UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE RECORD

The December meeting of the University Faculty will be held on Monday, December 1, 2003, beginning at 5:00 PM in the Langone Center Forum. Professor Michael Payne will preside. If there are any amendments to the November, 2003 minutes, please send them to Andrea Halpern, Secretary of the Faculty, in advance of the meeting.

AGENDA

1. **Amendments to November 2003 minutes**

2. **Announcements and remarks by the President and members of his staff**

3. **Announcements by the Chair of the Faculty**

   Report on Board of Trustees meeting
   Discussion of the Middle States "Issues" document

4 . **New Business**

a. Report from the Committee on Planning and Budget: Ben Marsh

1. The Committee intends to report specific recommendations on faculty compensation, staff compensation, and comprehensive fee increases to this Faculty meeting. The figures are not available at the time this report was submitted; they will be circulated to the 'Faculty' email list as soon as possible.

2. The Committee received a report on the success of the effort in Spring 2002 to bring Bucknell faculty salaries to the middle of our peer institutions by the 2002 – 03 fiscal year. The results were generally quite affirmative. Professors rose from rank 8 to rank 5 on the list of 11 schools, Associate Professor rose from rank 6 to rank 4, and Assistant Professors fell from rank 5 to rank 7. (This last one may not reflect a real salary trend at that academic rank; Assistant Professor rankings are more volatile than the others because the population changes more rapidly.)

3. The Committee endorsed a 3350-student enrollment target, as was being proposed to the Trustee Long Range Planning committee. Although well above the nominal 3250 target on the books, this number nearly reflects present (satisfactory) practice, to within a fraction of a percent. The prospect of predictability in enrollment, with an explicit and stable target, is appealing. Present admissions experience suggests no trouble in maintaining quality at this level in the short run. We have the facilities. Two new academic buildings (and soon another), one new residence hall, and one large recreation facility, and a few more faculty members have been added since the previous 3250 target. The additional students generate several million dollars in net revenue, as well. The arguments against the higher target include regret about the loss of sense of community that a smaller student body permitted,

and some marginal costs in class size, facility pressure, and student-faculty ratio. But any small change like this, in either direction, will not affect these very much. We suggested this caveat: the number should be regarded as a target, not a floor, in that budgeting of the expanded tuition revenue should be restrained enough to permit as many years of undershooting the target as overshooting it.

4. The Committee is providing this standard report, compiled by Dennis Swank, on the University Operating Budget results for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2003 (FY2002-03). As shown below, Bucknell ended FY2002-03 with an unrestricted surplus of $213,000. The variances in the **Sponsored Research & Programs** area, where both revenues and related expenses varied significantly, are due to the timing of research activities. The negative variance in **Auxiliary Enterprise Revenues** (Dining Services, Residence Halls, Bookstore, Summer Conferences) is an indication of continued competition from external sources. The positive variance in **Utilities** is a result of our recent capital investments in that area. This savings is reflected in future operating budgets. The negative variance in **Other Expenses** (which includes the day-to-day operating budgets for most departments and programs) is attributable primarily to variances in many restricted budgets. The unrestricted component of Other Expenses, which is 88% of the $27,474,000 budget, was under budget by $50,000.

b. Motion from Janice Mann

I move to include in the Faculty Handbook the current procedure for faculty participation at the Annual and Semiannual Board of Trustees Meetings and trustee committee meetings. These procedures are as follows:

The Chair of the Faculty and a Faculty Representative are invited to attend the meeting of the Bucknell Board of Trustees. The Faculty Representative is selected by the Chair of the Faculty from among the four faculty members elected by the faculty to serve as representatives to the following trustee committees: Complementary Activities, Educational Policy, Finance and University Relations. The Chair of the Faculty and the Faculty Representative also serve as at-large representatives to these same committees. Two additional faculty members serve as representatives to each of the same committees, selected as follows:

To the Committee on Complementary Activities: One faculty representative is from the Campus Committee on Complementary Activities and the other is elected.
To the Committee on Educational Policy: One faculty representative is the Chair of the Campus Committee on Instruction; the other is elected.
To the Committee on Finance: One faculty representative is the Chair of the Committee on Planning and Budget; the other is elected.
To the Committee on University Relations: Both faculty members are elected.

If any of the designated trustee committees work through subcommittees, the chairs may invite the faculty representatives from their committees to participate in the subcommittees.

No faculty members are voting members of any trustee committees. The elected positions will be elected by faculty members to two-year terms in April. The two faculty members elected to the Committee on University Relations will be elected to staggered terms. If the chair of any of the designated campus committees is not a faculty member, the faculty members of that committee will elect a faculty member of the committee as the representative to the relevant trustee committee.

c. Report from Committee on Instruction: Tom Cassidy

Review of Middle States Accreditation Self-Study:
Standards Section

CoI reviewed a DRAFT (October 2003) of the Standards Section of the Middle States Accreditation Self-Study report. CoI had only two weeks to review this 111-page document, meeting for four hours between November 14 and November 21, 2003 for that purpose. This was not enough time for a comprehensive review, and therefore COI cannot endorse the Standards Section in its entirety, but we have compiled a list of our most important observations that we want to relay to the faculty by means of this report. COI also notes that it did not receive a copy of the Issues document which has now been made available to the faculty.

