

Minutes of the General Faculty Council meeting held on September 13, 2005

Present: Jean Collier, chair, Phil Gates, Robin Kuzen, Ellie Wilson, Nancy Gansneder, Carol Hunter, James Groves, Daisy Rodriguez, Mark Ross, Dawn Rigney, Gary Davis, Derry Wade, Lynda White representing Lotta Lofgren, Pam MacIntire, Prue Thorner

Absent: Bill Keene, Virginia Carter.

Guests: Christine Patrick, François Masuka and Abbey Lynch.

1. Derry Wade reported that as a result of the special election in August, Gary Davis and Mark Ross have joined the Council to represent Health Professionals. Jean thanked them for their willingness to serve on the GFC and welcomed them.

2. Robin Kuzen reported on a meeting with Gertrude Fraser to discuss soliciting her support for our initiatives on disability leave funding and health insurance for faculty and staff whose external salary support experiences a lapse in funding. Gertrude felt that these issues were not in her area of responsibility, and suggested that we ask Ariel Gomez to request Gene Block's support for these policies.

3. Robin and Gertrude also discussed a University-wide leave policy for professional development and career advancement for general faculty. She will present the idea to the Provost's Council and let Robin know how they feel about it. They discussed intolerance of minorities at U.Va. Carol Hunter suggested that the two draft policies be submitted to the Benefits Committee which will meet next week. Possibly the Director of HR should be asked to support the policies. She and Lynda White said that the Diversity Commission strongly supported the policies.

Gertrude Fraser asked Robin if the GFC would be interested in co-sponsoring a University symposium on the after-effects of Hurricane Katrina to learn the lessons of this catastrophe. A resolution was passed in support of this motion.

4. Daisy Rodriguez talked about the Sustained Dialogue program. It was started by a foundation in Washington DC. About 200 students participate. They meet for 2 hours per week to talk about race issues. A goal is to have a tangible outcome from the meetings. Some faculty are participating in their own Sustained Dialogue group. Dawn was concerned about the fact that white people may be turned away from participating. Daisy explained that without a significant number of African Americans and other minorities, the dialogue will not be effective on the subject of racism. Daisy will seek additional involvement from general faculty via an e-mail message.

5. François Masuka, who is an international student adviser, asked to speak on the dire shortage of affordable housing in this area. When he moved here six months ago he found he could not afford local housing. Gary Davis supported this statement. The University used to offer subsidized mortgages for academic faculty but these are not for general faculty or staff. Carole Hunter asked if we can find out about other state institutions. Dawn Rigney suggested that a reverse mortgage program could be helpful through the UVA Real Estate Foundation. François asked the GFC to support an initiative to help staff and faculty acquire affordable housing. Carol agreed that this request could go to the Benefits Committee. The new light rail to Washington DC which may be operational next year may even further inflate the real estate market. Gary noted there is also concern in the local business community about this problem.

6. Jean Collier reported on our operating budget: there is \$6324 in operating funds. Funds are committed this year to update the website, to distribute the brochure, to support the annual forum and to provide lunches at our monthly meetings.

The brochure has been given to incoming faculty and to deans and department chairs. At the next meeting we will ask council members to distribute them within their units. The executive committee of the Faculty Senate will also receive them.

7. Houston Wood, chair of the Faculty Senate, has told Bill Keene that the Senate will be reviewing our bylaws and our two policy resolutions. Allison Booth and Ed Kitsch will serve on the joint committee of the Senate and the GFC.

8. At the Executive Committee in August we discussed the effort to gain faculty representation on the Board of Visitors. We also discussed guest speakers: Houston Wood, and Gene Block. The Forum held last year jointly with the Senate was successful and drew a good audience. Derry suggested we explore a topic with the Senate, possibly on benefits issues. Jean will pass these ideas along to Bill Keene who is away until later this month.

9. Carol Hunter talked about the effectiveness of the Employee Councils. They identify the top three items they support and have already invited speakers for the next year. Our top three items are benefits, representation on the BOV and better communication with our constituents, or perhaps affordable housing. Our minutes could be accompanied with bullets of the top three issues to look for in the minutes. Derry suggested that representatives' names and contact information be included in the cover message that goes out to the gf-roster e-mail group. Jean would like professional development to be included as one of our top issues. Dawn Rigney would like to see if we should be a sponsor of a pan-University program on disaster preparedness. A resolution supporting this was approved.

10. Daisy announced that there is a reporting method for incidents of racial slurs or attacks through the Dean of Students Office.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday, October 11 in 481 Newcomb Hall

Respectfully submitted,

Prue Thorner