

Minutes of the Faculty Meeting February 5, 2001

The meeting was called to order at 5PM by Prof. Michael Payne. Apologizing for the relative paucity of refreshments, he noted that this was not reflective of any impending budget crisis. He also announced that the Committee on Complementary Activities would report on their deliberations on the report from the Task Force on Greek Life, as directed by the faculty.

Announcements by the President

President Rogers reported on the January Board of Trustees meeting. Overall it was a positive meeting. The Board accepted his recommendation for a 6% increase in the faculty wage pool for next year, which he had modified from the Committee on Planning and Budget's recommended 6.5% increase. The increase for administrative and support staff was 4.5%, which was identical to CPB's figure. He noted the 6% faculty salary increase was about twice as large as the inflation rate, and larger than last year's 5.4% rise, and reflected his conclusion that our salaries were no longer competitive with frame of reference schools. Both the Compensation Committee and full Board noted that the strategic plan goals and method for setting faculty salaries were no longer being followed and that this issue needs to be addressed in the near future to regain ground in this area. He also expressed his concern that the salary increases were so disparate for faculty and staff.

On the tuition side, the Board and the President concurred with CPB's recommendation for a 5.64% increase, which is larger than in recent years but which is necessary to support various recent initiatives on campus. President Rogers announced that the consulting firm Art and Science will be hired for a new pricing study. He also announced that the next budget continues to evolve, with an initial \$1 million deficit now down to \$600,000. He noted that particular stress on the budget came from a 24% increase in 2001 health insurance premium costs for active and retired faculty and staff. He anticipates presenting a balanced budget to the Trustees in April.

The Patriot League did not vote on merit aid issue at their last meeting but will shortly do so. President Rogers was sure that the vote will be 4 to 3 for a more permissive scholarship policy, with football excluded. This issue is now under study on our campus. He predicted that men's and women's basketball and possibly lacrosse were likely to be first affected.

The President went on to report that four administrative searches were proceeding well (those for Vice Presidents of Development, Student Affairs, Academic Affairs/Provost, and Finance and Administration). Searches for a Dean of Engineering and University Counsel will proceed in the fall. He hoped to have a list of final candidates for the VPAA/ Provost position by March 9. The VPSA search committee will be co-chaired by Profs. Maurice Aburdene and Mitch Chernin; the VPFA committee will be chaired by President Rogers himself. Departing Counsel Richard Zansitis was thanked for his service with a warm round of applause. The President announced that Wayne Bromfield (former Union County judge) as well as the firm of Reed Smith will help with legal advice in the interim. Attorneys will be on campus 3 days per week.

Turning to news on campus construction, the President displayed drawings for the O'Leary Center and the Recreation and Athletic Center. The latter had been over budget but now back within budget after some changes. The building cost is now \$32 million plus a 50% endowment. The Coleman Hall renovation project is now out to bid, with a \$ 7.4

million budget. Finally, the “mole-like” tunnels appearing all over campus are actually part of a utility project costing \$5.7 million.

The President’s final comments included a report that police interactions with Bucknell students were down considerably this year, although the campus is having some continuing problems with certain fraternities. He announced the appointments of the following Presidential Professors: Pamela Gorkin, Jeff Evans, and John Peeler, who were congratulated with applause from the audience.

Several faculty members had questions for President Rogers or his staff. Prof. Peter Kresl asked about the Athletics Dept policy on encouraging students to study abroad; in his experience not all coaches were supportive. Director of Athletics John Hardt replied that his department does support study abroad but leaves it to coaches to discuss each student’s particular situation. Prof. Kresl recommended the department formulate a policy.

Prof. Cynthia Hogue asked about compression in faculty salaries and the status of the 3/2 courseload. The President said he did not discuss salary compression with the Board, but he is aware of problem, which is largely attributable to higher salaries given to new hires. The 3/2 load is currently being studied, although early returns suggest that we cannot afford the 29 new faculty slots needed to fully implement this plan. Other ways of approaching this issue need to be considered.

Prof. Ben Marsh asked about the priority setting that gave us a \$48 million athletic center while Coleman Hall and O’Leary Center have had to reduce academic space. The President noted that these decisions were made before his arrival and that he at least had reduced the size of the Athletic Center’s scope back to the original plans. Prof. Michael Moohr asked if the new facility has a name. Not yet, was the reply, although there is a major donor.

