Minutes of the Faculty Senate Meeting, 11 Sept. 2007

The Faculty Senate met on Tuesday, September 11, 2007, at 5:00 p.m. in Wachovia Auditorium. Speaker Joe Kelly called the meeting to order, and the minutes of the 17 April 2007 Senate meeting and its continuation on April 24 were approved.

Reports

Provost

The Provost announced that her meetings called “Conversation with the Provost” would continue this academic year and welcomed faculty participation. She reported that she has had some good discussions with faculty the previous year.

The Provost also reported that she would be meeting with Steve Osborne (Business Affairs) and the President regularly this year, which will give her a voice on budget and policy issues.

The staffing at the Provost’s office is almost complete. The Provost reported that Bev Diamond has been recently appointed as an Associate Provost and will be working on refining the hiring procedures and the faculty activity system and be involved in budget issues.

The Provost also announced that the Faculty Compensation Committee will begin a new study on the issue of faculty compensation and that the President is committed to addressing salary inequities.

The Provost reiterated her continued support for the General Education Proposal and urged the Senate to put in place a strong new general education program at the College. It is something, she stressed, that is in the great interest of the institution.

The Speaker

Speaker Joe Kelly announced that he has appointed Brian McGee (Communication) as Parliamentarian. He then reported that the administration has officially declared that it philosophically supports the First Year Experience program (FYE) and will monetarily support it (a budget has been approved), and he produced a letter from the Provost that officially certifies such support. He also reported that Susan Kattwinkel has been appointed as Director of the program.

George Pothering (guest) then asked the Speaker if this certification included a commitment to funding faculty lines. The Provost responded that eight lines will be added and funded over the next five years. Susan Kattwinkel added that about 300 students are currently enrolled in the FYE, which is about a sixth of all freshmen, and that next year about 40% of all freshmen are expected to enroll in the FYE.
The Speaker next reported that he has formed an informal committee to look at faculty governance and shared governance. The committee consists mainly of former Speakers of the Faculty and includes Bev Diamond, Trisha Folds-Bennett, Larry Krasnoff, Bob Mignone, Jack Parson, George Pothering, and Hugh Wilder. The Speaker wants to open up a larger discussion on faculty governance and wants the committee to identify problems and put together a plan to address them. He expects that a report from the committee will be ready by next semester.

The Speaker also reported that a committee, headed by Cathy Boyd (Registrar’s Office), has been formed to look into classroom management issues and various problems faculty have experienced involving the conditions and scheduling of classrooms.

The Speaker next announced that there is a new content management system under development that will change the way the catalog is revised.

Finally, the Speaker reported that after the Senate voted not to allow special tuition fees to be charged for students in certain schools, the Board of Trustees decided not to move on this issue. Any final decision on the matter will be delayed until the strategic plan has been completed.

George Pothering (Computer Science), chair of the Ad Hoc General Education Committee

Mr. Pothering first warmly thanked former chair of the Committee, Julia Eichelberger for all her work on the Committee and the Senate expressed its thanks with applause.

He next noted that all Senators should have a copy of the New General Education Proposal and explained four key changes in it.

--First, it has been re-organized and reformatted for a more streamlined presentation. Each goal includes a list of defining characteristics, requirements, and approval criteria.

--Second, much of the document has been re-worded in consultation with various departments.

--Third, the structure of the proposed Standing Committee on General Education has been clarified and streamlined. The current proposal would make this committee more similar to other faculty committees.

--Fourth, an analysis of 43 transcripts of graduates has been done to see what courses they had taken to satisfy their general education requirements and to see if those courses would fit under the new Gen-Ed requirements. The results of the study seem to indicate that the new requirements will have relatively little impact in terms of increasing the number of hours a student must take to meet the requirements.
Mr. Pothering also presented a revised schedule printed on colored paper for easy identification. He also said that each of the two Committee proposals—the Gen Ed Curriculum Proposal and the Proposal for the Gen-Ed Standing Committee—would be presented individually. His intention was to have the Senate review each proposal section by section, during which time it could offer amendments. At the end of that section-by-section review, the entirety of each proposal would be subject again to further amendment and the whole proposal voted on.

Hugh Wilder (Philosophy) asked whether the sections of the Gen-Ed proposal voted on by last year’s Senate would also be subject to further amendment by the Senate. The Speaker answered that those sections could only be reconsidered with the current proposals through a special parliamentary procedure, which he would explain later. Mr. Wilder also asked for confirmation that the procedure this year was different from last year’s, in that this year the Senate will be able to vote up or down on the document as whole at the end of the amendment process, and in that the Senate would not be voting on approving each section of the document. Mr. Pothering and the Speaker both verified that what Mr. Wilder had said was correct.

