Reports

The Speaker

Speaker of the Faculty Bob Mignone welcomed faculty back, hoping that we all had a productive and relaxing summer. Mr. Mignone covered three items in his report:

1) He noted that in the chair’s retreat in August, the consensual relations policy that came to the Senate last year for information purposes was discussed. Mr. Mignone wanted faculty members to realize that the policy was meant as a baseline that faculty could modify if they wished. Senators may recommend changes in the policy to the Welfare Committee if they want, or they may even form an ad-hoc committee to consider the policy in more detail.

2) Mr. Mignone noted the importance of the general education review currently taking place at the College, pointing out that we review our major offerings quite frequently and that the one common part of the education we deliver merits serious review as well. He reported that the ad-hoc committee on general education has re-affirmed the basic distribution model of general education we currently use, but that the committee would like to improve on the way this model is delivered to students. Forums intended to open up the general education review process to a wider range of faculty members will be held on October 24th and October 25th in the Beatty Center. Specific times for these forums will be announced later.

3) Mr. Mignone addressed the delayed implementation of the new plus/minus grading policy, pointing out that the Provost is concerned about possible consequences associated with implementing the policy. Student handbooks and the Undergraduate Catalog have been revised to make the new grading policy tentative for Fall of 2006 or 2007.

The Provost

Mr. Mignone then recognized Provost Elise Jorgens, who began her report by announcing that the Provost’s office had been debating for the last hour about what to do in the face of possible severe weather caused by Tropical Storm Ophelia. She told faculty her office had been assured that area bridges will stay open. She then went on to deliver her report, which consisted of four main items:
1) The Provost discussed the College’s response to the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina. She announced that the College has accepted thirty students from institutions of higher education in New Orleans and that we have been getting positive press about our efforts to help students displaced by the hurricane. At least one faculty member has joined us as well. The youngest hurricane evacuee at the College is a 2-year-old student enrolled at ECDC (the N.E. Miles Early Childhood Development Center).

2) Ms. Jorgens echoed Mr. Mignone’s justification for undertaking a review of the College’s general education program. She pointed out that, while this is a faculty review, it is also a priority for the Provost’s office. The stance of the ad-hoc general education committee is that the College’s current distribution model is not a problem. Ms. Jorgens, however, expressed concerns that we currently have a program which students view as something to “get out of the way,” that they often don’t see a connection between general education and the courses they take in their major. In addition, Ms. Jorgens would like to see an acknowledgment from the faculty that general education is essential in everything we teach. She pointed out that, if we don’t feel this way, we shouldn’t be teaching at the College. Faculty members need to talk with students about the value of their general education. Part of delivering general education lies in how we talk about the program with our students. She hopes these issues will come up in the October forums.

The ad-hoc committee, she added, is not putting out a specific proposal at this point. Instead, they want to solicit faculty input in order to generate guidelines about what our general education program hopes to accomplish. These guidelines should help faculty members tell students what we believe it’s important they learn and why. The Provost and the ad-hoc committee want to develop a set of specific expectations for general education and systematically show how each general education course offered fulfills these expectations. Finally, Ms. Jorgens added that she hopes this review of general education will result in a “raising of the bar” at the College, in increased expectations of students, many of whom find our current general education offerings unchallenging.

3) The Provost also announced that she has been working with the Deans on the project of identifying our institutional distinctiveness. This project is an attempt to pinpoint academic strengths and uniqueness at the College—to determine what makes the CofC academic experience stand out, what identifies it as different from experiences students might get at other places. Citing the example of the Historic Preservation Program, Ms. Jorgens noted that several of our programs draw strength from our specific location in Charleston. She assured faculty that this project is not about developing new programs, but is more a way of packaging what we already have in order to draw students not only to our unique programs but to the departments and programs which support them. If we have a strong Historic Preservation Program, for instance, we must also have strong back-up departments in art history, history, etc.

4) Finally, Ms. Jorgens addressed the delayed implementation of the new grading system. While the Undergraduate Catalog initially said the new system would be in place in Fall 2006, Ms. Jorgens pointed out that nothing had been done to get ready for the implementation of the new system, other than putting the notice into the Catalog.
Students, she argued, are not aware of the new policy, and the College has not fulfilled its obligation to inform them about the impending changes. The Provost stated that she has no objection to the new grading policy per se, and that she understands it arose from a desire to stem grade inflation. Studies show that students don’t spend much time studying and that general education courses are not perceived as challenging. While she believes we could ask more of students, the Provost also argued that we don’t have grade inflation on this campus.

