Highlights from the Faculty Senate regular meeting (9/15/15)

The Speaker called the Senate to order at 5:06 PM and the meeting adjourned at 7:21.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

George Pothering will again serve as Parliamentarian this year.

REPORTS

President McConnell reported that
- field research stations at Dixie Plantation are ready for use by professors and students.
- the Boundless campaign will finish within 10 months
- student aid and scholarship support from the College of Charleston Foundation is up nearly 70 percent from FY 2011.
- over and above normal appropriations, the state legislature added $600,000 in recurring funds to support Computer Science and Supply Chain Management programs and $1.75 million for repurposing the pool area of the Stern Center.
- CHE has approved the MFA in Creative Writing, the College’s first terminal degree.

On reaffirmation of regional accreditation, he reported that our 10-year SACSCOC reaffirmation visit will take place in March 2017. We will submit a Reaffirmation Compliance Certification Report in September 2016 and a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) in February 2017. Dr. Divya Bhati has joined the College as Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning and is working with groups of faculty, staff, students and trustees to develop the QEP.

On budget and revenues needed to responsibly run the College, he reported that “sobering truths” were revealed by careful examination over the past year of our enrollment and budget. Since 2012, we have not hit annual enrollment targets with respect to the mix of resident and non-resident students, with stark implications due to lower enrollments of non-resident students. For three years, money pulled from the enrollment reserve fund, coupled with savings in administrative costs, has been used to cover the annual shortfall, but taking money from the reserve is a short-term, non-sustainable fix. Depleting the enrollment reserve will have a negative and visible effect on maintaining buildings and classrooms and capital projects. The anticipated total revenue shortfall for the current fiscal year is $2.5 million, $0.5 million more than our available reserve.. The President has asked the budget team to prepare a budget reduction package of $1.5 million, and leadership will make decisions about how to make reductions across campus.

The idea that recruiting more out-of-state students could fix the situation, he believes, is not sound. Outside competition for non-residents, aided by price-cutting at other universities, continues to flatten our non-resident yield. Also, the prime recruiting ground of the Northeast is beginning to dry up, as the number of high school graduates is dropping and will continue to do so: competition for these students will only stiffen. The revenue model hinging on non-resident tuition has failed. Nor, as all indicators suggest, can raising tuition fix the problem.

On a new vision, academic and financial, for the College, the President said we must look to other opportunities to secure more revenue while maintaining academic excellence, and he called on the faculty to apply our creative, liberal arts mindset in helping to innovate solutions. He stressed that the College has a track record going back
to our founding of evolving over time to new demands and challenges while also staunchly safeguarding our academic excellence and student-centered approach.

We need to “strategically target,” he said, non-traditional students who are trying to complete degrees or never began a degree program. This is a large population waiting to be served and makes up a significant portion of the 15,000 people who move to Charleston annually. This population does not wish to come downtown for classes at the historic campus and serving them would allow us to grow out toward the North Campus, perhaps further north, and into Mount Pleasant, meeting a need and in so doing contributing to the College’s revenue needs. The School of Professional studies can expand program and degree offerings in order to attract these students, and SPS Dean Gibbison, the President said, is working on reforms to simplify matriculation and add more degree completion options. We must also expand graduate offerings to match demand downtown and elsewhere. These efforts will help stave off the movement into the Lowcountry of both public and private educational outfits.

He also said that we need to aggressively pursue hybrid and distance education and collaborate, where we can, with other universities to bring sought-after offerings to the Lowcountry. Other inroads can be made in executive education and certificate education.

School-based fees, he added, can also be pursued to help offset higher-cost curricula.

He noted, as well, that we are avidly recruiting international students and will be developing structures both to bring students to the College and also to support them once they are here.

The above, he said, are ways of diversifying our financial footing and strengthening the academic mission of the College. This represents an evolution that we need in order to protect the College and strengthen it, growing and changing but maintaining the liberal arts and sciences core and commitment to student-centered education.

\textit{A complete transcript of the President’s address as delivered at the Senate will be included in the meeting minutes.}

\textbf{Interim Provost McGee reported that}

- last year marked the third year in a row of substantial growth in funded research ($9.8 million at a highly competitive time for research dollars, particularly federal research monies).
- this past summer saw the delivery of 94 sections of courses through distance education, and these accounted for 21% of the summer offerings and had higher enrollments than face-to-face course sections.
- we have an increasingly diverse student body, up from 13.3% of degree-seeking undergraduates in minority categories in 2010-11 to 18.1% in 2015-16.

On \textit{budget and academic vision}, he provided data on the decline in the non-resident student population since 2012, broken down into regular, provisional, and transfer populations and added additional evidence to the President’s analysis of the causes for the decline.