Richard Nunan (Philosophy) asked whether the First Year Experience and the General Education Proposals would be reconsidered as a whole. He thought they were separate entities and should stay separate. He also thought that the procedure from last year was that the whole Gen-Ed document would be considered as a whole at the end of the amendment process. If such was the case, then he thought that the Gen-Ed items voted on last year should be reconsidered at the end of the amendment process this year.

Mr. Pothering then said that what was voted on last year has been formally accepted by the Senate, but that the rest of the proposal “died” and must now be formally re-introduced and considered as a separate entity. Mr. Nunan responded that he thought there was an obligation to re-consider the earlier parts of the Gen-Ed proposal voted on last year in light of what the current proposals end up being after this term’s amendment process. Speaker Kelly said that a way could be found to do this and that he would consult with the Parliamentarian.

Darryl Phillips (at large) then noted that his understanding was that all items of the Gen Ed proposal passed by last year’s Senate were dependent on the Senate’s approval of a Standing Committee on General Education; so nothing is a done deal until the Senate approves the Standing Committee, which has not yet happened.

At this point, the Speaker announced that at the next meeting he will entertain a motion that the Senate set a time limit of half an hour for discussion of each page of the Gen-Ed proposals, and that we will not move ahead of the announced schedule in order to allow faculty (who are not Senators) to attend meetings in order to speak to specific aspects of the proposal that are of special concern to them.
Mark Hurd (Psychology), chair of the Educational Technology Committee

Mr. Hurd wished to update the Senate on the possibility of moving to online course evaluations, something that the Educational Technology Committee started to look into in 2005. After a report to the Senate last year, when the Senate expressed some concerns about online course evaluations, the Committee tried to address those concerns as it investigated the merits of online course evaluation systems.

Mr. Hurd next reviewed some of the disadvantages of the current course evaluation system:

--it involves a lot of paper, many thousands of forms to handle and archive, and a fair amount of money to print
--it takes many hours of labor of the staff of many departments to process
--it has security problems (the evaluation forms pass through many hands and some are incorrectly administered or not given at all)
--anonymity is sometimes compromised (professors can identify the handwriting of some students)
--the feedback loop is slow (faculty receive the data from evaluations weeks or months after the courses are over)
--some class time is lost administering the evaluations
--the participation rate by students is not particularly high (67%).

Mr. Hurd then enumerated some of the advantages of an online evaluation system:

--the feedback is faster
--the comments remain more securely anonymous
--data can be extracted and plotted more easily
--it offers more flexibility in terms of administering the evaluations
--it is less expensive to administer
--it doesn’t take up class time
--it allows more space for written comments
--it is possible and easier to tailor specific evaluation forms for specific classes.

Mr. Hurd also pointed out one can control the time (hours during the day and the number of days) when students can fill out evaluations. This is an important point because it answers the fear—raised by the Senate the previous year—that students might decide to fill out the forms when they are least thoughtful. (Here the scenario of drunken students filling out evaluation forms at 2 AM was evoked.)

Mr. Hurd noted that other institutions have been moving to online course evaluations. Though the literature on the topic shows that response rates decline when the move to online evaluations is made, he said that he found in his discussions with other universities that response rates have increased. One can also force participation, he noted, by withholding grades from students who haven’t done the evaluations. Some challenges in
making online evaluations work are that students need to be persuaded that there is value in doing the evaluations, and that faculty must also “buy into it.”

Currently, Mr. Hurd reported, the administrative computing staff has too much work on its hands to develop a pilot study, so a third party vendor has to set it up. One vendor, Digital Measures, has agreed to do the study for free and has already started. Some departments and some tenured faculty have volunteered to participate.

Mr. Hurd said he would like Senate approval to continue the pilot study.

At this point Mr. Hurd fielded questions from the Senate. Richard Nunan, wondering about incentives for students to participate, asked whether data from the evaluations should be made available to students as an incentiv. Mr. Hurd answered that other sources, such as Pick-A-Prof, already provide some, and that withholding grades is the most prominent form of incentive.

Phil Dustan (Biology) asked whether the questions in the online form would be the same as the ones used in the paper form. Mr. Hurd said they would be the same. Mr. Skinner (EDFS) noted that the response rate goes down with online evaluations because usually only the best and worst students (or those who really like or dislike the professor) are motivated to respond. He noted that a system is needed that gets close to 100% participation rate to avoid getting skewed results. Mr. Hurd asserted that the research in the literature doesn’t support that view.

