

Radford University Faculty Senate
Meeting Minutes
October 22, 2009

Members Present: Dr. Mary Atwell, Dr. Moira Baker, Dr. Gwen Brown, Dr. Paula Brush, Dr. Iain Clelland, Dr. Farrell Doss, Dr. Patricia Easterling, Dr. Alan Forest (sub Stanley), Dr. I-Ping Fu, Dr. Kim Gainer, Dr. Mary Gibson, Mr. Anthony Guest, Dr. Judith Guinan, Dr. Katie Hilden, Dr. Maung Htay, Dr. Kay K. Jordan, Dr. Glen Martin (sub Turner), Ms. Deborah McLaughlin, Dr. Douglas Mitchell, Dr. Garth N. Montgomery, Dr. Michael Moore, Dr. Judy Niehaus, Dr. Stephen Owen, Dr. Richard Roth, Dr. Helen Roybark, Dr. Basel Saleh, Dr. David Sallee, Dr. Gary Schirr, Dr. Reginald Shareef, Dr. Lauren Smith (sub Waldren), Dr. Sid Smith, Dr. Laura Spielman, Dr. Jenessa Steele, Mr. Kevin Tapp, Dr. Lynne Taylor, Dr. Skip Thompson, Dr. Ed Udd, Dr. Richard Van Noy, Dr. Joe Wirgau, Dr. David Zuschin

Members Absent: Dr. Suzanne Ament (excused), Dr. Roann Barris (excused), Dr. Paula Stanley (excused), Dr. Alexei Orlov, Dr. Edward Carter Turner (excused)

Guests Present: None.

I. Call to Order and Approval of Minutes

1. Dr. Owen called the meeting to order at 3:30 pm.
2. The minutes from the October 8th meeting were approved.

II. Reports and Announcements

1. Dr. Owen reported on the Board of Visitors retreat. The consultant, Tim Sullivan, gave a presentation on what makes an effective board, and there was another presentation on the budgetary outlook for higher education. The gist of the budget presentation was that the outlook for higher education funding in the Commonwealth of Virginia remains bleak for at least four years. These reports will be posted on the Board of Visitor's web page soon.
2. Dr. Gwen Brown reported for the Curriculum Committee that the committee is reviewing the 7-17 plan.
3. Dr. Judy Guinan reported for the Faculty Issues Committee that they are examining a survey that was conducted of department chairs regarding evaluations.
4. Dr. Judy Niehaus reported for the Governance Committee that they continue to review the proposed IG Decision Matrix for Academic Affairs.
5. Dr. Joe Wirgau reported that the Resource Allocation Committee met and continues its work on the university budget.

III. Old Business

1. The Motion for a Vote of No Confidence in the Leadership of Provost Wil Stanton was taken from the table and debate ensued. Dr. Gwen Brown spoke in favor of her motion, quoting from the Ad Hoc Investigative Committee Report and emphasizing the need to repair trust and working relationships in Academic Affairs. She outlined several of the allegations that were submitted to the AHIC. She said that the provost's attitude was non-responsive, and that he seems unwilling to acknowledge the problems. She characterized the motion as the only way the faculty can make the necessary statement about the state of academic affairs to the president and board. Dr. Kay Jordan introduced a subsidiary motion to limit debate, permitting members to be recognized an unlimited number of times, but that individual speeches be limited to five minutes in length. This motion passed without objection. Dr. Paula Brush read a statement in support of the vote of no confidence, saying that it was important that there be consequences for not following established governance principles. Dr. Sidney Smith introduced a subsidiary motion to amend the main motion by designating that the vote of no confidence, if it passed, be referred to the general faculty for ratification. Dr. Gwen Brown offered a point of order that the amendment was not germane to the central issue of the main motion. Dr. Owen judged that Dr. Brown's objection was incorrect, and this decision was supported by the parliamentarian, Dr. Mary Atwell. Dr. Brown offered a second objection, on the grounds that the motion would be contrary to the senate constitution. Dr. Owen also overruled this objection, and was supported in doing so by the parliamentarian. The motion was then seconded, and Dr. Smith spoke in support of the amendment, saying that past responses by the Board of Visitors to votes taken in the senate expressing dissatisfaction with the administration had been to dismiss those votes as unrepresentative. Consequently, in order to ensure the Board was not able to respond in the same way to the vote of no confidence, if it passed the senate, it was necessary to ensure that the whole faculty was behind it. He also dismissed suggestions that junior faculty members might be afraid to vote, or that the amendment was intended to nullify the vote of no confidence. He asserted that senators should be unwilling to seek to terminate a colleague's career except by a process that is seen to be unimpeachable. Dr. Brown spoke against the amendment on the grounds that the senate was constituted in order to represent the voice of the faculty, and that it is the duty of the senate to speak for them. Dr. Atwell spoke against the amendment on the grounds that the general faculty can review and overrule the vote of the senate if they wish to. Dr. Waldron spoke against the amendment, saying that it would delegitimize the senate to send the vote to the general faculty. Dr. Jim McDonel spoke in favor of the amendment, saying that the message would be strengthened by the affirmation of the general faculty. Dr. Judy Guinan spoke against the amendment, saying that we already had the general faculty's answer in the Faculty Satisfaction Survey results. Dr. Gary Schirr spoke against the amendment on the grounds that it would affirm the charge of critics that the faculty senate is not representative. Dr. Moira Baker asserted that if the general faculty do not use their constitutional right to challenge the vote of no confidence, they can be presumed to support it. Dr.

