General Education Reform

The 2007-2008 Senate resumed its consideration of a new General Education program, as introduced by the Ad Hoc Committee on General Education, that had been considered by the 2006-2007 Senate. Ultimately, the new program was rejected by four votes at the 25 March 2008 meeting, 37 against and 33 for.

The Senate did approve a new General Education Committee to govern the curriculum and consider gradual reforms. The faculty ratified the formation of this committee, and the first duty this fall of our new Nominations committee will be to suggest members.

The reform movement was initiated by SACS, our accrediting agency, at our last review. Our current gen ed curriculum follows a distribution model: for example, students have to take two semesters of freshman English, two semesters of History, etc. As a faculty, we have not determined what is supposed to happen in those English classes or in those History classes. Consequently, we can’t really demonstrate that our students are getting what we hope they’re getting out of our gen ed program.

The Senate passed a set of fairly precise goals for gen ed on 12 September 2006. The new gen ed proposal, which failed last April, was designed to meet those goals. The proposal changed our distribution-model curriculum to a “goals-driven” model. For example, students would no longer be required to take two semesters of English 101 and 102. They would be required to become “effective” writers and “critical” readers. Any course that taught those skills would could “count” for that part of the gen ed curriculum.

What we have now is a hybrid: a distribution-model curriculum and a set of fairly specific goals. It is clear that the new committee and the Senate...

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Merit Pay

As every faculty member probably already knows, the president mandated that we install a new merit/market system of pay raises at the College. There was some trepidation on campus, many being fearful that it would damage our collegial culture, all for measly dollar amounts. One of the greatest worries that I heard voiced was that under this new system some deserving faculty might not even receive the cost-of-living raises given by the legislature to state employees. Pursuant to this concern, the Senate passed a resolution urging the administration to guarantee that all meritorious faculty would receive at least 80% of a state-mandated raise.

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President Benson asked the faculty to put aside our fears and trust him that the merit/market system would ultimately benefit all meritorious members of the faculty. Now, as the inaugural year of this new system comes to an end, it is clear to me that the trust was well placed.

The legislature mandated funding for a 1% raise for unclassified state employees (faculty are unclassified). This is not a COLA, even if the College in past years has used it as something like an unofficial yardstick. The exact wording of from the State Budget and Control Board’s July 1st memorandum reads: “Funding was also provided for an average 1% increase for unclassified employees, employees under the unclassified executive compensation system, and agency heads not covered by the Agency Head Salary Commission. The Budget and Control Board has approved a 0-1% range for increase for faculty, executive compensation, and non-academic unclassified employees.” At the June meeting of the Board of Trustees in Columbia, Dr. Benson, Provost Jorgens, and Steve Osborne (head of Business Affairs) argued vigorously for an additional $1,481,506 on top of the state mandate (which itself will cost the College an additional $496,982), essentially raising the money available for faculty salaries by 4% over last year’s budget. My own impression of that meeting is that the merit-based nature of the disbursement of these new funds helped persuade the Board to approve it; at least two board members sought reassurance about the role of merit in this year’s raises. From my own observations over the past year, I can say that raising faculty salaries is President Benson’s number one priority. The faculty salary increase eats up the largest chunk of $9.3 million generated by the tuition increase of 8% (for in-state students) and 9% (for out-of-state students), over 20% of those funds. The next highest new expenditure is $735,000 for new faculty lines—occupied by new faculty who have already been hired and who are beginning work in August 2008. The step we took towards parity this year (and it is just one step, not the first nor the last) is Dr. Benson’s best accomplishment.

I want to point out that this budget increase will not translate into a 4% increase in each academic department’s salary pool in the coming year. Half of this four percent was divided among schools according to how far or closely they lag behind faculty salaries at our peer and aspirant institutions. Some schools are doing worse than others in these comparisons. EHHP (4.33%), HSS (4.47%), and LCWA (4.55%) will receive somewhat more than a 4% increase, while SSM (3.41%), SOBE (3.37%), and SOTA (3.85%), will receive somewhat less than 4%. Individual faculty members who receive less than a 4% raise this year should NOT conclude that they have been judged to be less meritorious than others. Nor should one conclude that a colleague with a higher raise was judged more meritorious: it might just mean the colleague was further behind in market comparisons.

