

Executive Council meeting minutes, 14 May 09

The Executive Council met on May 14, 2009, 10:30 am to 12:30 p.m., in Newcomb 481. Present were: Ed Kitch, Ann Hamric, Gweneth West, Robert Bloodgood, Robert Kemp, Daniel Willingham, Teresa Culver, Chip Tucker, Susan Kirk, Martha Snell, Kevin Lee, Jack Brown, David Kovacs, Justin Thompson, and Tim Garson.

The Council discussed the activities and procedures of the Senate over the past year and identified possible improvements that could be implemented in the coming year. Topics discussed included:

1. The luncheon meeting hosted by President Casteen at Carr's Hill on Thursday May 7. The President, Provost Garson, Nancy Rivers and the Executive Council attended the lunch. An annual lunch with the President and key University administrators is an important part of the Executive Council's annual schedule and enables the Executive Council to benefit from a full exchange of information and ideas.

The Executive Council was surprised to learn at the lunch that the University, under the leadership of the President, is exploring the possibility of undertaking a major initiative in the area of distance and online education. In the discussion at lunch, it became clear that many faculty (including several members of the Executive Council itself) have experience with online and distance education and could contribute to the formulation of a feasible and practical plan. This provided a concrete example of the problem of lack of transparency identified in the faculty survey last year.

2. A member of the Council suggested that the Executive Council and the Senate could function more effectively with better information about the University's budgeting. The member reported that it is his understanding that in the past the Senate has had a budget committee. Provost Garson suggested that the Executive Council arrange for a briefing from staff knowledgeable about the budget.

2. The Dissertation Year Fellowships. In the past year, funding was only obtained for four fellowships. This raises the question whether the Senate should continue to take the time and effort to award the fellowships when so few are available. At the present time, the Senate seeks support for the fellowships each year. There was general agreement that a fellowship of this kind, which recognizes not only scholarly promise but also teaching ability, makes a good and useful statement. One member of the Executive Council pointed out that many of our peer institutions offer their Ph.D. students a dissertation year fellowship as a matter of course, and said that this was a goal at which the University should aim. Tim Garson offered to make a three-year rolling commitment of funds from the Provost's Office. Another member of the Executive Council pointed out that the existence of the Senate Dissertation Year Fellowship places extra burdens on graduate students and graduate students advisors because of the different application procedure involved.

3. Procedures for Senate minutes. Neither the EC nor the Senate have followed the practice of having the minutes approved at the next meeting. It was agreed that taking time out of either Senate or EC meetings to read and approve the minutes was not a good idea. Alternative suggestions were floated about various ways of approving them by e-mail.

4. Procedures for appointment of committee members. The bylaws prescribe that the composition of Senate committees is to be approved by the EC. In practice the Chair draws up the lists based on expressions of interest. There seemed to be agreement that this less cumbersome procedure should be continued, either by having the EC vote to accept in advance whatever assignments the Chair makes; or by a *pro forma* vote afterwards; or by amending the bylaws.

5. The role of the Senate Chair on the Pavilion Assignment Committee. The Board of Visitors has created a committee consisting of the Secretary of the Board, the Chair of the Faculty Senate, and the student holder of the Grey-Carrington Award to allocate space in the lawn Pavilions. The Secretary of the Board is the Chairman of the Committee. Ed Kitch, the present Chair, detailed some of the problems involved in the Senate Chair's participation in this committee. In fact the committee does not meet and as a result there is no real faculty input. The consensus seemed to be that if the Board of Visitors desires input from the faculty through the Chair of the Faculty Senate, then the committee should meet and do the work of a committee.

6. The Senate Committee structure and personnel for the coming year. Ann Hamric discussed her current thinking for the coming year.

7. The role of the Senate, if any, in the Faculty Senate of Virginia. The question of whether the Senate should be involved in, and send a representative to the meetings of the Faculty Senate of Virginia was discussed. The members of the Faculty Senate of Virginia are faculty senates at higher educational institutions in Virginia. Participation in the meetings requires sending a representative. In recent years, the University of Virginia Faculty Senate has paid dues but has not sent representatives to the meetings. In the past the Faculty Senate of Virginia has taken positions on legislation pending before the legislature, but it is not clear whether membership implies approval of those positions. Concern was expressed that a failure to participate might be construed as a lack of interest on the part of the UVA faculty of in the needs of faculty at other Virginia higher education institutions.