George Pothering (Computer Science) asked Mr. Hurd how the 67% participation rate of our current system was determined. Mr. Hurd responded that he got the figure from Pam Niesslein’s office (Accountability, Accreditation, Assessment, and Planning). Mr. Pothering wondered whether students who had dropped from classes were counted among the non-participants. If so, that would help explain what seems to be a low participation rate.

Meg Cormack (Religious Studies) observed that currently faculty can now control when evaluations are given. Picking up on this thought, Hugh Wilder remarked that during the two-week period when course evaluations can now be given, and when tests are given and papers are due, faculty have some control over when to administer evaluations, but the online course system doesn’t allow for this control. Mr. Hurd responded that the parameters could be tailored for individual courses with respect to the timing of when the evaluations are done. Jennifer McStott’s (at large) asked if in the pilot study students would fill out both sets of evaluations or just the online ones. Mr. Hurd responded it would all be done online. Laura Turner (Theatre) asked if the pilot study would try to evaluate and do different things. Mr. Hurd said that it depended on the volunteers and what they wanted to look at or evaluate.
Brian McGee (Communication), chair of the Committee presented a proposed amendment to the Faculty By-Laws, Art. III, Sect. 1.I.6. The amendment would strike certain passages and insert new language concerning the selection and service of the Parliamentarian.

6. The Speaker will shall appoint a Parliamentarian to the Faculty, at the first Senate meeting of the academic year from among the Senators who shall serve at the pleasure of the Speaker. The Parliamentarian will shall advise the Speaker or other presiding officer, and the faculty and Senate, concerning parliamentary procedure. The Parliamentarian will shall perform other duties normally associated with such an office. If the Parliamentarian is unable or unavailable to perform those duties during a meeting of the Faculty Senate, the Speaker may appoint an Acting Parliamentarian to the Faculty until such time as the Parliamentarian shall return to service.

Mr. McGee explained that currently the Faculty By-Laws require the Parliamentarian to be a Senator, but Parliamentary authorities, such as Robert’s Rules of Order, recommend that the Parliamentarian not be a member of the deliberative assembly that he or she advises. The amendment would thus better align our Faculty Senate practices with standard Parliamentary practices. It would also allow the Speaker greater flexibility in appointing a Parliamentarian. The amendment also allows for the appointment of an Acting Parliamentarian (something not possible under the current by-laws), thus giving the Speaker greater flexibility in obtaining parliamentary advice. Finally, the amendment regularizes some inconsistencies in capitalization and substitutes “shall” for “will,” which is consistent with parliamentary language on this subject.

Because the Faculty By-Laws requires that the Committee on the By-Laws and Faculty/Administration Manual make a report on all proposed changes to the by-laws, Mr. McGee announced that his Committee would present a report and recommendation at the next meeting on its own proposed amendment.

Hugh Wilder then thanked Mr. McGee for all the excellent work that he and the Committee have done over on the past year on the By-Laws and Faculty/Administration Manual, which “we all live by.”

**New Business**

**Election of Speaker Pro Tempore**

Scott Peeples (English) nominated George Hopkins (History) as Speaker Pro Tempore. The nomination was seconded and Mr. Hopkins was elected.
Academic Standards Committee

(1) Transfer Credit: 60-Hour Limit
Larry Krasnoff (Philosophy), chair of the Committee, addressed an issue that was brought to the Committee by the Registrar, Cathy Boyd. The issue concerned the number of hours of transfer credit a student may receive from two-year institutions. Apparently, a number of students have in the past successfully petitioned the College to receive more than 60 hours of transfer credit, which the catalog states to be the limit. Mr. Krasnoff explained that since the Academic Standards Committee rules on interpretations of the College catalog, it has the authority to address this issue, and the Committee wondered what the principle might be that would allow such petitions to be granted. The catalog contains no language indicating that exceptions beyond the 60-hour limit are permissible. Therefore the Committee affirmed that the catalog already offers a clear and firm rule on the 60-hour limit, which should not be broken. Mr. Krasnoff added that Don Burkhard (VP of Enrollment Management) verified that sticking to the rule as stated in the catalog will not affect the recruitment of students.

