

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Council**  
**October 14, 2009**  
**Excerpts**

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

The meeting came to order at 4:15 p.m. in the Nollen House first-floor conference room. The minutes of October 7, 2009, were approved.

**President's Remarks**

The President expressed his thanks to all who participated in Discover Grinnell. A number of parents told him that compared to past years this one was very well organized. For the first time it included concurrent panels during the day.

He expressed his concern about the alcohol-related and other misbehavior during the previous weekend in connection with the 10/10 party. Given the level of disruption, including some hospitalizations and thefts, discussions are now underway regarding the advisability of hosting the party on campus. The organizers of the party have gone before Joint Board to issue a formal apology.

Finally, he reported that on Saturday, October 17, at 9 a.m., the College will dedicate a red maple to the memory of Whitney Hendrickson '12. This is a public ceremony, with members of her family in attendance; all are welcome. There will also be a brunch after the ceremony at Grinnell House, to which all are invited.

**Dean's Remarks**

The Dean announced Connelly Lecture took place the previous Thursday, October 8, in memory of long-time English faculty member Peter Connelly. It was an excellent lecture, well attended. Gene Jarrett spoke on President Obama as a literary figure for his autobiographical work, this being a genre of writing with a long history among African American writers. Karin Connelly was present at the lecture.

She gave an update on the progress of the Library departmental review. They are working on their responses but given the large constituency the libraries serve, they expect it will be early spring before they have a final document ready to bring before Council.

There was a planning session on Friday, October 9, as part of the campus plan update process, which went well.

Next weekend, October 16-18, is athletic alumni weekend. She hopes this will give an opportunity to draw alums' attention to the progress on Phase II of the athletic facilities.

## **Council Remarks**

Mark Schneider reported that he has scheduled the next open faculty discussion for the Monday after fall break, October 26, at 4:15 p.m. He would like for the format to be a town hall discussion with Executive Council. He is aware Anatoly Vishevsky is unable to attend but hopes other Council members will. He requests that Council members relay their feedback to him soon.

Clark Lindgren brought up the dinner with the external reviewers for the staff policy review. All Council members were present except Barb Trish. He was very impressed with the review team's ability to pick up the many facets of the campus and the issues involved. He added that Council encouraged the reviewers to make their report one which could be disseminated widely. The President said that he had made the same request; Clark said the team seemed to appreciate having that guidance.

M. Schneider offered an update on selection of a 2010 Commencement speaker and honorary degree recipients.

He also reported that the ombuds committee will have a meeting before break. The President complimented Mark on his description of the role of the committee in a general email that went out to staff. Paula Smith asked that he also send this to Council members to see, and he agreed. It is also intended to set up a Pioneer Web site for discussion.

The mention of Pioneer Web reminded the President that the College's attorney has recommended that all faculty meeting minutes should be posted on Pioneer Web as opposed to the general public website. This would make it possible to have more informative minutes disseminated. It was generally agreed that this issue, with regard to both faculty meeting and Council meeting minutes, should be placed on a future agenda for discussion.

## **Discussion of Revision of FAR and Context Statement Guidelines**

The Dean opened the discussion by remarking that this topic follows nicely on the previous week's discussion of interviewing candidates about their potential contributions to diversity and inclusiveness at Grinnell. The proposed changes to the Faculty Activity Report and Context Statement guidelines, distributed in advance, are intended to keep track of whether and how such contributions are actually happening. They are based on recommendations by the group working on the diversification of the faculty. She has two questions in particular for Council. (1) Is the Service section of the FAR the proper place to ask about such efforts? (2) How should the guidelines best suggest weaving it into the Context Statement?

With respect to question #1, Steve Andrews wondered if it would be appropriate to suggest that diversity and inclusiveness were issues for scholarship as well as teaching and service. There was interest in this idea, but after extensive discussion it appeared that there might be an unintended result of privileging certain forms of scholarship in the salary review process. Clark Lindgren also remarked that it was less likely that an article, for example, on inclusiveness in the classroom would be omitted since it would be a concrete item to list. Steve concurred with this

and there was general sentiment that if there were enough attention to diversity and inclusiveness in general, faculty members would be subtly encouraged to consider discussing it at any point where it was relevant. Paula Smith also suggested that another way of encouraging such reflection would be to use such broadening terminology in the guidelines as “originality,” “innovation,” and “new areas.”

Mark Schneider wondered if there were some way to add “inclusiveness” to the proposed addition to the context statement guidelines. There was general agreement that this is a slightly separate point from diversity; the President pointed out that it describes more accurately the situation of people with disabilities, for example, who may not otherwise come from groups generally understood under the term diversity. There was general agreement with amending the text to read “...contributions to curricular or pedagogical diversity, **classroom inclusivity**, and new areas” etc.

Clark Lindgren asked for a clarification of the difference between “refereed” and “peer-reviewed.” There is some variation in usage among disciplines, but it was agreed that there is a general implication that “refereed” work is examined by a fixed panel, who may not be anonymous (an editorial board for example), and who examine all work, whereas “peer-reviewed” work is likely sent individually to anonymous external reviewers for comment.

