

**Radford University Faculty Senate
President's Report
February 26, 2009 (amended March 2, 2009)**

I am providing a written report in lieu of offering comments at today's Faculty Senate meeting for two reasons. First, with our crowded agenda of action items, we need to maximize our time for debate and voting. Second, I want to provide a written record accessible to all teaching and research faculty that addresses several important issues, including the expedited program reviews. For that reason, a portion of this report will summarize some of my comments from our prior Faculty Senate meeting, while also providing some updates.

Open Forum with President Kyle, Provost Stanton, and Associate Vice President Wilson

An open forum will be held to discuss the recently concluded session of the General Assembly and its impacts on the Radford University budget, on Thursday, March 19, from 3:30-5:00, in Bondurant Auditorium (Preston Hall). President Kyle, Provost Stanton, and Associate Vice President for Finance and Administration Wilson will be present to discuss legislation passed by the General Assembly that will affect Radford University, as well as the extent and impact of state-mandated budget reductions. This forum will be open to faculty, staff, and students; I would strongly encourage you to attend in place of your Senate committee meetings. There will be a time at this forum for questions and answers. If you have a question but would prefer not to ask it yourself, please let me know, and I will see that it is answered (I will work to secure answers to all questions, even if the volume is such that not all can be raised at the forum).

Expedited Program Reviews

I have received many questions about the expedited program reviews. Much of the information below is based on that available to Department Chairs and School Directors from their Deans; while lengthy, this provides an overview of the process and its context.

The current budget reversions provide the context in which the expedited program reviews will take place. Provost Stanton has indicated in multiple fora that academic affairs will be pursuing strategies that respond to the budget reversions, while simultaneously working to position the University for the future, academically (for these observations, cf. prior Faculty Senate minutes, Provost's report to the Board of Visitors Academic Affairs Committee). These two strategies will inform the budgetary and long-term planning in academic affairs. In the process, it is invariable that some difficult decisions will have to be made. The expedited program reviews are designed to allow faculty – both as a whole and in the affected departments – to have input into decisions about program viability, which will inform some of those difficult decisions.

There are several important observations to make at this point. First, the expedited program reviews will provide data that can be used to guide decisions about planning for budget reductions, but as Provost Stanton has indicated previously, there are a number of other initiatives in academic affairs to facilitate budget planning. As such, the expedited reviews are only one of numerous ways in which budgetary savings can be facilitated. Simultaneously, the program reviews can also provide data to inform decisions related to positioning the University for the future, academically, as noted above. Second, Provost Stanton has repeatedly indicated that the preservation of full-time faculty positions is one guiding value of the budget reversion planning process. Quite simply, protection of current faculty

is of the utmost importance. Third, the goal of the expedited program review is not to simply cut as many programs as possible. In fact, some programs will likely be continued, having prepared compelling justifications that override the viability indicators described below, and other programs will likely propose restructuring plans that result in the program's retention and future growth, becoming the stronger for it. While some programs probably will be eliminated, the goal is to provide a systematic assessment of all programs that have low scores on viability standards, and then to decide how support should be allocated. Fourth, the process is more streamlined and compressed than a traditional program review. However, in order to plan for the upcoming year's budget, to give faculty and departments a voice in the process, to allow as thorough a review as possible, and to communicate recommendations in time for the Board of Visitor's April Meeting (which is necessary to facilitate planning for the 2009-2010 budget), this timeframe is necessary.

A total of 29 programs were identified for expedited review, including undergraduate majors, graduate programs, post-baccalaureate certificate programs, and interdisciplinary minors. (Note: Dr. Debra Templeton, Assistant Vice Provost and Director of Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment, is willing to meet with any program to discuss its data, SCHEV standards, CIP code issues, or related matters). The programs and standards utilized for selection are summarized below:

- *Undergraduate Majors.* Twelve of the 37 undergraduate majors at Radford University were identified, including: Anthropology; Chemistry; Dance; Foods and Nutrition; Foreign Languages; Geography; Geology; Mathematics; Philosophy and Religious Studies; Physics; Sociology; and Theater. Programs were identified using a scoring rubric based on the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV) criteria.

This warrants a few words of explanation about SCHEV criteria. Here is what SCHEV policies state about program viability: "A program is not viable if it fails to meet standards for number of degrees granted and/or number of students served, program effectiveness, budgetary considerations, or if it is unnecessarily duplicative of other like programs in the state." These are state-mandated criteria. Furthermore, under SCHEV policies, quantitative data are the starting point for analysis. When quantitative indicators are problematic, additional review is required. Furthermore, SCHEV policies stipulate that, "SCHEV may limit the number of low-productivity programs that an institution can maintain. In general, no more than 5% of an institution's degree program offerings would be exempt under these criteria."

