McLeod and Money

The College’s proposed purchase of the 40-acre McLeod Plantation on James Island has generated a fair degree of controversy among the faculty. Nevertheless, in my opinion, it is an opportunity we would be foolish to miss. I commend Dr. Benson, Steve Osborne, Bev Diamond, and Tom Trimboli for their hard work in pursuing this purchase.

I don’t want to minimize the important issue of scarce resources. As has been justly pointed out by many, we’ve sustained semi-annual cuts to operating funds, we’ve tightened our travel budgets, we’ve lost fifteen faculty lines, all in a year with a burgeoning number of students. We’ve got a new science center that needs another ten million dollars to finish. We’ve got an old science center growing mold and not all of it in Petri dishes. We’ve got classrooms essentially unchanged since the 1980s, except that the chalkboards don’t work anymore.

That’s not to mention the uncompetitive salaries especially of our tenured and full professors.

Obviously, we’ve got lots of ways to spend money on these core issues. Jack Parson and Simon Lewis in particular have articulately raised the worry that the College is neglecting its core while pursuing peripheral projects. McLeod is, after all, literally on the periphery. You have to cross the Ashley River and the Wappoo Cut to get there.

Even so, these forty acres do present a wonderful opportunity to support a number of disciplines with easily-accessed field work: Marine Biology and Historic Preservation are the obvious candidates; Anthropology and Archeology also, Ecology and Environmental Science. Should we decide to go in this direction—and I most emphatically think we should—undergraduates and graduate students in other core disciplines like History and African American Studies can get from the site what they cannot get from the downtown campus.

(continued on page 3)

New Evaluation Form

After a lively and lengthy debate, the Senate approved a new student evaluation form, which will be put into operation in the Fall of 2010. The minutes of the October meeting will have details, including a copy of the form as amended and passed by the Senate.

The issue of whether to stay with paper or go to on-line administration of the form is still pending. Provost Diamond has suspended the pilot program that was in place last year, so this year all evaluations will be conducted in class and with hard copies. Meanwhile, a task force (including chairs of T&P, Welfare, Educational Technology, and Assessment) will review the data from the pilot program and the literature on the subject, and later this semester report to the provost and the Senate about the advisability of retaining paper or going to on-line evaluations.
Shared Governance

At the last Senate meeting, I urged Senators to begin the work of reforming how we, the faculty, participate in the governance at the College. The Senate is in the midst of debating the first of a series of motions coming from the ad hoc Committee on Faculty Governance—a proposal to change the way we apportion senators. Right now, each department elects a senator for every ten members (or portion of ten). For example, a department with nine senators elects one representative, and a department with eleven members elects two. We also, as a faculty body, elect fifteen at-large senators each year. The result is a rather large Senate. Right now, we’ve got 74 senators, down from 82 last year (we lost fifteen faculty lines last year). That’s somewhere near one senator for every six faculty.

The Strategic Plan is going to call for 100 new faculty at the College, which will, obviously, swell the ranks of the Senate considerably.

The size of our Senate and its low senator/faculty ratio puts us out of step with other institutions. For example, William and Mary has a senate of only twenty people. Appalachian State has only 27 faculty in its senate. Other schools without a fixed number of senators have much higher ratios: UNC has one senator for every 42 faculty; UGA, one for every twenty; Rowan University (which has a study body almost identical to our own) has half as many at-large senators and one other for every fifteen faculty. For more details, I urge you to look at the full report of the Governance Committee, in the materials for the September Senate meeting, available at the Senate website.

The motion before us right now would reduce the Senate to a fixed number of 50 senators, which is a compromise attempt to preserve the gadfly function of the Senate while also committing it to a greater role in policy decisions at the College.

As anyone who has been a senator will probably tell you, the Senate does not play a great role in making many of the important decisions at the College. After two years as Speaker, I’m frustrated by this state of affairs, and my report at the October meeting addressed these frustrations at great length. That report will be available in the minutes, but suffice it to say here that I’m convinced that a smaller senate, coupled with reforms in our committee structure, are essential if the faculty are to take a larger role in College governance.

The key will be to partner with the administration in certain key areas—so that faculty are part of the discussions that determine important decisions. In common parlance, this means shared governance rather than faculty governance. Most who have studied governance structures at universities equate faculty governance with impotence.

In my view, to be a senator ought to mean you are a leader of the faculty, not a representative of a particular small constituency. Senators should be expected to become something of an expert on the issues that come before them; they should certainly know far more than the average faculty member; senators ought to be pro-active rather than largely reactive. Being a senator should become a significant commitment of service to the College. When a senator calls a particular administrative office, that ought to mean much more than it does today. As a matter of fact, senators ought to be in the habit of talking to administrators.

This increased workload alone argues for a smaller body. It doesn’t make a lot of sense to devote such large proportions of our faculty to this kind of work—which is crucial to the College but tangential to each individual’s teaching and research.

Unless the Senate takes on this kind of leadership role among the faculty, it is hard to see how it will—or even deserves to—participate in the strategic decisions of the College.

