

Minutes of the November Meeting of the University Faculty November 6, 2000

The meeting was called to order at approximately 5:00 p.m. by Professor Michael Payne, Chair of the Faculty. Professor Payne began by recognizing and congratulating Professors John Peeler and Cynthia Hogue, who along with Athena Rogers and others, had worked diligently to plan the inauguration of President Steffen H. Rogers. Professor Payne said that some important items had arrived after the agenda was sent to press, and had been added subsequently to the agenda. He indicated that Mr. James Lee, adviser to the Bucknellian, also had asked to make a statement on behalf of the newspaper under the Chair's portion of the meeting.

Professor Payne asked the members of the Faculty to join him in congratulating the Secretary on the completion of her four-year term. The Faculty did so.

There were no additions or corrections to the minutes of the October meeting.

Remarks by the President and Members of His Staff

President Steffen Rogers thanked Professors Hogue and Peeler for co-chairing the committee charged with planning his inauguration. He expressed his appreciation to members of the Staff, with particular thanks to Dining Services and the Physical Plant for their excellent work to ensure the success of the inauguration.

President Rogers indicated to the Faculty that he would place his Ten-Year Plan into the governance system.

Professor Rogers went on to say that he felt very badly about the accidental inclusion in the last issue of the Bucknellian of a despicable advertisement denying the Holocaust; he expressed the desire that something positive would come as a result of this painful occurrence.

President Rogers then opened the floor to questions. There were none.

Remarks by the Chair of the Faculty

Professor Payne opened nominations for Secretary of the Faculty. He informed the Faculty that nominations made with the permission of the candidate would be accepted through noon on Friday, November 10. The names would then be submitted to Shirley Little who would issue a ballot.

Professor Payne then recognized Mr. James Lee, adviser to the Bucknellian, who wished to address the Faculty regarding the objectionable advertisement published in the latest issue of the Bucknellian. Mr. Lee said that he would speak both from the head and from the heart. He was clear: the Bucknellian had not intended to deny the Holocaust; the newspaper did not intend to initiate a discussion about the Holocaust; nor was it seeking to affirm free speech. He believed that fact that the advertisement was published was attributable in great part to the newspaper's transition to a new method of preparation in which material is scanned and laid out digitally. This move to digital preparation has been very recent. In this particular case, only news articles and editorials were printed out for the last edition. Had the advertisements also been printed out, the offensive ad would surely have been seen and eliminated. Even so, he reported, the student editors now realize that they should have looked at all of the material to be included in the issue. They have accepted responsibility for this oversight. The Editor-in-chief, Heather Napolitano,

deeply regrets that so much hurt has been caused, and has written a heartfelt apology to the campus community on e-mail. Mr. Lee indicated that the Thursday, November 9th issue of the newspaper would have a front-page apology. All letters of opinion regarding this matter would be printed. He added that apologies would be sent to every advertiser on the page on which the objectionable advertisement had been printed. Mr. Lee reported that several members of the Faculty had offered to speak to the Bucknellian staff about this matter. He assured the Faculty that the Bucknellian wanted to restore the credibility of the newspaper.

