March 13, 2001

MINUTES OF THE FACULTY SENATE

The seventh regular meeting of the Faculty Senate convened at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 13 in Room 116 of the Education Center, Speaker of the Faculty Trisha Folds-Bennett presiding. Fifty-one senators came. The Minutes of the previous meeting (February 13) were approved as circulated.

Reports

The Speaker

Trisha Folds-Bennett reported that she had received a number of questions from faculty asking how they could become more knowledgeable about, and more involved in, the budgetary affairs of the College. Accordingly, she had invited Samuel B. Jones, Director of Budgeting and Payroll Services, and Gary McCombs, Senior Vice-President for Business Affairs, to speak to the senate on this important subject. Mr. Jones gave a detailed report on the various stages of the annual budgeting process, as needs and available resources are matched up for the coming academic year. The process begins early in the calendar year, and moves through various stages of adjustment and approval, until the final proposal reaches the Board of Trustees about the middle of June. Mr. McCombs then gave a “PowerPoint” presentation on the actual details of the 1999-2000 budget, with graphs and statistical analyses suggesting where the money came from, and where it went. The 1999-2000 budget amounted to $76,226,687, and at the moment it looks as though $81,584,928 will be available for next year. The College is fortunate, he said, in the fact that fifty cents of every dollar goes toward academic instruction – a notably high percentage. The College does not go in for “zero-based” budgeting, and this has contributed to our basic financial soundness.

Reid Wiseman asked how much is in the so-called “reserve-fund” which the President can tap into. Mr. McCombs said, about 1.4 million dollars. This is where additional money for faculty salaries comes from, for example. Last year, a million dollars was drawn on for this purpose. The fund is lower now, because growth has been “flat” recently. For planning purposes, the operating budget is divided into four sections:: unrestricted funds, “designated” funds, restricted funds, and “auxiliary enterprises” (these have to be self-sufficient). It appears that we are facing a one per cent reduction in funding from the state (from 42% of our operating budget last year, to 41% next year). William Moore asked if tenure raises become part of our so-called “recurring costs.” Mr. McCombs said yes, but this does not mean that the state actually pays for them! And yet, though we are facing an immediate cutback of almost 3.6 million dollars, we are the best prepared institution in South Carolina to cope with the mandated cuts, because of our conservative financial planning. One senator asked if there was any talk of an enrollment increase: no, the College is budgeting now for a zero increase in enrollment, and for no changes in class size – but tuition will have to go up. 15% of the money saved by various “freezes” this year will be carried over to cushion next year’s budget – perhaps as much as four million dollars.
Caroline Hunt asked if the new library would be impacted in any way, and the answer was, absolutely not.

Mr. Jones and Mr. McCombs received a warm and grateful round of applause for this evidently superb presentation.

**New Business**

Lynn Cherry then introduced a series of motions on behalf of the Curriculum Committee, which were approved as circulated:

- S01-057 -- New Course: PHYS 405 - Thermal Physics (3hrs.)
- S01-056 -- Course Deletion: PHYS 307 - Thermodynamics
- S01-058 -- Concentration in Meteorology: Change in Requirements
- S01-059 -- Physics Minor: Change in Requirements
- S01-060 -- Minor in Meteorology: Change in Requirements
- S01-061 -- Concentration in Engineering: Change in Requirements
- S01-062 -- Lat. Amer. & Caribbean Studies: Change in Requirements

For Information:

- S01-055 -- Intermodal Transportation Program: Change in Name

Also for Information: Special Topics Courses in the Honors Program:

- HONS 390 -- ST: Myth, Baseball and the Meaning of Life
- HONS 390 -- ST: Writing Comedy for the Theatre
- HONS 240 -- ST: Value and Tradition in Asian Religions
- HONS 391 -- ST: Contemporary Latin American Women Voices & Images
- HONS 390 -- ST: Mathematics in Fiction
- HONS 391 -- ST: The Enlightenment, Its Projects and Consequences
- HONS 392/390 -- ST: The Politics of Water Resources
- HONS 392 -- ST: Introduction to American Government

Rohn England, for the Committee on Graduate and Continuing Education, proposed several new courses, course deletions, and course changes. Minor corrections were suggested (these are incorporated in the text below) and two friendly amendments (see item 4, part b, sections 4 and 5, and item 4, part d, section 4, below). The amended motions passed, as follows:

1. **New Courses:**
   - EVSS 603/604 – Graduate Core Seminars
   - EVSS 659 – Environmental Statistics

2. **Course Deletions:**
3. Course Changes:

EVSS 610 – (change credit hours form 4 to 3) - Environmental Biology
EVSS 640 – (change credit hours form 4 to 3) - Earth Systems Science
EVSS 650 – (change credit hours form 4 to 3) - Energy Production and Resource
EDFS 730 – Characteristics of the Emotionally Handicapped
EDFS 738 – Practicum in the Instruction of the Emotionally Handicapped
EDFS 750 – Characteristics of the Mentally Handicapped
EDFS 757 – Practicum in the Instruction of the Educable Mentally Handicapped
EDFS 758 – Practicum in the Instruction of the Trainable Mentally Handicapped
EDFS 759 – Practicum in the Instruction of the Severely and Profoundly Mentally Handicapped.

