

Minutes
Faculty of Arts and Sciences
Tuesday, December 2, 2008, 3:30 p.m.
Millington 150

Dean Carl Strikwerda called the meeting to order at 3:37 pm.

I. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting on November 11, 2008 were approved as posted:
<http://www.wm.edu/as/dean/fas/minutes/20081111.pdf>

II. Report of Administrative Officers

Provost Geoffrey Feiss reported that there was no new budget news, and that various organs of the College were hard at work on strategic planning. He praised Gene Tracy (Physics) and Katherine Kulick (Modern Languages) for their efforts in dealing with the Board of Visitors on this issue. In response to a question, the provost said that he would look into the issue of new limitations on the vendors for 403(B) accounts and whether the Faculty Compensation Board should have dealt with the matter.

Dean Carl Strikwerda reported that five of this year's twenty-two tenure-track searches have been cancelled due to the straitened budget. An important criterion for cancellation was startup costs. Cancelled searches would have top priority for reinstatement next year. The current 7% cut that the faculty has absorbed is likely to become a base cut, and may end up being more. In regard to strategic planning on the faculty level the dean announced that there would be a meeting involving FAC, the DAC co-chairs for '08 and '09 and the A&S members of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and the Faculty Assembly to discuss the faculty's response to the strategic planning "grand challenges." The goals of this meeting will be to establish a process for addressing these challenges, appointing a committee to oversee this process and inviting departments, programs and other interested groups to contribute feedback.

III. Report of the Committee on Academic Status

Jen Mellor (Economics), referring to the posted committee documents (URL's below), reported that the committee received 1109 petitions on various issues. She noted that methods of data collection and recording have been inconsistent in the past so it was difficult to say accurately how this year compares to other years, but the total number of petitions and the acceptance rate seemed not to depart much from the norm of previous years. Figures for students going on and coming off probation were also comparable to previous years. Prof. Mellor pointed out that certain types of petitions are granted only rarely, including late drops, changes in grading status, and withdrawals to an underload. She also expressed

the committee's appreciation to the faculty for their input on student petitions and their timely submission of grades, both of which help the committee do their work.

Annual Report:

http://www.wm.edu/as/committees/academicstatus/reports/Annual_Report_2007_2008.pdf

Academic Report:

http://www.wm.edu/as/committees/academicstatus/reports/Academic_Report_2007_2008.pdf

IV. Report from the Committee on Degrees

No report was forthcoming from this committee

V. Report from the Study Abroad Committee

Kate Slevin (Sociology) reported on the highlights of the committee's activity in 2007-8, which included the approval of new summer programs in Morocco and South Africa, and the discussion of a revised program in Potsdam that has subsequently been approved. She also noted that the committee had begun asking applicants for program directorships to submit a selection of student evaluations with their applications, and was encouraging programs to offer a 1-credit preparatory course in the semester before summer program. She encouraged faculty to consider applying to lead programs, and especially encouraged faculty from the natural sciences who have been historically underrepresented in such roles.

VI. Report from the Education Policy Committee

J. C. Poutsma (Chemistry) presented three proposals that the committee is referring to the faculty for approval:

1. Proposal for a 5-year BA/MPP degree program in Public Policy:

http://www.wm.edu/as/committees/educationalpolicy/documents/accelerated_mpp_proposal.pdf

http://www.wm.edu/as/committees/graduatestudies/documents/mp_catalog_changes.pdf (catalog changes approved by COGS)

In discussion, the question arose as to whether the students in this program would be considered eligible for graduate support and hence constitute an expansion of the graduate program. Sarah

Stafford (Economics) responded that it would expand the program by about two students per year.

The proposal was voted on and **approved**.

2. A change of the exam re-scheduling policy: Students will be allowed to re-schedule an exam if they have three scheduled exams in any 4 consecutive exam periods. This policy was voted on and **approved**.

3. A change in policy to allow transfer credit for pass/fail classes taken at other institutions.

In discussion it was pointed out that some institutions might not assign letter grades to pass/fail students, making it impossible to know whether the student performed at a level that would earn W&M credit. Prof. Poutsma agreed that this was a potential problem, but noted that it would only affect a small number of cases.

The policy was voted on and **approved**.

VII. Report of the Faculty Affairs Committee

Margaret Saha (Biology) reported that the committee continued to be busy with strategic planning issues, and noted that much faculty input had been received. Other issues that the committee has dealt with include efforts to encourage attendance at faculty meetings. One idea that the committee is considering is to announce a specific topic of discussion for each meeting. For instance, the next A&S meeting in February might have interdisciplinarity as a topic. Prof. Saha also announced that the committee was beginning to discuss a possible overhaul of the faculty bylaws, and encouraged faculty to look at the bylaws and make suggestions to the committee.

VIII. Report of the Faculty Assembly

Gene Tracy (Physics) reported on the assembly's meeting of Nov. 18, which included the following topics of discussion:

-a visit from representatives of the undergraduate Honor Council, who expressed the council's concern over the lack of consistency in faculty handling of honor-code issues (for instance, whether faculty should proctor exams, whether all honor-code violations, however minor, are to be reported to the council).

-strategic planning: Prof. Tracy discussed preliminary results of the committee's recent survey on the topic of faculty priorities. The priorities

with the most support so far are attracting and retaining quality faculty, supporting research, attracting and retaining quality students, and pursuing financial independence.

-potential changes to the College's non-discrimination policy to include explicit language against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and trans-gender status.

VIIIa. Unscheduled Agenda Item on Elections

Dean Strickwerda asked for a motion to suspend the rules to allow discussion of a time-sensitive election issue. This motion was made and **approved**.

Julie Galambush (Religious Studies), speaking for the Committee on Nominations and Elections, presented the committee's list of nominees for a replacement position on the FAC (Eric Jensen (Economics/Public Policy) and Ron Rapoport (Government)), and invited nominations from the floor. No additional nominations were forthcoming.

IX. Discussion of Grand Challenges Provided to the BOV

http://www.wm.edu/as/dean/fas/documents/Opportunities_and_Challenges.pdf

Dean Strickwerda, Prof. Saha and Provost Feiss led a discussion of the preliminary list of "grand challenges" drawn up by the Strategic Planning Steering Committee (URL above) and the reaction of the BOV to that list. A recent article in the *Virginia Gazette* purporting to reflect BOV views on the process had caused concern among the faculty. Provost Feiss, who was present at the public BOV meeting where this issue was discussed, reported that while the quotations of BOV members in the *Gazette* article were accurate, they did not accurately reflect the position of the BOV, which in his view is largely compatible with faculty perspectives.

Other concerns about the list that came up in discussion: that the proliferation of lists of challenges was somewhat confusing; that there was an absence of a bold clear statement about financial independence; that we should aim to improve the student-faculty ratio rather than "maintain" it (as per Opportunity/Challenge #4).

Provost Feiss and Dean Strickwerda stated that the process of winnowing these 14 challenges down to the required 6 or 8 was ongoing, and changes in content and wording would reflect faculty input. The final list of challenges will be made available to faculty prior its being sent on to the BOV and the president.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:53 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
William Hutton, Secretary
Associate Professor of Classical Studies
wehutt@wm.edu