Yet, she added, it is clear that the new grading policy will result in lower student GPA’s. The Provost is concerned about students on state scholarships in particular. She is also concerned about instituting a policy that may help professors, but also may make us lose some of our better students. She pointed out that we have new conditions at the College that weren’t present when the new grading policy was passed. At that time, the Life Scholarship was very new. We now have 23,000 students on Life Scholarships. The number of students on Hope Scholarships has increased as well. Thus, the Provost has asked the Speaker of the Faculty, Bob Mignone, to send the grading policy back to the Academic Standards Committee for further review. She has asked Kay Smith to work with the committee to study the policy’s potential impact on students.

In addition, Ms. Jorgens pointed out that a similar policy was proposed at Clemson University recently. Clemson did a pilot study of a new grading system for two years, after which the faculty voted overwhelmingly not to implement the new system. The Provost noted that she is asking for some kind of pilot study or intense analysis at the College as well. Finally, Provost Jorgens apologized that it appeared she’s over-ruling faculty governance. She concluded by stating that she wants to work with the committee to study the policy’s potential impact on students.

When Ms. Jorgens finished her report, Mr. Mignone pointed out that returning the grading policy to the Academic Standards Committee for further review raised important procedural questions in regard to faculty governance since the proposal was already passed several years ago. As a result, Mr. Mignone announced that he was opening the floor for a fifteen minute period to allow faculty members to express their views on the Provost’s decision.

Mr. Mignone then recognized Richard Nunan (Philosophy), who said that he was sorry to take issue with the Provost, but that he was not happy with her decision to send the grading policy back to committee and to change the Undergraduate Catalog without consulting faculty. He pointed out that the Provost should “play by the same rules” that bind the Senate. Mr. Nunan then want on to discuss what he considered a more substantive question than the one of procedure—that of linking a grading policy to retention. Pointing out that we don’t know that the new grading policy will deflate grades, Mr. Nunan argued that, in any case, the desire to improve retention should not influence the grading policy we use. Mr. Nunan reminded faculty members of the recent events at Benedict College, where faculty members were fired after refusing to base grades partly on effort. While acknowledging that the situation at Benedict is far worse, Mr. Nunan pointed out that what is being proposed by the Provost at the College
undermines faculty control over grading. Finally, Mr. Nunan concluded that he had never been happy with our current, illogical grading policy.

Mr. Mignone next recognized Claire Curtis (Political Science), who informed faculty members that she had looked back at the Senate minutes from 2001-2002 and seen that the issue of retention was discussed at that time. Ms. Curtis concluded, then, that retention is not a new issue in regards to the proposed change in grade policy. Finally, Ms. Curtis asked whether professors at the College would be asked to keep two sets of grading records if we run a pilot program similar to the one at Clemson University. At Clemson, she pointed out, all professors were indeed required to keep two sets of records during the pilot period.

In response to Ms. Curtis, Mr. Mignone argued that in 2001-2002 faculty discussed retention but didn’t investigate the consequences of the proposed policy. He pointed out that he voted for the policy at the time, and that he wishes to defend faculty governance, but he nevertheless believes it would be acceptable to investigate the issue more fully. Mr. Mignone argued that the faculty and administration should both work to respect the other’s views.

Provost Jorgens then spoke, pointing out that she had talked about the changes to the Undergraduate Catalog with Mr. Mignone, Hugh Wilder, and George Pothering in her office. She said that she had tried to talk with other faculty, but that the Senate was not meeting when she learned about this issue. In fact, Ms. Jorgens pointed out that she discovered the language about the new grading policy in the Catalog the day before it was going to press. She purposefully put in language that left the question open, that made the change tentative rather than killed it entirely.

The Speaker then recognized Hugh Wilder (Philosophy), who pointed out that some of the discussion of the new grading policy had occurred under his watch as Speaker, and some had occurred before. Mr. Wilder then presented faculty members with a timeline of how the new policy was approved in 2000-2002. The Committee on Academic Standards, Mr. Wilder noted, took up the issue in Fall of 2000. At this time, a thorough, comprehensive study of the proposed policy was conducted. The committee gathered information from dozens of institutions and reported their findings to the Senate in March of 2001. After substantial discussion, the Senate voted to approve the new policy in principle. Intense discussion of an implementation process for the policy then ensued. In April of 2001, the Provost at the time established an implementation working group. Many, many people were involved in this group, Mr. Wilder pointed out; it was representative of numerous campus interests. The group studied institutions that had made transitions to new grading systems. In March of 2002, the Academic Standards Committee reported back to the Senate, after the work of the implementation group was completed, that an August 2006 date to actually implement the new policy seemed appropriate. The Senate then voted to implement the policy at that date. The intent was for the working group to continue. But because both the registrar at the time and the acting Provost left, little was actually done. Finally, Mr. Wilder argued that students are aware of the new grading policy. He pointed out that the Student Government
Association has passed at least two resolutions opposing the policy. Mr. Wilder concluded by stating that the College has already considered this issue in a very deliberative way and that a great deal of work has gone into it.

