Haverford College Faculty Meeting Minutes

February 20, 2014

4:20 p.m.

Deborah Roberts, Clerk

Moment of silence.

Action I. Approval of the minutes of January 20, 2014.

I. Items for Action, and Items for discussion.

1. Richard Freedman & Suzanne Amador Kane, for FAPC: a revised proposal to continue FAPC for another four years, and to include a tenure-track assistant professor faculty member in the 5 faculty members (2 fac. reps. to the Board and 2 tenured members elected at large, and 1 untenured faculty member at large; and in the event that no untenured junior faculty member accepts nomination, the number of faculty will be reduced to 4.) Also, continuation of the current FAPC election structure, including optional statements of interest; and acknowledgment that there be designated some FAPC meeting time without the Provost present. (att. doc.)

QUESTION: Can you explain why you decided to stay with 5 members, since the straw poll seemed to indicate that the majority of the faculty was in favor of a “slimming down” of the number to 4? And to stay with the old election mechanism, when the straw poll seemed to indicate that we were split on this question? 
RESPONSE: We listened, and heard other comments from the faculty, and thought about it again. We agreed to stay at 4 tenured faculty members (in order not to take out of the already-over-committed tenured-faculty pool too many; but we also remembered that part of the original vision of the committee was to have the views of junior faculty represented; but recognizing the pressure this can put on junior faculty, we decided to include it as an optional 5th member.) Our decision to stay with the original election procedure was a considered judgment after hearing faculty comment.

QUESTION: Is there any way to ensure divisional representation? 
REPLY: The fac. reps. to the Board will represent at least two different divisions.

QUESTION: What about only a one-year term for the junior faculty rep? 
REPLY: It is our sense that the burden for such a service is in the first-year start-up time; the second year is less burdensome, and it is also desirable to have carry-over experience.

QUESTION: Why are we extending FAPC to four years, why not to 3? 
REPLY: the Board reps. will have two 2-year terms; there is some staggering of terms, providing continuity through overlapping constituents.

The Clerk asked for a straw-poll on willingness to approve this proposal. (38 votes): Yes 37, No 1. The Clerk asked: does the one No vote wish to speak, or to be recorded as
standing outside the consensus? No response. The Clerk asked: Do we have a consensus? YES.

**Action II:** The faculty accepted the proposal on extending FAPC for four years.

2. Phil Meneely, for EPC: changes in the Honors awarding system (att. doc.)

   Proposed change: That the first 15% would be handled as previously, and would receive *summa cum laude* or *magna cum laude*; and that the second 15% would receive *cum laude*. (Decisions to be made after discussion of each individual case, and with letters from the faculty influencing the decision.)

   **QUESTION:** Is there interplay between the %s and the # letters we write?

   **REPLY (Honors Committee Chair):** Under the current system, we are trying to cut down on the # letters that the faculty must write; we are asking for letters where students are on the margins, or are somewhere between receiving *summa cum laude* and *magna cum laude*. (Under the proposed new system, we would need letters also for students who might be on the margins of receiving *cum laude*.)

   **COMMENT:** I had a conversation with alumni who thought that 25% might be o.k. but 30% not.

   **COMMENT:** It is good that we are re-examining this. But perhaps our eccentricities are in our favor: we should be forced to make hard distinctions; and we will still be forced to, even if between 30% and 30.1%....

   **COMMENT:** I am not rejecting this proposal; but I want to observe that it is absurd to average course-grades (which are always “rounded-out” to categories of 3.7 or 3.3 and so on.) This is not meaningful data, because we lose data in the rounding-out of course grades. Perhaps our letters about our course-grades can help retrieve the lost data: can explain why we rounded out as we did.

   **COMMENT:** We owe it to our students, who are good, to recognize them in the awarding of *cum laude* honors.

   **COMMENT:** I like the simplification of our letter-writing job.

   **COMMENT:** This system allows some students, who have a slow start and thus who have weaker records in their freshman year, to still achieve an Honors award for the work they do in the last three years.

   **QUESTION:** Could we devise a system which allows us to make qualified judgments, as well as quantified judgments, about honors work? **(Associated**
COMMENT: which is how Phi Beta Kappa makes its judgments: starting with numbers, but examining each profile.)

COMMENT: Faculty letters are the way we make qualified judgments; they are very important evidence. Let’s not reduce the number of faculty letters.

REPLY (Honors committee Chair): We do want faculty letters; we recognize that many faculty choose not to write long useful letters; we are trying to get more letters which are shorter, more targeted and intense, more efficient.

The Clerk asked for a straw-poll (37 votes): YES 26, No 11. We are not yet in a position to give consensus.

The Clerk asked for a more refined straw-poll: (40 votes): YES, 22; Yes, I favor with minor changes 12; No 5; Too soon to say 1.

EPC strongly requested that faculty notify them about proposed minor changes.

3. Richard Freedman and Suzanne Amador Kane, fac. reps. to the Board: faculty development priorities (att. doc.)

Some faculty have objected to what seemed to be an emphasis on faculty research; but this was not meant to underestimate the importance of the teacher role. We also understand the importance of research and development of pedagogical methods.

We are asking for your comments about this list: how would you rank them? A survey will soon come to you.

COMMENT: You should include data about “stage of career” in the answers: my answers depend very much on this.

COMMENT: Rather than ranking Either/Or, priorities, I would urge thinking about this as “a holistic list. ”Both/And” is better. We don’t want to lose any of these. REPLY: Yes, they are an array. But we want to hear how you rank them, because decisions will have to be made among them.

COMMENT: “Rankings” can’t differentiate about intensity of feelings (the distance between rankings…)

COMMENT: Someone has to make the choices; if we don’t express preferences, the Board will make the choice. So you must make rankings: I myself think #1 and #2 are great, and then #3 and #4, and the rest not so much.
**COMMENT:** I myself can’t rank these, because I think the central issue is faculty time, and I don’t see that issue foregrounded. I prioritize TIME for all of us.

**REPLY:** Everything on this list is possible for us; all together the cost seems to amount to about the income from $5,000,000 of endowment.

**Provost’s comment:** It is good to think holistically. For instance, our current leave-policy hurts our governance procedures (there is not enough continuity on committees); and a new 5-year sabbatical policy could help this. We disaggregate in order to discuss; but the target is a holistic picture, the goal is to articulate into a mosaic, in order to make our academic enrichment plan coherent and persuasive.

III. Martha Denney, Dean of the College

We Deans rely on the faculty sharing its concerns about students. It is very important to the Deans; we don’t have residential assistants in the dorms to raise alarms. Every student has a Dean, who can coordinate concerns from the whole community about a student. If you want to phone rather than use email, that is fine too.

**The Open Question Period.**
Nothing was raised.

Adjourned at 5:40 p.m. 

Linda Gerstein, Secretary to the Faculty