October 5, 1999

MINUTES OF THE FACULTY SENATE

The second regular meeting of the Faculty Senate convened at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 5 in Room 116 of the Education Center, Speaker of the Faculty Trisha Folds-Bennett presiding. Fifty-six senators came. The Minutes of the previous meeting (September 7, 1999) were approved as circulated.

Reports

The Speaker

Trisha Folds-Bennett raised the question of how faculty senators should represent their “constituents.” In her judgement, senators were not “delegates” required to follow the will of their department or “school” in a literal sense, but, like members of other representative bodies, were presumably elected to use their best judgement, and to follow their conscience, in deciding major issues. In the future she would send out an e-mail, at about the time senate packets were distributed, to remind the faculty in general to get in touch with their senators and let them know what was on their mind. She noted that the finishing touches were being put on proposals to add “peer-evaluation” of teaching to the evaluation process; she intended to meet with departmental chairs and inform them of procedures for administering them. She would also post reports from last year’s faculty committees to the senate website; the Faculty Newsletter has been “de-prioritized.” She then welcomed Mr. Hank Bridges as the Student Government Association’s representative to the faculty senate, and urged senators to attend the Fall Festival celebrations in the coming days.

The Provost

Conrad Festa came to discuss the $500 maximum raise for faculty rated “superior” at the time of post-tenure review. He apologized for a statement he had made earlier which suggested that he had accepted in their entirety the faculty’s proposals for implementing the review; in fact, he had always had some reservations about the financial implications. Giving substantial salary now would have very serious consequences in the years after 2000. Such ratings could only, he said, be paid for by taking money away from research funds, or from professional development funds: for example, we could stop hiring new faculty at the present rate (25 this year, 16 and 14 in the two previous years, meaning a ratio of three new roster faculty for every four adjuncts replaced). But bringing down the number of adjuncts is a top priority for the College, and he would not jeopardize this.
The general attitude of many educational professionals throughout the state has been, "post-tenure review, who needs it?" Nobody thinks too highly of it, to say the least. Perhaps $500 is about what it's really worth. But the College has put in extra dollars for faculty salary increases, over and above funds allocated for this purpose by the state, in nine of the past ten years, and this is a record to be proud of. The fact is, Dr. Festa said, the College is now closing in on the Southeastern and even the national average for faculty salaries at comparable institutions. We are planning for the future, and hiring first-rate people, and paying them competitively from the start in order to attract them here. Pay raises for associate and full professors will remain, he said, a high priority, but they will have to be achieved in the usual way, through the same process of thoughtful planning and evaluation that has been in use for many years. He asked for questions.

Phil Dustan talked about "salary compression": this is what he thought post-tenure review pay raises were really about. That was an error, Dr. Festa said; the problem of compression had been, and would continue to be, addressed by carefully reviewing salary figures, and making adjustments as warranted. He had personally gone over the salaries of each of the four hundred or so faculty, not once, but four times, and full professors have actually received more than associate professors by way of compensation for "compression." Larry Carlson asked if the twenty-five new faculty lines were over and above replacements for retiring faculty; the answer was yes. The very highest priority is the replacement of adjuncts and, next to this, helping departments that are conspicuously understaffed.

James Carew countered, that, as matters now stand, about the only way for senior faculty to get paid properly is to leave the College, and go somewhere else. The ad-hoc faculty committee which last year drew up the guidelines for post-tenure review had thought that the process might be a way of reversing this trend, and of keeping competent people here. He pointed out that at Coastal Carolina University, for example, a "superior" rating gets a permanent $5000 pay raise, not $500 - exactly the opposite of the path which the Administration has chosen for the College of Charleston. Dr. Festa replied that Coastal Carolina plans to give $1000 to any faculty member who gets even a "satisfactory" post-tenure review, with $5000 for a "superior" - and of the eleven faculty eligible faculty, no less than eight were rated "superior." He had talked with their provost about this, because he foresaw huge problems in paying for such large raises several years down the line. The response had been, "several years from now doesn't matter; we're not going to be here then." This, Dr. Festa said, was most unwise. It would mortgage the future of the institution for the temporary benefit of those clever enough to work the system, and he absolutely would not stand for this at the College of Charleston.