Next, the Speaker recognized Jim Carew (Geology), who argued that the faculty had adequately addressed concerns about the new grading policy when it came to the Senate several years previously. Mr. Carew pointed out that the faculty had already accepted delays in implementing the policy which were demanded by the administration at the time. To re-open this issue now is wrong, he argued. If the administration dropped the ball in implementing the policy, that is their problem. Mr. Carew added that there is a group of at least twenty-two professors who will drop the B+ and C+ grade from the potential grades they assign if the new grading policy is not implemented.

Hugh Haynsworth (Graduate School) then very quickly pointed out that the new grading policy does not affect the graduate program at the College.

Bob Mignone then closed the discussion. Although he corrected the Provost’s assertion that she met with him, Hugh Wilder, and George Pothering before changing the Catalog, pointing out that this meeting actually took place two weeks after the Catalog change, Mr. Mignone nevertheless re-iterated that he sees nothing wrong with re-examining the new grading policy in terms of the way the College has changed since 2000-2001. Mr. Mignone affirmed that he has sent the proposal for the new grading policy back to the Academic Standards Committee for further review.

Old Business

XF Grade

Mr. Mignone then recognized Renee McCauley, Chair of the Academic Standards Committee, who re-introduced the proposal to institute an XF grade as an honor board sanction for cases of intentional and pre-meditated violations. The proposal had first come before the Senate last April and was remanded to the committee for further refinement at that time. Ms. McCauley pointed out that the committee had added examples of Class 2 and Class 3 offenses to the original proposal.

Jeri Cabot, Dean of Students, spoke next about some procedural matters concerning the XF grade. She pointed out that the form faculty members fill out when they bring an honor board case would include a line asking whether the faculty member believes the case merits an XF grade. Class 3 violations, which are considered more the result of confusion or ignorance on the part of the student rather than deliberate intent to deceive, would involve a different form, which could direct faculty members to various outcomes that would be intended to correct student ignorance about plagiarism.

Bob Perkins (Foundations, Secondary, and Special Education) asked whether faculty recommendations about the XF grade would be honored. Ms. Cabot replied that the faculty only makes recommendations, that the honor board would not be required to
follow these recommendations, but that they would be treated as another piece of data in the decision-making process. Mr. Perkins then pointed out that his department believes the XF grade constitutes double-jeopardy for students and that, under this policy, grading would be taken out of faculty hands.

Reid Wiseman (Biology) spoke next, arguing that the new policy treats plagiarism as a “mortal sin” rather than the “venial sin” it should be. He pointed out that he would hate to harm students’ graduate school and career opportunities with this new policy. Ms. Cabot replied that, after two years, students may petition to have the XF grade expunged from their records. Mr. Wiseman responded that that would still be putting students in limbo for two years. Ms. Cabot replied that students might already be in limbo because many law schools and graduate programs already ask about honor violations. Finally, Mr. Wiseman asked whether the point of the XF grade is to have a teaching or a punitive effect on students. Ms. Cabot responded that the grade is punitive, but that it assures consistency and sends students the message that we take plagiarism very seriously at the College. She pointed out that the administration would spend time talking to students about the implications of the XF grade if it is approved.

Bill Barfield (Physical Education and Health) asked how many students such a policy would have affected, had it been in place the last couple of years. Ms. Cabot replied that the honor board hears approximately 60-70 cases a year. About one third of these cases involve serious plagiarism—plagiarism in which pre-meditation and deceptive intent are involved.

Michelle Brooks (Chemistry and Biochemistry) spoke next, pointing out that the XF grade was specifically reserved for students who have planned to cheat and deceive. Ms. Brooks feels that such violations merit a severe sanction.

Paul Young (Mathematics) spoke against the XF grade, arguing that the rationale of ensuring consistency is not necessarily a good one. Mr. Young noted that he has brought two dozen cases before the honor board in his time at the College and that no cases received identical sanctions. He sees this as a good thing because the individualized sanctions were proportionate and appropriate to the individual cases he had brought. Further, Mr. Young argued that faculty members who don’t want to lose authority to grade students will be reluctant to bring cases to the honor board. He added that it was preposterous to believe that the XF grade sends a message to admissions officers why a student failed a course. Faculty, he noted, aren’t the only ones who can turn students in to the honor board. What if a student turns him or herself in? In such a case, the grade would still be out of the faculty member’s hand. Mr. Young also argued that he saw no right for faculty appeal in the policy as it now stands. He concluded by stating that he doesn’t object to honor violations being noted on student transcripts, but that these violations should not be tied to grades.