Associate Dean Beth Cunningham asked what procedures existed for screening material submitted to the newspaper. Mr. Lee responded that it was expected that the Editor-in-Chief would look at every page. This is the first time that something of this sort has happened. He said that Ms. Napolitano would like to tighten procedures in general so that the necessary editing is not left to section leaders. Professor John Grim asked how much hate mail was received by the Bucknellian. Mr. Lee responded that there were many hate groups and that they normally used a “shotgun” approach, repeatedly sending out their message to school newspapers and other organizations. Professor Rebecca Lesses asked if it was known who had included the advertisement in the newspaper and if it was included deliberately. Mr. Lee responded that he thought the ad was included through carelessness, not deliberately. Professor Lesses suggested that the university hold a symposium on the topic of Holocaust denial. Professor Mary Evelyn Tucker thought it was inconceivable that such an advertisement would appear in an academic institution’s publication and supported Professor Lesses’s idea of the university’s holding a symposium. Professor Andrea Halpern asked what would be done with money generated from such an advertisement. Mr. Lee said that normally Bucknell would send a copy of the ad to the submitting organization and receive payment for it. In this case he thought it most appropriate not to send the ad to the organization, nor to seek payment. In response to a question about the Bucknellian’s policy on accepting an advertisement, Mr. Lee responded that the policy was to reject things that are not true or that are offensive. Professor Cristianne Anderson asked what steps were being taken with the students involved in this matter. Mr. Lee said that they were talking to the three students who had access to the computer. Professor Payne was encouraged to hear the desire for something positive to come of this matter from Mr. Lee, President Rogers, Professor Lesses, and others. He said that he would try to convene a meeting with Mr. Lee, President Rogers and Professor Lesses to discuss an appropriate response. Mr. Lee said that the response should raise the consciousness of students and could combat the message of the advertisement by telling the truth. Professor Anderson wondered about the responses from parents, alumni and others. Mr. Lee said that there had been numerous responses from within and without the university. Professor Eric Faden suggested that Mr. Lee be sure that the staff of the Bucknellian receive a copy of the policy on accepting advertisements. He also thought an article on how many ads of this nature are received by the Bucknellian would make for interesting and profitable reading. Mr. Lee thought these were excellent suggestions. Professor Payne thought that the Bucknellian’s student editors might need support in the coming days. He found their apology to the university community to be powerful and sincere.

Turning to other announcements, Professor Payne reported that the Faculty Listserv was in the process of becoming unmoderated.

Professor Payne then called on Professor Deborah Abowitz, Chair of the Provost search committee. Professor Abowitz said that the advertisement for the position would be sent out soon. She had been in touch with the search firm, Korn Ferry, and assured the Faculty that the ad would be widely dispersed in order to generate as diverse a candidate pool as possible.

Professor Payne announced that the Faculty Council had not met in the past month. He encouraged the Faculty to read President Rogers's inaugural address, which is available online. He announced the upcoming Trustee Access Day activities and informed the Faculty that he had asked Professor Kim Daubman to serve as a general representative to the Board.

Next Professor Payne referred to the review of Greek Life, providing some historical background to the current review. About a decade ago, the Faculty voted to ban the Greek system, primarily for academic reasons. The Greek system had seemed at odds with the academic goals of the university. Last year the Task Force on Residential Life had focussed on non-Greek life. He thanked Interim Vice President for Student Affairs Charles Pollock and Dean of Students Richard Ferraro for their report on Greek Life. He then recognized Dean Ferraro who spoke about the report.

Dean Ferraro said that since his arrival in June he had been working on the reorganization of students' social life. He was aware that a significant minority of Bucknell students have problems abusing alcohol, which contributed to violence, sexual misconduct, disrespect and damage to property and other persons, and anti-intellectual conduct. He also observed that alcohol abuse could be found throughout student residential life, including Greek life. With 55% of Bucknell's students belonging to fraternities and sororities, Dean Ferraro saw the reformation of Greek life as an important step in reforming student life in general at the university. The purpose of the current review is to increase the pace of the reform already underway. The reform measures feature a number of external controls, but he expected that these would move in the direction of internal controls. One of the aims of the reform was to refocus competitiveness from alcohol consumption to more positive activities. He affirmed that the Dean of Students' Office was committed to this reform. Regarding the title "Plan for Prominence in Greek Life," he explained that the term "prominence" was not intended to make Greek life more important than non-Greek life, but to have Bucknell's Greek system be the best.

Dean Ferraro spoke to some of the recommendations the review committee had made. The first was that the GPA for pledging a fraternity or sorority be raised from 2.0 to 2.5. This, he thought, sent a positive message about the importance of academic performance. The second recommendation was that the Council on Greek Life be an independent committee rather than part of the Committee on Complementary Activities. The third recommendation he mentioned was that rush move from the third semester to the second. The rationale was that this would provide increased opportunities for student leadership. Dean Ferraro indicated that other factors led him to conclude that the third semester is more desirable than the second. He also saw that most members of the Faculty and the Administration opposed moving rush to the second semester. Even the students seemed to prefer the current system. Dean Ferraro concluded his remarks by situating the report on Greek Life within a broad reformation process of student life at Bucknell.

