November 2, 1999

MINUTES OF THE FACULTY SENATE

The third regular meeting of the Faculty Senate convened at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 2 in Room 116 of the Education Center, Speaker of the Faculty Trisha Folds-Bennett presiding. Forty-eight senators came. The Minutes of the previous meeting (October 5, 1999) were approved as circulated, after a correction to the first sentence on p. 3 ("last year" should read, "two years ago"): "Richard Nunan was recognized and reviewed the assumptions under which the ad-hoc post-tenure review committee had worked two years ago."

Reports

The Speaker

Trisha Folds-Bennett proudly reported that the new Faculty Senate website, which can be reached at <http://www.cofc.edu/-senate/>, has become operational. She fully expected that in future this service will become increasingly important for the entire College community.

The Assessment Committee

Rhonda Swickert and Simon Lewis reported for the Assessment Committee, as instructed at the previous meeting, their suggestions for a questionnaire which could be used to survey the faculty about General Education, if the Senate decides such a survey is a good idea. There were two issues at stake: should such a survey be undertaken in the first place, and if so, should it begin with possible changes to the report which had been vetoed by the faculty at the end of the previous year. The Committee’s intention had been to be neutral on both issues, but to be clear and simple in language. Accordingly, their report contained three numbered questions:

1. Do you think the College of Charleston’s General Education Curriculum requirement should be changed? (___ yes ___ no).

2. If your answer to question 1 above was “yes,” how do you think we might proceed? [check one]

   ___ Begin with a critical reappraisal of the current requirements.

   ___ Begin with a critical reappraisal of the April 1999 General Education Proposal.
(3) If you have any other comments or observations on this issue, please add them in the space provided.

In the discussion which followed, Talaat Elshazly thought that perhaps the questions should contain more specific detail. The Committee, however, had rejected this idea on the grounds that more specific questions might be interpreted as a "back-door" way of biasing the outcome of the survey itself. David Mann applauded the structure of the questionnaire, though he wondered what the difference was between "comments" and "observations" in the third part. Glenn Lesses wanted to know what we would do after we got the responses to the questionnaire, assuming that the Senate decided to go ahead with it: "What next?" Rhonda Swickert said this was beyond the Assessment Committee’s charge, and Robert Mignone added that it would be better to deal with questions of what to do next after there was an actual motion on the floor. Andy Lewis thought Part 3 was too "open-ended."

Mr. Mignone wondered whether the second question would be answerable even if an individual said "no" to the first. Simon Lewis said that the Committee had thought of this, but that it had seemed more of a secondary question, to be answered later. Mr. Mignone wondered whether we should just use the first question, because the answer to it would inevitably bias any response to the second question. Mr. Lewis said that the Committee had thought of this, too, and concluded it would be better to use the wording they were now suggesting. Deanna Caveny was troubled by the problem of one question "biasing" the next, also. David Gentry and Hugh Wilder were both concerned with the question of how to proceed, if the faculty were to begin to consider changes in the General Education program. Julia Eichelberger pointed out that the faculty had undertaken a reassessment of the program over a period of four to five years, and she wondered if we really wanted to start back at "ground zero" all over again; what did the first question really mean? Stephanie Low said she was not sure, either.

In the event, the Senate received the Assessment Committee’s report as information, but no motions were made and no vote taken. The Chair thanked the Committee for their diligence, and Rhonda Swickert replied that they had been honored to be asked.

Old Business

- Glenn Lesses, for the Tenure and Promotion Committee, then re-introduced seven
  RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGES IN THE FACULTY/ADMINISTRATION MANUAL, as set forth in a memorandum sent to the Provost, dated September 13, 1999, and discussed at length at the previous meeting (October 5, 1999) without being brought to a vote. These recommendation were, Mr. Lesses reiterated, attempts to clarify procedure, or document current practice; many had been previously described in memoranda from the Provost and
successive Tenure and Promotion Committees. He moved to divide the question (successfully) so that each of the seven motions could be taken up individually. The results may be summarized as follows:

I. Comments Portion of Student Evaluations (passed)

II. Recent Graduate Letters (passed)

III. Content of Transmittal Letters (passed as AMENDED, to now read in full!)

Add to page 99, M. 7. (1st paragraph following the last sentence):

Each panel should write a letter which, while maintaining the confidentiality of any meeting, summarizes the discussion that takes place among panel members, including positive and negative deliberations.

Justification: On occasion the transmittal letters have simply recorded the vote of the departmental panel or have not included sufficient justification for the recommendations.

IV. Department Chair Colleague Letters (passed)

V. Continuing Review of Senior Instructors (passed)

VI. [Change in] Professional Development Requirement for Senior Instructor Rank (DEFEATED)

VII. External Peer Evaluation (passed as AMENDED).

[From the first sentence in the next-to-last paragraph, strike: “to include their full or summary curriculum vitae with their review,” and from the end of the last paragraph, strike: “(5) the outside reviewers’ full or summary curriculum vitae,” to now read in full, with the excisions indicated.]

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
talent as the candidate frequently can make the best judgments about the quality of
specialized research.