Anatoly Vishevsky asked what the rationale was for no longer including in the FAR a list of courses taught and courses changed. Mark Schneider responded that the Dean’s office already has that information from other sources, and in the interests of simplifying the FAR it was felt to be redundant to ask for it again. In answer to further discussion, the Dean said that for purposes of preparing Context Statements every three years, the Dean’s Office supplies the list to faculty members so they don’t have to create it themselves.

In answer to a question about the Needs section of the FAR, the Dean noted that Leslie Gregg-Jolly, with the help of the Grants Office, is now stripping out answers to that and examining them to see how the needs expressed might be met. In some cases it is simply a matter of pointing out to the faculty member what mechanism is already in place for requesting help. Clark Lindgren pointed out that it would be worth conveying this new practice to faculty members, and the Dean added that she has the FAR for faculty undergoing merit reviews and can also discuss needs with faculty members on that basis.

Another issue raised by the President during the discussion was why advising is not named specifically in the guidelines. The Dean replied that it is ambiguous whether it is an aspect of teaching or of service. In the case of the Tutorial, it is plainly both. This led to a general discussion; should advising be a separate fourth criterion for review, given how important advising is to the College’s open curriculum? Clark Lindgren suggested it might make a good end-of-year topic of discussion with the Personnel Committee. Steve Andrews suggested it might also be a good topic for the upcoming town hall discussion between faculty and Council. Mark Schneider agreed it was a natural topic and that faculty feedback would be useful.

In this connection, and in anticipation of the next item on the agenda, the President noted that the materials on advising distributed at the beginning of the meeting indicate that of the 152 faculty members who have advisees, 17 people advise a third of the students among them.

### **Preliminary discussion of faculty advising guidelines**

Mark Schneider distributed statistical information about distribution of advising loads, collected by Cheryl Chase, both in raw form and in graphic form. The information is a snapshot taken this week. It is provided as a framework for discussion. The total number of advisors is 152, representing everyone who has any advisees. He has fuller raw data and can supply that if requested. He also asked whether it would be useful to have historical data on trends; there seemed to be little interest knowing this. However, there was interest in obtaining a second snapshot toward the end of the second semester, when one year's worth of Tutorial advisees will have declared majors, but a new set of Tutorial advisees will not yet have replaced them.

Mark remarked that he expected a more normal distribution with a hump in the middle. The Dean noted there is a sharp peak in the middle, representing a load of tutorial advisees with a few major advisees. But she notes that the number of advisors with only 1, 2, or 3 advisees is huge. Clark Lindgren pointed out that there is a difference in what is required in advising a major advisee as opposed to a concentration advisee. The President noted that the peak may represent relatively small departments with many majors such as chemistry, and may suggest that such departments not be asked to teach Tutorials. It was pointed out, however, that offering a Tutorial tends to attract majors to a department, so there is an advantage in offering them. The Dean noted that she has made a strong commitment to avoid having any faculty member teach two Tutorials in a row.

A number of questions emerged from the discussion, and Mark Schneider undertook to seek answers. (1) Who are those with the fewest advisees? Are they mainly new faculty? Faculty who do not regularly teach the Tutorial? Those who have just returned from leave? (2) What is the correlation between the size of a department and the number of majors in the department, and the advising load? (The Dean added that this would be helpful for her in determining who should be asked to teach Tutorials.) (3) How did some faculty members' load get so large?

With respect to the last question, there was a general agreement that for some faculty members, advising is something they do well and that energizes them, so that what is a large load for some may not be for others. It may also be traded off against committee service.

Mark suggested it might be valuable for him or someone to interview those with the largest number of advisees to find out how they feel about their loads. The Dean added that it would also be valuable to find out from them how they manage the load. Some may find that the load is about what they want; others may find it a burden; but it would be interesting to have their views as complements to the data.

Clark Lindgren noted another factor: departments do not all handle the assignment of advisees in the same way, and in some it is not coordinated at all but left to students to choose an advisor. Steve Andrews added that English has recently set an upper limit of 20 advisees per faculty

member. The Dean remarked this could be a useful model to other departments, especially if it gives advisors more permission to say no if the load gets too large. Clark pointed out that the limit can be reached quickly if the faculty member teaches a Tutorial. The Dean said that the normal pattern in English, where everyone has one set of Tutorial advisees at any given time, is that the advising load is the dozen or so Tutorial advisees plus another seven or eight major advisees. She said there are also a variety of approaches in different departments as to how to handle advisees of a faculty member on leave.

In addition to this guidance on the questions posed by Mark Schneider, there was general agreement that it would be good to have the second snapshot, since things look different in the spring; this snapshot could conceivably be made on the basis of last spring. Clark added it would be useful for the Budget Committee to have data for the past three years when conducting reviews, and also that the distinction between major advisees, concentration advisees, and Tutorial advisees should be clear. Vicki Bentley-Condit asked whether Council planned to make any recommendations to departments. Mark Schneider said the survey of the high-end advisors would help inform any recommendations, and will bring forward a set of questions to ask them. The Dean reiterated the suitability of this topic for the faculty open forum, and would like to hear also how faculty manage their advising loads and set priorities in their advising.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Acting Secretary  
Richard Cleaver