Minutes of the Faculty Senate Meeting, 12 February 2008

The Faculty Senate met on Tuesday, 12 February 2008, at 5:00 p.m. in Wachovia Auditorium. Speaker Joe Kelly called the meeting to order.

Reports

The Provost

Provost Elise Jorgens mentioned the faculty-generated resolutions regarding the new faculty merit-raise system, which were on this evening’s Senate agenda. She thought that the tenor of both resolutions was positive. She also announced that President Benson would hold a forum on the merit-raise system on February 20.

Provost Jorgens thanked the Senate for its efforts in the Gen-Ed reform process. She said that it was very important for our students and for SACS accreditation to put in place a strong Gen-Ed program. It is a difficult process, she acknowledged, but she encouraged the Senate not to give up and to press forward. She added that the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and many provosts across the country have been paying close attention to Gen Ed and the issue of assessing student learning.

She reported that the Federal Commission on Higher Education and AASCU have been involved in trying to develop standards that would apply to all colleges, and to which colleges would be accountable. These standards will allow parents and the general public to compare colleges. AASCU has set up a voluntary system and the College has been asked to participate. Winthrop and some other schools in the state have already signed on. The Provost reported that she would like to hold off from participation for a while to see how it works for other institutions. If the President sees that it’s a good idea, then the College will participate, and she will work with faculty to see how we might make best use of the assessment data generated by the system.

The Speaker

Speaker Kelly said that with respect to the special Gen-Ed meetings, he wanted to find ways to facilitate the Senate’s deliberations so as to make best use of the Senate’s time. To that end, he passed around a two-page abstract of Gen-Ed Proposal as well as the exact language of the pending amendment to goal 6. When Senators wish to make amendments to the Gen-Ed Proposal, he asked that they submit the exact wording of what will be changed in the goals, and that they provide information on how an amendment will impact other goals. He encouraged Senators to submit their amendments in advance so that they could be displayed on the screens. If Senators proposed amendments from the floor, he asked that they write down the amendment and hand it to Debbie Vaughn so that it could be typed up and displayed on the screen.

On a different matter, the Speaker reported that he had attended the Senior Leadership meeting, and that there had been a lively discussion about the merit raise resolution on
tonight’s Senate agenda. He said that Senators who desired more information about the meeting could contact Dean Cynthia Lowenthal and some other deans, who attended the meeting.

The Speaker also reported that with the help of Bob Cape (Battery Project leader), the Faculty Advisory Committee was being formed to address issues concerning the Battery Project, the switch from SIS to a different system, and other issues that fall outside the purview of the Faculty Educational Technology Committee (FEC). The deans have been asked to send IT representatives to explain technical changes. The FEC is also represented in this new group.

New Business

Tom Heeney, Motions Concerning Faculty Raises and Compensation

Tom Heeney (Communication) moved that the Senate endorse the Faculty Compensation Committee Report of 01/10/08. The exact wording of his motion is as follows:

In the spirit of collegiality with the College’s new administrative leadership, and with the following qualifications, the Faculty Senate endorses the Faculty Compensation Committee’s January 08 “Recommendations on Merit/Market Salary Increase Process,” presented at the Jan 22nd regular Senate meeting.

(1) This endorsement, like the Faculty Compensation Committee’s recommendations, applies solely to the process governing the merit/market evaluation system. It does not speak to the question of the substance of any forthcoming salary increase distribution policies. Nor does it speak to the question of specific criteria that may be devised for establishing various merit thresholds. Nor does it speak to the wisdom of substituting this new process for the existing system of merit evaluation used in conjunction with the tenure, promotion, and post-tenure review processes, if that were to happen at some future date.

(2) Because the Faculty Compensation Committee’s recommended process represents a significant increase in the annual quantity of faculty evaluation, without any firm assurance of added value to be achieved through such a measure, the Senate reserves judgment on the long-term wisdom of replacing the current annual evaluation process with a new system.

Richard Nunan (at-large) seconded the motion. Mr. Heeney explained that the motion was offered in the spirit of collegiality, that it represents the thoughts of several faculty groups that have met informally, and that it affirms the tradition of shared governance at the College. He added that the faculty have had a month to process the Faculty Compensation Report and to reflect on it.

