September 28, 2006

Dr. Michael Kiphart
Executive Associate Director
Middle States Commission on Higher Education
3624 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104-2680

Dear Dr. Kiphart:

One of the conditions of Bucknell's re-accreditation letter of June 25, 2004 was a required Monitoring Report "documenting developments regarding its [Bucknell's] governance structure." That report (April 1, 2005) described a number of changes that were still in progress. In accepting the report, Middle States requested an additional Progress Letter by October 1, 2006, to elaborate on further developments in governance reform. The present letter attempts to fulfill that requirement.

In response to the overall recommendations of the Middle States Evaluation Team, Bucknell has pursued four goals: (1) hire a strong president; (2) conduct a search for an individual of national stature to serve as provost; (3) secure approval for a comprehensive strategic plan; and (4) implement University-wide governance reform. The first three goals have been achieved in full. The fourth and final goal has enjoyed progress, but governance reform remains an ongoing issue.

To continue our governance reform efforts, the University will commission and re-activate the Trustees' *Ad Hoc* Committee on Governance, chaired by Vice Chair Joseph Ciffolillo. This committee will reaffirm the Board's changes in Bylaws, but will also be charged to look at University-wide governance issues and reach most decisions before the start of the silent phase of a major fundraising campaign likely to begin in July 2007. Board Chair Susan J. Crawford has also declared governance will be the Board's focus this year. It will be considered at the November 2006, and January and April 2007 meetings.

As an important step toward governance reform, Dr. Richard Chait of Harvard University, a national authority on higher education governance, addressed an open forum of trustees, faculty and students during the Board's September 2006 Retreat. After that session, the Board approached Dr. Chait and asked that he serve as the Board's consultant while we continue to assess and improve our process. Dr. Chait has agreed to serve in this capacity and has assured the University he will also be available for consultations with the faculty through his consultation with the Board.

The Board is also investigating the possibility of making the Trustees' *Ad Hoc* Committee on Governance a permanent, standing committee. Bylaws and other University documents will be adjusted as necessary to implement these changes. Bucknell's governance reform efforts have sought to address four issues: (1) an imbalance in the distribution of power and authority within the shared governance model; (2) a weakening of the presidency; (3) an overreach of the Board of Trustees into operational issues; and (4) a faculty governance model that was described as "problematic" in the Evaluation Team report. This letter will demonstrate some progress in

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addressing these issues. Although we take pride in this forward motion, we recognize the need for additional progress, notably in the area of faculty governance.

In anticipation of a presidential search, the Board made two fundamental changes in its Bylaws to strengthen the presidency: The Board (1) made the president a full voting member of the Board of Trustees; and (2) gave the president full authority to hire, fire and set compensation for the members of his senior staff (provost and vice presidents). With that authority, we have proceeded to recruit a strong administrative team, to realign senior administrative reporting relationships, and to begin to restructure the administrative bodies through which the most important business of the institution is transacted.

Administrative Team and Reporting Relationships

Academic Affairs: Bucknell's most immediate priority was the recruitment of a chief academic officer who would also serve as officer-in-charge in the absence of the president. Dr. Mary A. DeCredico (Class of 1981) was appointed provost in July 2005, having served previously as vice academic dean at the U.S. Naval Academy. Under Provost DeCredico's direction, the divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs were consolidated to provide a more seamless environment for student learning and development in and out of the classroom. Within the College of Arts & Sciences, the long-serving dean returned to the faculty and a national search is in progress to fill the deanship. A special committee was convened to study the possibility of restructuring the Department of Management (currently within the College of Arts & Sciences) as an independent third college (with the College of Engineering). At the request of departmental chairs in the College of Arts & Sciences, Provost DeCredico also established a faculty committee to advise the administration on the selection of strategic plan tactics with academic implications.

Other New Senior Staff Appointments: For Bucknell to realize its new strategic goals, three other new senior staff appointments were essential: (1) a chief communications officer, consolidating responsibility for print and electronic communications and media; (2) a vice president for external relations, leading efforts in community relations, economic development, and lobbying; and (3) a new vice president for development and alumni relations, providing critical leadership for Bucknell's planned comprehensive fund drive. All three positions have now been filled.

Administrative Governance Committees

Senior members of the administrative staff have now been realigned into two new administrative governance units:

President's Senior Staff: The former University Policy Group was reassessed and reconstituted as a President's Senior Staff consisting of the provost, the four vice presidents (Finance and Administration; Enrollment Management; External Relations; Development and Alumni Relations), chief communications officer, and general counsel.

