

Notes of the General Faculty Council meeting held on March 8, 2005

Present: Robin Kuzen, chair, Lotta Löfgren, Derry Wade, Jennifer Bauerle, Jean Collier, , Camilla Curnow, Ellie Wilson, Greg Strickland, Chris Milner, Robbie Greenlee, Phil Gates, Prue Thorner. Absent were: Dawn Rigney, Nancy Gansneder, Bill Keene, John Wilson, Elaine Attridge, and Carol Hunter.

Guests: Angela Davis, Anne Bromley, Allen Cohn, Lynda White, and Virginia Carter.

Report of the President's Commission on Diversity and Equity

Angela Davis, associate dean of students and director of Residence Life spoke about the report of the Commission on Diversity and Equity, which she co-chaired with Michael Smith, Thomas C. Sorenson Professor of Political and Social Thought in the Department of Politics. The commission's charge was to look at diversity and equity for under-represented groups including women and minorities, to identify best practices at other universities, and to examine the relationship of minorities within the University community and the Charlottesville community. Faculty, students, classified staff and community members worked in committees on curriculum, student life and climate, recruitment and retention, and business community relations.

Angela characterized this effort as a working commission that met with numerous representatives of all constituencies which sought to energize the entire community about what they think the issues are. Three working retreats were held, at which commission members heard from all the vice presidents who shared their areas of concern. Recommendations produced by the commission have gone to the president and to the BOV, who are committed to finding ways to achieve structural and systemic change in order to advance the University to rank with the top ten institutions in the nation. They reviewed all past U.Va. reports and task forces on equity and diversity.

Lynda White, who co-chaired the subcommittee on Faculty and Staff Recruitment and Retention for the Commission, spoke about the data analysis they undertook, and particularly about the need to make data publicly available on the internet down to the departmental level to achieve data transparency about the makeup of University's faculty and staff.

Problems identified by the Commission included people and departments working in silos — not sharing or benefiting from others' efforts; lack of access to policy information, and notably, that accountability was missing from previous reports. Jim Trice, an alumnus associated with U.Va. for over 30 years, assisted with an examination of best practices and also studied community relations efforts. Recommendations of the Commission included the appointment of a chief diversity officer who will respond and report directly to the president and vice presidents: this model was found to work best at other institutions.

Ellie Wilson spoke about a report on the climate in the Curry School conducted eight years ago which was discredited by a single Curry faculty member who criticized the methodology. She asked if this could happen again. Angela responded that she did not think it was likely, and that some environmental changes were put in place while the commission was still working. She also commented that she believes the atmosphere is more receptive today than in previous years. She noted that vice presidents have bought into the process, and current members of the Board of Visitors are very supportive of the Commission's work and its recommendations. She cited an example in which the Carter G. Woodson Institute was able to access some unused faculty lines for minority faculty appointments. Equity was as much a top issue for the commission as was diversity. Lynda said that a climate study is recommended in the Issues for Future Exploration area of the report. Tom Gausvik has suggested it be done by school or unit. What is different now is that the president is fully committed to diversity. The BOV has changed in its composition. To achieve Top Ten status nationally, the University must change to have a fully diverse student body and faculty, and the Board takes this objective seriously.

Implementation of an incident reporting system has been recommended and Rick Turner chairs this effort. Every incident of racially-biased behavior, gender inequity or hate crime will be reported, and the data will be publicly available. A study of changing perceptions based on race was conducted amongst students. Eighty percent of African-American students report negative experiences in the classroom and elsewhere on Grounds while white students are not aware there is a problem at all.

In terms of recruitment and retention of students we are in the top five nationally. However, the climate for minority students, including international students, is what needs remediation. A student life committee looked at fraternities and sororities and found that there is a need for a sustained dialogue on diversity with them. Reinforcing ethical treatment of others as a societal norm is most important in fraternities and sororities.

Programs need to be put in place to effect structural changes in the University and the outside community, the Board of Visitors, and the Governor's office in order to ensure that racial and gender equity is achieved. Angela commented that of all areas of the University, the Health System is probably in greatest need of reform.

Other business:

Jean Collier reported that candidates up for election to the Council are Daisy Rodriguez, (Student Services), Pam McIntire and Mary Beth Knight (Health Professionals), James Groves (Engineering), Virginia Carter (Administration), and Phil Gates (Athletics). Election results will be announced at the end of March.

It was moved and seconded to nominate Camilla Curnow for chair-elect. A formal vote will be taken at the April 12 meeting.

Prue reported on progress on policy changes that she and Bill Keene have submitted to the University's Policy Committee. Lynda pointed out that noting support for these policies by the Diversity and Equity Commission could be helpful.

Camilla said that she compiles a weekly list of general faculty who are featured in Headline News. These could be featured on our web site and circulated to our membership. Anne Bromley from *Inside UVA* offered to discuss this idea further with the Council.

Camilla, Robin, and Lotta met with Gertrude Fraser, Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement earlier in the week to discuss flexible tenure options and other professional development opportunities for general faculty. Gertrude was open to the idea of giving faculty the ability to move between tenure-track and non-track status. They also discussed the lack of career development opportunities and ways to redefine tenure. Gertrude invited them to meet with two University of Michigan professors who are doing a study on a current trend in higher education to define faculty classification according to their function. The meeting will be on March 25. Providing advancement opportunities for General Faculty is one of the Diversity and Equity Commission recommendations.

The next General Faculty Council meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 12, in Room 389 Newcomb Hall.