It is also important to note that not all programs have the same quantitative requirements; for instance, "Group 1" programs (e.g., Political Science is one example) require 36 FTE majors, whereas "Group 4a" (e.g., Nursing is one example) programs require only 18 FTE majors. These discipline-specific groupings were developed by SCHEV in collaboration with a working group of academic affairs administrators in the 1990s (All SCHEV quotations are from the document, "Program Productivity/Viability at Public Institutions: Policies and Procedures for Review of Academic Programs").

With this as background, the following scoring mechanism was used to identify the undergraduate programs named above. Two points were awarded for having at least 150% of the minimum number of SCHEV-required FTE majors. Five points were awarded for meeting 150% of the minimum SCHEV-required number of graduates. SCHEV's numerical standards are derived assuming a program with two full-time faculty. As such, these standards are the state-required *minimums* that any program (regardless of its actual number of faculty) must meet.

The 150% threshold was utilized because simply meeting 100% of the requirements is, in actuality, a low standard. Because most programs at Radford University have more than two faculty (implying the potential to exceed the standards established by SCHEV in its two-faculty model), and because meeting only 100% of the standards is (by definition) meeting only the most minimal requirement, a higher threshold was selected for this program review process. Two points were awarded for having 25% or more of courses taught at the upper level (consistent with SCHEV's focus on students served in upper-division courses). One point was awarded demand for graduates in the field, operationalized with job projection data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (although in preparing their narratives, described below, departments undergoing review can provide more field-specific information, if available). Using this rubric, low-scoring programs (5 and under) were flagged for expedited program review. In addition, programs were flagged if they did not meet one or more of the SCHEV-based indicators *and* they had low demand.¹ Some of the programs currently do not meet SCHEV standards; others are on the verge of not meeting standards. (Note: This data is available on the Faculty Senate website by following Current -> Reports -> Assessment -> Program Review Decision Matrix).

- *Graduate Programs.* Four of the 15 graduate programs at Radford University were identified, including: Art; Corporate and Professional Communication; Music; and Reading. Again, the assessment was based on SCHEV-mandated criteria, again including number of FTE majors and number of FTE graduates. Programs that were at or below 150% of the SCHEV standards in either of these two areas were flagged for review. (Note: this data is available on the Faculty Senate website by following Current -> Reports -> Assessment -> Program Review Decision Matrix).
- *Post-Baccalaureate Certificate Programs.* Nine of the 10 post-baccalaureate certificate programs at Radford University were identified (the only one not identified is a program which has not yet begun): Appalachian Studies; Autism Studies; Educational Leadership; Gerontological Nursing; Family Nurse Practitioner; Informatics; Information Technology; Professional Development in Library Media; and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. While many certificates are under-enrolled (some with no students), a complicating factor is the definition of what constitutes a "certificate." It is unclear (the lack of clarity and resolution thereof is from SCHEV) whether, under Virginia state policy, enrollees can count as Radford University "graduates" with less than 18 hours. Until this is resolved with certainty, certificates requiring less than 18 hours (all but three certificates fall short) may not meet state requirements.
- *Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Minors.* The interdisciplinary minors in Appalachian Studies, International Relations, Peace Studies, and Women's Studies have been flagged for review largely based on issues of parity. Not all interdisciplinary minors are equally supported, and not all have the same cost basis and revenue streams for report. A review of these minors will allow them to be assessed not only for financial impact (although this does become important in a

¹ The only exception to the latter criterion is History, for the following reason. History and Social Science have two separate CIP codes, and are listed as two separate programs in "Group 1" of the matrix. However, the Social Science program is housed in the History Department, and there are no unique faculty and no unique courses attached solely to the Social Science program; the program is administered by the History Department and its faculty. The Social Science program requires students to take a variety of course, including many history courses taught by history faculty. When Social Science data are aggregated with History data, they are sufficient to render History viable, based on the aforementioned SCHEV standards.

time of budget reductions), but also with an eye towards how resources are (or should be) dispersed to promote distributive justice in the provision of interdisciplinary minors.

