

Minutes of the Faculty Meeting

10 May 2010

Dean Susan Ashley called the Meeting to order at 3:37 p.m

I. Agenda and March 8 minutes. The agenda was deemed correct as circulated. Minutes of the March 8, 2010 meeting were approved by voice vote, after three minor corrections.

II. Dean's Report. Dean Ashley said that she would soon be making a report to the trustees, of which her present remarks would be a foretaste: The Faculty last year returned half a million dollars to the endowment from the "Block visitors pool", which will indeed help to rebuild the endowment after recent injuries. Some unexpected savings from the year-long replacement pool will help the College to complete the "Vision 2010" goal for added tenure lines. FEC and Chairs have put forth several key criteria for evaluating proposals for such new lines, now posted on Dean's Prowl site:

- 1) Enrollments. Can adding a faculty member decrease chronically high enrollments in certain departments?
- 2) Preventing destabilizing losses for departments and programs due to the retirement of lecturers or adjunct faculty (when they retire, their positions disappear).
- 3) In no particular order: a) New areas of study not currently covered by departments and programs; b) Reinforce a department while adding significantly to cross-disciplinary initiatives; c) Add value to several departments with a single hire.

The first new tenure line will open with a coming Anthropology search.

Budget planning for 2011-12 and 2012-13 is underway. Senior Staff have been asked to identify the first priority for investment in each division. Commentary from various constituencies will be combined with estimating and prognosticating over the summer with the goal of a meaningful draft budget before the winter break. Among the needs that have come to light are "modest redress" of certain recent cutbacks, and several relatively costly major ideas. The FEC urged high priority for academic matters, including smaller class sizes. As planners consider the linked factors of academic support and faculty workloads, it is likely that a few staff "replacements" could restore some support lost in the previous year's cutbacks.

Susan remarked that much has been accomplished in AY 2009-10: A new writing requirement in place, needed action on parental leave policy, deliberations on future directions of the Block Plan, general education, and much more. Less noticeable, but very important, work by FEC and other committees has sometimes earned those bodies criticism, but all who believe in faculty governance must ultimately support their existence and the faithful efforts of colleagues who serve thereon. Susan called attention particularly to the example of FEC Personnel, and that triggered thunderous grateful applause.

The Dean then invited Professor Emeritus Jane Cauvel to speak briefly on her role as the College's inaugural Ombudsperson. Jane noted that the Trustees had strongly supported the founding of an Ombuds Office. Many universities and colleges have such facilities, playing roles similar to those of early municipal or corporate "commissioners" described by this old Swedish word. Jane's appointment is half-time beginning August 1, and she will divide her hours among an open office in Tutt Library, conversations on a "secure cell phone", and purposeful walking around. She will act as a "neutral listener" to any College staff with complaints or concerns, aiming to resolve, report, and alleviate difficulties brought by her visitors without slipping into unnecessarily aggressive advocacy. Confidentiality of visits will be a paramount goal. She will not decide any questions for the College, but will seek to connect the "issue" with offices or individuals able to effect solutions. Her work will be independent of the usual reporting channels, and she cannot be obliged to reveal anything communicated to her in the Ombuds role. She planned to attend a workshop of the International Ombuds Association, and to adhere to its ironclad principles of Independence, Neutrality, Confidentiality, Impartiality, and Informality.

III. Report of the Chair, Faculty Executive Committee. Gale Murray thanked Jane for her willingness to serve, and congratulated the new members of FEC, Professors J. Lee, M. Grace, Janke, Hautzinger, Erdal, and Regan. Esther Redmount will be FEC Chair, with subcommittee chairs Neena Grover for Personnel, David Weddle for Governance, and Michael Grace for Budget and Planning. Likely Committee priorities for AY 2010-11 include: Trustee-mandated review of personnel procedures; revisions of substance in the Faculty Handbook; reviewing the structure of faculty governance and shared governance, the possibility of reduced class sizes, and the possibility of Governance and Planning working together. It will be a hugely busy year for personnel reviews, and will also include reviews of the structure of Senior Staff and President's Office operations.

