

Faculty Assembly Meeting
January 27, 2009
Approved February 24, 2009

Present: Bruce Campbell, Mike DiPaola, Larry Evans, Alan Fuchs, Katherine Kulick, Lisa Landino, John Lee, Alan Meese, Leisa Meyer, Marc Sher, Carol Sheriff, Kate Slevin, Greg Smith, Barbette Spaeth, Gene Tracy, Tom White.

Absent: Carl Hershner, Steve Kuehl, Rip McAdams, Todd Mooradian, Adam Potkay, Laurie Wolf.

Others in Attendance: Provost Feiss, Sarah Stafford, Eric Chason, Scott Swan,

Tom White called the meeting to order at 15:35

1. Motion to approve minutes of December 9, 2008 were approved unanimously
2. Provost Feiss reported that the budget situation is awful. Sam Jones will make a preliminary report to the BOV next week. The General Assembly is considering many bills related to the budget and other university issues. The provost plans to meet with the faculty compensation committee concerning the "retirement incentives" that have become institutionalized as an annual benefit. It is a benefit that works very differently for VRS members and non-members. In the area of risk management, the Provost has been asked to develop a field trip policy for the university. He is also working on the issue of background checks for prospective employees. Finally, he is attempting to bring closure to the issue of a "clearance form" when an employee leaves the university. There is a form for faculty on the Provost's web site, but another form for all university employees, including faculty on the HR site. A question was raised about the potential for Federal funds forthcoming as a part of the stimulus package from Washington. The university does have a list of potential projects at different levels of spending if resources are forthcoming. The Provost was asked what process would be followed prior to decisions concerning the budget cuts that are forthcoming? The Provost believes that generic priorities from the FUPC are in place and that committee will develop a set of guidelines for budget reductions.
3. Annual report from the Faculty Compensation Board followed. Faculty salaries have not been an issue, since there are no funds available for salary increases. The issue of tuition benefits for employees' family members was the major topic of the report. Sarah Stafford reported that the committee believes this is a good time to suggest such a low cost (about \$292,000) proposal. A written proposal was delivered to the Assembly that would cover faculty and staff. Peer institutions that have such a benefit were listed in the report. Almost all private peers have a significant benefit (full tuition), while about half of our public peers have such a benefit. In this time of no salary increases, it may be perceived a great value by the faculty and staff. It also has a retention and recruitment implications. As we compare to our peer group, we should consider both salary and benefits, such as tuition. Cost estimates were about \$292,000/year after several years of implementation. The proposal covers dependent children (includes stepchildren and

foster children) for undergraduate tuition and fees. Full time employees become eligible after a year of continuous service. Questions followed.

A question was asked why we couldn't have a "cafeteria" style plan of benefits so that those employees without children would also included with some alternate benefit. The issue of including children of gay or lesbian partners was raised. It is important to find out how the issue of domestic partners is handled by other programs so our proposal is inclusive.

A suggestion was made to broaden the benefit by using resources to enable matches to a 529 plan, which would be more inclusive. Employees whose are saving in a 529 plan for children or grandchildren could benefit from such an arrangement. A question was raised as to why this is a faculty compensation issue, since such a tuition program is a recruitment and retention issue for the university. The fundamental question is whether a tuition benefits program is something the Assembly wants to endorse as opposed to a "cafeteria" style benefits program, which could benefit more faculty members. Additional innovations were suggested to broaden those who would benefit from additional benefits, such as matching 403B contributions.

A discussion ensued as to how to proceed to get a sense of the faculty before the Assembly proceeds. The Assembly was reminded that the organizations representing the professional faculty and other staff members should be consulted. Given the budget situation, there is no urgency for action on this issue. Other organizations will be contacted and questions relative to such a proposal will be incorporated into the faculty survey scheduled for next year.

4. Committee Reports:

Executive Committee report:

- Populated the ad-hoc task force to develop a framework for a college-wide education abroad committee, to be presented to FA by mid-March. An organizational meeting of this group was held on January 23.
- Discussed nomination of a faculty member to the W&M campaign planning committee. Seven individuals were nominated by EC, with six of these agreeing to serve if appointed by FA. A recommendation will be made to the FA by EC regarding a process for finalizing this appointment.
- EC has requested, and been granted, two meetings of EC with President Reveley during the spring semester for the purpose of discussing topics of mutual interest. These meetings have been set to precede the two remaining BOV meetings this semester, in February and April. EC will report back to FA on the content of these meetings.
- EC will be on the interview schedule of all of the candidates for the Provost's position. There will be an open faculty forum with each of the candidates.

- Elections for Assembly seats for those whose terms expire in May should occur in March!

Tom White reported that the strategic planning website now contains the draft version of SIX grand challenges that resulted from the fall semester engagement of stakeholders. Subcommittees of the planning steering committees for each grand challenge have been established. Members are listed on the website. Subcommittees are charged with developing goals and initiatives to reflect the challenges. A question was asked about the Assembly's role in representing the faculty concerning the substance of the six identified challenges. Does the Assembly have a voice in the grand challenges? Sentiment was expressed that the results of the faculty survey are not reflected in the six challenges that have emerged. Many faculty may feel disenfranchised in this process. The Assembly needs to determine when it should respond to the identified grand challenges. How will the FA be involved in defining the specific goals and objectives that respond to these challenges? A question was raised about the mission statement. The president has taken ownership of the mission statement. It will become a public document when presented to the BOV next week.

A motion to adjourn was approved at 17:30

Respectfully submitted,

Mike DiPaola
Secretary, Faculty Assembly