



WILLIAM & MARY

CHARTERED 1693

Faculty Assembly Minutes, April 16, 2024

3:30 – 5 pm

Location: Miller Hall 2003

Zoom: <https://cwm.zoom.us/j/7441676700>

Officers Present: K. Scott Swan (Faculty Assembly President), Nicholas Popper (Secretary)

Other Members Present: David Armstrong (Faculty Assembly Representative to the Board of Visitors), Mark Brush, Josh Burk, Sara Day, Christopher Del Negro, Marjy Friedrichs, John Gilmour, Aaron Griffiths, Katherine Guthrie (zoom), Erin Hendrickson, Terry Meyers (Parliamentarian), Randi Rashkover (zoom), Cristina Stancioiu, Evgenia Smirni (zoom), Betsy Talbott, Brett Wilson

Members Absent: Chuck Bailey, Christopher Del Negro, Jim Dwyer, David Feldman, Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, Jessica Martin,

Others Attending: Aaron Bruhl, Pamela Eddy, Carlane Pittman-Hampton, Christy Porter, President Katherine Rowe, David Yalof

Meeting

I. Minutes

Minutes Approved

II. Provost's Report (Delivered by David Yalof on behalf of Peggy Agouris)

Yalof report that Derek Aday, chair of the committee searching for a Dean for the School, says that the pool is incredibly deep and diverse terms of background and experience. On campus visits will happen in May. Meanwhile Accreditation is moving forward.

Pamela Eddy reports that she talked to the Faculty Assembly leadership about presentation to the BOV Academic Affairs committee, and continues to refine and polish it.

III. Katherine Rowe

President Rowe commended the draft statement on academic freedom being developed by Scott Swan and Aaron Griffiths. Her view is that the 1948 AAUP statement, which is the basis for most statements on academic freedom, reflects a different time when the public sphere worked differently. Now in her view there needs to be a statement on academic freedom not to protect faculty from institutions but from some of the vitriol of the public sphere more broadly. Faculty need administration to back them up.

John Gilmour responded that people who enter the public sphere know they're going to enter the public sphere, but that faculty are worried about being terminated. Rowe says that has been traditionally the case, but at the moment she's hearing less fear of being terminated than of being cancelled. Swan points out that NTEs are most susceptible.

Gilmour asks what level of protection is afforded by the current statement on academic freedom in the handbook? Rowe replies that the handbook is in the hands of the board.

President Rowe states the problem as: How do we engage academic freedom now in this public sphere? Are there affirmative statements of practices or of responsibilities comparable to the faculty handbook language, drawn from the AAUP statement, which separate the political and professional. She continues that faculty will likely have to be very intentional about hot-button issues and, for example, explicit that a students' politics will not affect their grade. Faculty need to model the behavior they want even when (as was pointed out), it's the students that hold each other to orthodoxies.

Rowe continues that social media is the biggest source of this concern, and it prompts some to hope for a fantastic degree of control by the institution. There are limits to institutional power, but one thing it can do is affirm freedom of expression and academic freedom. In this moment, both for faculty and for students. She reports on the success of the "Better Arguments Project" for creating a more tolerant atmosphere among students that also enable difficult conversations to be had without generating too much rancor, and she proposes providing similar training for faculty.

Armstrong asks what the faculty are being criticized for. Rowe answers that it is often controversial readings. Swan points out the problem of self censorship and the necessity of having difficult conversations.

Popper notes that misinformation is a problem; part of the issue is that social media, where so many actors are operating in bad faith or just bots programmed for polarization. Students need

training in media literacy. Armstrong picks up the point and asks how we can help students understand a good faith discussion. Rowe points to the principles of “Better Arguments Project,” developed by the Aspen Institute, which students have been learning. Gilmour notes that the principles are good but there is need for training in terms of dealing with bad faith actors; Rowe replies that we can only control what happens at W&M, and the goal here is to create a constructive environment.

IV. Unfinished Business:

Aaron Griffiths reports that they’ve received feedback on the statement concerning academic freedom and that he would want this to be workshopped to the broader faculty rather than guessing about concerns.

Swan reports that conversations concerning faculty tuition remission are continuing.

Wilson notes that the Faculty Survey is complete and his committee is getting ready to analyze the responses. The Response rate nosed above 50% in the end. Armstrong said that the BOV would appreciate a synopsis by the fall; Wilson agrees.

Eddy reports that there is a proposal concerning the retirement incentive program headed to the BOV next week; if it is approved they will begin the process of rolling it out in the fall so people can take it in 2025. Only the cash inventive element is being brought to the board; the phased retirement element does not need BOV approval and so is being moved forward.

Armstrong reports from the Faculty Handbook committee that there will be changes to vote on in May.

V. New business:

Brush notes that VIMS is developing a plan for an undergraduate major. It has been devised with faculty feedback after narrowly passing a faculty vote in November, and is now going through the approval process for SCHEV. A&S approved it last week. The final step is to go to BOV later this month.

Meeting adjourned in 4:55