Mr. Carew brought up the issue of adding another rank for the exceptionally meritorious, beyond Full Professor, to be paid for the way existing promotion increases are. Why not ask the state to do the right thing and come up with some entirely new money, instead of trying to squeeze it out of existing operating costs, the way we seem to be doing now? The Provost thought the idea of an additional rank might be worth considering, and remembered having said so some years ago when the question was raised.
New Business

Richard Nunan was recognized and reviewed the assumptions under which the ad-hoc post-tenure review committee had worked last year. The committee’s understanding, he said, was that they had received the following charges:

From the Administration--
In order to secure approval by Commission on Higher Education (CHE), design a post-tenure review process that would be sufficiently substantive to be genuinely consistent with both the letter and the spirit of the “Best Practices” guidelines.

From the Faculty--
Design a post-tenure review process that would not erode or dilute the intellectual freedom protected by academic tenure.

From Both--
Design a post-tenure review process that would be as streamlined as possible, within the constraints of the so-called “Best Practices.”

In keeping with these requirements, the ad-hoc committee had recommended the following criteria as necessary for all post-tenure reviews:

Professional Vitae
Candidate’s Statement on teaching, research & service
Computer-generated student teaching evaluations
Department chair’s annual evaluations
2 letters from intra- &/or extra-departmental peers

Additional criteria, however, were recommended for candidates seeking a ‘superior’ rating. These persons would also furnish clear evidence of exemplary teaching effectiveness (exemplary professional competency in the case of librarians), leadership in service, and continuing quality scholarship. Since “peer refereeing” is one criterion of scholarly quality, the evidence provided would have to include at least two scholarly articles and/or books (or otherwise juried publications, or professional evaluated performances or exhibits in the arts).

Accordingly, the language setting forth the standard for a superior rating was deliberately written to be virtually identical to the language used in The Faculty/Administration Manual, in order to signal that a packet, and the review process, warranting a superior rating ought to be comparable to the packet and review process appropriate for a successful promotion review. This, in turn, derived from two guidelines set out in the CHE’s own “Best Practices for Post-Tenure Review”:
Guideline #9: "The institution must identify the means by which the post-tenure review is linked with faculty reward systems, including merit raises and promotion."

Guideline #10: "The institution must display a commitment to provide funds to reward high achievers on post-tenure reviews.”

Since, however, there was obviously no money to speak of being made available, and the Administration had thereby chosen essentially to ignore the recommendations for “Best Practices for Post-Tenure Review” established by the Commission on Higher Education, he intended to enter into the record the following proposal, for action at the next meeting:

Proposal to Revise Implementation of Post-Tenure Review

Recommendation:
Ignore implication of language governing nature of evidence & review for superior rating. The only appropriate difference between a satisfactory packet & a superior packet should instead involve the inclusion of professional publications produced (or forthcoming), since the last review, plus documentation of a serious peer-reviewing process for at least two of these publications.

Justification:
The principle that the review process warranting a superior rating ought to be comparable to the promotion review process was appropriate only when we thought there was serious money associated with a superior rating. Since that is no longer the case, the work of the Post-Tenure Review Committee, at all levels except an unsatisfactory rating, ought to be reduced to a checklist enterprise. I.e., no compilation of course materials (unless the candidate feels they are necessary to offset relatively unenthusiastic teaching evaluations), no piles of college service memoranda, no external peer reviews of the candidate’s body of work from the College, perhaps no teaching portfolios, etc.