4. Program Changes:

a. Modification of the number of hours required for the Bilingual Legal Interpreting program from 45 to 42.

b. Environmental Studies program math requirement (prerequisite of MATH 250 for EVSS 659.) (As amended:

4. All MES students should be required to pass MATH 250: STATISTICAL METHODS 1 (or an equivalent or higher level college-level statistics course) OR pass an entrance exam as a PREREQUISITE to one core graduate- level Environmental Statistics course.

5. Since EVSS 659 Environmental Statistics will be a required core course, passing Mathematics 250 OR the entrance exam should be considered a prerequisite to the MES program. It is the suggestion of the Mathematics Department that students pass the undergraduate MATH 250: STATISTICAL METHODS (or an equivalent or higher level college-level statistics course) OR pass an entrance exam. . . [etc., no further amendments in Part b].

c. Environmental Studies program - EVSS 660 no longer needed as a core requirement.

d. Environmental Studies program - degree completion
requirements.

4. ALL MES STUDENTS (POLICY AND SCIENCE TRACK) SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO PASS SIX HOURS OF INTERNSHIP...[etc., no further amendments in Part d].

5. For Information:

EVSS 658 (to cross-list with PHYS 458) - Climate Change [For information only, because not yet approved by undergraduate Curriculum Committee]

Change of Course Acronym, from CSCI to CSIS, for the new Master of Science in Computer and Information Sciences.

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On behalf of the Academic Standards Committee, Walter Pharr introduced a recommendation to change the basic grading system used at the College. The four grading models referred to in this proposal, which were circulated to the Senate before the meeting, are included after the proposal itself.

The Academic Standards Committee moves that the current grading system be replaced by a system consisting of the following grades, with Quality Point values as indicated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Quality Point</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rationale:

The Faculty Senate charged the Academic Standards Committee with the task of evaluating the College of Charleston’s current grading system. The need for this evaluation was brought to the Senate’s attention by faculty who suggested that our current grading system is inadequate. Proponents of this view argue that there
are too few gradations in the current grading model to effectively evaluate performance. Further, unequal grade ranges within our system (B and B+ vs. D) are problematic because they create an inequitable condition where students that score in the upper end of B and C grades are treated more favorably within the current grading system (by receiving a + grade) than individuals who are unfortunate enough to score in the upper end of other grades (e.g., D). Because of these concerns the request has been made that these issues be addressed by adding plus and minus grades to our current grading system. The Committee has considered four grading models, which are described in the attached table. These models were arrived at after a survey of 21 grading models of colleges in the region and selected colleges from outside the region. No attempt has been made to conduct an exhaustive survey of US colleges.

Model I is, of course, the College's current model. Model II is in use at the University of South Carolina, Model III at William & Mary College, and Model IV at Clemson University. Some minor variations occur. For example, Furman University and UNC-Chapel Hill use a model like Model III except for not having D-.

Not all colleges that use the same letter grades attach the same quality points to them. For example, William & Mary and many other colleges with minus grades attach points of 3.3, 3.0, 2.7 to the grades B+, B, B-, respectively. But UNC-Wilmington attaches 3.33, 3.0, 2.67 to these grades, respectively, and Florida State attaches 3.25, 3.0, 2.75 to them, respectively.

One concern with any change in the current grading system is whether GPA inflation or attenuation would result, with repercussions for scholarship retention and graduation with honors. Comparisons between models (both new and existing) with regard to GPA are difficult, however, as faculty members will implement any new system in accordance with their own grading policy.

Consider for example Model III that proposes to add minus grades. One instructor may implement this change by raising the requirements for an A from their original benchmark (e.g., 90th percentile) to a higher standard (e.g., 92nd or 94th percentile). This grading policy might result in lowering the average grade in this instructor's class. Another instructor may choose to retain the original benchmark for an A grade (e.g., 90th percentile) and assign an A minus to students whose performance would have earned a B+ in the current system. This grading policy may inflate the average grade earned by students in this instructor's class.

Because each faculty member enjoys the academic freedom to develop his or her own standard of performance (a freedom that the Committee supports), it is difficult to infer any systematic influence on GPA, a priori. One may speculate that faculty differences would negate each other. However, there is no guarantee that this will occur. Therefore, any systematic influences must be assessed in a
post hoc fashion. Finally, the Committee believes that the decision to make any grading changes should be driven primarily by the aim of improving the grading system itself rather than the result of these changes on GPA.

To satisfy the concern that there are not enough gradations in the current model, the Committee has chosen the model with the largest number of gradations that seem reasonable. To satisfy the concern that the current grade ranges are not the same size, the Committee has chosen associated Quality Points that are (approximately) evenly distributed.

Also noteworthy in our deliberation, is that Model III (or a slight variation) is quite prevalent among institutions of higher education with a similar mission or nature to the College of Charleston both within and outside our state. For example, Model III is currently used by William & Mary, Furman, Wofford, UNC-Wilmington, and Appalachian State University.