One Senator asked if there were state regulations requiring that we accept all the credits of transfer students. Cathy Boyd (Registrar’s Office) responded that there is no such regulation, and that what credits we do accept must apply to the state articulation agreement. She added the 60-hour rule exists because faculty traditionally have not wanted College of Charleston graduates to earn more half their hours from another institution.

(2) Latin Honors Requirements
The Academic Standards Committee moved that the minimum requirements for Latin honors at graduation be changed from:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Honorary Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>cum laude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>magna cum laude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>summa cum laude</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Honorary Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>cum laude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>magna cum laude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>summa cum laude</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

as soon as the Provost deems the change to be feasible.

Mr. Krasnoff explained that the recent changes to our grading scale, which include the introduction of minus grades, have made it more difficult for students to achieve these honors. At the request of the Provost and the Board of Trustees, John Newell, the Dean of the Honors College, conducted a survey comparing our requirements to those of other institutions. (A spread-sheet illustrating these comparisons was projected onto the auditorium screen.) His report concluded that these new requirements would better
reflect the realities of our new grading scale and the requirements of both our peers and our aspirational peers.

Hugh Wilder said he was undecided about the issue and wanted to know more about the rationale for the change. He asked if the data support the claim that the recent change in our grading scale has affected the GPAs of our students. He also said that a key statistic is the percentage of students receiving honors awards, and was wondering if there were data on that. John Newell (Dean of the Honors College) responded that Institutional Research can’t easily retrieve some of the data that Mr. Wilder mentioned, and that the data for the percentage of students who receive honors awards from other institutions are hard to come by (he looked at 100 institutions and could only find this kind of data for twelve). Based on the data he did collect in his survey, Mr. Newell proposed to adjust the Latin honors GPA requirement to be at or above the median of the other institutions in his survey.

Paul Young (Mathematics) asked how long the current standards have been in place. Mr. Newell replied that they have been in place many years, at least as long he has been at the College. He also noted that the Board of Trustees was concerned that our standards were too high compared to other schools and that they were putting our students at a disadvantage. He shares this concern and said that our standards need to be even with our peers. He also added that the slight lowering of the honors standard would help attract more top students who are motivated to pursue such honors. Jamie Schafer (SGA) said that her conversations with students indicate overwhelming support for the amendment.

Phil Dustan (Biology) wondered about the premise of the amendment, namely that the new grading scale will make it more difficult for students to reach the honors standards. Isn’t the new grading scale supposed to be fairer and even out grades overall, keeping GPAs level? Mr. Newell responded that that may be so for some students earning grades below “A”s, but such is probably not the case for those seeking the top honors, especially summa honors, because some of the “A”s that students previously earned will be “A-”s and because there is no “A+” in the grading scale that students can earn to compensate for “A-” grades.

Brian McGee then moved that the Senate postpone deciding on the amendment until data are made available to the Senate.

The motion was seconded and discussion of the motion ensued. Scott Peeples (English) then asked about the time required for the collection of data; he and some other Senators were concerned that the search for data could be too open-ended and could end up killing the Academic Standards Committee’s motion. Brian McGee assured the Senate that his motion was not an effort to defeat the Academic Standards Committee’s motion; the intent of his motion is to allow the Senate to make a more thoughtful decision on whether to change the honors standards.
Laura Turner asked if data could be obtained on the percentage of students earning honors awards here and elsewhere. There was some question here as to what data the Committee needed to gather and present, and the Speaker consulted the Secretary, who said that the types of data that had been discussed and that the motion seemed to indicate were the following: data on the GPAs of students receiving honors awards at other institutions, percentage of students receiving honors here and at aspirational institutions, and, if possible, data on the impact of our new grading scale on GPAs.

John Newell pointed out that it would be hard to get more of some of this data (e.g. find data on the percentage of students earning honors awards at other institutions). Mr. Krasnoff asked whether the College could make public its studies on student GPAs, and the Provost responded that it could. Mr. Krasnoff said that we should focus on the top end of students when looking at how the new grading scale effects GPAs, and that it might be useful to look at whether the percentage of students receiving honors awards has changed this year since the implementation of the new grading scale. Kay Smith (Office the Academic Experience) said that we really need another four years to measure the affects of the new grading on GPAs. Mr. Krasnoff then pointed out that though it is good to find and look at more data, this is a “time-sensitive” issue that affects a number of students now.

The Senate then voted on Mr. McGee’s motion, which passed.

No constituent concerns were brought up and no issues of the Good of the Order were raised. The Senate adjourned at around 6:45.

Respectfully submitted,

Terence Bowers
Faculty Secretary