April 16, 1996 (Second Session)

MINUTES OF THE FACULTY SENATE

The Second Session of the April meeting of the Faculty Senate convened at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 16, in Room 100 of Maybank Hall, Speaker of the Faculty Robert Mignone presiding. Forty-six Senators attended; Susan Morrison served as Parliamentarian.

Speaker's Report

Mr. Mignone called attention to the fourth annual Holocaust Memorial Observance, which was scheduled to take place later in the evening, starting with a candlelight march from Washington Square Park. He announced that President Alexander M. Sanders, Jr. was organizing a gesture of support for Kevin Baltimore and his family. As the faculty was doubtless aware, the Baltimore family property along the Ashley River had been vandalized with racial slurs, an apparent attempt at intimidation. The President, Mr. Mignone said, was planning for a group from the College consisting of faculty, students, and staff to go the Baltimore property to help remove the letters "KKK" from trees, a dock, and so on, and had asked the Speaker to help organize the faculty contingent.

The Speaker's report included a memorandum from the Provost, dated March 11, 1996, on "Changes to the Faculty Manual," which asks the Speaker, and the Chair of the Senate Committee on the By-Laws and Faculty/Administration Manual, Herb Silverman, for any comments on these changes, to be forwarded to the Provost before the end of the semester. The most important of these changes has to do with a detailed "Workload Policy" statement from the Office of Academic Affairs. Mr. Mignone circulated this memorandum at the meeting, and asked the Senate to bring to his attention any comments or concerns which they might have.

The Speaker then distributed copies of two committee reports delivered to the Senate. The first, from the Committee on Tenure, Promotion, and Third-Year Review, summarized the Committee's activities for the year and particularly requested the Senate's advice about the problem of decisions apparently being made outside the normal procedures specified in the Manual:

The practice of making tenure and promotion decisions outside the provisions of the Manual, though valid de facto in cases already past, should now be discontinued.

It is the committee's view that awarding tenure or promotion outside of the procedures and requirements outlined in the Manual is a very unwise practice. It is especially unwise given that there are no existing procedures or standards for determining personnel decisions other than those provided by the Manual, and that such a practice would be subject to abuse by future Presidents and Administrators.
Consequently, we respectfully recommend that the Administration not make such decisions, and we seek guidance from the Faculty Senate concerning the propriety of such actions. (Part 6)

The Committee also sought guidance from the Faculty Senate, “at an appropriate time,” on whether the Manual should be amended to provide that evaluation panels for promotion be composed only of faculty members who are tenured and hold the rank being sought, or a higher rank. (For instance, a panel for a candidate seeking promotion to the rank of Professor would consist only of tenured Professors.) (Part 7)

The second item, from the Faculty Welfare Committee, concerned (1) Retirement and (2) Faculty Salaries. The full texts of these reports, and of the Provost’s memorandum mentioned above, are attached to the Secretary’s copy of the Minutes.

**New Business**

Lindsay Packer was then recognized for the Academic Standards Committee, and introduced a motion on allowing students to “walk” at Graduation:

Proposal to the Faculty Senate
Re: Students who may participate in the commencement ceremony

To most students and their families, the commencement ceremony represents the culmination of the student's undergraduate career. In practice, there are some students for whom, due to incomplete documentation, only tentative degree verification can be provided before commencement. In addition, there is always a handful of students participating in the ceremony who have not completed all their degree requirements but whose status could be described as “all but done.” These students are permitted to walk either by hiccups in the system or because of extenuating circumstances. In acknowledgment of this, the printed program for the commencement ceremony carries an explicit disclaimer that while “appearance of a name on this program is presumptive evidence of graduation...it must not be regarded as conclusive.” In an effort to address the inconsistencies of current procedures, the Faculty Committee on Academic Standards, Admissions and Financial Aid proposes that the following criteria be used to determine which students be allowed to participate in the December and May commencement ceremonies.

*A student may participate in the commencement ceremony at the end of any given semester if he or she either has completed all graduation requirements or satisfies all of the following three criteria:*
1. At the beginning of the semester immediately preceding the commencement ceremony, the student has a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or better, as well as a GPA in the student's major of 2.0 or better.

2. After the final withdrawal date in the semester immediately preceding the commencement ceremony, the student is registered in all courses required for the completion of his or her degree, but is not registered in more than 18 hours of courses.

3. The student has received a failing or incomplete grade in no more than 4 hours of course work taken during the semester immediately preceding the commencement ceremony.

