version of the William & Mary News. David Lutzer (Mathematics) seconded the idea that this was Faculty Assembly business and he urged that body to go over the issue carefully. Margaret Saha once again reminded the faculty to send in agenda items for future meetings. Barbette Spaeth (Classical Studies) asserted that there was a systematic problem with Student Affairs doing things that affected the faculty with consulting with it first and urged the Faculty Assembly to work with other divisions of the College to make sure that this did not happen again in the future.

Dean Sanderson adjourned the meeting at 4:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Leruth
Associate Professor of Modern Languages and Literatures