During the brief discussion that followed, Kem Fronabarger asked whether the $500 the Provost had referred to was going to be a one-time “bonus” (as originally bruited), or an actual salary raise. It was a raise, Dr. Festa said. Caroline Hunt objected to publications being the only criterion for getting a “superior” rating. This was hardly appropriate, she said, for an institution that prides itself primarily on its teaching. Robert Mignone spoke in favor of the proposal, saying that it was only about changing the requirements for the packet. Several senators again raised the problem of salary compression, especially in departments that hired people directly from administrative positions, where salaries of course tend to be higher than among roster faculty working their way up through the ranks. But Dr. Festa assured the faculty that the fact that a mere $500 was involved for post-tenure review did not mean that he would relax his vigilance in trying to eliminate inequities elsewhere. Rewarding faculty through a combination of cost-of-living increases and merit pay for doing excellent work was a quite reasonable system, and it would continue in force.
Robert Mignone moved to reintroduce a motion about surveying the faculty on general education which had been made by John Huddleston at the September meeting, amended by Larry Carlson, and tabled at the end of the meeting. That motion, as amended, reads:

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 discussion here at the College of Charleston?”

The motion to remove from the table passed, on a voice vote. Mr. Mignone then made a second motion, to refer the original motion, as amended, to the Assessment Committee, so that “an effective survey question might be developed.” “The intention,” he said, “is to survey the faculty as to their wish with regard to the Senate’s continuation of the review of general education reform, and whether such review should begin with possible changes to the vetoed proposal of Spring 1999.”

When asked why he wanted to give this task to the Assessment Committee, Mr. Mignone replied that they are expert in devising questions of this kind. There were several objections, to the effect that the Assessment Committee should first be asked if they would accept such an assignment. David Mann asked whether the Senate actually has the authority to give such directions to a Standing Committee of the Faculty. Mr. Mignone argued that it does. Hank Bridges, the representative of the S.G.A., asked if the student body could vote on the question of reviving the discussion of general education. The Speaker answered that this would be up to the S.G.A.; they certainly had this right, though their vote would not, of course, be binding on the Senate. Mr. Mignone said that devising a fool-proof survey question was no easy matter, and that we should direct the Assessment Committee to formulate an instrument that would work, and then – a separate question altogether – the Senate could decide whether or not to send it out to the faculty at large. In the event, his motion to refer the question to the Assessment Committee passed, on a voice vote.

David Mann, for the Senate Committee on the By-Laws and Faculty/Administration Manual, recommended two CHANGES IN THE BY-LAWS concerning the College Honor Board, derived from a proposal introduced at the September 7 meeting. These two changes were voted on as a single question and unanimously approved, as follows:

1. Article V Committees. Section 1, General Regulations. [Add, p. 41 of the current Manual]:

K. Service by Faculty members on the College Honor Board is the equivalent of service on any Senate or College Committee.

2. Article V Committees. Section 3-B, Standing College Committees.

i. Committee on Nominations and Elections, c. Duties.
(4) [Reworded, p. 43 of the current Manual]: To present to members of the faculty, in writing, its slate of candidates for standing College committees and five faculty for the College Honor Board by March 15th.[]

[Secretary's note: the text has been adjusted to reflect recent changes ratified by the Faculty but not yet incorporated in the current edition of the Manual.]

Clyde Metz introduced seven motions endorsed by the Curriculum Committee on September 23, 1999:

1. F99001   PSYC 392   Course Change
2. F99002   CSCI 101   Course Change
3. F99007   GEOL 232   New Course: Introduction to Petrology (4 cr. hrs., including lab.)
4. F99012   CHEM 490   New Course: Chemistry and Biochemistry Seminar (1 hr.)
5. F99013   CHEM 492   New Course: Senior Seminar (1 hr.)
6. F99015   CHEM 481   Course Change
7. F99016   CHEM 482   Course Change

An additional proposal had received the endorsement of the 1998-1999 Curriculum Committee on March 4, 1999, but apparently had not reached the floor of the Senate last year, even though the requirements for this minor currently appear on page 46 of the 1999-2000 Undergraduate Catalogue:


All eight motions passed unanimously and with no changes.

