

Haverford College Faculty Meeting Minutes

October 25, 2012
4:15 p.m.

Deborah Roberts, Clerk

Moment of silence.

Action I. Approval of the minutes of Sept. 27, 2012

I. Report of the President. (att. doc.)

I thought that the discussion with the Task Force at the last faculty meeting was very productive, and would hope that we will have other such opportunities this year.

The recent Board meeting was both a retreat and a regular Board meeting with a packed agenda. [The December Board meeting will not take place on campus, but rather by conference-call or some such medium.] The Board was appreciative of the heavy faculty involvement in this meeting, through committees (regular and ad hoc) and the Thursday social occasion. My goal this year is to augment opportunities for mutual understanding between Faculty and Board, recognizing the importance of both in the shared governance of the College.

The second plenary meeting on Friday focused on space planning.

- a. Ryan, Magill, Union, and Sharpless: cornerstones of the central campus which need renovation, repurposing, and revitalization.
- b. Space planning should be driven by academic needs (“Form follows Function”)
- c. We should attend to complementarities for optimal functionality
- d. We should articulate compelling programmatic rationales for each building to create adjacency-enriched tech-infused learning environments, building on prior studies
- e. We should be pragmatic depending on resources for size decisions: **BUT ATTENTION MUST BE GIVEN TO ALL THESE BUILDINGS OVER THE NEXT DECADE.**

The third plenary demonstrated how changing technology is changing learning and teaching.

The case was strongly made that academic enrichment should be front and center as an institutional priority; however, the Board was particularly sobered by the financial challenges facing us. Institutional planning, space planning, and financial planning must be integrated.

Therefore, we cannot defer this discussion until next year; we have to begin now, and to open out the discussions of Senior Staff and AAC to the faculty next semester. In addition to envisioning new things, we have to shore up existing programs, shore up financial aid, and evaluate the affordability of policies, as well as shore up the endowment.

My view is that the on-campus community makes recommendations to the Board: we must inform the Board about what we think and recommend a course of action.

We have to wait for decisions about budget trade-offs until next year when Dan Weiss is here. But we can work this year to evaluate our situation and the options we have. Given the urgency felt by some people, some decisions must take place this year; but the total process will take two years. However, we can make good progress this year on a good draft which will produce a road map for fiscal equilibrium which will be forward looking and fiscally responsible. Next year, Dan Weiss and you and the Board can decide whether to follow it or to chart a different route.

And in doing this, let us not forget what an incredible hand, in terms of the considerable assets and legacies, we were dealt.

The Board also devoted much effort to looking at its own functioning: whether it is focusing on the right issues, spending its time wisely, and doing enough consideration as a whole Board (rather than simply in segmented committees.)

II. Reports, Items for Action and Discussion

a. Suzanne Amador-Kane: Faculty Rep. to Board of Managers (att. doc.)

We have submitted a report to you after the October Board meeting (att. doc.); perhaps it is best to ask if there are any questions or comments to that report.

QUESTION: Can you say more about the “doing more with less” point?

REPLY (the President): That is *not* a signal for “no faculty growth,” but rather that the argument has to be presented well and thoroughly. **REPLY:** We can influence, and strongly, the process of academic enrichment. But all the donations we have received so far have been for financial aid or buildings. The Board wants to hear a coordinated strategic plan for academic enrichment, not 27 little different plans. One of the challenges would be: can we *bundle* plans, coordinate our visions?

But it is also true that the number of donors is a hard constraint; and we have to make cutting-back decisions as well as growth-decisions.

QUESTION: What programs are they thinking of cutting back? **REPLY:** Nothing in particular. We did remind them about short-term decisions to cut according to current fashions which could become long-term mistakes as fashions change.

QUESTION: Was there talk about student/faculty ratio? **REPLY:** There was no conversation about teaching-load. The central question was: “Where are you taking this place strategically?” **REPLY (from I.A.):** We are now re-defining “academic enrichment.” When we do it, then we can get donations for it. We are going back to the drawing board; the Board is with us on this.

COMMENT: The original FCAE terms had us in competition with one another: “which to un-grow, which to grow?” Which are necessary survival strategies, which are “extra goodies?” **REPLY:** The Board is saying that they have been unable to raise money for the FCAE; we need to hear a “strategic plan.”

COMMENT: I wonder if we could appeal more to students (instead of Faculty and Board) to create the plans, to put the students more in the center of our planning.

COMMENT: (the Provost): I urge the faculty to join in the Task Force discussions about how we educate students; we are the responsible parties for this. We already have a structure for allocating faculty positions, for cutting and adding; we know how to do this, corporately. We understand that it is not just a matter of “slots,” but of larger issues.

b. E.P.C. (Anne McGuire) (att. doc.)

1. New course proposals; there were some emendations to the submitted text in response to questions, but no objections; so the proposals can be considered “approved” by the faculty.
2. Proposal for a new Minor in Neuroscience. This is a change from the former Area of Concentration in Neuroscience, to allow a greater variety of Majors to participate in the program.

A preliminary straw poll was taken: 40 votes, YES 39, NO 1. (The No vote proved to be an objection to doing a straw poll at this juncture, not to the proposal itself.)

Thus, **preliminary straw poll should be considered as reading: 40 votes, YES 40.**

The Clerk asked: do we have a consensus? Yes.

Action II. Approved

- c. Curtis Greene (Academic Council) and Rob Manning (FAPC): new promotion procedures about the outside scholarship letters.
 The goal was to for Academic Council to have a better reading of the outside letters; and also, (as became clear in our discussion about the proposed change), to aid in departmental mentoring of young faculty.
 Two changes have been added since the first proposal we made concerning which Haverford non-departmental tenured professors would have access to the outside letters: 1) we have a minimalist definition of “non-departmental” and 2) it is the Presenter who should develop the list of “non-departmental” professors.

