September 7, 1999

MINUTES OF THE FACULTY SENATE

The first regular meeting of the Faculty Senate of the College of Charleston for the academic year 1999-2000 convened at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 7, in Room 116 of the Education Center, Speaker of the Faculty Trisha Folds-Bennett presiding. After the Roll was called, fifty-two senators were found to be in attendance. The Minutes of the third session of the April Senate meeting (April 20, 1999) were approved as circulated.

Reports

The President

President Sanders began with several amusing stories about his early days in politics. It seems that the FBI took a picture of him at a peace rally in 1969, around the time he had helped to author South Carolina’s Endangered Species Act. At a news conference called to announce that legislation, he had brought a South American River Turtle as a prime example of a species facing extinction, to display to the press. The case of conservation had scarcely been helped when then-Governor West (who thought the turtle moving around in a sack might be a snake) announced that he, too, was fond of turtles, especially in the form of turtle soup, and loved to hunt for turtle eggs along the Grand Strand. . . .

Really, Mr. Sanders said, the College budget was like a turtle-egg, the kind that looks like a slightly squashed, leathery ping-pong ball, with a dent in it. You can squeeze the egg into different shapes by stepping on it, but the baby turtle inside just makes a bulge in another part of its casing: nothing really changes. Similarly, you can mold our budget into several different configurations, each one of which could be rationally defended. But if you move more money into one area, that means you have to take it away from somewhere else, because there is only so much turtle to go around. The dent in the egg doesn’t go away. It just moves.

The College has received what sounds like a hefty funding increase of more than 11% over last year, or about $3,200,000. And yet, since about two million of this has to go for one-time or “non-recurring” expenses, the real increase is only about $1,200,000. The President said that his top priorities this year are to cut down on the number of adjuncts being used, and to enhance existing faculty salaries. Accordingly, about half of the “new”
money, the budget increase, will probably go toward hiring 13 more tenure-track faculty, and half toward a 3% salary increase over and above the 2% “across the board” increase provided for state employees in general. Other divisions are of course possible in theory, but the dent in the egg would still be there. If salary increases were made larger, we would get fewer new faculty, and vice versa. A fifty-fifty division, therefore, would seem to be about what we should aim for.

Mr. Sanders noted in passing that because of the continuous pace of technological change, things like computers, which become obsolete almost as soon as they are purchased, have to be treated as recurring, not one-time, expenses. Why not, in that case, charge students a separate “technology fee” to pay for this constant and obviously necessary turnover? Well, the concept of “special fees” always keeps coming up, in one form or another, and, knowing this, the Legislature has effectively nixed the idea by deciding ahead of time the percentage by which a college can increase its total charges in any given year. This percentage is limited by law to the HEIR figure (“Higher Education Inflation Rate”). This means that any increase in revenue from separate “fees” would have to be subtracted from tuition increases, and so nothing would be gained. The dent in the egg can be moved around, but not eliminated.

We also receive a certain amount of new money as the student population slowly grows (about 1.5% this year), but this does not go very far. Why not, as a one-time solution, try to persuade the Legislature to allow us to increase our tuition substantially? After all, places like Williams now charge $32,000 a year. Davidson costs $26,000. Well, in the first place, these institutions are not really our competition. And in the second, those inflated figures need to be looked at closely. Few parents except oil-sheiks and the super-rich actually pay such amounts, because the tuition at many of these institutions is in effect heavily subsidized through loan packages, scholarships, and fee-remissions of one kind or another. The fact is, our tuition is already higher than many near-by institutions – more than William and Mary, more than the University of North Carolina, more than the University of Georgia. Our fees are not unduly low. Why not, in that case, stop being a state school altogether? Well, the State of South Carolina does send us over $30 million a year, and that should take care of that question for a while.

Mr. Sanders also reported that the Provost, Dr. Festa, is considering a bonus of $500 for those rated “distinguished” at the time of “post-tenure review,” to be paid for from the $2,000,000 available for “non-recurring” expenses. To reward the distinguished with a real raise, rather than a one-time bonus, would mean reducing salary increases for all the rest of the faculty, which must be funded from the same, fixed sum of around $1,200,000.

