

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

Present: Jean Collier, Chair, Lotta Löfgren, Bill Keene, Ellie Wilson, Dawn Rigney, James Groves, Gary Davis, Mark Ross, Phil Gates, Derry Wade, Robin Kuzen, Virginia Carter, Nancy Gansneder, Daisy Rodriguez, Prue Thorner.

Absent: Carol Hunter, Pam MacIntyre, John Wilson

Guests: Vice President and Provost Gene Block, Associate Provost for Management and Budget Anda Webb, Nicole Eramo, Alan Cohn, Judith Reagan, Christine Patrick, Lynda White, Jennie Moody, Peter Norton, Marva Barnett, Donna Plasket.

1. Jean Collier welcomed Vice President and Provost Gene Block to the meeting and explained his role at the University.
2. Provost Block outlined major issues he is dealing with, including the development of a 10-year plan at the request of the Board of Visitors indicating projected financial needs, which will in turn be driven by an academic plan to be developed by the deans. Work on documentation to support re-accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools requiring a quality enhancement plan will begin shortly. Regularly scheduled five-year reviews of programs, institutes and departments with external advisers will continue. Provost Block commented on difficulties in recruiting and retaining women faculty, still at 25 percent as it has been for more than a decade, as well as some other minorities. He acknowledged the remarkable recruiting success of Gertrude Fraser who has increased the percentage of African-American faculty recruited by fifty percent in the past year, but pointed out that this success must be further built upon for decades if we are to create an enduringly diverse environment. He said that Dr. Leigh Grossman is working to expand study abroad programs and to initiate joint degree programs with overseas institutions. He commended Governor Warner for his financial package recently unveiled that for the first time includes funding for graduate programs and research. This initiative will help to strengthen the research mission of Virginia colleges and universities, and he hopes future governors will be able to build upon it.
3. Regarding the restructuring agreement, Provost Block said that the University administration will now be able to better plan for the longer term because we will be less dependent on the year-to-year health of the Virginia economy.
4. Lotta Löfgren commented that there have been some inequities in pay increases for general faculty which have impacted women more than men, simply because there are so many more women on the general faculty. She also said that there has not been enough attention given to career development of non-track faculty, and Provost Block agreed with this perception and said he would be paying more attention to this problem. He said that department chairs need to be made aware of their obligations in ensuring that general faculty are treated equitably. Lotta asked if the University will make it possible for faculty to be transferred to the tenure track if they both teach and do research, and the Provost responded that such transfers would be considered, and that the line between general (non-track) faculty and tenured track should become more porous. Lotta expressed frustration

on behalf of general faculty who feel that they carry ever-increasing responsibilities yet have reduced rights and privileges.

5. A general faculty member in the School of Engineering stated that after eight years of full-time employment as an instructor and assistant professor his contract is not being renewed, and he believes this creates a chilling atmosphere for non-track faculty. When he was originally hired as a member of adjunct faculty, he was not told nor did his original offer letter state that the Engineering School distinguishes between adjunct versus general faculty with regard to eligibility for the expectation of continued employment (ECE). Adjunct or visiting faculty in the Engineering School (and in every school) should be clearly informed when hired that they are ineligible for the ECE..
 6. Provost Block responded that his office will more closely examine on a case-by-case basis those who are on the general faculty who both teach and do research, to consider their transfer to tenure-track status. He agreed that those who only teach or only do research should not be transferred. He then distributed written responses to other issues that had been identified prior to the meeting by the GFC.
 7. Regarding status of the draft policies proposed by the GFC on paid disability leave and health insurance bridge funding for sponsor-supported faculty: Provost. Block reported that a working group appointed by his office is studying the costs and benefits of this proposed policy.
 8. The policy on the General Faculty: this will be posted on the University's web site after the Policy Review Committee has approved it.
 9. On the relationship of the Provost's Policy on the General Faculty to school policies, and which takes precedence: Anda Webb and Gene Block stated that schools may adopt more restrictive policies to suit their needs as long as these do not violate state and federal law. Policies governing general faculty must be clearly communicated to each individual, most appropriately in the original offer letter. Contractual arrangements for general faculty are specified in the policy under which they were hired.
 10. Provost Block anticipates that the management agreement required by the Higher Education Restructuring legislation may have the following consequences:
 - Performance and evaluation processes may change.
 - Enhanced benefits may be offered.
 - There will be more flexibility in the use of leave, compensable and non-compensable awards to recognize employees.
 - Changes in leave and disability policies may be made for eligible employees.
 - Severance benefit policies may be developed for salaried employees who are involuntarily separated for reasons unrelated to performance or conduct.
 - There may be new definitions for administrative and professional faculty.
- The Management Agreement is subject to the approval of the General Assembly and is expected to be effective July 1, 2006. All faculty, both track and non-track, are expressly exempt from the Virginia Personnel Act.
11. Council members thanked Gene Block and Anda Webb for responding to questions and concerns. They also emphasized that the GFC and the Provost shared the common goal of trying to improve our University and encouraged the Provost to more actively engage the GFC as a resource towards that end.

The next meeting of the GFC will be held on Tuesday January 10, 2006, in Newcomb Hall, Room 481.

Respectfully submitted,
Prue Thorner