Claire Curtis (Political Science) then asked about data at other schools. Did the number of cases brought before honor boards change after similar policies were adopted? Ms. Cabot replied that data on that issue was not available. Ms. Curtis then asked if anything
on student transcripts currently notes suspension or expulsion for honor board violations. Ms. Cabot replied “no.” She also pointed out, in response to one of the issues Paul Young had raised, that the student transcript would explain what the XF grade signified.

Susan Kattwinkel (Theatre) then asked who determines the class of the violation students will be charged with. Ms. Cabot replied that the honor board would make that determination.

Bob Perkins (Foundations, Secondary, and Special Education) pointed out that the XF proposal provides for an automatic XF sanction if a student is convicted of a Class 1 or 2 violation.

Next, Joe Kelly (English) argued that the XF grade does not represent a usurpation by the honor board of the right of faculty members to assign grades. Rather, it represents the faculty agreeing, as a whole, to take honor violations seriously. Individual faculty members would surrender control of serious plagiarism cases to the faculty as a whole. Mr. Kelly added that he believed the severity of the penalty—an XF staying on student records for two years—was perfectly reasonable. Freshmen and sophomores who make mistakes will have the grade expunged before they graduate. A senior who cheats, though, should be kept out of graduate school for a while.

At this point, Jeri Cabot interjected into the discussion a point of information—that faculty members can appeal an XF grade. The faculty right of appeal is already built into the current honor board system and thus is not a change in policy and wasn’t included in the XF proposal.

George Hopkins (History) argued that we should think of the XF grade as separating a “felony” from a “misdemeanor.” The XF sanction is for pre-mediated, deliberate cases. Such violations deserve a felony-weight punishment. Mr. Hopkins also pointed out that the XF policy would affect maybe twenty students a year out of the 10,000 who attend the College. Finally, Mr. Hopkins asked, in response to a point raised earlier by Paul Young, how many students in the past year had turned themselves in for plagiarism. Ms. Cabot replied that only one student had done so and that “it made [her] semester.”

Paul Young then pointed out that the first two items mentioned in the examples of Class 2 violations didn’t seem to be pre-mediated, yet still required the XF sanction.

Next, Alisa Whitt (Library) said that, in her experience, the honor board tries very hard to be fair. More faculty should serve on the honor board, she argued. If they did, some of the mistrust between the honor board and faculty members would be alleviated.

Claire Curtis then pointed out that she had an experience in which she thought the sanctions imposed by the honor board on a case she brought were too harsh. The board was very open to her input. Ms. Curtis encouraged faculty members to attend the honor board cases they bring, so that their input can be heard.
Bob Dukes (Physics and Astronomy) then asked about whether the College’s honor code required faculty to report violations or themselves be considered guilty of an honor violation. Ms. Cabot replied that the honor code no longer used this language. While she argued that faculty members are obligated to report honor violations, she also acknowledged that this duty is hard to enforce.

At this point, discussion ended. After a division of the house, the Speaker announced that the XF grade proposal passed, on a vote of 34-20.

**New Business**

**Curriculum Committee**

The following proposals put forth by the curriculum committee passed without discussion:

1. S05-01 ARTH 339 Historic American Interiors—New Course Proposal
2. S05-38 BS in Discovery Informatics—Proposal to Change Degree Requirements for the Major

**Committee on Graduate Education**

The following proposals brought by the Committee on Graduate Education passed without discussion;

1. Program Change Proposal for MAT - Early Childhood Education (EDEC)
   - New course proposals supporting the program change
     - EDEE 615 - Assessment in Student Learning
     - EDEE 682 - Field Experience III in Early Childhood Education
   - Course Change proposal supporting the program change
     - EDEE 642 - Social Studies for the Elementary School Teacher (title change)

2. Program Change Proposal for MAT - Elementary Education (EDEL)
   - New courses proposals supporting the program change
     - EDEE 645 - Field Experience I in Elementary Education
     - EDEE 690 - Creating Effective Learning Communities
     - EDEE 695 - Field Experience III in Elementary Education
     - EDEE 614 - Field Experience II in Elementary Education
   - Course Change proposals supporting the program change
     - EDEE 640 - Language Arts for the Elementary School Teacher (title and course description change)
     - EDEE 653 - Techniques for Teaching Reading (title and course description change)
     - EDEE 610 - Integrating Assessment and Instruction (title and course description change)
     - EDEE 606 - Individualizing Instruction (title and course description change)
     - EDEE 642 – Social Studies for the Elementary School Teacher (title change)
3. Course Change Proposal (not in EDEC or EDEL)
    EDFS 687 - Technology Education for Teachers (title change)

Proposal to Modify Probation Standards

The speaker then recognized Renee McCauley, Chair of the Academic Standards Committee, who introduced a proposal to modify probation standards.

