

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Council
September 9, 2009
Excerpts**

Present: S. Andrews, V. Bentley-Condit, C. Lindgren, R. Osgood, M. Schneider, P. Smith, B. Trish, A. Vishevsky.

The meeting came to order at 4:15 p.m. in the Nollen House first-floor conference room. The minutes of August 26, 2009 had been approved via email.

President's Remarks

The President noted that the upcoming weekend is a big one. The Second Year Retreat is taking place, with a very large number of students, around 180, participating. This has meant a number of volunteers have had to step up to help staff (Terri Phipps in particular) and Associate Dean Kathleen Skerrett. He expressed his thanks to all for the hard work that goes into this event. It is also a big weekend for sports, with the Les Duke invitational, a volleyball tournament, and football and tennis matches.

The Board of Trustees is meeting the weekend of September 25-26. On their agenda are approval of the Gender, Women's Studies, and Sexuality major and the December degree recipients. There will be a joint meeting of the investment and budget committees to begin budget planning with clear communication on College finances. There is to be an update, probably in executive session, on the presidential search. Executive Council members are invited to dinner with the Board at the President's house on the Friday evening. This is a tradition at the fall meeting; in the winter meeting the Board generally dines with selected faculty members and in the spring with students from the graduating class. On Thursday evening, September 24, Board members will dine with the Anthropology department and with staff members.

Dean's Remarks

The Dean reported that the previous Saturday there had been a test of how well the emergency response systems in place work when one of the referees suffered a cardiac incident during the football game. Medical response was prompt and effective, and the referee is doing well.

Dining Services has put in place several good new systems, including one for students fasting during Ramadan. The selection available to these students is wider than in past years. Also, as there are fewer committee lunches subsidized by the College, Leslie Gregg-Jolly is working with Bill Francis, John Kalkbrenner, and Richard Williams to develop a new system whereby faculty members with meetings or other work over the noon hour can go online to order a prepaid lunch that can be picked up at the Spencer Grill either individually or for the group.

The Dean updated Council on the discussions about the printed version of the annual Campus Directory. It appears that there will be an "opt-in" system for faculty to request these, and one copy, not two, will be made available without charge. It is still being resolved what the system

will be for staff members and campus offices. In reply to a query about whether photos will be included, it was reported that it is not clear how much money would be saved by eliminating them, and the utility of the directory might be reduced by doing so. The President pointed out that the College is very sensitive to the requests of those who do not wish their photographs to be on the Web for all to see, so that the Web directory would not necessarily meet the need for photographs.

The Dean also reported that two faculty members will be appearing soon in the national press. C. Lindgren will be in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* on the subject of BIO 150. Bob Grey's remarks on a panel about the job market in political science are quoted in the September 10 issue of *Inside Higher Ed*. The President noted that the former came about partly as the result of the work of a media firm with which the College is working to find outlets for stories that demonstrate what we do well. A future story might highlight the Tutorial as a way of setting expectations for teaching good writing skills across the curriculum, something that distinguishes graduates of Grinnell and liberal arts colleges in general at, for example, law schools. The President invited Council and all faculty to contribute ideas for additional articles.

Council Remarks

C. Lindgren raised the issue of animal research as an area in which the College may need to improve compliance with Federal regulations. The Dean replied that a consultant was on campus that very day to help Jennifer Krohn, who has taken over the duty of Compliance Officer on the retirement of Frank Thomas, to help us assure the College's compliance with these requirements—a complex task, particularly as Federal regulations multiply.

M. Schneider reported on the Monday afternoon informal faculty discussion session, which was devoted to faculty scholarship. Many junior faculty were among the fifty or so people in attendance, and the discussion was lively and thoughtful. Junior faculty raised the issue of mixed messages and unclear expectations of what constitutes a suitable level of scholarly productivity for tenure. Schneider suggested that Council keep this issue in mind; it is not clear whether this is an issue in certain departments or more broadly. He added that tenure candidates sometimes believe the standards are more difficult to meet than they are in practice. C. Lindgren remarked that it should be definitively stated that the standards for scholarship are not simply quantitative and that as a matter of College policy there is no specific quantitative target.

Schneider also reported that the “faculty supporting faculty” group had its first meeting the previous day. This is an additional means for helping first-year faculty members to become acclimated, beyond what they receive at New Faculty Orientation and from their departments. Faculty in this role are not mentors with any formal relationship, but rather have the responsibility of consciously looking out for first-year faculty members. They were selected from faculty members who had expressed a particular concern about new faculty in the past, but the group is not meant to be exclusive and others who are interested are welcome to participate. In response to a question he said that in the future it is hoped that other early-career faculty, not just those in their first year, might be brought within the purview of this group. B. Trish asked whether faculty in Physical Education are included; she believes it is always important to include them with the rest of the faculty. There are no new members of the P.E. department this year, but

it is explicitly envisioned that they will be included. The President said that he particularly liked the informality of this “FSF” group and expressed his thanks for the work involved.

Update on Religious Diversity Policy

Both the original paragraph and the version as amended by Council were distributed. The latter version has been shared with the original drafters, who accepted the changes. Both Council and the original drafters are eager to bring it before the whole faculty. After some discussion of whether it might be useful to discuss it within divisions, there was a general consensus that this was not so controversial that there was a benefit in this additional stage; it would be best to lay it directly before the September 21 faculty meeting. With further discussion, it was agreed that the Chair of the Faculty would present it, with Kathleen Skerrett and a student from the drafting committee present to answer any questions.