1. *COI found many small errors of fact in the document and communicated them directly to Lois Huffines.* These minor items are not included in this report.

2. *In Standards 2 and 3, the faculty is portrayed as uninterested in the Vision 2010 process.* Some examples follow.

   Page 7, lines 12-13: "During the first year of planning, there was a growing sense that the strategic planning was becoming unmanageably expansive and not engaging the Faculty."
   Page 7, lines 45-46: "Relatively little comment was received from the campus in response to either the Academic Affairs report of June 12th or the *Intro/Goals/Guidelines* document of September 19th. To engage the Faculty more effectively, the AATF hosted an open forum on October 1st entitled 'What are the Issues?'."
   Page 8, lines 4-5: "The fifth group concluded that the faculty were disengaged from the process because the fundamental questions of purpose and mission were not addressed."

3. *It is our understanding that this document is intended to be descriptive, but we noticed several places in which the document is prescriptive.* A few examples follow.

   Page27, lines 9-10: "The university should explore options for improving the student governance process."
   Page 49, lines 48-50: "…Bucknell must continue to recruit students who are prepared for and committed to the academic and intellectual experiences, along with the personal development opportunities available at the University."
   Page 55, lines 41-42: "As Bucknell renews its distinctive Teacher-Scholar Model, it will do well to affirm Bucknell's excellent demonstration of what researchers call the "student orientation" of the Faculty …"
   Several other examples of prescriptive language are contained in Standards 8 and 9.

4. *As of November 21, 2003, COI has not reviewed several documents that are referenced in the report.* Some of the more important documents are listed below.

   Assessment Plan from the Committee on Assessment (a subcommittee of COI): This document was finalized during the week of November 17 and will be presented to COI on December 5.

The "Long-Range Plan" for Athletics (referenced as Appendix 16 on page 57 and Appendix 25 on page 69) and the Mission Statement for Athletics (mentioned on page 70, line 15): These documents are not available to the campus community, as far as we know.
The "Issues" document in the Self-Study.

5. *Standard 6 on "Integrity," which is meant to address academic and intellectual freedom, contains only one line on this subject.* COI believes that this omission will be corrected in the next version of this document.

6. *Standard 9 on "Student Support Services" is written in a voice that is different from the other sections. This section appears to be dismissive of any concerns about athletics, and appears to be defensive in some places.* Some examples follow.

   Page 57, lines 1-4 seem to be argumentative and dismissive: "Also regarding support for the academic program, some faculty members about have [sic] been questioning the demands made on students' time by intercollegiate athletics participation, including about a perceived increase in conflicts between class schedules, on the one hand, and athletics practices and contests. These questions come despite Bucknell's having had the nation's highest graduation rate for student-athletes in 2003 (100% graduation in six years)."
   We note also that the second sentence in this quote is misleading, because the statistic refers to student-athletes that received aid, not all student-athletes. The term student-athlete is used in the broader sense elsewhere in the document. The misleading statement is repeated on page 70, line 22.

   The argumentative and dismissive tone is continued in line 10 on page 57: "… an open-ended survey of current student-athletes regarding time demands, administered through the Patriot League in 2003, revealed no cause for alarm, …".
   This statement dismisses faculty concerns based on the results of a student survey.

   An important message in Section 9 is that the academic mission and student support services are complementary activities (for example, page 55, lines 8-13). However, on page 57, lines 44-45, *the following statement seems to suggest that the academic mission and students' personal lives are in competition:* "Remaining focused on the academic mission while supporting students' personal growth will never be an easy task."

   The discussion of the new Athletics and Recreation Center on page 70, lines 1-13, seems to be defensive. For example the statement: "There has been criticism within Bucknell, particularly among members of the Faculty, of the cost of the new Athletics and Recreation Center …".

7. *We recommend that the paragraph on page 58, lines 1-16, be rewritten with neutral language that is free from judgments.* For example, the current version suggests that "below-norm results" for "religious beliefs and convictions" is a negative outcome, and that the top-five objective of "being very well off financially" is a positive outcome.

8. *The report discusses admissions policies and issues about student culture. However, these topics are discussed separately, and there is no acknowledgment that they are intimately connected and that they affect one another.*

9. *The* Bucknell Teacher-Scholar Ideal *is discussed on page 75, lines 11-16, and Appendix 26 is referenced. COI has not reviewed this appendix, so we cannot tell whether COI's concerns from April, 2003 about the Academic Affairs Task Force (AATF) draft of the Teacher-Scholar model are addressed.*

d. Motion from the Committee on Instruction: Tom Cassidy

The Committee on Instruction moves that the Faculty adopt the following policy for the administration of student evaluations of teaching.