Larry Krasnoff (Philosophy) mentioned the potential problem of having two evaluation systems in place—an old one and new one. It is better, he stressed, to have one just one system, a new one that replaces the old one. The resolution, he thought, seemed to back away
from the one-system approach. Mr. Nunan responded that the language in the resolution is neutral on the issue of whether the two systems should merge or not. He pointed to the last sentence in statement #1. He added that it was not the intent of the resolution to preclude a single system.

The Senate voted on the motion, and it passed.

Mr. Heeney then read aloud the second motion on salary increases for faculty meeting the merit threshold:

For any faculty member judged to meet the merit threshold as defined in Recommendation 3 of the Faculty Compensation Committee’s January 08 “Recommendations on Merit/ Market Salary Increase Process,” the College of Charleston Faculty Senate recommends a minimum salary increase of 80% of the mandated average annual raise percentage authorized by the General Assembly for State employees for the coming year. Larger salary increases will be contingent on funds available, on level of meritorious performance, and on market factors, as judged appropriate.

The motion received a second. Mr. Heeney explained that this motion is not about process, but about criteria. It specifies what meeting a minimum merit threshold means financially for faculty, something not specified in other documents pertaining to the new merit-raise system.

Jack Parson (Political Science) said that state salary increases are often at or below the inflation rate. He would like the resolution to say that a salary increase will be 100% of the mandated average annual raise, if the state awards raises that are 3% or below 3% of what faculty currently earn, or that a salary increase will be 80%, if the state awards raises above 3% of what faculty earn.

Jason Coy (at-large) said that the Senate should weigh in on this issue, but he was concerned about the timing of the resolution. He said the Faculty Advisory Committee to the President has spent a lot of time expressing concerns about the new raise system. He thought it would be more appropriate to postpone a vote on the resolution until after the forum, where the President would respond to concerns about the new merit-raise system. Mr. Nunan said that he had no objection to Mr. Coy’s suggestion. He explained that when the resolution was circulated, no forum on the new raise system had been scheduled. He also found it troubling that it took so long for such a forum to be held.

Mark Long (political Science) asked where the 80% figure came from. Why 80% and not another percentage? Mr. Nunan replied that though the number is somewhat arbitrary, it comes from past practice: 80% has been treated as an across-the-board raise for faculty in the past. The rest has traditionally been used to address compression issues and other matters. He didn’t want to come up with a percentage that departed from what has been done in the past. Jeffery Diamond (History) agreed with Mr. Coy about the timing of the resolution. He also said that he had a problem with the 80% figure. Isn’t the whole approach of the new merit system to make us aware that we are in a competitive market? This resolution goes against that idea. He was
also concerned that the 80% figure could simply represent not a minimum for raises, but the
typical level for most raises.

Calvin Blackwell (Economics and Finance) said that we (the Senate) could only advise on these
matters; we have no power to enact changes. He thought the Senate should treat the salary issue
as a negotiation, in which case the Senate should ask not for a low minimum, but for high
minimum. He likened such a negotiation to buying a car: to get the best price, you don’t start
with a high offer, but with a low offer. He also said that it bothered him to hear about raises
that are below the inflation rate. If we are going to offer a recommendation on salaries, let’s
start with a strong one. He also agreed with the view that the low minimum salary raise
suggested in the resolution could become the norm for all raises.

Mr. Long asked for unanimous consent to amend the resolution and change 80% to 100%.
Unanimous consent was not granted. He then made a motion to amend the resolution and
change 80% to 100%. The motion received a second.

Hugh Wilder (Philosophy), speaking against the motion, argued that it would decrease the
flexibility of department chairs, who have to decide how to divide up small amounts of money
to address merit, market, and equity concerns when it comes to salary raises.

Mr. Nunan urged the Senate to think about the issue from the point of view of the President,
who is trying to address serious salary deficiencies by a long-term policy. His intent is to
loosen up the purse strings to give bigger increases for merit. To do that, he must go to the
Board of Trustees for more money. If he goes to them with the Senate recommending the 100%
figure, he has to say that the faculty wants to be treated as the staff is treated. This would send
a message to the Board that the faculty is less serious about merit evaluations than the
President.