In conclusion, President Sanders asked if there were questions. Someone asked about the cost of the projected new basketball arena. This was a capital expense, and so funded in an entirely different way from the operating budget. To obtain substantial capital funding, you have to have a project that will be appealing to the Legislature – and, make no mistake, this one is. In fact, we may be able to “piggy-back” a number of purely academic building projects onto this one. The basketball arena may also bring in
“matching” funds from city and county, so it may be a very substantial bargain for the College in the long run, not to mention all the favorable publicity. So many people have been enthusiastic about the arena that it has actually taken a good deal of effort to limit the size and scope and cost of the project! Another question had to do with the College of Charleston Foundation. The Foundation has substantially exceeded its original goal of raising $30 million in five years: in half that time, we have $40 million. But much of this is in the form of “tied” gifts — money ear-marked by the givers for scholarships, for example, not faculty salaries. Kern Fromabarger asked when faculty contracts would come off the endangered species list. (By the end of the week, the Speaker said.) There were additional questions about the $1 million gift for a new ECDC school building, and about the perennial problem of parking. Mr. Sanders said parking was not a high priority at the moment, but some thought was being given to a new parking garage.

As he left, President Sanders was warmly applauded for attending the first meeting of the Senate, and for taking the time to give substantial and detailed information about the financial situation of the College.

The Speaker

The Speaker announced that she would omit her report on the “Special Planning Session” held just before the start of the semester, and proceed to the rest of the agenda.

New Business

- George Pothering was reappointed as Parliamentarian.

- Robert Mignone was reelected as Speaker pro tempore. He will also continue to serve as our representative to the Commission on Higher Education, as the implementation of “performance funding” proceeds and develops. He noted that we have learned a number of lessons this past year and fared pretty well, all things considered, in the “ratings.” More “funding indicators” are still being phased in, but it may be that all 37 will never be used. He hoped that the College might obtain up to $1 million in additional funding by doing well in the ratings. The Senate thanked him for all his hard work by a warm round of applause.

- The Curriculum Committee introduced eighteen motions held over from last year. (These were approved by the previous Committee on April 8, 1999, and sent to the Speaker and the Faculty Secretary on May 13, without, of course, being acted on by the Senate.) Seventeen of these passed, and one was remanded to committee, as follows:
During a brief discussion, Glenn Lesses said that he believed item S99-20 (HUM 200 - New prefix and course) was unsatisfactory in several ways and should be returned to this year's Curriculum Committee for further study; he so moved. Julia Eichelberger agreed, saying that it duplicated Honors Western Civilization. Dean Sam Hines said that as matters now stand, there are problems coordinating special topics courses when they are split between different departments; there is no mechanism yet for dealing with interdepartmental courses that involve different Schools at the College. Mr. Lesses' motion to remand passed on a voice vote, with the understanding that the Curriculum Committee would discuss the proposal with Dean Hines. The original documents provided by last year's Curriculum Committee (48pp.), dated May 13, 1999, are attached to the Secretary's copy of the Minutes, and a duplicate will be sent to the Registrar.

- For the Assessment Committee, Rhonda Swickert gave a progress report on the work of its general education subcommittee, which is actively looking into ways of evaluating the existing General Education Program at the College. This subcommittee had worked diligently, she said, during the previous semester to develop a systematic approach to the problem of evaluation. One of the issues that many people had had with the original general education proposal which the faculty refused to ratify last year was that there appeared to be very little documentation suggesting anything wrong with the current curriculum, and thus little reason to change it. The answer to this difficulty, she said, is to develop an assessment approach that will enable us to use standardized assessment "batteries" that will point to any weaknesses in our current general education program, as well as to possible areas of excellence.
The first step was to gather instruments that would enable us to assess general education. But, since the subcommittee did not know which curriculum it might be assessing (the old or the new, if it passed), they decided to go back to the “Goals for General Education” as a starting point. These included knowledge of arts, humanities, mathematics, and science; interdisciplinary understanding of political, economic, and social issues; knowledge of diverse cultures; and effective “communication skills.” An attempt would be made to select test instruments that would allow us to assess as many of these goals as possible. In tabular form:

1. Selection of Testing Instruments

   Subject Content Knowledge (English, math, science, social science - history, geography, political and cultural understanding)

   Critical Thinking Skills (critical thinking, problem solving, quantitative and historical analysis)

   Student Experience (use of facilities, like the library or the web; writing experience; art, music, theater; diversity, i.e., interacting with others from different perspectives)

2. Development of Testing Protocol

   Procedure for sampling participants from the student population
   Policy to ensure adequate student participation in assessment
   Protocol for test administration
   Procedures for scoring and reporting data