Below is a table breaking down the percentages of faculty who fell into each category in each school.

Please note that the “unranked” category is mostly filled by first-year faculty, department chairs, and/or visiting faculty, depending on the school. Also, it is important to note that NO money was transferred from one school to another based on these percentages.

Here are some reasons to be encouraged this first year:

1. After President Benson mandated that we use a merit raise system, he left nearly all of the details to Academic Affairs, and the Provost has been thoroughly open to the recommendations coming from departments, schools, and the Senate. Associate Provost Diamond, who should be credited with much of the work on this issue, was on President Higdon’s Ad Hoc Committee on Faculty Compensation (she chaired it after Lynne Ford), so she knows better than nearly anyone else where we stand in relation to our peers and aspirant schools, and this year she’s worked closely with Hugh Wilder, the chair of the faculty’s new Compensation Committee (the committee’s report is available on CougarTrail as “Salary Study 2008”). In other words, we, the faculty, have been given a wide degree of latitude to make sure that the merit system is done right.

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Faculty and Guest Houses

At the 16 June Senior Leadership meeting, Steve Osborne announced a new policy regarding our guest houses. In an attempt to stem the flow of red ink from these facilities, we're instituting new fees. If you bring in someone to give a lecture, for example, and put him or her up in the Faculty House, you'll be asked to pay a modest $20/day for the day before the event, the day of the event, and the day after. If the lecturer wants to stay longer, the fee will rise to $60/day, still a bargain at downtown prices.

On a happier note, Jane Benson is spearheading an initiative to improve what the Faculty House offers members. Look for more information about this in the coming months.

Faculty Governance

The ad hoc steering committee on Faculty Governance, chaired by Larry Krasnoff, met twice in the Spring. You can access its home page at

http://www.cofc.edu/facultygovernance/index.html

The committee is still gathering data on current problems in shared governance, especially among the three Senate and seventeen College committees.

Among the three things the committee is specifically charged with studying is the relation between the six academic schools and the centralized Senate. Larry Krasnoff and I met with the deans on the 28th of May to discuss this issue. Not surprisingly, the deans were very interested in talking about the Curriculum and T&P committees. They also wanted to discuss the budget process at the College, and they were very receptive to increasing the faculty’s role in that process.

As a consequence of that meeting, Larry and I met with Steve Osborne (Senior Vice-president for Business Affairs), Provost Jorgens, Associate Provost Diamond, and Cynthia Lowenthal (Dean of HSS) on 12th June. After a general discussion of the budget process at the College of Charleston, we all agreed that we would form a task force to study the role of faculty in the budget planning process.

(continued on page 4)

Searches

At the 2 June 2008 Senior Leadership meeting, David Cohen, chair of the search committee for a new dean of the School of Business and Economics, reported that on-campus interviews should begin near the 1st of September.

The search for a new dean of Science and Mathematics is not as far along.

George Watt has been hired as the Executive VP of Institutional Advancement and will start work on 1 September.

Shirley Hinson has been hired as the new director of the Office of Governmental Affairs for the College, and she is already on the job.
Pending Faculty Business

1. Vendor Code of Conduct

At the urging of students, the Senate passed a resolution recommending that the College better ensure that money spent on campus does not contribute to unjust labor practices, such as the violent suppression of unions, child labor, etc. To this end, the Senate recommended that our vendors conform to a “Code of Conduct” and that the College join “[t]he Fair Labor Association (FLA) and Worker Rights Consortium (WRC),” which are “the two leading monitoring groups who provide licensed apparel to colleges and universities.” I’ve been working with Steve Osborne, Senior Vice-President for Business Affairs to get CofC to adopt these recommendations, and I’ll continue to report on our progress.