Any College policy involving a GPA could be affected if this motion passes. For example, should a student with a C- average be allowed to graduate (on the grounds that C- is a "kind of C") or not allowed to graduate (on the grounds that the student's GPA is less than 2.0)? Other examples are the GPAs required for graduation with honors and the GPAs associated with being placed on and removed from academic probation. The GPA required for retention of a scholarship is often not within the control of the College, but minus grades could affect scholarship retention.

To minimize any potential adverse impact on transfer students, scholarship recipients, and Honors Program requirements, we were committed to retain the traditional anchor points of the grading scale. For example, an A is 4.0, B is 3.0, C is 2.0, etc.

### Grading System Models

#### Model I – Current Grading System (A, B+, B, C+, C, D, F)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No change required</td>
<td>Less flexibility, fewer gradations to evaluate student performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No new programming</td>
<td>(Student that earns solid grade gets same grade as student that barely earns grade)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No new policies.</td>
<td>Unequal gaps in rating system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(e.g., No gap between A and B, gap between C and D)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ranges of A and D are larger than ranges of B and C

**Model II – Add plus to D (A, B+, B, C+, C, D+, D, F)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More flexibility/options compared to Model I</td>
<td>Potential procedure implications (e.g., Registrar required to change systems to support new grades)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More accurate reflection of student performance compared to Model I</td>
<td>Unknown whether GPA’s will increase, decrease, or remain the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addresses gap between C and D system</td>
<td>Doesn’t address all unequal gaps in rating (Gap remains between D and F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range of A is larger than B, C, and D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More flexibility/options compared to Models I and II</td>
<td>Potential procedure implications similar to Model II (e.g., Registrar required to change systems to support new grades)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More accurate reflection of student performance compared to Models I and II</td>
<td>Unknown whether GPA’s will increase, decrease, or remain the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addresses all relevant gaps</td>
<td>Potential policy implications (e.g., Honor’s Program, scholarships)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Model IV – Eliminate plus grades from current system (A, B, C, D, F)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simpler model</td>
<td>Policy and procedure implications similar to Models II and III</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even less flexibility and fewer gradations to evaluate students than Model I

Unknown whether GPA’s will increase, decrease, or remain the same

At the outset of the discussion, Mr. Pharr made clear that the Committee was endorsing “Model Three,” and he went over some of the advantages and disadvantages of each model in turn. Kem Fronabarger wanted to know why the fourth system had been rejected. It had too few gradations, Mr. Pharr said. Paul Young asked what a D- grade would mean? The answer: that someone had passed “by the skin of his teeth.” Richard Nunan asked if it was standard procedure that a C-grade would not “transfer”; the answer was, yes. There were several questions about “grandfathering” and about the effect on scholarships. David Hall said that, as a practical matter, “grandfathering” was impossible, and Caroline Hunt agreed, saying that the College’s computer system would not be able to handle multiple grading systems simultaneously. Several representatives from the Student Government Association attended the meeting as observers, and reported that, in their opinion, most students were decidedly not in favor of the change being proposed. Faye Steuer said she agreed with the SGA that the proposed change would have a negative impact. James Carew disagreed strongly, and thought it would be a very positive development because it would make possible more flexible and ultimately more accurate grading, which is, he said, what we are all committed to doing. He thought that the net result would be to pull grades up, not down.

David Hall thought the new system would slightly help students at the bottom end of the grading scale, and slightly hurt those at the top. Kem Fronabarger asked if there were any statisticians in the house? Richard Nunan started to answer, and Mr. Hall – alluding to a commercial that suggests staying at a Holiday Inn makes you mysteriously “smarter” – asked “What motel did you sleep in last night?” Mr. Nunan said the actual statistical results of the new system were simply not predictable, but he was in favor of increasing the number of gradations available.

John Huddlestun insisted that the problem of implementation should be kept completely separate from the question of supporting, or opposing, the proposed change itself, which should be approached strictly on its merits, leaving the details – if the motion passed – to be worked out later. Caroline Hunt pointed out that grade inflation, or its opposite, does not seem to depend historically on what grading-scale is used at any particular institution, but on the general academic “culture” within that institution itself. The actual distribution of grades is likely to remain pretty much the same, no matter what system is put in place. Several senators thought the proposal was a significant step forward, because it would bring the College’s grading system into line with what is used in a great many – in fact, at most – high-quality academic institutions, both regionally and nationally.

When the question was called, the motion passed by a vote of 26 to 18, on a show of hands. There was a general consensus that the Senate was endorsing this change in principle, for the long-term improvement of the academic standards of the College, and that the actual
implementation would take considerable time, and very careful planning, on the part of both faculty and administration.

Constituents’ Concerns and Adjournment

Since it was after 7:00 o’clock, the meeting had to be adjourned quickly. Without objection, it was so ordered.

Respectfully submitted,

Bishop Hunt
Faculty Secretary

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Final Senate Meeting: April 3 (second part, April 17)
Faculty Meeting: Monday, April 23, 2001