

Faculty Senate
October 5, 2005
MINUTES

- 1) An informal reception with Provost Burish preceded the meeting.
- 2) The meeting was called to order at 7:20 pm; Seth Brown chaired.

The senators introduced themselves.

John Stamper gave the opening prayer.

- 3) The minutes from the September 6th, 2005 meeting were approved without amendments.

4) Chair's Report:

The chair welcomed Provost Tom Burish to the meeting. In contrast to the usual format for provost meetings with the FS, i.e., FS members asking questions of the provost, Provost Burish furnished a list of questions for our consideration and discussion:

- What role does the Faculty Senate currently have, and what role should it have, particularly vis-a-vis the other faculty committees on campus?
- In what ways, and in what areas, is the Senate best able to play a generative or constructive (in contrast to responsive) role?
- How can we [administration] improve communication among faculty, Deans, and the Provost's office? What do the faculty want to know from the administration that we're not hearing? Conversely, what do faculty want to tell the administration that we're not saying?
- How can we promote and properly recognize interdisciplinary work? What are the barriers that prevent such work, particularly across colleges?
- How can we enhance research and graduate education without compromising undergraduate education?
- What should *not* change about the University as we go forward?
- What advantages are offered by our Catholic character, and how can we best leverage them? Conversely, what obstacles are posed by our Catholic character, and how can we overcome them?
- How can the Provost's office be maximally helpful? How can the bureaucracy be reduced?

The chair introduced and welcomed Associate Provost Jean Ann Linney.

5) Discussion with Provost Burish:

The provost stressed the importance of meeting with members of the faculty in a variety of forums, including within individual departments (ongoing) and at informal lunch gatherings of 10-12 faculty from various departments (planned). The latter will be convened with no particular agenda. The provost mentioned that faculty complaints are a source of concern to the Board of Trustees, and suggested that faculty accomplishments should be highlighted at future Board meetings.

The provost invited comments from the FS regarding the above questions. In the discussion that ensued, FS members offered several responses to the questions posed by the provost. Regarding the first question, senators stressed the independent nature of FS with respect to the administration. An explanation of how the FS agenda is determined was advanced (issues are raised in the senate or in committee, and are tabled or advanced after discussion). Concerns raised about the FS included a lack of a sense of university “ownership” on the part of the senate, perhaps linked to a perception that the university is not “faculty driven” and an agenda that frequently overlaps that of the Academic Council. The provost acknowledged that FS independence from administration has positive and negative aspects, and questioned whether more integration with the administration would be desirable/beneficial to the FS.

In response to the second question, it was pointed out that, as an example, changes to the Academic Articles have emerged from FS and its sub-committees. Regarding input on budgetary matters, the provost was informed that the FS has not had a history of directing budgets and that faculty, in general, seem to have little input in determining budget direction. The provost touched on faculty/budget arrangements at his previous institutions (Vanderbilt, Washington & Lee) and stressed that he was in the process of learning how monies are apportioned and funding priorities determined at Notre Dame.

The provost was asked about the emphasis placed on interdisciplinary work (question 4), with the additional comment that it is not necessarily essential to academic excellence. The provost indicated that disciplinary and interdisciplinary work should be allowed to flourish when appropriate. Barriers to the latter appear to exist at Notre Dame, but the provost does not regard this as unique. One senator suggested that university-wide postings of dissertation defenses would help to foster interdisciplinary communication. Other comments: interdisciplinary work is difficult to pursue because, within the existing university structure, faculty are “ beholden ” to their home departments; advances in scientific research exist at the fringes of disciplines, but university infrastructure cannot support the “pulling together” of disparate fields/disciplines; library services have been curtailed to the extent that research within--and between--humanities and social science departments is compromised.

The Catholic character of the university was raised, with one senator expressing concern about the perception of undue emphasis being placed--by administration--on the hiring of a Catholic faculty member within his department. The provost acknowledged the complexities of simultaneously fulfilling the Catholic mission of the university and achieving/maintaining academic excellence. It was noted that attracting the best graduate students has been problematic owing to less-than-competitive stipends offered by the university.

6) Break to Committees

7) Committee Reports

Academic Affairs and Administrative Affairs. The two committees met jointly. Colin Meissner reported. Associate Provost Jean Ann Linney was present and described her history, role, and objectives within the administration. One concern of her office is the inconsistencies in the Academic Articles. While a wholesale revision of the articles is not imminent, it was agreed that some articles, specifically those that pertain to the selection and appointment of academic officers, should be examined in the near future. The associate provost expressed a desire to foster a more welcoming and supportive culture for new and prospective faculty hires. She also communicated her willingness to meet regularly with the FS, as her schedule permits.

Benefits: Nasir Ghiaseddin reported. He recently met with representatives of Human Resources and discussed changing health care issues in general. Of particular note, revisions in section D of Medicare benefits are forthcoming. Nasir will summarize the numerous anticipated changes in a forthcoming e-mail to the FS. He indicated that literature summarizing current benefits programs was available for interested FS members following the meeting. Safety issues pertaining to campus walkways were raised in committee.

Student Affairs: Philippe Collon reported. Students have expressed a desire to have a list of course texts made available prior to the start of semesters, presumably to circumvent the university bookstore. The university's position on this will be pursued. It was noted that Dennis Jacobs is putting together a document related to the TCE situation. The issue of student academic freedom was raised. A joint discussion of this topic with the Academic Affairs committee was proposed.

8) Old Business.

Seth Brown announced that Joni Warner would be stepping down from the FS, also leaving her post as FS treasurer, and issued an invitation to those senators present to stand for election. As no one offered to stand for election, an e-mail will be issued to the FS to solicit for a new treasurer.

The publication of FS minutes in the ND report is pending. It was noted that the minutes are currently not included on the FS web page. Attempts will be made to update the web page.

9) New Business. None

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted

Mary Prorok
Co-secretary