This is not meant to disparage the senate today or to suggest any sort of failure on the part of our senators. The senate is functioning honorably as it always has, governing the curriculum and our own by-laws, exercising great power in those areas and next to no power in most others.

Motions of this nature, which require revisions to the by-laws, need a 2/3rds majority in the Senate, and then they need to be ratified in a general election of the faculty. So if any of these reforms make it through the Senate, you’ll be asked to vote on them yourself. (continued on page 4)

Faculty Club

The Faculty Club is off the ground, with 81 members, as of press time. That means we’re collecting about $800 a month in dues. How should the Club use that money? It’s for members to decide: give your ideas to the executive committee, Rich Bodek (History), Phil Jos (Political Science), Susan Kattwinkel (Theatre), Bob Mignone (Math), and George Pothering (Computer Science).

The By-Laws of the Club have been ratified by the membership, in a vote of 22 in favor and 3 against. Already, the executive committee is talking about ways to amend the membership clause, which, because of legal reasons, is defined fairly narrowly right now.

For more information, visit the Club’s webpage, housed at the Senate’s site: http://facultysenate.cofc.edu/faculty_club.html
McLeod and Money (continued from page 1)

And though intramural fields are not academic, we should not discount their importance. If academic facilities are under-funded, or our student rec facilities are severely below par, to the point of disadvantaging us in recruiting.

There’s another opportunity here: McLeod includes a slave street of half a dozen houses, a barn, a cotton gin, a “big house,” most if not all ante-bellum. If developed to educate not only our students but also the public about the African American experience in ante-bellum Charleston, an honest and historically accurate version of that experience, McLeod could become more important to the Lowcountry than Drayton Hall, Middleton, and Fort Sumter, a must-see site with very close access to downtown hotels and central schools.

Above all else, we must not let any element in our custodianship tend towards a glorification of the Old South, no euphemism, no silences, no paean to the McLeods. Absolutely no fraternity or sorority functions with battle flags and the like. Peter Wood, the historian of the Stono Rebellion, advocates that we substitute “slave labor camp” for “plantation” in our rhetoric. The suggestion was made a generation ago, and obviously it has fallen on deaf ears not only in the hospitality industry but also in the academy. We will be well-served to ponder his industry but also in the academy.

All of this depends upon proper governance. I’ve discussed the decision-making process with Dr. Benson, who assures me that faculty will be a driving force in decisions about McLeod. It’s premature right now to determine how the faculty will exercise that influence, so it will be our duty, should we buy McLeod, to insist upon it, just as it will be Dr. Benson’s duty to honor that commitment. I trust that together, faculty and administration, in a strengthening of shared governance, can handle the property properly. With the people we have—Conseula Francis, James Ward, Bernie Powers, Robert Russell, Tom Trimboli, Simon Lewis, Georgette Mayo, Dale Rosengarten, Scott Poole, to name just a few—and with the Avery and CLAW, the College can do a better job than anyone else. It is a matter of will. (I should point out here that some of the people I’ve just named are much more cautious about this purchase than I am, and their caution is and will be an asset.)

Still there’s the matter of money. In a perfect world, few would object to the uses hinted at above. But our world is imperfect and impecunious. Contrary to reports, we do not have deep pockets. I’d like to explain some of the financing issues, which actually are different than what the Post and Courier reported. The College plans to put down about a quarter of the price up front—paid by the Foundation. This would represent closer to 2 than 10% of our rather small endowment. The rest would be paid in annual installments of about half a million dollars. George Watt will be going to work right away to encourage gifts towards that balance. This kind of property is very attractive to donors, much more attractive than scraping mold out of the old science building or putting SMART boards in Maybank. In other words, the money we hope to spend on McLeod should not come from the same proverbial “pot” of money that pays for the core needs I enumerated above.

I say should not. It depends on how successful Institutional Advancement is in these difficult times. But Institutional Advancement is now better equipped to do this kind of work than it ever has before. As George Watt pointed out at the town hall meeting, no other department is so easily assessed as Institutional Advancement, which measures its success in dollar bills, so we will soon know if this financing plan succeeds. The revamping of that department will be complete at the end of December, and we expect great things from George’s staff of professionals.

I may be in a minority among faculty in believing what I’m about to say; nevertheless, I offer it for your consideration. Even if we need to dip into other “pots”, such as the Strategic Planning fund or the President’s fund, which are funded annually through tuition and other regular revenues, I still think we ought to do it. We need to think strategically about McLeod. Even if we did nothing with it for ten years or thirty years, buying it now for something near $4 million dollars will be celebrated as incredibly forward looking by our students’ children, when they matriculate in 2035, after most of us have retired. I fear that if we pass on this opportunity, our own successors, the future faculty, some of whom were hired last year and the year before, will wonder at our short-sightedness.

And what of the pot of money we’re most interested in, the pot that will pay for new faculty lines, raises in our salaries, the completion of the science center, the improvement of our instructional infrastructure?
Distance Education

As many of you are surely aware, the College offered six “distance education” courses this past summer in a pilot program, and we’re gearing up to offer another eleven in the summer of 2010. (Any course in which more than 50% of the instruction occurs when the students and faculty member are not physically present is defined as Distance Ed. Most of our courses fit the narrower definition of “online”: courses offered largely through the internet.)