Announcements by the Chair of the Faculty

Prof. Payne reported that he spent time at the January Board meeting discussing how faculty and the Trustees could better communicate. He detected a new eagerness for such communication under the leadership of incoming Chair Lee Hamilton. Prof. Payne again reminded us that the campus recommendations for budget figures were accepted easily, and praised Dennis Swank and President Rogers for their lucid financial presentations.

Turning to the courseload issue, Prof. Payne said that several groups on campus will be considering this now and in the fall, with new administrators on board. He has sent letters to Committees on Instruction, Faculty Development, Staff Planning, and Planning and Budget to ask them to form an intercommittee to keep a focus on courseload (text appended). Finally he noted that Richard Fleming, the newly appointed Harris Professor of Philosophy, will shortly give his inaugural lecture, and once again the assembly showed its congratulations with applause.

Committee Reports

Prof. David Jensen asked for any questions on CPB’s report from last month. Prof. Aburdene asked whether anyone systematically reviews salaries for adjuncts. Prof. Jensen said CPB does not, but Interim VPAA Genie Gerdes said that her office periodically consults with other institutions on this matter and sets salary scales. We were reminded that CPB only considers overall budget numbers, not how monies are apportioned at each rank.

Prof. Payne noted briefly that the November meeting of the Educational Policy Committee of the Board was devoted to assessment. The issues were ably presented by the Deans and VP Gerdes.

Prof. Moohr presented further information from the Compensation and Finance Committee meetings of the Board. He echoed previous comments that a 6% increase in the faculty salary pool is welcome, and the Trustees are talking about revisiting our 5 yr plan for future increases. In another positive development, the Trustees appear to now be convinced that we are underpriced relative to frame of reference schools and what the market will bear (which was the conclusion of the 1996 Art and Science pricing study, whose recommendations were not accepted), and that they will be considering the revenue side of the budget more carefully in the future. Prof. Coralynn Davis asked if middle class students pay proportionately more when tuition rises. Prof. Moohr replied that the burden will increase somewhat because of loan obligations, but that the most burden falls on full-fee families. Incomes of these families have increased much more than the comprehensive fee in recent years. He further stated in response to several questions, that he felt genuine change in attitudes among Board members was in the wind now, and that we should expect more responsiveness to the pricing issue in the future. And that downtown Newark was in fact quite handsome architecturally.

Prof. Evans asked if we can we afford 29 new faculty to implement a 3/2 courseload after a tuition raise. Prof. Marsh noted that application numbers are up, so demand is there, but added that there may be reasons not to offer the most expensive education we can. Prof. Hogue wondered if we could give teaching credit for supervising independent research, masters and honors students. Interim Dean of Engineering Jim Orbison said such a system was in place in the Engineering College, on paper, but not really in practice. Profs. Payne and Moohr both noted that this issue must be considered carefully and in such a way as to not cause conflict among us.

Prof. Deborah Abowitz reported that the VPAA/Provost Search Committee reviewed 60 files and hopes to have candidates on campus before Spring Break. There will be public forums for faculty, staff, students to provide input to committee.

Dean Richard Ferraro presented a report from the Committee on Complementary Activities, which recently considered the report from the Task Force on Greek Life. The CCA basically endorsed the report. It counseled retention of rush in the second year and proposed a 2.25 minimum GPA to be initiated into a Greek organization. They recommended CCA retain oversight of the Council on Greek Life, which has everyday purview over the Greek system. CCA voted against reduction in size of sororities to 80, because more sororities cannot be housed in Hunt Hall. They endorsed renovation of Hunt Hall. CCA liked that the report set standards and goals, but cautioned against a system being overprescriptive. They endorsed the "gold" and "silver" star level of achievement, for which a fraternity or sorority needs to maintain good performance in all areas (academic, philanthropy, etc.).

Dean Ferraro also addressed the recent penalties imposed on the SAE house, noting that per capita fines exceed \$400 in some cases, that shutting down houses is a major inconvenience, and that the brothers are required to engage in unattractive work projects at end of year. He noted his concern that yet another fraternity was just suspended for having an unauthorized party. We need to take a middle road between enabling alcoholism and prohibition.