All students who have filed an application for graduation through the Office of the Registrar will be notified in writing of these criteria and of their status with regard to graduation. This notice will explicitly warn students who do not meet all of the above criteria that if they make graduation plans, they do so at their own risk.

Rationale:

The degree check to determine who may participate in the commencement ceremony is typically completed by between 2 and 4 days before the ceremony (for example, 2 days in Fall 1995 and 4 days this semester). At that time, the Deans of the various schools try to contact by phone those students who have failed to graduate. It is not unusual that, at such short notice, the student's family plans cannot be canceled. Even if they can, and although the student's failure may not come as a great surprise, the very short notice of the current procedure results in at least considerable inconvenience for the student's family, and quite often considerable ill will directed at the College.

Given the haste in which the checking process must be carried out, it is inevitable that, despite the diligent efforts of administrators and faculty, some mistakes will be made, both in denying permission to some students who have in fact completed their degrees and in granting permission to others who have not. The proposed criteria for participation in the commencement ceremony expand the class of eligible students to include a small group of students who are all but done at the time of the ceremony. The Office of the Registrar estimates that, in each of the last three long semesters, there were between 10 and 20 students who failed to graduate but who would have satisfied the above criteria.

The aim of the criteria is to define those students who, by virtue of their GPA and remaining degree requirements at the beginning of the semester, have a reasonable
expectation of graduating. The second and third criteria are intended to prevent students from loading up with classes in their final semester for the express purpose of being allowed to participate in commencement.

It has been argued that to allow nongraduates to participate in commencement would devalue the ceremony for those who are truly graduating. The SGA was asked for their input on the above proposal, especially with regard to this issue, and the senate of the SGA gave the proposal its unanimous support.

The proposed procedures will give students early warning of exactly where they stand. In addition, the College will be making a gesture of goodwill to its students and their families by allowing students who have a reasonable expectation of graduating to carry through with their commencement plans.

In summation, Mr. Packer maintained that this proposal, which had appeared before the faculty in a number of earlier versions in the past, would preserve the spirit of “presumptive but not guaranteed” graduation, while making it a little easier on students and especially on their families. The message was essentially this: “Provided you don’t mess up too badly, you can go ahead and ‘walk.’” Marion Doig strongly opposed the motion, saying that when you redefine what graduation means, you are heading down a slippery slope; why not just rename the ceremony? In the event, the proposal passed, by a vote of 24 to 17, on a show of hands.

Trisha Folds-Bennett, for the Curriculum Committee, then introduced eight motions. After brief discussion, these were passed as circulated and may be summarized as follows:

**DIVISION OF CLASSICAL AND MODERN LANGUAGES:**

**SPANISH AND ITALIAN**

1. Minor in Italian (requirements)

2. Minor in Italian Studies (requirements)

3. New courses:  
   - ITAL 361 Survey of Italian Literature I (3hrs.)
   - ITAL 362 Survey of Italian Literature II (3)
   - ITAL 452 Twentieth-Century Italian Literature (3)

4. New course:  
   - SPAN 381 Introduction to Spanish Linguistics (3)
BIOLOGY

5. New course: BIOL 445 Systematic Biology (3)

6. Change in Environmental Studies Minor: inclusion of BIOL 406 (Conservation Biology) and BIOL 444 (Plant Ecology) in the list of suitable Science and Math courses

PSYCHOLOGY

7. New Course: PSYC 313 Sensation and Perception (3)


Constituents' Concerns

William Moore mentioned that the prohibition against “double counting” of courses in Minors was probably not being followed because there is no procedure in place for checking. Frank Kinard said that we need to have much better records kept for Minors in general. Susan Morrison noted that the Senate had as yet taken no stand about guns on campus (this was in connection with proposed legislation legalizing the carrying of concealed firearms in the State of South Carolina); should we not express some opinion? Mr. Mignone said that he would try to make copies of the law available. Susan Morrison pointed out that the legislation had not yet passed, and that now was the time to go on record; Caroline Hunt agreed. The Speaker thought, however, that we should look at the Bill first, before making specific comments. Mr. Moore wanted to know if college campuses were specifically covered in the legislation, that is, were places where firearms would not be allowed? Mr. Mignone said that he would acquire a copy of the proposed legislation, so we could find out. Caroline Hunt repeated that she thought the faculty should make some kind of a statement on this important issue, if necessary asking for a “suspension of the rules” at the General Faculty meeting on April 22 in order to introduce a resolution making our views known.

At about 5:45 p.m., with no further business, the meeting adjourned sine die.

Respectfully submitted,

Bishop Hunt
Faculty Secretary