Mr. Krasnoff suggested that perhaps the 100% figure might force the President to find money
elsewhere for salary increases. In any event, he thought the debate over the issue was
overheated, especially given the prevailing view that things won’t change much with regard to
salary increases.

Brian McGee (Communication) agreed with Mr. Wilder’s comment. He said that as a
department chair he needs flexibility to address equity issues and the problem of salary
compression. Chairs also need a way to recognize significant disparities in performance among
faculty. He would be reluctant to endorse any scheme that makes things more restrictive for
chairs. Mr. Blackwell replied by pointing out that state mandated salary increases “are peanuts”
and always will be. Why should we fight over that? It we’re only talking about such small
sums, they aren’t worth fighting over. Mr. Long’s resolution would at least prevent that. He
said that if raises are 3% or less, then we might as well divide it in an even, straightforward
way. Mr. Nunan said that he understood Mr. Calvin’s annoyance with such quibbling over
small amounts of money; nevertheless, chairs have to deal with situations year after year in
which very little money is available. If you have faculty who were hired when no money was
around and thus started with low salaries, yet who may be very good, those people get treated
unfairly and suffer greater financial hardship, if chairs have no discretion in how to distribute state money allotted for salary increases.

At this point, Dennis Keyes (at-large) called the question. The motion passed.

The Senate voted on Mr. Long’s motion to change 80% to 100% in the resolution. The motion failed.

Mr. Krasnoff then suggested altering the wording of Mr. Heeney’s proposed resolution. He suggested adding the phrase “publicly specified minimum percentage” in place of “80%.”

Scott Peeples (English) asked if the intent was that the minimum would be constant or that it would change? Mr. Krasnoff said that it would change. Mr. Blackwell pointed out that the minimum percentage could be zero. Recalling his car-buying analogy, he said that the Senate was merely willing “to pay sticker price” and not negotiating with any savvy. Mr. England replied that we are not yet at the negotiating stage. It’s not even clear what we are being sold. He added that he planned to make a motion to table Mr. Heeney’s motion. RoxAnn Stalvey (Computer Science) thought that the Senate should debate the issue when it had more information.

Ms. Stalvey next moved to table Mr. Heeney’s motion until the March meeting. After receiving a second, the motion passed.

Faculty Curriculum Committee

The following proposal from the Curriculum Committee were approved without discussion:

Accounting and Legal Studies
New Course Proposal – ACCT 444 Accounting Internship.

Mathematics
New Course Proposal – MATH 475 Statistical Consulting.

Communications
Proposal to change a Course – COMM 301 Communication Research Methods.
Proposal to change a Course – COMM 326 Organizational Communication. Change in Prerequisites to “COMM 210 or permission of the instructor.”

Committee on Graduate Education, Continuing Education, and Special Programs

All proposals submitted by the Committee on Graduate Education were approved without discussion.

1. New Course Proposals
Proposals for a New Graduate Course: MA in Teaching in Performing Arts
MUSE 611: Middle and Secondary Choral Methods
MUSE 702: Graduate Conducting Style and Analysis II
MUSE 704: Trends and Critical Issues in Music Education

2. Course Change

Proposal to Change a Graduate Course: MEd in Science and Mathematics SMFT 645: Physics of Force and Motion

3. Proposal to Change a Graduate Program

MA Bilingual Legal Interpreting Program:

Course Changes - MA Bilingual Legal Interpreting
  INTR 502: Legal Processes & Procedures (Title Change)
  INTR 515: Fundamentals of Interpreting (Description Change)
  INTR 601: Fundamentals of Written & Sight Translation (Title & Description Change)
  INTR 602: Law & the Legal System of the United States (Title Change)
  INTR 615: Consecutive Interpretation (Description Change)
  INTR 725: Internship in Legal Interpreting (Description Change)

Course Deletions: MA Bilingual Legal Interpreting
  INTR 514: Fundamentals of Medical Interpreting
  INTR 613: Consecutive Interpreting in Health Care
  INTR 625: Practicum in Legal Settings

Constituents’ Concerns

No issues or concerns were raised.

The Senate, having finished its business, adjourned a little after 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terence Bowers
Faculty Secretary