Prof. Kresl commended the hard work put into the report but had numerous reservations. Why should we work to make Greeks prominent on campus? He questioned why the campus subsidizes Greeks in various ways, including providing staff and some financial rewards for silver and gold star levels of achievement. He wondered how faculty advisors can be recruited, and questioned the appropriateness of associating this activity with credit towards tenure. He also disagreed with the requirement that Greek students be required to attend athletic events, and noted that cheating sometimes is facilitated by Greek environments.

Dean Ferraro noted that the plan was intended to be a reformation and failure is possible. The report can become a model for other Greek systems. There is current discussion about reducing monetary investment in the Greek system and instead providing incentive in the form of academic awards. He warned that rejecting the report might leave Greek organizations to their own devices or solely interacting with Lewisburg authorities. We don't want to follow the laissez faire attitude of Bloomsburg University, which has experienced several recent fraternity-related deaths.

Prof. George Exner raised other concerns. He noted two assumptions of the report with which he disagrees. One assumption is that the Greek system is reformable. A second is that a reformed system is an appropriate centerpiece of Bucknell University. We need to discuss alternative use of the resources. Despite protestations from the Greek organizations about wanting to do better two years ago, many problems have emerged. Their and our best efforts at reform may have failed. It may be better to support a campus-wide Residential College system.

Dean Ferraro replied that such a Residential College system would have to be created, and that some of the current Colleges also have problems. Prof. Payne reminded faculty that it passed a "no confidence" vote in Greek organizations 10 years ago but also that Dean Ferraro was hired with a mandate to try to reform them.

As the time approached to adjourn, Prof. Jean Shackelford moved to table discussion of the report, to be resumed at our next meeting. The motion was seconded and passed, and the meeting adjourned at 6:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Halpern
Secretary of the Faculty

Letter to Committee Chairs re: courseload issues

Date: February 2001

To: Committees on Staff Planning, Instruction, Planning and Budget, and Faculty Development

From: Mike Payne, Chair of the Faculty

Re: Course Load

Although the issue of course load is one that falls under the charge to the Committee on Staff Planning, it also has obvious implications for the work of Instruction, Faculty Development, and Planning and Budget. For that reason I am writing to all four of your committees to ask for your help in providing the necessary leadership in dealing with this important matter. I realize that considerable work has already been done. But

there are unmistakable expectations within the Faculty that this matter will receive sustained, prompt attention and that it will be dealt with by means that are available in our governance system.

You might want to consider, however, the possibility of putting together a small inter-committee, with membership drawn from elected members of your committees. The purpose of such a group would be to give sustained attention to this matter during the current semester in preparation for major planning initiatives that lie ahead. (By this suggestion I am assuming that you might wish to have regular contact back to your individual committees from those who are sustaining this discussion.)

I am very encouraged by several substantive conversations I have had recently with members of the Board of Trustees, including the out-going and in-coming chairs, about this matter. Furthermore, I am convinced that those in positions of leadership on the Board are beginning to understand that the key issue is approximately this:

How can we reduce the course/teaching load in such a way as to enable us to offer more successfully the quality education that we are committed to providing for our students? (Obviously, there are other issues involved as well.)

It may be that there is not a single answer to this question and that we will have to take an approach that is multiplicitous. For example, in some quarters of the University, a course-load reduction may be the only answer. Elsewhere, it might make more sense to offer more frequent leaves without a reduction in course load. Yet elsewhere, a reduction in class size might be the answer. In other words, there may be various ways, which we have not tried, to determine what constitutes a full-time faculty teaching load.

As you know, we are approaching an important new planning period at Bucknell. That was the unmistakable message in President Rogers' Inaugural Address. He has already met with the Faculty Council to request early, active participation by elected Faculty groups in preparing for the first phase of the 2010 initiative. Obviously, whoever is appointed Provost will have a major role in this process and in dealing with the teaching/course-load issue.

But even before that person takes office, there is preparatory work that needs to be done. Our colleagues are obviously eager that the teaching/course-load issue be addressed. It was a principal topic for discussion at the Faculty/Trustee lunches in November. And it is always on our minds at this time of year when we are in the midst of the hiring season.

My purpose in writing to you is to solicit your ideas about how we might most effectively address this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any help as you discuss it among the members of your committees.