Bill Barfield (Physical Education and Health) asked for a clarification of what was meant by “satisfactory academic improvement” in the proposal. Lynn Cherry, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies, replied that a student may raise his or her GPA one semester, but not enough to get off academic probation, particularly if the previous GPA had been especially low. But the Office of Undergraduate Studies would nevertheless consider that the student was making satisfactory progress if, in the following semester the same GPA for the same number of hours could pull the student out of probation.

After a division of the house, the proposal passed.

Resolution of Endorsement for Recycling Coordinator

Burton Callicott, Chair of the Recycling and Environmental Responsibility Committee, introduced a resolution that the College hire a Recycling Coordinator. Explaining that a student audit discovered that 60% of the trash in College cans is actually recyclable, that ARAMark doesn’t recycle at all, and that the committee had sent a similar proposal to Mr. Higdon a year and a half ago and received no response, Mr. Callicott asked that the Senate support his committee’s resolution.

Susan Kattwinkel (Theatre) asked whether the proposal suggested we actually have to recycle items at the College itself, or if we can send items off to be recycled for us elsewhere. She pointed out that, across the country, a majority of items sent to be recycled in fact end up in landfills. Thus, she asked, would such a proposal actually do any good? Mr. Callicott replied that a Recycling Coordinator might encourage the College to purchase necessary recycling equipment ourselves, thus saving money in the long run by avoid tipping fees and profiting from aluminum recycling.

Jason Overby (Chemistry and Biochemistry) then pointed out that, in the list of the duties to be performed by a Recycling Coordinator, #8 (overseeing disposal of material from science labs) seemed completely different from recycling duties.

George Hopkins (History), in response to Susan Kattwinkel’s earlier observation, pointed out that he had called an investigative reporter at the Post and Courier to ask about recycling. To the best of this reporter’s knowledge, recycling was actually being done (items sent for recycling were not simply ending up in landfills).

Julia Eichelberger (English) pointed out the issue the Senate was considering was a Resolution, not binding law. The specifics of the position would not be dictated by this proposal.
Allan Strand (Biology) then noted that many small towns can’t respond to the new enthusiasm for recycling. They have no room to store material sent for recycling, thus make the bad decision to landfill the items. This fact might explain Ms. Kattwinkel’s previously stated concern about items sent for recycling that get dumped instead.

Joe Kelly (English) then moved, as a friendly amendment, that Item #8 (which Jason Overby had spoken against) be removed from the duties ascribed to the Recycling Coordinator. Mr. Callicott accepted the amendment.

Bob Dukes (Physics and Astronomy) pointed out that the College has received grants in the past to explore recycling and environmental issues. Mr. Callicott replied that he imagined the position could expand to become that of a general environmental consultant.

George Pothering (Computer Science) then asked whether the three full-time employees mentioned in the proposal would have to be newly hired, or if these would be employees already at the College. Mr. Callicott replied that the proposal envisioned employees already here.

At the close of discussion, the Senate endorsed the Resolution on a voice vote.

**Constituent Concerns**

Alex Kasman (Mathematics) pointed out that all incoming students, during orientation, were required to participate in a 4-hour alcohol awareness program. Yet, there seemed to be no sanction for students who didn’t participate, despite the program’s supposedly mandatory nature. Mr. Kasman was concerned that such a policy sent a message of laxness about requirements to students. Susan Kattwinkel (Theatre) added that the College has a number of such requirements. Attendance at Convocation, for instance, is required, but there are no penalties for not showing up. Jeri Cabot, Dean of Students, spoke to these concerns. She pointed out that the alcohol awareness program was actually a 3-hour, online course. The language used to get students to participate was “strongly encouraged,” not “required.” In fact, 87% of students did participate in the alcohol awareness program. Ms. Cabot also argued that the program has an effect, that Student Affairs sees results from it.

Bob Mignone then closed the meeting by welcoming the new faculty secretary, and by thanking George Pothering for agreeing to serve as projectionist at Senate meetings as well as Deb Vaughn for continuing her service as Senate webmaster. The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Farrell
Faculty Secretary