Faculty Senate Meeting
Thursday, September 11, 2008
Remarks from Provost Stanton

• Regardless of the apparent worsening of our state’s economy, it’s going to be a great year, e.g., we must keep our eye on the target – and that is to make our great university even greater!! The many successes we have had are just the beginning! We have a lot of excitement growing on our campus, and the freshmen wearing their "Dread the Red" shirts is helping to rapidly increase esprit de corps. I hope more students and faculty begin doing the same.

• Budget

  o As you may know, the Commonwealth of Virginia is expecting revenue shortfalls. While the official revenue projections will not be available until October, state agencies, including colleges and universities, have been directed to prepare a 5, 10, and possibly 15% reversion (in addition to the 5% we have already had to manage). We are currently preparing guidelines within Academic Affairs to prepare for those reversions.

  o As with the 5% already implemented, our intent is to do all we can to protect instruction – after all, that is what we’re here to do.
    1. I doubt if any of you felt the 5% reversion this year because we set protecting instruction as our guiding principle.
    2. Similar to the processes we have used in the past, we hope to provide opportunities for as much input as possible.

  o We have to have initial plans to Richmond by the 26th of September, so we will be expected to move quickly.

  o Guidance from the state, and specifically from the Governor’s Chief of Staff and the Department of Planning and Budget, indicate that agencies should consider actions that will result in long-term savings rather than short-term savings. Further, agencies are being asked to review all options, particularly in areas where our costs outstrip national norms. Agencies are also encouraged to focus on targeted cuts rather than on across-the-board reductions, and to take steps to ensure that we do not downgrade essential services.

  o We must plan for a long term reduction, so cuts we make cannot be planned to be reinstated in the next few years. Given the most recent economic news, it is likely that reductions will continue and we will have to continue making tough decisions to insure that our core mission, teaching our students, is not harmed.
I will meet early next week with the Council of Deans to review the guidelines I’m developing for reversion within Academic Affairs.

As we did in 2002 when we also had had a major budget reversion, we will need to look at all of our operations, organizational structures, and programs.

I will have more information about the level of cuts within Academic Affairs as we receive more information from Richmond, and I will share that information with you as it is developed.

One other thing that will make the next few weeks challenging is the announcement today that Donna VanCleave, our Vice President for Finance and Administration, has accepted a position with the VCCS.

Even in light of this, I have already authorized faculty recruitment for 2009 – and we will continue to bring in faculty at competitive salaries of our new peer group. And I am committed to provide support to ensure that we do not begin the Core Curriculum without sufficient resources.

- Spending Guidelines: As you know, new spending guidelines have been distributed and you will notice that, for most things, the approval process stops at the Provost Office. For travel, the dean will be the final approval except for those instances where more than three individuals are travelling to the same conference or for international travel.

- Update on application and enrollment information. As you probably heard at the President’s Convocation address, we have good news about fall enrollment. While we will not have official numbers until after the census date, I want to share some preliminary information with you:
  - Undergraduate enrollment increased by 140 students (1.74% increase over fall 2007)
  - RU received over 9,100 applications for new students (7,822 New Freshmen and 1,296 New Transfer)
  - RU received more New Freshmen applications (7,822) than any year during the past 20 years. The next highest year in terms of NF applications was in 1989 when RU received 6,938 applications.
  - This year’s acceptance rate was 73.78% for New Freshmen. By comparison, in the year’s that are closest to this one in numbers, the acceptance rates were much higher—1991—1893 (83.58%), 2001—1877—(78.39%), 2005—1896 (81.46%).
  - As of today, the SAT average for this year’s New Freshmen is 1018 compared to 1010 in fall 2005
  - High School GPA average for this year’s freshmen class is 3.14 compared to 3.07 for the fall 2005 freshmen class.
• It does appear that Graduate Enrollment for fall 2008 will be less than the previous couple years but this was not unexpected given the fact that RU awarded the highest number of graduate degrees (426) on record during Academic year 2007-08. This was over 60 more graduate degrees than was awarded in Academic Year 2006-07.

• As you are aware, we have had several key individuals in admissions leave the University for other positions. David Kraus has left for a position at Davidson, and the next two senior people in the office, Amy Jarich and Rebekah LaPlante have also taken other positions. While this will present challenges, we have taken steps to insure that the Office of Admissions continues to operate effectively and the needs of individual colleges are incorporated into recruiting strategies. In the near term, Dr. Steve Lerch will assume leadership responsibility for the admissions functions related to travel and personal contact, while Rick Slavings and I will provide oversight for publications, database management, and other technical aspects of the process. Mike Dunn will spend a portion of his time working directly in the admissions office to provide interim oversight of day to day activities.

• I have made a personal commitment to communicate as effectively as possible with faculty. As part of this process, I will be sending minutes from each meeting of the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Visitors to you. Following each Faculty Senate meeting, I will post my notes used in making my comments to you. That way I can include any questions received and any information necessary to follow-up on those questions.