1. Under normal circumstances, student evaluations of teaching will be administered during regularly scheduled class hours. It is recommended that evaluations be done at the beginning of class and that students be allowed at least 10 minutes to complete the questionnaires. The instructor will ask one of the students to administer the teaching evaluations following the procedure outlined here. When that student has agreed, the instructor will announce to the class that student ___________ will administer the student evaluations of teaching for this class, and then remain silently at the front of the room, not overlooking students while the evaluations are completed and collected.

2. The student will then read the following script, which will also be printed at the top of the questionnaires:

   Student evaluations and feedback are very important in helping instructors to improve their courses and teaching methods, and they also play important roles in decisions for reappointment, tenure, promotion and salary. After final grades for this course are submitted, each of your responses will be reviewed by the instructor, the department chair, the dean, and by one or more review committees. The University appreciates your giving careful consideration to each of these questions.

3. The student will distribute the questionnaire forms so that each student has one, and the students will complete the forms. The administering student will collect all completed forms, and put them in the envelope that has been addressed to the departmental secretary (name, title, and room number). The student will seal and date the envelope and sign across the seal. If the secretary is available, the student will deliver the envelope immediately after class. If the secretary is unavailable, the instructor will ask the student to do one of the following: (a) Put the envelope in the Campus Mail either at the mailroom on the ground floor of Marts Hall, or in the brown Campus Mail mailbox located at the curb between Marts and Rooke Science, or (b) Walk with the instructor to the department where the student will deposit the envelope on the secretary's desk.
   In the case of electronic evaluations, the results will be directed to the departmental secretary.

4. The results of the evaluations will be held until the instructor has turned in final grades for the class.

Rationale for Policy on Uniform Course Evaluation Procedures

Current policy requires that course evaluation surveys be administered in each course, and that they include a certain set of core questions. We are proposing a set of procedures for how surveys should be administered. The purpose of this policy is to reduce the influence of extraneous situational factors that may inappropriately skew students' responses on evaluation surveys.

The impetus for creating this policy originated in a memo to COI from the URC that expressed concerns about how the lack of uniform procedures allows for potential biases and dilutes the interpretability of course evaluations. COI has considered several factors in creating this policy, including the concerns of the URC, the policies currently existing in some departments, the scholarly literature on course evaluation methodologies, as well as the norms and traditions unique to Bucknell faculty and student culture.

Ideally, the results of course evaluation surveys should provide individual faculty with information useful for improving their teaching, as well as providing DRCs and the URC with data that are useful in decisions of retention, tenure, promotion, and merit salary adjustments. The interpretability of course evaluation surveys is particularly important in situations where the performance of an individual is judged in reference to a comparison group, such as in the merit review process that affects salary adjustments. Given the inherent complexities in interpreting course evaluation data, COI agrees that the Faculty should do what we can to minimize extraneous sources of variance or bias that interfere with meaningful interpretation.

We considered first whether such a policy is advisable, and second what such a policy should include. As part of our deliberations we surveyed department chairs to determine which departments already have their own policies or standard practices. Among the several departments that do currently have such a policy there is great similarity in what they stipulate. We used that commonality as the basis for the policy we have crafted, but in some cases the proposed policy departs from current practices. These recommendations are based on consultation with faculty who are very familiar with the published social science literature on course evaluation methodologies. We believe that a compelling interest in increasing the uniformity and validity of evaluation surveys makes those changes desirable.

The purpose of this policy is simply to increase uniformity of methods for collecting course evaluation data, not to change existing practices for how the data are used by DRCs or the URC. This does not represent a shift in the weight assigned to student evaluation data relative to other indicators of faculty success, nor do we think this policy enables such a shift. We acknowledge that having students evaluate teaching is inherently imperfect, and we do not claim to be "perfecting" the process. But given that course evaluation data are used, we believe those data should be collected using the best methods practicable.

The use of course evaluation data by DRCs and the URC are not the only reasons for faculty to survey their students' opinions of teaching. Such surveys are also vitally important to individual faculty who use them as a means to continually improve their courses. We have attempted to craft a policy that does not infringe on the ability of faculty to use evaluation surveys for their own benefit. The policy we propose is what we consider to be the least restrictive set of prescriptions that would accomplish the purpose of increasing uniformity. We recognize the need to allow flexibility for situations such as night classes, electronic evaluations, and other atypical circumstances.

Finally, we would like to emphasize our belief that the vast majority of faculty already endeavor to use good practices in collecting course evaluations. Ultimately, we trust that practices for collecting and reporting course evaluations are based on each faculty member's motivation to participate in an equitable process that functions as evenly and objectively as possible. But even variation in routines that are "good" *per se* can affect the interpretability of results, and we believe it is advisable that there be a standardized procedure.