Haverford College Faculty Meeting Minutes

November 16, 2017

Deborah Roberts, Clerk

Moment of silence.

The Clerk announced the experiment of using portable microphones.

**Action I.** Approval of the minutes of October 12, 2017.

I. Report of Tom King, Executive Director of Bi-Co Safety

Tom spoke to us about the importance of the faculty’s role in helping the functioning of the safety-net for the campus. He urged us not to be reluctant in reporting worries by concerns over “student privacy” where the issue is student-safety. Faculty are often critical “first-responders” in noticing potential student crises (such as psychological distress, academic overload, personal crisis) and early-reporting to the several campus offices (Deans, Counseling Services, Campus Safety) which can act to help is often crucial is allowing us to do our jobs. We do it very well, and you can have confidence in our institutions. We have a great record in preventing actual hospital-admissions for crises (e.g., alcohol abuse, mental breakdown) by getting students to emergency-rooms early enough, and in being warned early enough so that we can help them before it goes into critical crisis; in this endeavor, faculty knowledge and warnings to Deans and Campus Safety is sometimes very important.

II. Reports. Items for Action, and Items for Discussion

1. Fran Blase, Provost (att. doc.)

   a. I want to introduce Calista Cleary, the new Tri-co Philly Semester Planning Coordinator (whose position was described in the November 16 Provost’s report.) Calista stood, was recognized, and urged us to speak with her about courses we might have in mind, or about anything else.

   b. For the purposes of discussion, I want to raise the issue of removing gender-specific pronouns from institutional policies and public documents, in particular the editing of the Faculty Handbook. Faculty and staff began discussing this in the Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion and its recommendation was adopted by the Council for Diversity and Inclusion. Note: we are
talking here about College policy documents and public-facing documents, not how you as individuals in personal or even class communications use pronouns.

COMMENT: Since replacing the singular neutral by a plural pronoun is awkward and goes against the grammatical rules I have been taught, I suggest it would be better to avoid pronouns wherever possible rather than replacing He/She with They.

COMMENT: As a teacher of the English language, I hate the change; but I think I have to accept it. We can’t re-write texts entirely to avoid pronouns; the students (and society at large now) use They; we have to get used to it.

COMMENT: As a teacher of Gender Studies, I can tell you that “They” is their pronoun of choice. They are reacting to the experience of being “invisible” in society, and they want to be seen. If the College doesn’t use They in the Handbook and other public communications, we are making them “invisible” again.

COMMENT: As a teacher of Linguistics, I can assure you that the English language has used They as a singular for centuries in certain cases.

COMMENT: As a teacher of History, I assure you that language changes over time and we always resist changes which we later accept. I resisted “Ms.” (for Mrs.) and I resisted “Chairperson” or “Chair” (for Chairman), and eventually I got used to it; I am gradually training myself, despite my grammatical training, to use They, and we will all be taking this as a matter of course in a while.

The Clerk asked for a straw poll, in preparation for a decision on this at the December faculty meeting. (40 votes)

I like it: 37
I don’t like it: 1
It is too soon to tell: 2

III. Report of the Provost (att. doc.)

1. Cornel West, distinguished scholar and a Haverford Honorary degree recipient, will be visiting the College on December 11. His public talk is at 7 p.m.

2. There will be some considerable campus re-configuration as a result of Magill Library re-building next semester; and we will soon be having presentations about this.
3. I draw your attention to the new Term Research Professors program (described in the Provost’s report). I also draw your attention to the Provost’s new Course Development Fund, with preference given to courses which address issues of Diversity.

4. Note the upcoming Thanksgiving Basket project, an initiative from the Strategic Plan for Diversity and Inclusion to build community among faculty and staff. This project benefits the Haverford community and by providing baskets of food helps the outside community as well.

5. I am delighted to announce two new endowed Chairs:

   The Constance and Robert McCrate Professorship in Social Responsibility awarded to Ken Koltun-Fromm (Religion.)

   The Edmund and Margiana Stinnes Professorship in Global Studies awarded to Jim Krippner (History.)

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

1. I draw your attention to the memo from me about the U.S. News and World Report rankings. We can discuss it at the December meeting.

2. The President gave us an update on the U.S. tax-reform bill process... potentially not great for us.

3. I am delighted to announce another new endowed Professorship: The Phyllis Koshland Professorship in Fine Arts, awarded to Ying Li (Fine Arts.)

V. Open Question Period

1. Rob Scarrow, for FAPC: note our report. “Will we continue as a committee?” Also, note the Report from the Faculty Reps. to the Board (the reps. are also part of FAPC): the Board Compensation Committee is now discussing the relative weight of salary and benefits; what are your thoughts?

2. What is the rationale for having 5 faculty members serve on FAPC, when this so much adds to the burden of faculty service? Could those 5 be better used elsewhere? REPLY (FAPC): well, two of them are also Faculty Reps to the Board, and our report suggests a re-formulation that would have the other three also sit on other committees such as AAC.
3. I am concerned that, in the Library re-construction, library carrels will temporarily disappear. These are valuable for seniors writing research theses, (and also for students who in general need library carrels for “undistracted” study space.) REPLY: The Librarians are aware of this; they have been studying the current use patterns of carrels; they are providing study-space in other venues on campus (Science Library, Music Library, shelves for reserving books in the Great Hall and Common Room, etc.); address your concerns to them.

4. Why not move the initial business of advising first-year student to June? Other schools do this.

COMMENT: Yes, some of us are considering this already in an ongoing committee studying first-year advising (prompted by the last Middle States report) and starting with e-mail distance-advising in June or later in the summer, that is: before the rush of the first week of the Fall semester. SEVERAL COMMENT(S): No! I want to protect my June, and protect the whole summer, as time for my own research; this may be especially necessary for junior faculty, but it is really for everyone. COMMENT: I think face-to-face advising (not e-mail) is the critical kind of advising. COMMENT: I think it is important for students to be able to use The Academic Tea right before classes begin, to consult the various professors in person over questions about a course. COMMENT: I think it is important for the students to have the benefit of consultation with their UCAs to winnow down their lists, before they come to the faculty adviser.

[Clearly there is more discussion coming about this.]

Adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

Linda Gerstein, Secretary to the Faculty