



UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE RECORD

Minutes of the Faculty Meeting

November 13, 2001

The meeting was called to order at 5PM by Prof. Michael Payne. He explained the purpose of the meeting, convened at the request of the Personnel Committee (FAPC), was to finish the discussion of the merit system in time to accommodate people currently under review. Prof. Marj Kastner asked for a quorum count, and a quorum was found to be present.

The motion on the floor, introduced at the November 5, 2001 meeting, was the amendment to the FAPC report by Prof. John Peeler [this motion will later be referred to as JP1]: *1) That on each of the categories of teaching, scholarship, and service, there shall be three possible ratings (1, 2, 3, where 3 is highest). 2) That a rating of "2" will acknowledge the high calibre of work that is expected of Bucknell faculty members in each area, such that normally, the large majority of faculty members will receive "2" ratings in any given category. "3" will denote extraordinary achievement, while "1" will indicate significant shortcomings in any given category. 3) The Faculty and Academic Personnel Committee is charged to develop operational definitions of these three-point scales.*

Prof. Payne, speaking as a member of the faculty, spoke for the Peeler motion. As he was recently assured by members of the Board of Trustees that they were not mandating any particular system in its details, he felt the Peeler amendment would be consistent with the general guidelines stated by the Board in 1998. He saw an advantage in simplicity in the amended categories, as well as a more accurate reflection of the high standards of faculty performance.

Prof. Kim Daubman, chair of FAPC, reminded the faculty of the rationale behind the FAPC recommendations (see October 2001 Minutes). She then reiterated that a majority of survey respondents believe salary should be based in part on merit and that the FAPC proposal would allow merit judgments on an absolute rather than relative scale for teaching as well as scholarship.

Discussion of the amendment included what a rating of "1" in a given category would mean in the FAPC vs. Peeler system. Profs. Daubman and Peeler agreed that a "1" in a given category would probably be more frequent in the Peeler system. Prof. Peeler added that although a majority of people would probably get "2"s in each category, the final merit rating would be more differentiated than under the old system that had only 3 merit categories. He was not convinced that administrators can make distinctions on a 5-pt. scale reliably, and that it is easier to make intuitive distinctions between normal and outstanding performance. He agreed with several faculty members that the presumed abundance of "2" in each category would reflect the expectation that we all do good

work. Prof. Christopher Para added that the 3-pt. system better reflects his intuition that it is easy to recognize deficient work but not so easy to differentiate various levels of good performance from outside a discipline. Prof. Tom Travis also thought the Peeler system would reduce alienation among faculty, chairs, and administrators, and would be more encouraging of departmental and university service.

Prof. Kastner, speaking against the amendment, noted that the FAPC proposal removes the pitting against one another, and is a moderate change that is appropriate. The Peeler amendment has vague points that the committee would have to operationalize.

Prof. Travis then asked about salary implications under the amendment. Large salary discrepancies between rankings would undermine its intent. Prof. Peeler answered that not all implications have been worked out. In fact, given some people's concern about how the Trustees might react to his amendment, and the potential benefits of a sweeping reexamination of the merit system he then introduced another motion (JP2) to refer his first amendment (JP1) to the FAPC:

JP2: I move to refer my motion to the FAPC, with the charge to conduct a full reexamination of the faculty merit system, under the following stipulations:

1. That the faculty undertakes this gesture in the expectation that the administration and Board of Trustees will take effective action to make progress towards the university's official goals in faculty compensation; 2. That the FAPC is not limited to amending the present system, and should solicit suggestions from the faculty and administration about principles of a more satisfactory merit system.

Prof. John Miller spoke in favor of JP2. He worried about quality of the data gathered for this review, which was not intended to be a major overhaul. Many points have not yet been considered, such as salary distribution. Prof. Ben Marsh thought that the motion to refer JP1 is in fact a motion to kill it. Prof. Daubman thought the FAPC needed time to consider salary issues, such as different discounting factors. Dialogue on this issue continued: Some discussants supported JP1 because of the merits they saw in it; whereas others agreed with Prof. Miller that more time is needed to make sure any changes are beneficial.

When asked to rank his own motions, Prof. Peeler said he prefers JP1, but thought it prudent to vote for referral. In response to a question about our overall salary goal, President Rogers noted that the administration is putting together an aggressive financial plan. But if there is economic downturn, we may not be able to do this. The FAPC-proposed 5 pt. system will look different from the current one and he would rather not send a proposal to the trustees that they might veto. He himself doesn't like the current system and has tried to convince trustees we aren't motivated by money. But other merit systems could work.

After a suggestion by Prof. Brian Williams that there be a time frame of September 2002 for the FAPC to report back to the faculty was adopted, the question was moved on JP2. The motion was defeated. The question was then moved for JP1 and it was passed as an amendment to the FAPC report.

Given the vote on JP1, the remaining points of the FAPC report still to be considered were original points 5 (allowing newly tenured faculty to revise their dossiers for merit review) and 6 (requiring departments to compile tabulations and summaries of all course evaluations and student comments).

Prof. Marsh spoke to the tabulation issue, noting that the wording changes ownership of evaluations to departments, whereas submission of evaluations is actually voluntary. He moved an amendment to original point 6 to change the wording to: *Request that tabulations and summaries be submitted*. Interim Dean Jim Orbison said that FACP doesn't care who compiles the summaries, as long as they are compiled. Others thought that requiring transcription of all student comments would be very burdensome. Prof. Daubman said that the spirit was to make material easier to get through. She offered an interpretation of the point that would require tabulations of numerical data, but that written comments would be transcribed when possible. Prof. Marsh's revised wording was voted on and passed.

Finally, the assembly took a vote on the following items as a whole: The JP1 amendment revising the merit scale to three points, allowing newly tenured faculty to revise dossiers before a merit review, and the amended point about tabulations referred to in the paragraph above. This motion passed without dissent.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Halpern
Secretary of the Faculty