The directive to initiate the expedited program reviews came from the Provost. This is within the Provost's authority, as chief academic officer for the institution. The curriculum path document even notes that university-wide changes, such as modifications to programs, may be initiated by the Provost (as Vice-President for Academic Affairs). It is important to reiterate two things. First, the programs identified for review are those that are currently, or those that risk becoming, in violation of SCHEV-mandated standards. In a time when budgetary resources are scarce, it is simply a reality that tough decisions must be made about which programs to support for the future, and to what degree. Programs that do not meet, or are at risk of not meeting, state-mandated requirements necessarily receive heightened scrutiny. In this process, bear in mind this additional information, stated in SCHEV policies. In the event that an institution were to request from SCHEV authority to continue programs that do not meet productivity standards, those requests would be evaluated by SCHEV (and not automatically granted) on a select set of criteria, including a combination of the following:

- centrality "to the institution's mission";
- "support of general education and/or professional programs";
- "interdisciplinary program...no more than 25% of the required course in the curriculum are unique to this program";
- "program shares a substantial number of courses and faculty with other similar programs";
- "student or employer demand...is high";
- "program provides access to an underserved population or geographic area; or
- "program meets a unique need in the region, Commonwealth, or nation".

Second, as referenced earlier, the outcome of this process for each program will be one of three recommendations: to continue a program, to restructure a program, or to discontinue a program. Attention will now turn to the process by which the expedited reviews will occur, as described in a memorandum and supplementary materials addressed to Department Chairs/School Directors/ Program Coordinators.

1. Faculty may voluntarily agree to discontinue some programs. The decision to do so would be communicated by the Department Chair, School Director, and/or Program Coordinator to the appropriate Dean by February 27, 2009. In this case, the program would have no further responsibilities in this process. Otherwise, the process would continue as follows.
2. All other programs – that is, those that do not wish to be voluntarily discontinued – would prepare a self-assessment by March 9, 2009, including a "recommendation for the future continuance or restructuring of their program. The recommendation must be supported by compelling justification addressing the [following questions]...and the data provided to the programs from Institutional Research." Note that these items are consistent with SCHEV-specified criteria, as described above.
 - a. "Describe how the program contributes to the university mission and strategic plan (RU 7-17) and what adverse impact (if any) elimination of this program would cause."
 - b. "Describe the program's contribution to the new core curriculum and/or interdisciplinary teaching, service, and research efforts."
 - c. "Describe your current and future strategic plans for increasing program viability."

- d. "Describe how the program significantly benefits for the local community, region, Commonwealth, and larger society."
 - e. "Provide any additional information supporting your recommendation."
3. Shortly thereafter, Deans will submit their comments regarding each program in their college that is under expedited review.
4. The Academic Program Review Committee will review each program's materials, and will meet to recommend that each program be: (a) continued, OR (b) restructured, OR (c) discontinued. Consistent with internal governance guidelines, these meetings will be open to the University community. The Committee will conclude its work by March 31, 2009; the Committee is composed of the Director of Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment; the Faculty Senate President; the academic deans; one faculty member from each undergraduate college; and one undergraduate student.
5. During April, the Faculty Senate will review and comment upon the recommendations of the Academic Program Review Committee. In the spirit of transparency and informed decision making, it is important for the Faculty Senate to have access to the same data that was available to the Academic Program Review Committee. At the February 26, 2009, Faculty Senate meeting, a motion was passed recommending in favor of access to this data. Senators will be provided access to a database containing these materials, through the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment.
6. Consistent with internal governance guidelines, the final authority for all decisions rests with the Provost, who will make his recommendations to the Board of Visitors at its April meeting.

During this process, faculty have input at three points: First, through discussions between Chairs/Directors/Coordinator and their faculty, in the preparation of the initial documentation; Second, on the Academic Program Review Committee; and Third, through the Faculty Senate. The decisions about each program will also go through a multi-layered review process, and one that is consistent with the curriculum path oversight process (see the curriculum path document, available online: http://www.radford.edu/~registra/Curriculum/UG_Curriculum_Proposal_Path.htm).

Also, the process takes many factors into account when evaluating a program. These factors are consistent with SCHEV guidelines and also reflect the diverse ways in which a program may contribute to Radford University. The first item on the list that programs are asked to address is how the program corresponds to the Radford University Mission and strategic plan. This helps ensure that decisions will be made with this factor in mind, although it does become the program's obligation to articulate those connections, demonstrating how it contributes to the University's mission and plan. This is also consistent with advice from higher education specialists, as noted in a recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*: "...colleges with solid strategic plans are likelier to remain on track and perhaps even spot opportunities *in a financial crisis+, planning experts say" (10/24/08, "How Colleges Can Keep Strategic Plans on Course in a Stormy Economy," p. A16).

In the academic affairs budget and planning process, difficult decisions will have to be made, including some that may result in program closures. These decisions must be made with as much transparency and faculty input as possible. The Faculty Senate Executive Council is committed to monitoring the process to ensure that this is the case.

Other Faculty Senate Actions

The Faculty Senate has also responded to planning for the budget reductions in other ways, as well. They are described below, with the current status of each.