Gale yielded the floor to David Weddle, to resume discussion on the "hotly disputed" Section 2 of the Handbook. Dave pointed out that the College now has 175 faculty members, enough that the FEC might realistically try to avoid doubling up of committee assignments. The six extant Handbook editions, dating back to 1999 and not counting the current debated draft, fairly cry out for clear resolution on intent and procedure. Attention was called to the marked-up draft handout to be voted on. The subcommittee had decided to put up four key issues for consideration:

Confidentiality or "serial notification of candidate" in 3rd year reviews: The approach of confidentiality throughout the process was moved and seconded, and after a few comments passed by a mixed voice vote.

Early promotion assistant to full; terms set at hiring or adjustable thereafter: After discussion, this question was set aside for next year's meetings.

Appeals board review procedures, and objective basis of Dean's recommendations: This too was set aside for the next year.

President's role in appeals of denial of tenure: Procedure described in the draft under XIII.D.2 was approved by voice vote.

David said that a Special Meeting of the Faculty next year would return to this editing process.

IV. Report of the Committee on Instruction, Assoc. Dean Nelson-Cisneros presenting.

Victor moved approval of a consent agenda proposing the dropping of one course in Mathematics and revision of three others, and announcing multiple changes in major requirements in both Mathematics and Art History. This passed by voice vote.

Attention was called to the Thursday 1:30 meeting for checking of graduation lists and awarding of Latin Honors. Also committee reports, at least 8 of them so far, had been paperlessly posted on the FEC Prowl, the Dean's Prowl, and the Staff Council websites.

V. Report of the General Education Oversight Committee, Assoc. Dean Noblett presenting.

Jeff moved approval of a consent agenda calling for DCC designation of 6 courses. This passed by unanimous voice vote.

VI. President's Report.

President Celeste added an important detail to Jane Cauvel's earlier presentation: the Ombudsperson may report directly to the Board of Trustees, among the numerous other channels available.

He remarked upon David Weddle's work (visible at the April meeting) on the never-simple task of filling committee vacancies, and emphatically echoed Susan Ashley's remarks about the importance of committee service.

The external review of the President's Office and Senior Leadership Team was set to proceed with Russell Osgood (just retired from Grinnell's presidency) and Bro Adams (CC alum and president of Colby) on campus August 26-27. The Advancement Division's external review was scheduled for September, with visits by their counterparts from Pomona and Amherst.

Dick commented on the challenge of how to address effectively the maintenance of IT infrastructure. Karen To had been charged with updating various "stale" parts of the College website. That task was expected to be a lengthy one.

In admissions news, the College was 5 deposits ahead of the previous year's pace, although some "melt" is to be expected. (Yale and Middlebury had begun to mine their wait lists.) CC admitted 100 fewer students than last year, predicting a high yield percentage. Already the target for American Ethnic Minorities and international students had been surpassed, with 102 from these categories planning to matriculate.

VII. Boettcher Health Center Review, Prof Dan Johnson presenting.

The Center is reviewed annually by external agencies, but had not had formal local scrutiny for about 2 decades. (Its operation costs the College about one million dollars annually.) A brief professional study has been commissioned to sample perceptions of the operation and possible broadening of the communities it serves.

VIII. Committee reports.

As Victor mentioned earlier, all committee reports were to be posted with electrons instead of toner and cellulose, on Prowl under FEC or Deans, and on the Staff Council website. In connection with the CAFA report, Michael Grace invited faculty reactions to the prospect of CC accepting alternatives to standard “board scores” in the admissions process. Mark Hatch commented that more than 400 schools were already doing so. The College will be putting such procedures into action during the summer, at least for a trial year.

IX. Announcements.

Dennis McEnnerney pointed out that assessment of the FYE program was coming soon: Results would be needed from 10 to 12 of the FYE courses, with special emphasis on the writing segments leading toward late-year submission of the newly-required portfolios. Instructors were urged to participate.

Reminders of the Thursday graduation and honors meeting, and the traditional late August events, concluded the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ted Lindeman
Secretary of the Faculty