

*Motion from Professor Marsh, Part 1: The Faculty requests that the Faculty Council seek to organize a public dialogue with the administration on the strengths and weaknesses of shared governance at Bucknell.*

To address the first part of Professor Marsh's motion, two meetings have been arranged. The purpose of these meetings will be to "organize a public dialogue with the administration on the strengths and weaknesses of shared governance at Bucknell." The meetings are scheduled to take place on January 23, 2007 and January 30, 2007 during the noon hour.

*Motion from Professor Marsh, Part 2: The Faculty requests that Faculty Council review both the MSA letter and the process by which it was produced and report back to the Faculty at the December meeting with a recommendation on any action the Faculty might take in response to the letter's contents or the procedures by which it was drafted.*

In order to respond to this motion the Faculty Council believes that it is important to review the recent history of, and motivation for, governance review at Bucknell. The 2004 report of the Middle States Evaluation Team identified several issues concerning board and faculty governance at Bucknell, and one of its recommendations was "a serious, substantial, and self-critical review of faculty governance." Although the Faculty Council does not agree with all of the conclusions of the 2004 Middle States Evaluation Team report, the Council recognizes that the faculty should periodically assess whether or not its governance structure is working efficiently and effectively. Such an assessment requires that we examine our system critically, identifying strengths and weaknesses. Toward that end, in April 2004, the faculty commissioned an Ad Hoc Committee to Review Faculty Governance, which was chaired by John Peeler. This committee investigated an array of governance issues, including the specific concerns raised by the Middle States Evaluation Team.

To facilitate its review the Ad Hoc Committee, in Fall 2004, "solicit[ed] comments from members of the university community, ... submit[ted] an online survey to all recipients of the Faculty list-serve, and ... conduct[ed] confidential interviews with several present and former senior administrators and faculty officers." The Committee's report listed three sets of recommendations: a) Immediate Recommendations, b) Recommendations Requiring Handbook Amendments, and c) a Recommendation to consider a basic structural change. In addition, the report produced "ideas for further study" and asked the Faculty Council, guided by the faculty, to determine what further action should be taken. In January 2005 the Ad Hoc Committee brought its report to the faculty. We describe briefly where we are with respect to this report before we turn to a discussion of the MSC letter.

After an Open Forum to discuss the report, several of the Committee's initial recommendations were modified and, in March 2005, the faculty addressed all nine of the amended versions of the Immediate Recommendations. All nine of the recommendations received the support of the faculty.

In April 2005, the faculty addressed the recommendations that require a change to the *Handbook*. The faculty expressed support for the creation of a standing Committee on Athletics and a standing Committee on Information Services and Resources. It supported the idea that the

existing University Council should become a standing Strategic Planning Council and it agreed with the Ad Hoc Committee that the Faculty Council needed a clearer charge. In addition, the faculty supported an increase in the quorum for faculty meetings. These votes of the faculty did not change the *Handbook*; rather they served as advice to the Faculty Council. In last month's meeting, one of the *Handbook* changes was completed, and others remain on the agenda of the Faculty Council.

The recommendation to consider basic structural changes remains to be addressed, and our consideration of it will be informed by our continuing analysis of our governance system and of structures used at our peer institutions.

We turn now to the task at hand: a discussion of the September 28 letter to the Middle States Review Commission from President Brian Mitchell. The letter describes numerous changes made to date in response to the Middle States Review, including several made by the faculty. However, the letter also highlights the Evaluation Team's conclusion:

“[T]he faculty will now address the core issue the Evaluation Team identified: the faculty's role in governance needs to change... 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 with American private higher education.”

As noted earlier, the faculty as a whole has already begun an internal governance review and has made some changes as a result. As a part of the University's wider governance discussions, we are arranging for an external review involving an outside team of experts. During this period of self-study, we intend to consider carefully the results of both reviews to determine whether additional governance changes would, in fact, be appropriate and in the best interest of the University. In particular, we lack information about whether Bucknell is outside of governance norms, and if so to what extent. Further, deviations from common practice, should they be found, are not necessarily weaknesses but should be evaluated as to their actual effectiveness. We will withhold conclusions concerning our structures and practice until the reviews are complete. The decision to use the Middle States language in the September 28 letter suggests that the University has accepted that body's conclusions about Faculty governance. Such remarks were, in our view, premature and presented a sense of agreement that has not yet been established.

The Faculty Council believes that the September 28 letter to the Middle States Commission would have served the University better if the drafting process had been more inclusive and had allowed time for important changes in successive drafts to be considered by all parties. Writing a response to the Middle States Commission could have been an opportunity to consult with those who were involved in the original Middle States Review, including those faculty and administrators who were members of the University Council at that time. In the future, the Faculty Council encourages more involvement of knowledgeable parties in creating such external communications; we would like to assure that Bucknell is presented in the most accurate light possible.

Further, we should acknowledge that issues of governance are inherently issues of power, and while they are often contentious, the Faculty Council concurs with the Introduction to the Ad Hoc Committee's January 2005 Report, which states:

“All members of the Bucknell community share an interest in making the University stronger. While conflict is often a necessary part of decision-making, it is important that it occur in the context of an overarching sense of collaboration in this common cause.”

The Faculty Council encourages the faculty and the University administration to have collegial and critical discussions about the current status of University governance and about potential “best practices.”

The second part of Professor Marsh's motion asks the Faculty Council to make a recommendation on any action the Faculty might take in response to the contents of the September 28 letter to the Middle States Commission or the procedures by which it was drafted. The Faculty Council's recommendation is based on our belief that the faculty has a responsibility to participate fully in accreditation reviews. This responsibility cannot rest on a single faculty member or officer of the faculty and should be included in the formal charge of a governance committee. Under our current governance system, no committee has this responsibility.

The Faculty Council recommends that the upcoming governance review yield, as one of its outcomes, formal guidance from the faculty as to where the responsibility for faculty participation in accreditation reviews will reside. Therefore, we will make the following motion:

The Faculty Council moves that we add consideration of this recommendation to those listed in Section 3 of the Ad Hoc Committee report, titled “Recommendations requiring Handbook Amendments.”