- University Planning and Budgeting Advisory Committee.* The Faculty Senate, and the Faculty Senate Executive Council, have taken the strong position that the University Planning and Budgeting Advisory Committee should be convened, to provide faculty (and other constituencies) with a voice in the budgeting and planning process. On January 22, the Faculty Senate unanimously passed a motion calling upon President Kyle (designated in the Internal Governance Document as “convener” of the Committee) to convene the Committee. The Executive Council reiterated its support for this motion in a subsequent meeting with Provost Stanton, and I have also subsequently advocated with President Kyle for the Committee to be convened. President Kyle has requested and received from Provost Stanton information about the Committee and its role in the internal governance system. I am pleased to report that President Kyle will be convening the Committee within the next week. This will allow the Committee to provide its input as the University begins the planning required to implement the budgetary decisions made by the recent General Assembly session.
- Faculty Involvement in Planning the Academic Affairs Budget.* The University Planning and Budget Advisory Committee makes recommendations for planning and budgeting across the units of the university. It is imperative for faculty to be represented in the planning of the academic affairs budget. To that end, Provost Stanton will be meeting regularly with the Faculty Senate Executive Council and Resource Allocation Committee so that faculty voices can be represented in the academic affairs budget planning process. As the actual budget reduction amounts will be known soon, I anticipate these meetings to start in the very near future, as the 2009-2010 budget is developed.
- Equity of Budget Reductions.* In the 5% budget reversion this fall, academic affairs received reductions that were proportionally less than those asked of other units. In the current budget planning cycle, all units, including academic affairs, were required to develop plans for a 7.5% reduction. In response to the concern that academics are the central mission of the University, the Executive Council introduced and the Faculty Senate approved (at the February 12 Faculty Senate meeting) a motion recommending that the academic affairs budget should be accorded the highest priority, and reduced at a lower proportion than other units. I have communicated this motion to President Kyle.
- Enhanced Communication.* It is imperative that faculty are consulted regarding decisions impacting academic affairs. Consultation was imperfect regarding the recent merger and relocation of departments, including the merger of Chemistry and Biology; the merger of Dance and Theatre; the creation of the School of Environmental and Physical Sciences, comprised of Physics, Geology, Geography, Physical Anthropology, and the Forensic Science Institute; the movement of Foods and Nutrition to Exercise, Sport, and Health Education; and the movement of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism to the College of Education. After a frank but productive discussion with the Provost, we received a commitment that the Faculty Senate would be kept apprised of any future plans regarding these sorts of changes. The Faculty Senate also approved a motion (at its February 12 meeting; this is the same motion referenced in the bullet point above) that emphasizes the importance of faculty consultation when making decisions that impact departments/programs/etc. within academic affairs. To date, no mergers, relocations, new degree programs, etc., have been proposed, but in the event that any are, the Faculty

Senate Executive Council is committed to ensuring that they include the appropriate consultations, lines of communication, and provisions of the curriculum path document.

The importance of effective communication cannot be overstated. The Faculty Senate Executive Council has received a commitment from the Provost to ensure that faculty will have a voice before decisions are made regarding potential changes to their academic departments. Other opportunities for communication exist, as well. I continue to encourage faculty to work through their Senators to pose questions to the Provost at Faculty Senate meetings; I am happy to pose questions when Senators or constituents wish to remain anonymous. The Q&A forum on the Faculty Senate webpage provides an additional opportunity to ask questions; as I write this, Provost Stanton and others are working to secure answers to several questions that I have forwarded from the Q&A page. I would encourage all faculty to make use of these lines of communication, and to communicate their concern and questions with their Faculty Senators. These processes allow upward and downward communication, both essential for transparency.

- *Internal Governance.* Underlying several of the above issues is a larger concern about the state of internal governance at Radford University. The Faculty Senate Executive Council supports using the next academic year to vigorously pursue internal governance reform in a way that stresses the value of faculty primacy. This is an attainable goal, which will position us in the future to better respond in situations such as this one. The Provost and President have expressed a commitment to working with the Faculty Senate in substantially revising internal governance to create a more effective system. My goal is to move forward with the process of reforming internal governance, to create a system that reflects primacy and exemplifies the values and structures necessary to allow faculty to have meaningful input into the decisions which impact us.

As always, I would encourage you to bring any questions or concerns to your Department Chair or School Director, your Dean, the Faculty Senate, and/or to me, so we can work to resolve them.

Conclusion

Budget reversions pose a difficult situation for any university to weather. Key to the process are transparency, communication, and well-informed decision making. The Faculty Senate will promote these values, as we have done previously. While there may not be unanimous agreement on all outcomes, we are committed to ensuring that the process is one where faculty may openly represent their views on the important issues of academic affairs, which are, after all, the primary mission of our institution.