2. Modification of Duties

At its 8 April meeting, the Senate passed a resolution brought by the Welfare Committee regarding the modification of duties policy that would bring CofC’s policy in-line with the University of South Carolina system’s (the resolution and USC’s policy are available on the Senate website under the 8 April meeting). Among other things, the resolution recommends that for births and adoptions, the primary care-giver be granted automatically one semester of off-campus modified duties. In light of the Senate resolution, on May 19th Elise Jorgens met with myself, Associate Provost Diamond, Budget Committee chair Norris Preyer, Bethany Goodier and Laura Penny (chairs of last year’s and next year’s Welfare committee) to discuss the College’s policy. Academic Affairs is reluctant to automatically adopt all provisions in USC’s policy, but will work with Welfare to hammer out an acceptable new policy. Welfare will make a report at the first Senate meeting in the Fall to give fuller details on where we stand. The plan right now is for Welfare and Academic Affairs to develop a plan by the end of the Fall semester, in time for the Board of Trustees to consider it at its meeting in April 2009. The new plan would then go into effect in Fall 2009. In the meantime, the current policy is still in effect.

Faculty Governance (continued)

The hope is to recommend a new process that will be a better method of “shared governance” than what we have now—not only to assure the Senate of an official role in the process, but to make the Senate more responsible for the budgetary consequences of its own decisions and recommendations. It was recognized that the issue involves not only the relation between the Budget committee and Business Affairs, but also the entire academic unit, including deans and the Provost’s office. The new process would help us to better identify and communicate institutional priorities. Membership on the task force will include either myself or Larry Krasnoff, Norris Preyer (the chair of Budget), Todd McNerny (the chair of Academic Planning), Associate Provost Diamond, Cynthia Lowenthal, Sam Jones from Business Affairs, and Beth Murphy (Assistant to the Provost).

You can access its home page at http://www.cofc.edu/facultygovernance/index.html

Tuition

At its June finance meeting, the Board of Trustees approved an 8% increase in undergraduate tuition (from $7778 to $8400) for in-state students and a 9% increase (from $18,732 to $20,418) for out-of-state students. As reported in more detail under “Merit Pay,” the biggest item funded by this increase was faculty salaries. All of the other public colleges in South Carolina also raised tuition. In fact, at the August meeting of the Board of Trustees, the Office of Business Affairs reported that even after CofC’s increase, we dropped from 5th to 7th place in highest cost for in-state students (we stayed at 6th for out-of-state students). We’re cheaper than The Citadel, Coastal Carolina, USC-Columbia, Clemson, Winthrop, and MUSC. Our students pay $20 more a year than Lander’s students.
If you’re around campus this summer, you’ve seen the progress made on the Science Center, the Arts building, and the new arena. The arena is scheduled to open for its first basketball game on 14 November. The Arts building, which should have opened in Spring 2008, is scheduled to open in Spring 2009, with an as yet undetermined date of occupancy. The Science Center is right on schedule, and that project has not faced any significant delays. That building is slated to be occupied in Spring 2010.

General Education Report (continued from page 1)

have more work to do in the coming years, because there are some glaring gaps between our goals and our old curriculum. For example, nothing in the old curriculum addresses the new goals of giving our students international and intercultural perspectives. We'll either have to revise the goals or continue with a gradual reform of the curriculum. We will also have to tackle the distribution v. goals model. For example, should any course that meets the writing and critical reading goals be able to “count” for freshman English? This year’s Senate will have to settle such questions.

I should add that we all owe our 2007-2008 senators a lot thanks for their hard work, no matter which side they took on the controversial issue: they met every week for the entire school year to debate the gen ed program, which is four times the normal burden on senators.
2. The system is not set in stone. It is a work in progress, and we’ll learn from problems this year how to better conduct the process next year. Diamond and Jorgens have been sensible and flexible in their approach, and I have every expectation they’ll continue to be so in the coming years.