Niehaus called the question, and the amendment failed on a voice vote. Debate returned to the main motion. Dr. Helen Roybark said that she needed to better understand the purpose of the vote of no confidence, and what the outcome was expected to be by those who supported it. Dr. Brown replied that the intent was to inform the president that the faculty agrees that there are such problems that we no longer feel we can work with the provost. That our colleagues have been treated badly, and that we want someone to work with us in a better fashion. In response to a further question from Dr. Roybark, Dr. Brown said she could not imagine circumstances in which it would be possible to work with the current provost in the future, citing her department's experience with the decision making processes that were imposed on them. Dr. Mary Hope Gibson said it is important to realize that the problems have been around for a long time, not just in the last year. Dr. Glen Martin said that one consequence of the poor governance we had seen is that the professional and teaching lives of the faculty have been adversely affected. He said he doesn't believe the provost understands how to create a serious academic environment. Dr. Richard Roth read a statement in support of the motion, saying that his constituents were overwhelmingly in favor of the motion. He noted that his college was the most affected by the hasty restructuring, and that his colleagues had been both directly and indirectly threatened. He said that although the impetus for some of the provost's most controversial decision may have come from members of the board, the provost's attitude does indicate that there would be any change in his methods in the future. He asserted that the motion is not a bill of particulars, or a pink slip, but an expression of the faculty's lack of confidence in his leadership. Dr. Joe Wirgau spoke in support of the motion, saying that his constituents are extremely disturbed about the state of academic affairs at RU. He pointed out that the merger of his department, Chemistry, with the department of Biology, was forced over the objection the faculty, and was undertaken in an autocratic way that dismissed the concerns of faculty regarding the effect on their programs. Dr. Mary Atwell spoke again, saying that it was necessary to vote in favor of the motion out of respect for the faculty's calling and responsibility for academics at RU. Dr. Claire Waldron said that she would have to speak against the motion on behalf of her faculty, but further said that she was very much moved by the concerns of her colleagues across campus, and was also concerned about the long history of trying to improve governance at RU, citing a motion she had introduced in 2003. She asserted that the problems we face are systemic, and that we need to come up with real solutions, and that she doesn't see the vote of no confidence as a solution. Dr. Sidney Smith noted that debate up to this point had been focused on the case against the provost, and that he would like to hear debate on the consequences of the vote before we are asked to vote on it. Dr. Baker asserted that senators should vote solely on the question of whether we should have confidence in the provost, not on question of what the consequences of the vote may be, and that a vote of no confidence would call the board, the provost, and the faculty to their "better angels." Dr. Maung Htay spoke against the motion, saying that his colleagues in the School of Information Technology are concerned about the consequences of the vote, about the effect

