Special points of interest:

- Notes from the Board of Trustees meeting
- The development of distance education
- A discussion of the budget
- Committee reports

Inside this issue:

Faculty Meeting 2
Board of Trustees Meeting Notes 2
Student Evaluation Form 2
Distance Education 3
International Studies Major 3
Marketing Awards 3
The End of WebCT? 3
Committee Reports 4
Budget 4

GLBT Community

The campus climate survey that Academic Affairs conducted by the Diversity Office a couple of years ago indicates that the College could improve the way that it treats our gay, lesbian, bi- and trans-sexual faculty, students, and staff. Von Bakinic, who developed the survey and helped interpret its results, has written a report for the Welfare Committee assessing this problem.

I’ve been in contact more or less informally with a group of faculty to work on the issue, coordinating our efforts with Carolyn Morales, the director of the Diversity Office. With Carolyn’s resignation and the consequent vacancy in that office, the Faculty Secretariat is taking the lead on at least one project: developing and maintaining a resource website targeted at GLBT faculty. We’re taking as a model a similar website at Drexel University: http://www.drexel.edu/fde/diversity/lgbt.html.

I’ve scheduled a meeting to discuss this web resource. The meeting will be 17 February in the HSS conference room on the second floor of 9 College Way. Any interested faculty are welcome to participate, but please let Heather Alexander know if you’ll be there, in case we end up needing to find a larger venue.

Provost Search

As Dr. Benson announced on 3 February, the membership of the Provost Search committee is

Dean Fran Welch, Chair of the Search Committee
Mr. Seaton Brown, President, Student Government Association
Mr. David Hay, Alumnus, Class of 1981
Professor Joe Kelly, English

Associate Professor Andrew Lewis, Health and Human Performance
Associate Professor Todd McNerney, Theatre
Professor Bob Mignone, Mathematics
Mr. Steve Osborne, Executive VP for Business Affairs
Mr. Kolo Rathburn, President, Graduate Student Association
Associate Professor Pamela Riggs-Gelasco, Chemistry & Biochemistry

Mr. Tom Trimboli, Senior VP for Legal Affairs
Mr. Victor Wilson, Executive VP for Student Affairs

The committee includes four of the seven candidates the Senate recommended at its special meeting on 27 January (Dr. Benson had asked the Senate for five names). The committee will meet for the first time on 16 February.
Faculty Meeting

This Spring we’re changing the format of the traditional Faculty meeting. The official meeting will still take place as scheduled, 5 pm Monday the 13th of April, but the only business conducted at this meeting will be the approval of candidates for graduation, the Speaker’s, Provost’s, and President’s reports and subsequent questions. It is my understanding that Dr. Benson plans to deliver a “State of the College” address again this year, as he did last year, at a time prior to the Faculty meeting. In that case, he would not give a report at the Faculty meeting, but would be available for questions.

We will celebrate retirees and the winners of awards at a separate event at 3:30 pm on Tuesday the 21st of April. This celebration will include an appropriately convivial atmosphere, lubricated by ARA.

I’ve asked the By-Laws committee to look into changing the by-laws to allow for the business of the Faculty meeting to be conducted at the last Senate meeting of the Spring, with accommodations for full faculty participation. The somewhat enervating nature of Faculty meetings in recent years has spurred me to seek these changes.

Board of Trustees Meeting Notes

In his recent meeting with state legislators, Dr. Benson emphasized three issues in these difficult fiscal times:

1. the need to restore funding for PASCAL;
2. the opportunity to grant state colleges and universities regulatory relief, especially in the areas of procurement, human resources, and capital projects;
3. the need to continue sending to higher ed the lottery money earmarked for technology.

Bobby Marlow, the chair of the Board of Trustees, has resigned his position on the Board. That position is one of the governor’s appointees and has yet to be filled.

Marie Land, who represents the Sixth District, was unanimously elected chair of the Board of Trustees. Ms. Land is the first woman chair of the Board in the College’s long history.

Lee Mikell, from the Second District and a political science C of C alum, was unanimously elected Vice-Chair of the Board.

Renovation of Craig Cafeteria is slated to begin in March.

The new arts building, the Cato Center, should finally be finished in May and should be occupied this summer.

The Science Center should be occupied next January.

Student Evaluation Form

The ad hoc committee on Developing and Evaluating Teaching is close to making its recommendations regarding the student evaluation forms. A subcommittee consisting of Hugh Wilder (Philosophy), Martin Jones (Math), Ray Barclay (Institutional Research), and Pam Niesslein (Accreditation and Assessment) will have a draft of a new set of questions for students within the couple of weeks, and the larger committee will discuss the draft after Spring Break.

Other subcommittees have been working on proposals for the Center for Faculty Development, classroom visitations, measures of teaching effectiveness (other than student evaluations), etc. We should have a comprehensive report ready for the April Senate meeting. For more details on the subcommittees, see the Senate website or call me.
Distance Education

As many of you probably have seen by now, the draft of the Strategic Plan calls for the development of “distance education” in support of “Goal 7: Offer revenue-generating life-long learning and professional development programs that create partnerships with our external constituents and other academic institutions.” The Senate recently dealt with the issue somewhat tangentially when it chose not to “ban” on-line courses (see the minutes of the 27 February 2007 meeting). Apparently, some few such courses are now and always have been offered under the radar, so to speak. This summer, the Summer School will offer six sections of “on-line” courses, with varying degrees of distance ed components.