As at the previous Senate meeting, the seventh item, the question of requiring “outside”
evaluation letters, proved once again to be controversial, and many of the same arguments, both
for and against, were presented by many of the same persons. Most of the discussion focused on
whether or not outside letters would represent a significant change in the standards required for
advancement at the College. James Smiley, a former member of the Tenure and Promotion
Committee, recommended approval on the grounds that it would clarify procedures that were
now murky; the intention, he insisted, was not to increase the requirements or “raise the bar,” but
to standardize and codify what have seemed to be sometimes inconsistent evaluation practices.
Julia Eichelberger, on the other hand, thought that it represented a substantial ratcheting-up of the
requirements, and reported that the English Department was very much opposed to the change on
these grounds. Glenn Lesses insisted that this change was procedural only.

James Deavor thought the burdens being imposed on outside evaluators were too severe, and
moved to amend the language in paragraphs 4 and 5 calling for the submission of “full or
summary curriculum vitae” from such persons. James Carew noted that in all his years of writing
“outside” evaluation letters for scholars at other institutions, he had never, ever, been asked to
submit such a document; Richard Nunan opposed the amendment on the grounds that evaluation
panels need such information. Caroline Hunt supported the amendment, saying that the
requirements being imposed on outside evaluators were too burdensome and would likely reduce
the responses we received to such requests. The amendment passed on a show of hands, by a vote
of 26 to 17.

Rick Heldrich thought that the main argument for having “outside” letters is the possibility that
some of our Departments may not be able fully to assess the quality of their own candidates;
while he supported the motion, he disagreed with the role which the Tenure and Promotion
Committee seemed to be arrogating to itself, of imposing a kind of uniformity on the evaluation
procedures of each and every Department. Scott Peeples maintained that, on the contrary, the
various Departments at the College understand, better than anyone outside the institution, what
our teaching load means in terms of imposing limits on the quantity of research that can be
expected. If, he said, we send packets out to be evaluated elsewhere, we may very well be
confronted with the very different standards of big universities, which would make our research
output necessarily look almost puny in comparison; how are we to convince outside evaluators
that we are not really a “research” institution, if we go around soliciting “outside” letters about
“research” that suggest we are? Mr. Lesses replied that quality, not quantity, is the issue, and that
outside letters can help us distinguish what true intellectual quality is. Robert Russell added that
our standards are not low, and he found it insulting to suppose that they are. We are in the
process of becoming a better institution, he said, and we do not need to take special steps to
protect ourselves against “outside meanies” who might be skeptical of our scholarship.
“What.” David Gentry asked, “can outside reviewers really tell us that we can’t find out internally, on our own?” Herb Silverman replied that people at Harvard or Stanford or Berkeley are perfectly well aware that the College of Charleston is not like their institutions, and will make allowances accordingly. Faye Steuer, however, pointed to what she said was a new assumption and expectation about our research, namely, that advancement should come through the development of a “body” of work, over a period of years; this will surely hurt those people who have been working for long years under a different set of assumptions. Ken Bower claimed that the only reason for doing “research” at a place like the College is that it improves the quality of a teacher’s teaching, a connection no “outsider” is likely to make — and we are a “teaching” institution. Mr. Lesses replied that the Manual does not say this. Hugh Wilder said that he favored the motion, because “outside” letters had often proved helpful in his Department, Philosophy and Religious Studies. Deanna Caveny agreed, but thought that the instructions to outsiders ought to specify what we expect of our faculty. Dinesh Sarvate said that he also was opposed the motion.

Robert Mignone said that, despite all the arguments he was hearing to the effect that the new requirement did not represent a change in standards, he had come to the conclusion that it really did — plainly and clearly — but that maybe the College was now ready for such an upgrade. We are, he said, finally on the road to becoming a really good institution, and one sign of that is to ask for outside letters about our scholarship. Julia Eichelberger replied that the proposal would simply increase the amount of work we all have to do, without producing more or better scholarship. But how much more could we be expected to do? Not all departments, she said, face the same kind of labor-intensive system as the English Department, with its large numbers of necessarily small classes and constant paper-grading — and it was plainly observable that many of the supporters of the motion did not themselves have to cope with a 12-hour teaching load. James Smiley replied that we have no need to be fearful; he had read at least 115 evaluation packets while serving on the Tenure and Promotion Committee and could testify to the obvious truth that we have a superb faculty. He had always found outside letters to be both helpful and understanding of our situation. In addition, he saw this as another chance for our faculty to become “known” in the outside world.

Rick Heldrich spoke again in favor of the motion, but he noted that we should be honest with ourselves and admit that we are raising the requirements for professional advancement. Robert Mignone then said that perhaps it would be unfair, after all, to pass this measure, because teaching loads at the College really are unequal; he was perfectly aware that in his own field, Mathematics, he was not carrying the equivalent of a genuine four-course, 12-hour teaching load, the way departments like Languages and English did. Perhaps it was time for a major reassessment of teaching loads, now that the “12-hour” requirement had been silently done away with in most fields. Deanna Caveny insisted, however, that faculty in the Mathematics Department have plenty to do and spend a lot of time teaching and grading.

When the question was called, Part VII of the recommendations from the Tenure and Promotion Committee, the motion to require “outside” evaluation letters, was approved, on a show of hands, by a vote of 20 to 17. These seven recommendations were then sent to the Senate Committee on the By-Laws and Faculty/Administration Manual, to propose any necessary changes in language
at the December meeting, before the document is forwarded the Office of Academic Affairs. The full text, as provisionally endorsed by the Senate, is attached to the Secretary’s copy of the Minutes.

**Constituents’ Concerns & Adjournment**

At 7:00 p.m., the Speaker recommended an adjournment, with the remainder of the agenda to be taken up at the next meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Bishop Hunt,
Faculty Secretary