University Management Group: Originally assigned to monitor the University's operations, this group has been given expanded managerial responsibilities (for example, a role in vetting the proposed tactics for the new strategic plan), and was enlarged to include the provost; the four vice presidents (Finance and Administration; Enrollment Management; Development and Alumni Relations; External Relations); chief communications officer; three deans (College of Arts & Sciences; College of Engineering; Student Affairs); general counsel; four Associate vice presidents (Information Services and Resources; Facilities; Finance; Development); assistant vice

president for planning and institutional research; director of human resources; director of athletics and recreation; and director of strategy implementation.

Board of Trustees Governance

At a dinner for trustees, faculty, and administrators in September 2006, Board Chair Susan J. Crawford summarized the Board's new conception of its governance role: (1) setting and assessing University policy; (2) approving and monitoring the operational, capital, and campaign budgets; and (3) hiring, firing, evaluating, and setting compensation for the president.

This role, which is now consistent with prevailing higher education practice, evolved in two stages: (1) an *Ad Hoc* Committee on Governance reviewed the status of the whole governance system in anticipation of a presidential search; and (2) an *Ad Hoc* Bylaws Review Committee in fall 2004 initiated a systematic study of the Board's own governance structure and practices.

One of the principal objectives of the Bylaws Review Committee was to reconstitute the Board's committee structure to articulate more closely with the reorganized administrative configuration described above. Such a parallel structure promised not only improvements in communications and operating efficiency, but also an improved agility in responding to decisions. The current structure includes twelve standing committees and four *ad hoc* committees; the proposed new structure would reduce this to a total of ten standing committees. Key changes would include: (1) an Executive Committee composed of the chairs of *all* standing committees, with subcommittees for Executive Compensation and for Risk Management and Legal Affairs; (2) a single Academic and Student Affairs Committee (paralleling the broadened responsibilities of the provost) with subcommittees for Academics, Equity and Diversity, Residential/Greek Life, Athletics, and Honorary Degrees; (3) a Finance Committee, with a Human Resources Subcommittee responsible for salary and benefit policies for faculty and staff; and (4) an External Affairs Committee with responsibility for corporate/foundation relations, marketing and communications, enrollment management, and community relations.

The Bylaws Review Committee also recommended a number of procedural changes to streamline Board operations. Five changes have already been enacted; one is scheduled to be enacted at the November 2006 Board meeting.

Still under consideration is the design for a Committee on Trustees (a successor to the Committee on Nominations), with responsibility for the selection, retention, assessment, nomination, and orientation of trustees. While many of the procedural changes mentioned are necessary, they are of less consequence than the results that the Board achieves. Issues of trustee performance assessment, criteria for recruitment, and new trustee acculturation are all of far-reaching significance for the future.

While its comprehensive governance self-review is almost completed, the Board realizes that other governance configurations and processes may prove optimum for changing future circumstances. The Board is committed to a regular, ongoing evaluation of its own responsibilities and effectiveness within the shared governance system.

Faculty Governance

As described in our Monitoring Report, an *Ad Hoc* Committee to Review Faculty Governance began work in September 2004, and presented a report at the February 2005 meeting of the faculty. The recommendations were organized in three categories: (1) those that could be

implemented immediately without Faculty Handbook amendments; (2) those that would require amendments; and (3) possible structural changes (e.g., a Faculty Senate). At its March 2005 meeting, the Faculty approved an amended version of the *Immediate Recommendations* section of the report. Specific details are described in the appropriate sections below.

The Faculty Committee System

The Faculty's internal review judged the committee system to be the most effective part of the faculty governance structure. Committees are generally well-managed and hard-working, and have produced thoughtful and detailed recommendations for consideration by the faculty as a whole. Between committee chair tenures, individuals serving in standing committees and additional *ad hoc* committees, there is broad involvement in committee work. One hallmark feature is that faculty committees have sound and comprehensive involvement by and engagement with administrators and students.

Subsequent to the initial faculty internal review, several new committees were recommended, all of which will require amendments to the Faculty Handbook. These recommendations are currently in different stages of consideration (for example, the Committee on Athletics will be ready for the October 2006 meeting agenda):

- Elevate to standing committee status admissions and financial aid, and athletics;
- Create new faculty committees for information services, and for strategic planning;
- Clarify the charge to the Faculty Council.

The possible proliferation of committees raises the issue of the relevance of the existing structure of faculty committees. The issue could be addressed within the context of a systematic review of the entire committee structure of the faculty. The desired end result would be a committee system that parallels the evolving structures of the Board of Trustees.

University-wide Faculty Governance

In the recent past, meetings of the faculty have suffered from low participation and the tendency for substitute motions to divert well-reasoned committee recommendations before they have been presented fully. Even with a low quorum requirement of 75, faculty meetings have periodically failed to produce a quorum. The *Ad Hoc* Committee attributed low participation to conflicts with classes, laboratories, student advising, and family commitments. This committee recommended meetings at noon rather than 5 p.m., a change introduced experimentally in 2005-06. The new meeting schedule appears more popular than the old, as it has been accompanied by gains in participation.