Principles that Academic Affairs will adopt for any cuts that are required of the division, he said, include 1. preserving our ability to maintain and improve faculty salaries for recruitment and retention, 2. understanding that operating budgets (which have already been cut without full replenishment) cannot be a source of further cuts, 3. we will have to, therefore, look at faculty and staff positions, permanent and temporary (the largest
cost item in institutions of higher education), and 4. there will be shared governance in this process. There will be a thoughtful, multiyear approach to budget reduction, he emphasized.

On the revenue side, the strategy will include recruiting students in our current prospective student populations, graduate students, and non-traditional undergraduate students and concluding the comprehensive fundraising efforts, which are also contributing to our bottom line.

Pursuant to accreditation, the Interim Provost said that all faculty by May 16, 2016, should have at least a year’s data entered into the Faculty Activity System. He encouraged faculty involved in assessment to “close the loop” by making changes to course design and delivery based on what assessments reveal. Evidence of closing the loop should be provided for accreditation purposes. Additionally, he said that department and program heads should be documenting adjunct evaluation to meet SACSCOC standards. Many policies are in the works: a course numbering policy, policies that clarify the meaning of “academic program,” “department,” “center,” etc. Also under development is a scheme for undergraduate program review.

On the Faculty/Administration Manual and other policy matters, the Interim Provost enumerated and explained changes that appeared in the latest edition and he discussed the College’s compliance with state law requiring the teaching of founding documents of the United States. He noted that changes have been made to the undergraduate catalog for compliance. He also singled out for discussion the creation of adjunct faculty titles: Adjunct Lecturer and Adjunct Senior Lecturer.

On Tenure, Promotion, and Third Year Review, the Interim Provost listed topics for discussion this year emerging from discussions with Deans last year: adding clarity to the selection process for external reviewers, streamlining cases where there is no controversy at the school level, reviewing the continued use of Associate Professors in the process of promoting colleagues to full professor, and whether or not to review the 30-year old policy for faculty grievances.

Speaker of the Faculty Todd McNerney thanked faculty who have volunteered to serve as replacements on committees and addressed a failure to ratify a change to the F/AM regarding how meeting agendas are distributed, which will be up for ratification this year. He announced that we have hired a new Faculty Secretariat, and she will start working shortly. Finally, he explained that the Senate has not been reapportioned since it was reduced in size a few years back: this will need to occur this year and a policy for reapportionment added to the F/AM.

Faculty Athletics Representative Vince Benigni discussed faculty engagement opportunities through the Colonial Academic Alliance. The College will be the inaugural scholar exchange host of Northeastern University Presidential scholar William Mayer, who will deliver a keynote address on Donald Trump as Presidential candidate and talk with classes. If the event goes well, we hope CofC scholars will have the opportunity to go to Colonial Alliance schools on the program. He also discussed the Alliance’s undergraduate research conference, faculty pedagogy conference, and a bystander intervention program launched by Andrea DeMaria and Jeri Cabot. He noted that information about other opportunities to get engaged with the Alliance is forthcoming and asked for faculty to send ideas to him about how we might increase faculty engagement in CofC activities and events and develop a better esprit de corps.
Committee on By-Laws and Faculty/Administration Manual Chair, Jason Vance, reported on changes made to the F/AM last year and listed items on the committee’s agenda this year and that are carry-overs from last year: reapportionment of the senate, the status and procedures of the Faculty Hearing and Grievance committees, separating of process/procedure and policy in the F/AM, addressing concerns raised over titles for adjuncts, and clarifying language on committees (such as charges, purview). He also noted that Academic Affairs and Legal Affairs will be reviewing institutional policy for consensual relationships.

OLD BUSINESS

The Senate approved course and program change proposals from the Department of Health and Human Performance.

NEW BUSINESS

The Senate debated a motion on administrators’ roles in faculty evaluation made by Senator (Philosophy) Larry Krasnoff and, on a successful motion from Senator (HSS) Joe Kelly, sent Krasnoff’s motion to the Faculty Welfare Committee and the Advisory Committee on Tenure, Promotion, and Third-Year Review for further study, asking those committees to report their findings to the Senate.

CONSTITUENTS’ CONCERNS

Senator (Religious Studies) Margaret Cormack raised a longstanding concern of hers that the effort required to earn a superior rating in post-tenure review at the Professor rank is same as that needed to earn promotion to Professor, yet the raise is not equivalent. She announced that she will be bringing this concern to the Faculty Compensation Committee, the Faculty Welfare Committee, the Budget Committee, and the President’s Advisory Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Duvall
Faculty Secretary