Glenn Lesses, for the Tenure and Promotion Committee, then introduced seven recommendations for CHANGES IN THE FACULTY ADMINISTRATION MANUAL, as set forth in a memorandum sent to the Provost and dated September 13, 1999. These recommendation were, he said, attempts to clarify procedure, or document current practice; many had been previously described in memoranda from the Provost and successive Tenure and Promotion Committees. These recommendations were divided into seven sections, as follows:

I. Comments Portion of Student Evaluations
II. Recent Graduate Letters
III. Content of Transmittal Letters
IV. Department Chair Colleague Letters
V. Continuing Review of Senior Instructors
VI. Professional Development Requirement for Senior Instructor Rank
VII. External Peer Evaluation
The seventh of these motions, which would not only permit but require letters on research and professional development from evaluators outside the College, immediately became the subject of controversy. (Please note that at the end of the discussion, a vote on these motions was postponed, and no action was taken.) A copy of the original memorandum is attached to the Secretary’s copy of the Minutes, and the text of the seventh section reproduced here in full:

VII. External Peer Evaluation

Delete the following sentence on p. 76 2 b. (2) of the current edition of the Faculty/Administration Manual:

Both internal and external statements on research and professional development activities.

Insert in its place:

Statements on research and professional development activities from professional colleagues within and outside the College of Charleston.

On page 98 of the current edition of the Faculty/Administration Manual, renumber items 6. c. through 6. h. to 6. d. through 6. i. and insert a new 6. c. to read:

By early September, candidates should submit to the departmental evaluation panel chair the names of at least three professionals from outside the College in the same area of research as the candidate, who can evaluate the research and professional development of the candidate. Evaluation panel chairs should obtain from that list at least two reviews of the candidate’s scholarship and research. Panel chairs can solicit up to three additional letters of review from outside the institution (for a maximum of five).

After the external reviewers have been determined, a cover letter from the panel chair should accompany the review materials sent to them, stating that we seek a review of the quality of a candidate’s research and professional development and that we do not seek merely a testimonial to the candidate’s accomplishments. A copy of the candidate’s academic curriculum vitae and copies of the materials identified by the candidate as satisfying the criteria in this area should be sent to each of the outside reviewers. Copies of the relevant portions of the Faculty/Administration Manual about research and professional development (currently, IV. J. introduction, IV J. 2., and IV. J. 4.) as well as any additional departmental criteria on file in the Office of the Provost should be included. Additional supporting review materials may also be submitted by the panel or the candidate, provided that these materials are included in the packet.
Reviewers should be asked to identify what relationship, if any, they have with the candidate, to include their full or summary curriculum vitae with their review, and to return their review in a timely manner for the deliberations of the departmental panel. To make it possible that reviews are available prior to those deliberations, external reviewers must be solicited sufficiently in advance of panel deliberations.

The following items must be included in the candidate’s packet: (1) the candidate’s initial list of outside reviewers, (2) a description by the panel chair of the process by which the outside letters were obtained, (3) copies of the letter of solicitation by the panel chair, (4) the confidential outside reviews, and (5) the outside reviewers’ full or summary curriculum vitae.

Justification: Professionals from outside the College working in the same field of expertise as the candidate frequently can make the best judgments about the quality of specialized research.

Mr. Lesses began the discussion by reminding the senate that, while the faculty has no control over the contents of the Faculty/Administration Manual and can only recommend, not legislate, the Administration does want our comments and suggestions, and if the Senate votes to recommend changes, they will at the very least be taken seriously. These seven recommendations are based on the Provost’s annual memoranda to the Tenure and Promotion Committee about how to interpret the language of the regulations governing evaluation procedures. The Committee now wants to incorporate these memoranda and interpretations into the actual text of the Manual. In particular, item 7, concerned with external peer evaluation, has caused some confusion over the meaning of “external” – does it mean outside a candidate’s department, or outside the College altogether? The present language, Mr. Lesses said, is designed to remove this potential ambiguity, which different departments have interpreted in different ways.