New procedures for faculty meetings have allowed faculty to be better prepared for meetings because committee reports must now accompany the meeting agenda. Similarly, the governance website provides an electronic archive of the threads of faculty discussion on myriad issues.

Thanks to the committee system, the faculty has been effective in transacting scheduled and recurring institutional business, from budgetary review to recommendations on the allocation of faculty and appropriate academic staff positions. As a whole, the faculty is less successful in dealing with big issues, particularly non-recurring ones that cut across traditional governance boundaries. In part, it is an issue of accountability. This remains an issue that must be addressed.

Next Steps in Faculty Governance Review

The initial set of faculty governance recommendations was to be a first step in a more comprehensive governance self-study. With the implementation of several of these procedural measures, we have experienced some modest benefits. That said, it is time for the faculty to consider broader governance issues, including those that require Faculty Handbook amendments and those that are structural (e.g., the possibility of a Faculty Senate). This next stage will be facilitated by the use of external consultants.

To establish a common foundation for continuing institutional governance reform, Dr. Richard Chait was the guest speaker for a half-day conversation about governance as part of the September 16, 2006 Trustee Retreat. Dr. Chait's keynote address was followed by an open question and answer session and panel discussion with representatives of the Board, faculty, administration, and Bucknell Student Government.

Dr. Chait closed the meeting with his impressions of the state of Bucknell's governance. He applauded the candid and productive discussions. He also noted that Bucknell remains anomalous in retention and tenure practice because the final authority does not rest with the president. Chait's conclusion: If you deviate from peer norms, the onus is on the Faculty to demonstrate that their way works better—that they are accountable for outcomes. The trustees' *Ad Hoc* Committee on Governance will continue these discussions, with Dr. Chait serving as their consultant.

Governance Outcomes

In the end, the best indicators of progress are the outcomes of important governance deliberations on our campus. How effectively has our shared governance structure dealt with major strategic and operational issues? Several significant examples are provided below.

The Plan for Bucknell: During FY2005-06, Bucknell's new strategic plan (enclosed) was adopted unanimously by the Board of Trustees, faculty, and Bucknell Student Government—after a total planning process of less than two years—a milestone accomplishment, given past false-starts and failures. Approval of *The Plan* is more than just a sign of the progress of effective governance processes; it delineates all subsequent processes by providing a clear, shared vision and direction for the University. It also is aimed to facilitate effective decision-making and resource allocation.

Five-course Load: The institutional decision to move forward with a plan to reduce the faculty teaching load from six to five course per year has been very complex,, involving reallocations of release time, new faculty hires, considerations of course availability, and issues of faculty accountability. The joint collaboration of Board, faculty, and administration in implementing this change has been an encouraging example of effective governance in shared institutional priorities. In testament to the significance of this transition, all new faculty hired for fall 2006, received contracts are for five-course teaching loads.

The Faculty Handbook: As described in our Monitoring Report, this document has required some amending, but those changes were gridlocked largely because of some contentious differences between the faculty and administration. The amended Faculty Handbook finally received a supportive vote by the faculty at the April 2005 meeting, and was subsequently approved by President Mitchell.

Honorary Degrees: The historical governance problems in awarding honorary degrees were described previously in our Monitoring Report. The Faculty Council initiated discussion of the

revival of honorary degrees at the March 2005 faculty meeting. In April 2005, the faculty voted for amendments to the Faculty Handbook that modified the composition of the Committee on Honorary Degrees in light of the president's new status as a member of the Board of Trustees. FY2006-07 will be the first year that independent committees of the faculty and Board will recommend an unranked list of jointly supported nominees for the president's final action.

Summary

While aspects of Bucknell's governance may continue to be outliers to common practice, the University has begun to move toward the center in fundamental aspects of its shared governance system. The president's role has been strengthened somewhat; a strong and effective senior leadership team has been assembled; the Board has continued a critical self-examination; and the administration and the Board have moved toward a parallel committee structure.

The faculty, too, has undertaken an initial round of procedural reforms. As a result, some gains in process have been achieved. With these behind them, the faculty will now address the core issue the Evaluation Team identified: the faculty's role in governance needs to change.

The external review, coupled with changes to the Faculty Handbook, will begin to address these issues. We are confident that Bucknell's faculty are committed to addressing these issues in a timely manner that will place Bucknell's governance practices more within the norms established within American private higher education.

The recent participation of all constituencies in an externally facilitated conversation on governance has established the framework for an external review of faculty governance and for the development of a process for ongoing assessment.

Sincerely,

Brian C. Mitchell
President

Enclosure