3. Implementation of Testing Plan

   Summer 2000 (incoming Freshmen) - follow-up test, Spring 2002
   Fall 2000/Spring 2001 (Sophomore/Junior)

Professor Swickert concluded her report by saying the Assessment Committee’s timetable is to have test instruments selected by the end of Fall 1999, and be ready to begin formal assessment of the existing General Education Program by the end of Spring 2000. Since students must be “tracked” and their educational experience followed over a period of time, the testing protocol adopted indicates that three years will be required before real information is obtained.
• A proposal was then introduced to make the Honor Board equivalent to a Standing Committee of the Faculty:

a. Composition:

Five faculty members, five staff members, and at least twenty students. The student membership of the Honor Board should be representative of the student body of the College in terms of sex, age, major area of study, race and year in school. Student membership is voluntary and there are no term limits. The Honor Board, with the assistance of the Office of Student Affairs, annually selects new student members to replace graduating members, members dismissed for insufficient grade point average and to maintain the representative nature of the Board. The Office of Student Affairs annually selects new student members to replace graduating members, members dismissed for insufficient grade point average and to maintain the representative nature of the Board. The Office of Student Affairs recruits and selects the five staff members.

b. Duties:

1) To enforce and promote the Honor System, in conjunction with the Office of Student Affairs, of the College of Charleston.
2) To review the Honor Code and Code of Conduct periodically and make recommendations to the administration.
3) To hear cases involving alleged violations of the Honor Code and/or the Code of Conduct.
4) To recommend sanctions in cases involving violations of the Honor Code and/or Code of Conduct.
5) To provide members for appellate board hearings.
6) To provide student members for grievance hearing panels.
7) To hear student government election appeals, impeachment[s added -- Sec ] of officers of student organizations, and requests for judicial review of the actions of the student government (student members only).

This proposal was received and forwarded to the Senate By-Laws Committee for a consideration of its language; no action was taken on the proposal itself.

• Robert Mignone then proposed a single change in the Post-Tenure Review Calendar:

Departmental Chair or Panel Chair will inform the candidate of the departmental recommendation, and forward the candidate’s packet with either a brief acknowledgment of the chair’s or panel’s concurrence with the candidate’s self-evaluation, or a detailed negative evaluation letter, to the appropriate dean. Date: December 17 (changed from December 6).

This was approved unanimously.
John R. Huddleston then introduced this motion, as previously circulated:

That the Senate consider putting to the entire faculty, by means of a formal ballot, the following question: “Do you favor the continuation of General Education reform here at the College of Charleston?”

Considerable discussion followed. Larry Carlson moved to amend the motion by taking out “reform” and substituting the word, “discussion,” so that the question would read, “Do you favor the continuation of General Education discussion here at the College of Charleston?” If the Senate approves the motion, Mr. Carlson said, the language needs to reflect the fact that no “reforms” have actually taken place. This was accepted as a friendly amendment. Glenn Lesses opposed the amended motion, on the grounds that it was, he said, too general and amorphous. Stephanie Mignone added that she, too, would prefer something more definite. Why not have discussions within departments and then come back with specific proposals? Robert Mignone said that he would, in fact, like to consult the faculty as a whole about whether or not to continue discussing the basic issue of General Education. Brian Scholtens said there were really three questions to be asked: do we drop the whole issue; do we continue from where we left off last spring; or do we start over, from scratch? Stephanie Mignone thought the motion could be rephrased in some way to see if the faculty as a whole wanted the Senate to resume General Education discussion. David Mann spoke against the idea of polling the faculty; the Senate, he said, were the faculty’s elected representatives and should take responsibility for deciding these questions. Franklin Ashley spoke in favor of asking the faculty as a whole. Brian Scholtens attempted to put his point about there being three questions (drop, continue, or start over) in the form of an amended question to be directed to the faculty: “How do you wish the Faculty Senate to proceed on the question of General Education: drop the issue, continue from where we left off, or start over?” Mr. Mignone spoke against this amendment. David Mann moved to adjourn; the motion to adjourn failed, on a show of hands. Finally, Robert Russell moved to table the motion. In the event, forty-one senators voted in favor of this. The prime motion, as amended by Mr. Carlson, was tabled.

Constituents’ Concerns & Adjournment

Apart from a brief announcement, no one had anything else to say. The meeting adjourned around 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bishop Hunt
Faculty Secretary