Professor Ben Marsh thanked Dean Ferraro for his report. As he saw this issue relating to student life to be very important, he moved that the report should come to the Faculty through the Committee on Complementary Activities. Professor Matt Silberman asked if 55% of all Bucknell students are Greek. Dean Ferraro responded that 55% of eligible students are Greek. In response to a question about data on alcohol abuse among Greeks and non-Greeks, Dean Ferraro said that his data was primarily anecdotal rather than scientific. Professor Martin Ligare recalled that the Faculty opposed not just certain behaviors on the part of Greek students, but certain attitudes associated with sexism, racism and elitism. Dean Ferraro responded that when Hamilton College eliminated the

Greek system, it continued to have problems with alcohol abuse. In response to Professor Ligare's concern about the equality of resources allotted to fraternities and sororities, Dean Ferraro said that he believed that Bucknell's sororities had preferred not to have their own houses. He asked Assistant Dean of Students Roy Baker to comment on the numbers of men and women involved in the Greek system. Assistant Dean Baker responded that 58% of eligible women and 53% of eligible men were involved in the Greek system. Professor John Peeler seconded Professor Marsh's motion that the report on Greek life come to the Faculty through the Committee on Complementary Activities. He recalled that ten years ago there had been an agreement between President Gary Sojka and the Faculty that rush would be moved to the third semester because the previous second semester rush was detrimental to the successful functioning of the Residential Colleges. Professor Peeler thought that Bucknell already had a very powerful Greek system that impacted not only the actual members of fraternities and sororities, but first-year students and upperclassmen and women whose social life centered on the Greek system. He thought it was important for the Faculty to have a role in addressing issues relating to the Greek system.

Professor Payne said that if Professor Marsh's motion passed, the report on the Greek system would be referred to the Committee on Complementary Activities. Professor Jeff Evans observed that this report seems to go against the previous report on residential life, which had sought to promote alternatives to the Greek system. Professor Carl Milofsky asked how the recommendations of the report would eventually become policy. Professor Jean Peterson was also concerned about this process and wanted to know if the review committee was going to make the recommendations in the current draft of the report, even though she and other members of the Faculty opposed, in particular, the proposed move to second-semester rush. Professor Payne noted that the fact that the committee reviewing Greek life was chaired by a Trustee placed university Administrators at a disadvantage. Professor Marsh's motion would allow the report to go through the Faculty's governance system. Interim Vice President Pollock hastened to indicate that the report that is circulating is a draft and that the committee is seeking input. He said that the input from the Committee on Complementary Activities would inform the report before it went to the Trustees. Dean Ferraro added that there have been information sessions to encourage individual reactions on the part of Faculty and other members of the campus community. Professor Payne reiterated that the motion on the floor would refer the report to CCA which, as a Faculty committee, would make its report and recommendations to the Faculty. Professor George Exner expressed two concerns, first that the Committee on Complementary Activities was not exactly a Faculty Committee and second that he thought the university should consider how to achieve prominence in residential and social life in ways that do not privilege fraternities and sororities. He was not sure that the CCA was the right committee for this, nor was he convinced that the charge had been properly formulated. Professor Peeler clarified that the Committee on Complementary Activities was a University committee with faculty and student representatives. The premise of the committee is that both the Faculty and students have a right to be heard on student affairs. He thought the CCA could report to the Faculty on its recommendations. Professor Payne observed that such a report should be made to the Faculty by the February meeting, as the document was to be sent to the Trustees in April. Professor Gary Sojka thought that Professor Marsh's motion was an effective way of allowing the governance system to work.

Seeing that the Faculty was prepared to vote on Professor Marsh's motion, Professor Payne called for a voice vote. The motion passed.

Written Committee Reports

Professor Nancy White, Chair of the Committee on Instruction, presented her introduction to the report, prefacing her remarks with the hope that the fact that she resided in a “battleground state” would not affect this governance matter. She said that the recommendations included in the report were part of a lengthy and considered review process. She thanked the faculty members who had answered the questionnaire distributed by CoI. The results of the survey had driven the recommendations. Professor White called the Faculty’s attention to the committee’s specific recommendations regarding academic responsibility on the sheets appended to the agenda and addressed each in turn. In light of the hour, Professor Payne suggested that the discussion of the recommendations be pursued at the December meeting of the Faculty, under Old Business. Professor White agreed. The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alice J. Poust
Secretary of the Faculty