There was also discussion of where the paragraph should be published once approved. A general consensus emerged that this was a matter of general policy, not Faculty legislation, and that if it is to appear in the Faculty Handbook it should be on the page with the general non-discrimination policy. There was strong support for publishing it in the Catalogue and the Student Handbook. Some of the Trustees are concerned about this issue; wide publication of the policy will bring to their attention the fact that concerns raised last year have been addressed.

Proposed revision to 2009-2010 Merit Review Guidelines

The proposed revisions had been distributed in advance. The Faculty Handbook states that guidelines are to be issued each year. The President noted that the description in the Faculty Handbook does not reflect with complete accuracy what currently happens. On the other hand, he does not recommend amending the Handbook until the recently developed procedures have been tested fully and then amendments might be made to reflect established practice.

The Dean pointed out the two items that are substantial changes. (1) The Faculty Budget Committee will have the faculty members’ FARs, context statements, and CV to hand, so it is unnecessary to ask the person chairing the merit review to duplicate what is already contained in them. The general aim is to streamline the process and require less work from the chairs and the candidate. (2) There is a proposal that instead of the review chair being necessarily the one to visit a class, the faculty member under consideration might request another colleague, perhaps even from another department, who may have pedagogical ideas or skills that the faculty member would like to learn from, conduct the visit and report to the review chair. It is envisioned that the expectation would be a single visit sometime during the three-year period under review, rather than the current “one to three” visits during the semester of the review. Thorough discussion of both changes ensued.

Discussion of (1) was generally favorable to suggesting a reduction in the length of both the review chair’s statement and the faculty member’s context statement. (Guidelines for the latter have been identical to those for personnel reviews.) V. Bentley-Condit suggested the word “pages” in the existing guidelines might be amended to “paragraphs” for the salary review process. The idea met with general support. Council also discussed their sense that whenever

guidelines suggest the possibility of a higher level of effort, faculty members tend to regard anything less as insufficient and may feel that adhering to the lower end of a set of standards will be penalized. Consensus emerged that the language of the guidelines should more clearly encourage a streamlined process.

Discussion of (2) centered on the issue of whether the department should relinquish entirely the possibility of conducting its own class visit, should there be some reason to do so. At the same time, the general rationale for the change—to make the visit, and indeed the whole process, stem more from the needs and nurture of excellence in the faculty member under consideration—was strongly supported. Council also was reminded that in an earlier year when a similar discussion took place, the idea of eliminating the class visit (for merit reviews) was raised in a full meeting of the faculty and defeated by a single vote. Several Council members expressed a preference for no visit at all, and supported any language that urged a minimal approach by review chairs.

Council ultimately agreed that to retain maximum flexibility and keep time investment to a minimum, the guidelines should simply specify that the review chair, in consultation with the faculty member under review, will identify an appropriate faculty member to visit between one and three class sessions of the faculty member under review. The visitor, if someone other than the review chair, will produce a very brief summary (typically a paragraph) for the review chair.

A third issue emerged during the discussions: whether to alter the merit review cycle in view of the fact that the 2008-09 pool for salary increases is zero. It was noted that the merit review was designed to be conducted independent of what size increase may result. Council discussed ways to ensure that faculty awarded high merit scores last year, when no raises were given, nevertheless may benefit from three years of raises. To accomplish this, M. Schneider moved that Council recommend to the Faculty Budget Committee that over the next three years, whenever a faculty member's new merit score is determined, then if that score is lower than the preceding score, that the Budget Committee should carry over the higher (previous) score for an additional year. In this case the new merit score would then be used for only two years instead of three. C. Lindgren seconded. The motion was carried without opposition.

B. Trish asked what would be the procedure when some of the EKI appointments made recently reach the point of their first post-tenure merit review. Special review committees appointed to review these faculty members through tenure were not originally intended to continue beyond that point. However, no discussion of these procedural issues has yet begun, and Council will need to resolve this question.

There was general agreement, but no vote, that the simplification of the merit review process represented by the Dean's points (1) and (2) should go forward.

Finally, the matter of how best to discuss these issues at division meetings or, possibly, at a faculty meeting was considered. There was agreement that wide discussion was desirable, as long as it is made clear that Council has not made any final decision, and in any case will only make recommendations to the Faculty Budget Committee, which already has the charge and authority to carry out the process.

Preliminary ordering and scheduling of 2009-2010 Agenda Items

This item was deferred, with the exception of noting items for the next meeting. Items listed for the September 16 meeting were:

1. Joyce Stern on accommodations for persons with disabilities
2. Formation of the ombuds committee (if an update or discussion is needed)
3. Further ordering and scheduling of 2009-10 Council agenda items
4. Preparation for the September 21 faculty meeting

With respect to item 2: a slate is to go forward for the September 21 faculty meeting for the faculty members of this committee. Council agreed that the divisions, who meet this coming Friday, will each elect one of their number to serve on the ombuds committee, by paper ballot. The names of those elected will be forwarded to Jin Feng as chair of the Faculty Organization Committee, which will then select two additional members at large.

The meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Richard Cleaver
Acting Secretary