



UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE RECORD

Minutes of the Faculty Meeting February 7, 2005

Prof. Martin Ligare called the meeting to order at 5PM.

Announcements by the President

President Mitchell began by commenting on the successful feedback received during the public discussions of the Strategic Planning. Jerry Rackoff, Director of Planning and Institutional Research, is working on the general framework of the plan. President Mitchell continued by announcing that a copy of the mission statement review will be distributed by Wednesday. Of note is the emphasis on shorter sentences and more active verbs in statements from some other schools. Next, President Mitchell discussed the Provost search. He had the opportunity to meet five of the candidates and commended the search committee on the quality of all six dossiers. Sometime this month, the search committee will choose three candidates and select a finalist by the end of this February or early March. Finally, the President announced that Commencement plans are almost finalized and invited all to attend.

Then President Mitchell gave the floor to Charles Pollock, VP for Student Affairs, who outlined the operating principles governing the NCAA steering committee headed by Prof. Sweeney. These principles aim to maintain the quality of academics as well as equity among students. All members of the Bucknell community are represented. The committee's work will begin after spring break and is expected to be done next fall, with a report due in January and a peer review process achieved by May. Prof. Sweeney insisted in the transparency of this data-intensive process, and invited anyone to contact him with questions. A website showing various drafts will be available.

VP for Finance and Administration, David Surgala, brought up the recently approved 6.3% increase in comprehensive fees. The reason for such an increase is the targeted ranking near the 9th position in a set of 13 comparison schools. The compensation committee approved a total of 5% general increase for faculty.

President Mitchell concluded by saying that the Board of Trustees is thinking strategically as they prepare for the campaign.

Announcements by the Chair of the Faculty

On the topic of the meeting of the Board of Trustees, Prof. Ligare pointed out that faculty was represented at the meeting, as he and Prof. Ben Marsh were invited to attend. Prof. Ligare announced the appointment of Prof. Karl Voss on the Personnel Committee. He also reminded everyone of the open forum next Monday, where the report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Faculty Governance will be discussed.

Old Business

Prof. Ligare recalled the motion brought by Prof. Paul Susman at the last meeting referring the Dining Services issue to the Faculty Council. Prof. Ligare asked Prof. Erik Lofgren to step in and briefly chair the Faculty meeting while Prof. Ligare reports as chair of the Faculty Council. Prof. Ligare began his report by summarizing the context

for the issue (see February agenda), and noted that on January 4th four staff members met with President Mitchell and expressed how the upcoming decisions were going to affect them personally as well as impact the larger Bucknell community. So far, five responses to Bucknell's Requests for Proposals have been received. On behalf of the Faculty Council, Prof. Ligare introduced the following motion: *The faculty endorses the principles articulated in the Faculty Council's December 9, 2004 letter to Vice President Surgala regarding the employment status of the Dining Service workers at Bucknell.* (Dec. 9 letter is attached at the bottom of the February Agenda) The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

New Business

Prof. Tom Cassidy introduced the issue of procedures for the administration of student evaluations of teaching. The Committee on Instruction was asked to draft a uniform policy in order to help the URC better interpret the data. The policy was presented to the faculty in fall 03 and sent back to COI for further study. A subsequent survey yielded a lot of feedback, which was analyzed last fall, revealing some concerns on the part of junior faculty as well as a division concerning the presence of the faculty member inside or outside the classroom during the administration of teaching evaluations. This new version is meant as a compromise, which COI sees as a good process. Prof. Gary Steiner, as Chair of the URC, mentioned a number of problems with the current procedure including wide variations in the rate of return of evaluations without any explanation, as well as evidence of coaching of answers. The procedures brought to the faculty today are the result of the URC's request for a standard protocol. On behalf of the Committee on Instruction, Prof. Tom Cassidy then moved that the faculty adopt the procedures for the administration of student evaluations of teaching as outlined in the agenda. The motion was seconded and the floor was opened to questions. Prof. Greg Krohn suggested that the word "inadvertently" under paragraph 3 be replaced with "inappropriately". The motion was seconded and passed after the words "should try not to" were replaced to read: *Faculty members will not influence inappropriately the students' responses on the course evaluations.* To the question about the lack of any mention of timing for the distribution of the evaluations, Prof. Cassidy responded that the last version required evaluations to take place during regularly scheduled class time and should avoid final exams week. Prof. Tammy Hiller pointed out that in her department, faculty members tabulate their own data; she asked if COI had considered the possibility of allocating clerical help for large departments. Prof. Cassidy responded that COI did not discuss the question of resources but that the committee did not want instructors to tabulate their own data. Prof. Elisabeth Guerrero noted that evaluations are not used simply for URC purposes but also serve as feed back for course improvement. Prof. Keith Buffington moved that the language *used as a source of feedback* replace to *improve courses*, so item #2 would read as follows: *Course evaluation forms are used as a source of feedback by instructors and by the University to evaluate instructors.* The amendment was voted on and was carried. Ensuing discussion suggested that since many instructors do not want to be in the classroom during the evaluation process, maybe administrative staff or colleagues in the department (not students) could administer the evaluations. Finally, the question to vote on the motion as amended was called and was passed.

The next item was a report by Prof. Tom Cassidy from the Committee on Instruction about medical excuses from class. This policy states that Student Health Services will not provide excuses for routine illnesses (see agenda). The policy was revised by the Deans in consultation with faculty members and will be distributed to students.

Reporting on the issue of Honor Code for Bucknell University students on behalf of the Committee on Instruction and the Faculty Advisory Committee on Teaching, Prof. Tom Cassidy noted that this code was not designed to expel students but to showcase strong commitment to academic responsibility. In order to make it more visible, the code would appear in the Student Handbook and on the website. The motion recommending the adoption of an Honor Code was made and seconded. Prof. John Peeler spoke in favor of the motion but recommended that students get a chance to vote on it. He moved that an Honor Code be adopted “following a referendum open to all current students.” This was seconded. After much discussion about what constituted student support, Joel Buckman, President of BSG, noted that it is difficult to get students to vote and pointed out that the only opposition to the code came from first year students; as a statement of principles, most students thought that the code was a good idea. The amendment was then voted on and failed. As the discussion of the motion itself continued, Prof. Deborah Abowitz noted that the code also serves as a reminder about academic honesty and that any attempt to educate students about the values of the academic community was a significant improvement. Following questions about how students will find out about the code, Dean Garrett responded that it could be attached to the code of conduct that all incoming students have to sign. Referring to the students who are already here, Prof. Andrea Halpern asked for clarifications about the disparity the code would create within the student body. Prof Cassidy responded that he was looking for faculty endorsement and that details could be worked out afterwards. A motion to close the debate was made and seconded. The vote on the adoption of the Honor Code was passed.

Next, Prof. John Peeler from the Ad Hoc Committee on Faculty Governance proposed an open discussion of its report next week. On behalf of the committee, he stated the belief that on an initial review, our governance system is not broken, but that it clearly can be improved. We, the Faculty, must do better in tending to our core responsibilities thoughtfully and expeditiously, while offering our advice as a matter of right, but in a collaborative spirit. This was followed by a spontaneous round of applause. Prof. Ligare added that next week’s open forum would be structured in such a way as to encourage the discussion and exploration of issues.

The last item on the agenda was a report from the Faculty and Academic Personnel by Geoff Schneider, who explained that the method used for the various raises within our ranks is tied to comparable institutions in such a way as to avoid a slide with these institutions, even though it seems to create a differential within our ranks. Prof. Marsh commented that this represented a move from the situation of inequity a few years ago.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Philippe C. Dubois
Secretary of the Faculty