Julia Eichelberger said that the suggested revisions made her think that she had seriously misunderstood the Manual up until now, if this was merely a clarification of existing practice. The requirement for evaluation letters from outside the College seemed to her new, and a major escalation or “ratcheting up” of the criteria for promotion and tenure. They suggested a new emphasis was being given to “research” or scholarly production, at the expense of the teaching mission of the College. Mr. Lesses countered that a “peer review” is surely a logical way of determining the quality of research. Andrew Lewis pointed to the language requiring letters from experts in the same field, and the requirement that outside evaluators must establish their own credentials by submitting a vita to the evaluation panel at the College -- in other words, making evaluation panels now evaluate the very outside evaluators they would be asking to evaluate the candidates up for evaluation -- a cumbersome and complicated procedure, he thought. Mr. Lesses thought that the credentials of the outside recommender might be highly relevant to an accurate assessment of the candidate being considered for tenure. Herb Silverman agreed, but thought that the outside recommender should not necessarily be limited to someone in a particular academic field, or, indeed, to an academic at all, since there are recognized, knowledgeable experts in many fields who are not professors.
Kem Fronabarger objected to the motion. He thought the language of the proposed change suggested that there were departments at the College who were either unable or unwilling to evaluate their own candidates properly. Caroline Hunt said that, based on her experience on the Tenure and Promotion Committee in the past, some departments were much more "impressionistic" in their evaluation of candidates than others, and that the proposed change would be for the better. Julia Eichelberger again insisted that the changes were raising the bar, and increasing the requirements. Mr. Lesses strongly disagreed, saying they were only clarifications, and were needed in order to conduct rigorous reviews. Richard Nunan pointed out that there could only be two reasons for the suggested changes: either our academic departments are not fully capable of conducting accurate evaluations on their own, or we are suspicious that some of the department chairs are not being fully honest when they give high ratings to candidates. We may not be the University of California at Berkeley, he added, but we are capable, surely, of judging the quality of research in our fields. Trying to keep people honest during the evaluation process could be the only real reason for insisting on outside letters, and he was not convinced there was a real need for this. Richard Heldrich said that he agreed with Professor Eichelberger: the outside letters were a serious ratcheting-up of the requirements. What more evidence do we need beyond the word of a respected scholarly journal about the worth of a candidate's publications? Tom Heeney agreed, and said there was a clear correlation between scholarly productivity and teaching load; it was not wise to keep on tightening the publication requirements when candidates had to cope with the burden of four courses.

Mr. Lesses countered this argument by insisting, once again, that the proposed language would have no effect whatsoever on existing, already mandated requirements. He saw it, not as a threat, but as an aid to making sound professional decisions -- but not as a change in the requirements themselves. Faye Steuer thought that flexibility was being written out of our evaluation process by writing this requirement (outside letters on scholarship for every decision and every department) in. David Hall pointed out that something really new and unprecedented was being added, which nobody had apparently noticed. Nowhere in the published criteria for professional advancement at the College is it stated that candidates have to have a specialty -- an area of specialization within an academic field, which has hitherto been thought sufficiently specialized in itself; this would change that. Herb Silverman repeated that the requirement for outside letters was not a further tightening of the screw, because most candidates do, in fact, have "outside" letters about their scholarship included in their packet, and these are often very useful to the Committee.

William Moore spoke against this particular change. He called it "overkill" and pointed out the substantial burden it would place on departmental chairs setting up the evaluation process, and on the outside evaluators themselves, not to mention on the candidates, who would have to supply multiple copies of books or articles, and early in the process if the outside evaluators were going to have a chance to read them. He trusted his own colleagues, he said, to do a fair and careful evaluation. James Deavor wanted to have the terms "external" and "within the College" clarified. Phil Dustan said that he had seen "external" letters used as weapons against a candidate; we ought to do the judging ourselves. Rob Dillon said that he thought he ought to report to the Senate that James Smiley (in the Biology department, and until recently a Senator)
had been very surprised – shocked, in fact – that what he saw as minor changes in language – basically just clarifications, as Glenn Lesses had described them – were being interpreted by some members of the faculty as a serious “ratcheting up” of the basic requirements for tenure; he (Smiley) did not see how they could possibly be seen in that light. At this point, John Newell moved to postpone the question until the next meeting, a motion that passed immediately on a voice vote.

Constituents’ Concerns & Adjournment

Some constituents were concerned that the extension of the drop-add period by a full week, after Hurricane Floyd, had caused problems. Others were intrigued by the idea of a class-action suit to defend the legal rights of faculty with tenure, which the whole program of Post-Tenure Review seemed to throw into question. With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bishop Hunt,
Faculty Secretary