In my view, this pilot program has been a model of the kind of shared governance we need to practice. At the provost’s request, a committee was gathered to supervise this pilot program and to write College policy regarding distance education. That committee includes the chairs and/or representatives of our Curriculum Committee, Faculty Educational Technology Committee, and Academic Planning Committee, as well as myself and a couple of other faculty; on the administration side are the directors of Summer School and Accreditation, Accountability, Planning, and Assessment, and reps from IT, the Library, the Strategic Planning committee, etc.

We have a draft of policy, which has been reviewed by Tom Trimboli of Legal Affairs. One of Mr. Trimboli’s concerns—as well as my own—is to make sure our Distance Education policy preserves the authority over curriculum already invested in the Senate. SACS (our accrediting agency) also requires that distance education be “supervised” by the faculty. It is my view that “supervision” means strategic decisions about distance ed need to be made by faculty. For example, we need to define in what circumstances it is and is not appropriate, in what proportion to conventional education, what IT infrastructure is needed, how faculty need to be compensated, etc.

It may or may not surprise you to learn that studies have shown that the most effective methods of teaching combine traditional and distance ed elements.

Right now we’re working out the mechanisms by which the faculty will help govern distance education. Ultimately, those parts of the policy that are appropriate will come to the Senate for review, revision, and approval. I’m not sure when that will be—either this coming Spring or next Fall.

If you’re interested in learning more about distance education, you might begin with this report from the U. S. Department of Education:

Money and McLeod (continued from page 3)

I think it is unfair to gauge our expectations for success on setbacks we’ve sustained since the collapse of the stock market. Obviously, in the last eighteen months we’ve gone in the wrong direction, and even treading water has gotten harder. It has everywhere, not just in South Carolina, not just at the College.

We won’t see the fruits of Dr. Benson’s new fiscal model for the College for some time. This model will augment the annual, recurring funds on which depend our salaries, research and travel funds, and the maintenance of facilities. Annual budgets are determined in June. Right now, faculty leaders, in partnership with the leadership in Academic Affairs, are beginning to prepare recommendations for the Academic Affairs side of next year’s budget, and we don’t plan on any very big increases. The proof won’t be in the pudding until the budget of the 2010/2011 school year. Then we should begin to see significant steps towards the ambitious goals of the Strategic Plan, such as a hundred new faculty lines (and the accompanying staff to support that faculty). We need to be patient another year and a half, and in the meantime continue to set up structures for healthy, shared governance at the College.

Shared Governance (continued from page 2)

I am optimistic about shared governance at the College, should we, the faculty, seek it. First as Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs and now as Interim Provost, Beverly Diamond has worked hard at making Academic Affairs a partner to the faculty. A good example is how closely the provost’s office worked with the Compensation Committee on developing a method of merit evaluations. Another is in today’s news: the use of committee chairs in determining whether the College will go to an on-line student evaluation form. In a way, this model of governance is easier to accomplish with committees, and future legislation will try to write into the by-laws the kind of systemic cooperation we’ve been moving towards. It is harder to accomplish with the full Senate. Nevertheless, the administration in general has proven itself receptive to the idea of shared governance, should we figure out how to accomplish it.
Catherine Thomas is an assistant professor of English and Director of the British Studies Program. Before coming to the College in 2005, she completed her Master’s and PhD in English Renaissance Literature at Pennsylvania State University, where she also taught classes. Currently, she teaches first-year composition courses, the early British literature survey, Renaissance literature (especially Shakespeare), and Honors Western Civ. In addition, she advises students who wish to participate in some of the great British Studies study abroad programs available through C of C, such as the British Studies Program Consortium. In Summer 2008 she took students in the Consortium to study in England and Scotland for the course, "Love, Sex, and Desire in Shakespeare," a class she plans on offering again in Summer 2010. Personally speaking, she enjoys practicing yoga, singing, reading, traveling, spending time with friends and family, visiting the beach, and eating lots of Thai food. She lives with her cats, Selah and Teaghan, in Summerville, SC.*

http://thomasc.people.cofc.edu/

Don has been with the College for over 23 years. Before moving to his new position in the Office of the Provost, he was Dean of Admissions from 1986 to 2004. During this time, he helped the College make great strides toward its current position of national pre-eminence. Undergraduate admissions doubled, and the college received three Noel-Levitz national Retention Excellence Awards during this same period. Before arriving at the College of Charleston in 1986, he worked as Director of Admissions at St. Bonaventure University. It was in 1974 that he began work in his position at St. Bonaventure at the age of 24, making him the youngest director of admissions in the country at the time. He graduated with a BA degree in Psychology from St.

Bonaventure, as well as with a MS degree in counseling and personnel. He has completed coursework towards completing his PhD in Higher Education at State University of New York in Buffalo.*

http://spinner.cofc.edu/AcademicAffairs/staff/burkard.html