Since last fall, an ad hoc committee has been meeting to set strict guidelines for all distance education offered by the College—not just on-line courses, but courses delivered with other technologies as well. I, Debbie Jeter (chair of the Faculty Educational Technology Committee), Bob Perkins (chair of Curriculum), and two other faculty share membership with various administrators, such as Sylvia Gamboa, Dean of Summer School. In April, we will publish guidelines for how to properly conduct such courses, etc. These guidelines, in concurrence with SACS standards, require full supervision of distance education by the faculty. We have not yet worked out how this supervision will be exercised; undoubtedly, whatever we decide will require revision to the by-laws committee descriptions and will therefore be fully vetted by the appropriate authorities, including the Senate itself. Included in our guidelines will be recommendations for the appropriate venues for such courses—summer school, for example, and certificate programs—as well limitations (how few or many distance ed courses are appropriate for CofC). And, most importantly, will be recommendations about fees. The Strategic Plan clearly links any such development at CofC to increases in revenue.

At the March Senate meeting, I’ll make a preliminary report to the Senate for comment. In the meantime, comments, concerns, etc., should be forwarded to me, Debbie Jeter, or Bob Perkins.

International Studies Major

A proposal for a new major in International Studies has been in the works for some time. It was originally scheduled to come before the Senate in the December meeting, but the Academic Planning Committee asked for some revisions. David Cohen (Dean of LCWA) and Doug Friedman (Latin American Studies/Political Science) have been meeting with interested faculty, including members of Academic Planning, to revise the proposal. At a very productive meeting last Friday, some final details were worked out. The proposal will now return to Curriculum, Academic Planning, and Budget. It will be posted on the Senate website after its approval by these committees. If you’d like to see a copy of the proposal now, just ask David Cohen. It will probably come to the Senate at the April meeting.

The End of WebCT?

The long-anticipated end of WebCT might soon be here. As most faculty are aware, IT has been looking into the alternatives for about 18 month now. Many of you have contributed to the writing of the “Request for Proposal” or RFP that the state requires of all purchases over $200,000—contributed through various surveys, attendance and comment upon vendor demos, etc.

The procurement process is somewhat murky right now, due to fluctuating state requirements. Debbie Jeter (chair of Faculty Educational Technology Committee) and I are working with IT to make sure there’s a preponderance of faculty on the committee that chooses a vendor.

The plan is to run a selected number of courses on the new LMS in Fall 2009. The system would be widely available to faculty in Spring 2010. WebCT would run simultaneously for one year, being dropped after the Spring 2010 semester.

Marketing Awards

Marketing and Communications has won a number of awards for its recent work, including Awards of Excellence (from CASE District III) for The Portico and a Friends of the Library event package. The new FIRST Book, distributed at orientations, won two awards; and the entire orientation package won another. Mike Haskins, Executive Vice President for External Affairs, won the South Carolina Marketer of the Year from the American Marketing Association.
From the Post-Tenure Review Committee

The Committee on Post-Tenure Review is completing the packet reviews for all professors seeking superior status, and expect to have the final recommendations submitted to the Provost by Feb. 25, as required. As Chair, I would very much like to thank Drs. Johnson, Winfield, Lindner, Swickert and Starr for their valuable contributions to this process!

DWK
Denis W. Keyes, PhD, Chair
2008-2009 PTR Committee

From the Compensation Committee

We are working on a long range salary enhancement plan this Spring to be implemented during sunnier financial times which we are hopeful will come!!!

Laura Turner
Associate Professor of Theatre for Youth
Chair, Compensation Committee

Budget

As reported by Steve Osborne, Executive VP for Business Affairs, the College has sustained three separate budget cuts in the last year. The first was a $1.3M cut—a 3.9% reduction in our state funding—absorbed by the 2008-2009 budget as passed by the Board of Trustees last June.

The second cut was the big hit we took in September—$4.965M or 14.8% of the remaining state funding. This was a mid-year cut, so it had to be made up by funds already committed in the budget. It is also a permanent cut; next year’s budget will not restore the lost money, so Dr. Benson, Dr. Jorgens, and Mr. Osborne have taken the prudent choice of meeting much of this new obligation with cuts to our recurring costs. In other words, they’ve chosen not to do things like furlough employees, because money saved by furloughs this year will have to be saved some other way next year.

The larger portion of this cut was absorbed by eliminating 33 staff and 15 faculty lines. These lines are gone, erasing some of the gain we’ve made in increasing the faculty in recent years. These cuts equate to $2.77M in expenses that we will no longer incur.

Academic Affairs tried to spread out its 15 faculty cuts so no single department would lose more than one line and no school would bear most of the burden. In other words, these were not strategic decisions but decisions based largely on what lines were officially vacant last fall.

Similarly, the staff lines that were eliminated were culled from vacancies. But in this case, IT took the lion’s share of cuts—fifteen lines—because it had more vacancies than any other division.

An additional $2.39M cut was accomplished in a 7% reduction in operating costs across the College (these cuts were made after identifying and exempting operating expenses that could not be cut).

Finally, half a million dollars each were removed from the Strategic Planning reserve fund and the enrollment reserve fund. The Strategic Planning Reserve, which now stands at $2.1 million, is a fund meant to help launch initiatives identified when the new Strategic Plan is finished. The enrollment reserve is a cushion meant to help the College absorb shortfalls due to annual fluctuations in enrollments. That fund now stands at $1.5 million.

There is a possibility that the state will cut another 8% of our budget in June, when the Board has to finalize next year’s annual budget. If we sustain another such cut, further reduction plans have not been finalized, but they’ll be painful.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the good work Steve Osborne and Business Affairs has done with the budget. Other state colleges and universities have instituted pay cuts (aka “furloughs”). It’s a testament to the sound financial shape the College has been in that we’ve been able to weather this storm so far.