We want to say that we see no drift toward the writing of a “Departmental group-letter”(on the Bryn Mawr model, about which some concern was expressed); but also, that departmental members should be free to “consult” with one another.

If letter-writers are explicit about which information they have consulted (“I have read outside letters or I have not read outside letters”), Academic Council can read these letters better.

QUESTION: Are tenured Bryn Mawr faculty in a Bi-College Department to have access to the outside letters? **REPLY:** Yes.

QUESTION: If so many more people are reading the outside letters, do we still need a Glossator? **REPLY:** Yes, we do need a Glossator; the Glossator is the person who has a responsibility, and obligation, to do the work of familiarizing himself with the field and making a comparative judgment on how the outside letters fit in it. Other members of the tenured faculty who read the outside letters may, or may not, feel it necessary to make that kind of judgment.

QUESTION: When departmental members “consult” with one another, does the tenured professor who has read the outside letters have an obligation to keep those letters” “confidential” from the scrutiny of untenured professors? **REPLY:** Yes, “consultation” between departmental members is to take place “within the constraints of confidentiality.” Tenured professors should not reveal the content of the outside letters to non-tenured professors. [**COMMENT:** THEN THERE SHOULD BE AN EXPLICIT STATEMENT TO THAT EFFECT IN THE PROPOPSAL. SEE FINAL VERSION OF THE PROPOSAL.]

FAPC/Academic Council (later): The revised text would now read, approximately: “Department members (including the Glossator, should write individual letters, but may consult mutually about the case if they wish, within the constraints of confidentiality.”

COMMENT: 1) I *do* think that we are on a path of losing “confidentiality,” even with an inclusion of such a sentence. [**RELATED COMMENT:** I would like to express a caution about the evolution of a kind of “group-Think.” **REPLY:** I certainly hope not.]

COMMENT (Continuing): 2) I also think that this new proposal is increasing our service obligations as a faculty; it represents more work for us. 3) And I also think that we are shifting to a more “departmental” focus, especially with this talk of “departmental mentoring.” **RESPONSE (from the floor):** This is a service that we should *already* be doing; we will do a better job at what we *should* do as colleagues if we are familiar with the scholarship of our colleagues and how it fits into its wider scholarship community. **ANOTHER RESPONSE:** This supports the idea of “an intellectual community” and a “collective judgment.” We as scholars are exposing ourselves to the outside world as well as to our colleagues, by saying: ”This is what we do.”

COMMENT: Our old system gave “the power of protection” to our younger untenured candidates; this change makes a possibility for more departmental abuse. **RESPONSE (FROM THE FLOOR):** I think that this new proposal can also empower our young colleagues by showing them at their best to their senior colleagues. **ANOTHER RESPONSE:** This process will help us write more helpful departmental letters, (of which there have been many rather unhelpful examples in the past); it helps create scholarly sense of ourselves as a department.

QUESTION: Why just tenured professors read the outside letters? **REPLY:** We discussed how far to extend access at length last year, both in committee and on the floor of the faculty meeting. To extend access too far would create many problems; we judged that it would have deleterious effects. **ANOTHER REPLY:** The common practice in the profession, “the custom of the country,” is to have tenured, but not untenured, professors read these letters; this is what our outside letter-writers would expect.

THE CLERK ASKED: IF ACADEMIC COUNCIL/ FAPC ADD SOME PHRASE ABOUT “CONSULTING WITHIN THE CONSTRAINTS OF CONFIDENTIALITY,” (and if the Handbook reminds us about the Confidentiality of all documents), can we take a preliminary straw poll now? Yes.

Preliminary straw poll: 39 votes, YES 35, NO 4.

The Clerk asked: Do the people who voted No wish to speak further?

COMMENT: The numbers (39) are very small, in contrast to the number we had when we last discussed this issue; this concerns me. Do we have a quorum?

COMMENT: I did not vote No, but I had an email from someone who wanted to come to faculty meeting but could not.

COMMENT: I agree. I voted No because 1) there are defects with this proposal: Why should not non-tenured professors have access? And 2) there are defects with the method: Do we have a “quorum” of participants here? Even if we have no

formal rules of “quorum,” when there is an issue of “are there enough people here to make a decision?,” the numbers have unintended inhibitory consequences; we are looking at a “numbers problem.” With a consensus system, quorum is not an issue; but the straw poll changes the issue. **RESPONSE (from the floor):** Well, I myself think that you come to faculty meeting or you lose your vote. **ANOTHER REPOSE:** Yes, I agree. **ANOTHER:** I agree.

The Clerk asked: Do we have a case for going ahead? Or should we postpone this to the next faculty meeting, as Item #1 on the agenda? **REPLY:** In favor of postponing, one could argue that there were two new items presented for the first time; on the other hand, there were no objections to these new items and they were responses to previous discussion. **RESPONSE (from the floor):** It’s not going to be perfect; this is not perfect; but we have to come to the point sometime, and I am in favor of the general principle, and am willing to go ahead with it on that basis.

COMMENT: I was simply asking if we are comfortable with the low numbers, not objecting to the proposal...

The Clerk asked: Do the 4 people who had voted No wish to stand outside the consensus? Three decided to do so, (with the later addition of the fourth.)

The Clerk asked: Is the faculty willing to come to consensus, with 3 people standing outside the consensus? Yes.

Action III: Approved. (To take effect in academic year 2013-2014.)

At this point, there were five minutes left. The Clerk announced the Open Question Period, noting that we now had an opportunity to ask questions about the Provost’s report which had been circulated in advance. There were no questions.

Adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Linda Gerstein, Secretary to the Faculty