3. At least for this year, the COLA issue is irrelevant. The state mandated a 1% raise. I feel confident in saying that, when all the dust settles this year, no one who is professionally competent will have received less than a .8% raise (or 80% of this year’s state-mandated raise). If any do, please let me know. Most faculty will get more than 1%

Here are some reasons that I think we still need to be cautious:

1. Exceptional teaching is hard to identify and document, certainly harder than exceptional research; a merit system runs the risk of encouraging faculty to neglect teaching in order to pursue more productive scholarship, a surer route to the highest category of merit. This summer Associate Provost Diamond and I attended a conference on best practices for evaluating teaching, and we’ve put together a task force of faculty and administrator to help provide some guidelines for departments to identify and reward exceptional teaching. If we do things right, we should also institute a healthy practice of formative evaluations of teaching, which, in my view, would be the best consequence of a merit system of pay.

2. A merit system introduces competition into departments. As we all know, competition is a great reservoir of energy. But reservoirs need to be dammed, channeled, and regulated if they are to be useful. Even corporate America knows that an “every employee for himself” attitude will ruin a company. Worse yet is it for a university. We need to make sure we don’t slip into a culture in which we are financially hurt by the successes of our colleagues or benefited by their failures. One person’s success should not make the rest of us jealous or resentful. The system must encourage us to encourage each other to be better teachers and scholars. I’m not sure exactly how we’re going to regulate competition. Perhaps we should emphasize objective benchmarks of success over comparisons of relative merit. However we do it, this channeling of competition is our own responsibility. Dr. Benson has left it to us to figure out the right way to do it.

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2008 Raises Spread by School

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<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>0—2.99%</th>
<th>3—5.99%</th>
<th>6—8.99%</th>
<th>9—11.99%</th>
<th>12—14.99%</th>
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<tr>
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<td>49%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EHHP</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<td>2%</td>
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<td>SOTA</td>
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<td>59%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>49%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>32%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>3%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>90%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIBR</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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</table>

Percentages of faculty receiving raises in five distribution ranges.
Secretariat Office

As many of you know, we moved into a new office space last summer, leaving Maybank Hall to unpack our boxes in the basement of Randolph Hall (Suite 108). Bertie Mack, the long-time administrative assistant for the Faculty Secretariat, retired in December. We upgraded the job description considerably, and we now have a new office manager, Heather Alexander, who began work after the end of classes this past Spring. Ms. Alexander is one of our own, having graduated in 2007, and brings to the office the enthusiasm and ability we need to transform the way we do business.

The Faculty Secretariat will be a vital resource for faculty committees (especially committee chairs), senators, and for all faculty members. Come to us with any question or issue, large or small, and we’ll try to serve you. We now have a smallish committee meeting room that will accommodate eight comfortably and more in a pinch, and we encourage anyone conducting any faculty business to book this room with Ms. Alexander. Drop by your next time through Randolph Hall and check out our new space and introduce yourself to Heather.

Merit Pay (continued from page 6)

3. Already, it seems to me, we’ve begun discouraging service to the College by leaving it out of the “exceptional” category. We’ve established a powerful disincentive to sacrificing one’s research productivity to College service. We do not want to find ourselves in the situation in which service on, say, the T&P committee is a guarantee of not meeting a benchmark for exceptional merit. Nor do we want to discourage faculty from taking a more active role in the governance of the College, for fear it will cost them a good raise.

4. We haven’t yet worked out the exact relation between the salary-merit process and the tenure-and-promotion process. Ultimately, of course, we’d like to minimize the time faculty spend collecting and arranging evidence of their work. Surely there are other issues, both good and bad. These are my own reflections after working this year with numerous concerned faculty and senators, Beverly Diamond, Hugh Wilder, Elise Jorgens, Steve Osborne, George Benson, the deans, and the entire Academic Council, which includes department chairs and the chairs of certain Senate committees. The bottom line in my view right now is that President Benson secured a significant pool of money of salary increases in a difficult economic climate. Increases in the range of 4% will have to continue for the continued success of the system. The Compensation committee reports that we’re over 11% behind our peers. As Dr. Benson has pointed out on more than one occasion, those peers are a moving target because they get raises too. A 4% increase this year does not mean we’re one third the way there. Obviously, catching up is going to be hard work for the faculty and administration, but so far so good. The 2007-2008 Compensation committee recommends that the administration, working with the 2008-2009 Compensation committee, develop a long-range plan to solve the problem, and the Faculty Secretariat office will help make this so.