on the university's reputation and its future. He suggested that the Faculty Senate Executive Committee should be communicating the faculty's concerns to the administration and seeking solutions. Dr. Gary Schirr spoke against the motion on behalf of his colleagues in the Marketing Department. He said it was his sense and that of his colleagues that since the spring there had been a great effort on the part of the provost and the administration to reach out to the faculty and to work with them on improving governance, and that consequently this is an inopportune time to have a motion with such negative connotations. Dr. Mike Montgomery said that he wished that the motion could be tabled for another two weeks so that the many substantive arguments on both sides that had been voiced at the current meeting could be considered by his constituents. Dr. Judy Niehaus read a statement given her by Dr. Rhett Herman. Dr. Herman in speaking with the provost asked him what he thought had gone wrong in the past year, but the provost insisted that nothing had gone wrong. Dr. Herman found this stunning, and in consequence feels no confidence that the provost can work constructively or collaboratively with the faculty. Dr. Niehaus further said that she respects the hope that the "leopard can change his spots", but that we have seen the real provost, and that faculty should not hope for any real change in him. Dr. Judy Guinan said that the members of her department were unanimous in having no confidence in the provost, citing the results of the Ad Hoc Investigative Committee and his continued refusal to recognize or take responsibility for the problems that resulted in the formation of that committee in the first place. Further, the faculty of the Department of Biology and Chemistry do not trust the provost in consequence of his misrepresentation of an email sent by a colleague as representing the will of the faculty of the department in order to impose a restructuring that was actually opposed by the faculty and was contrary to the interests of their programs, and his continued refusal to acknowledge the position of the faculty on this issue; she asserted that their trust in him can never be restored. She said that if the senate does not act then it is tacitly accepting what has happened, that the problems will not go away but continue to fester. She asserted that the senate is the voice of the faculty, but that the faculty had already spoken in the Faculty Satisfaction Survey and the statements of many submitted to the Ad Hoc Investigative Committee. Consequently, she said, we owe it to them to act now. Dr. Tricia Easterling spoke in favor of the motion. She said she had, as a member of the Faculty Senate Executive Council, sat in meetings with the provost and tried to communicate the concerns of the faculty, but that he had shown a troubling managerial style, including the use of threats. She added that the problem wasn't his and the president's style of communication but their lack of communication. She also noted that senators would be inconsistent to support the provost simply because they have not been affected by his decisions in light of the near unanimous support of the senate for the administrators in New Student Programs a month earlier. Dr. Reginald Shareef read a statement from his colleagues in the Department of Political Science in support of the motion, stating that the motion is not a legal indictment but a statement to all constituencies about the view of faculty concerning whether the university is being competently led. Dr. Kay

Jordan said that she wanted to address some of the concerns raised by Maung Htay. She asserted that the Faculty Senate Executive Council had been very active in representing the view of faculty, and in particular had pressed the provost at the time on the controversial decisions made in the spring semester. However, she said, it became clear that the provost's responses and explanations were inconsistent with the reports of affected faculty and departments. She said that contrary to his assertion that he has been trying to work with the faculty for six months, he stood before the Board of Visitors on April 23rd and offered a "prebuttal" to the faculty concerns that were expressed in the motions debated and passed in the senate concerning restructuring and the expedited program review, in the letter signed by 65 senior faculty delivered to the board at the same meeting, and the letters of the campus AAUP on the same issues. Dr. Owen pointed out that the clock was running late. A motion was offered to extend the meeting, and this passed on a voice vote. Debate continued. Dr. Jim McDonel said that the last several speakers had in fact eroded his confidence in the efficacy of the vote of no confidence, since if it didn't result in the removal or resignation of the provost then it's only consequences were likely to be negative for faculty interests. Dr. Laura Spielman said that she thought doing nothing was not an option, and that if faculty have no confidence in the provost we should vote accordingly. She noted that she had attended the morning coffee with the provost in the last few weeks, in which she raised the issue of how the Board of Visitors could have the impression that only a few faculty were disgruntled in the spring in light of the letter signed by 65 senior members and delivered to the board at their meeting. She said that the provost responded that it was his understanding that at least one signer had been coerced to sign by their department chair. Dr. Glen Martin said that he thinks the best thing that could happen to this campus is to get a good provost, and that he does not think that this is so unlikely, noting that although the decision concerning how to respond to the vote of no confidence would rest with the president, the faculty still have many options for creatively working for positive changes in the governance of the university, including through the efforts and interest of the AAUP. He noted that universities fear the possibility of censure by the AAUP, and that there is also concern about the university's accreditation. He said that we should look for a truly visionary and competent provost to lead the academic life of the university. Mr. Kevin Tapp noted that many had asserted that this vote just boils down to whether one has confidence in the provost, but that to his constituents it is not nearly so simple. Dr. Ed Udd said that in his view the hard work is after the vote, whichever way it goes; that we must build effective internal governance and systems of communication vertically and horizontally. He said that he hopes we will put the same energy that brought the motion forward into building the future. Dr. Skip Thompson said that if we do not vote no confidence we are accepting the status quo, and that this consequence is more serious than any other potential negative consequences that have been discussed. Dr. Mary Hope Gibson spoke in favor of the amendment on behalf of the School of Nursing, saying that many of her constituents had communicated with her and expressed their conviction that this vote was necessary. Dr. Gwen Brown spoke again to

reiterate her view that, as the Ad Hoc Investigative Committee's report asserted, failure to address the problems will have serious consequences. A member moved to call the question. Dr. Mike Montgomery made a motion to table the motion, and this was defeated on a voice vote. The motion to call the question was then seconded and passed without objection. Dr. Sidney Smith introduced a motion for a secret ballot, and this was approved without objection. Voting commenced, and the tally of ballots was 29 "yes" and 16 "nay", carrying the motion. A motion was made to adjourn the meeting, and this passed without objection.

IV. New Business

1. None

V. Announcements

1. None.

VI. Adjournment

1. The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 pm.