

## **FACULTY SENATE MEETING**

**February 1, 2006**

### **1. Call to Order**

Chair Gene Reeder called to order the meeting of the Faculty Senate of the University of South Carolina of February 1, 2006.

### **2. Approval of Minutes**

One correction was made to the minutes of December 7, 2005: under section 7, New Business, Professor Marco Valtorta was incorrectly identified as having asked a question. The appropriate name is Marcia Castro (Geography). The minutes were approved as corrected.

### **3. Reports of Committees**

#### **a. Faculty Senate Steering Committee, Professor Laura Kane, Secretary**

Professor Kane (School of Medicine Library) reported that the Faculty Senate Steering Committee met on January 23<sup>rd</sup> to discuss committee vacancies. A slate of nominees will be presented for a vote at the March Faculty Senate meeting. Professor Kane thanked all faculty who volunteered for committee service. Chair Reeder reminded the faculty that the Committee Volunteer Forms are kept on file should additional committee slots become vacant throughout the year.

#### **b. Committee on Curricula and Courses, Professor Victor Giurgiutiu, Chair**

Professor Giurgiutiu (Mechanical Engineering) presented changes in curriculum and/or courses within the following colleges: College of Arts and Sciences, College of Education, and College of Engineering and Information Technology. All motions from the committee carried.

#### **c. Faculty Advisory Committee, Professor Judith Alexander, Chair**

Professor Alexander (Nursing) announced that the Faculty Advisory Committee has reviewed the policies for graduation with honors. The committee moved to change the range of Summa Cum Laude to 3.95 – 4.0 and change the range for Magna Cum Laude to 3.75 – 3.94. This change will allow a student to get a single B+ and still graduate with a Summa Cum Laude. In response to a question from the audience, Professor Alexander explained that ours is the only university in the nation with the stringent 4.0 requirement for Summa Cum Laude. A vote was taken and the motion carried.

#### **d. Faculty Budget Committee, Professor John McDermott, Chair**

Professor McDermott (Moore School of Business) reported that the Faculty Budget Committee has nearly completed the final draft of “A Guide to the Budget of the University of South Carolina.” The report will be available on the Faculty Senate website soon. Professor McDermott welcomes any comments or questions regarding the report.

#### **e. Faculty Welfare Committee, Professor Marja Warehime, Chair**

Professor Warehime (Languages, Literatures, & Cultures) announced that the Faculty Welfare Committee is preparing a survey to gather information that will help explore the issue of tuition waivers. In addition, Dr. Warehime met with Susie VanHuss, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Children's Center at USC, and Jerry Odom, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Children's Center at USC, to discuss changes in the Center. Staff of the Center will be invited to a future Faculty Senate meeting to discuss the facility and how it might continue to be an asset to the University.

### **4. Reports of Officers**

#### **Provost Mark Becker**

Provost Becker announced that the University's presentation to the House Ways and Means Higher Education Subcommittee began today at 2 p.m. Additional state funding in support of the University's academic mission is being sought.

The searches for deans continue. Applications are currently being received for the Pharmacy vacancy. For the College of Engineering dean vacancy, candidates are being brought to campus for interviews. Information about the final candidates is available on the College's website and on the website for the Office of the Provost. The Provost thanked the search committee, co-chaired by Dean Mary Anne Fitzpatrick and Professor Tangali Sudarshan, for their work in screening over 60 strong applicants.

Candidates are also being brought to campus for the dean of the School of Law vacancy. Information about these candidates is available on the College's website and on the website for the Office of the Provost. The Provost thanked the members of that search committee for their hard work.

The Provost announced the call for proposals under the Faculty Excellence Initiative. This is the third cycle of a 6-year program, and Provost Becker has been delighted with the responses thus far. He and the President continually receive feedback regarding the high quality of applicants to the new positions created through the Faculty Excellence Initiative. The formal call for proposals can be found on the Office of the Provost website under "News & Documents of Interest."

Provost Becker is in the process of reorganizing the Office of the Provost. The motivation behind this activity is to make the office as responsive as possible to requests for information and support, and to increase levels of productivity across the full spectrum of academic affairs. Better supporting faculty development and enhancing academic quality will be among the highest priorities of the reorganization. Following are some of the topics under consideration:

- Creation of a Vice Provost for Faculty Development position to be responsible for areas such as:

- The Center for Teaching Excellence
- Development of mentoring and leadership programs
- Diversity and equity
- Enrollment and retention
- Role of the Graduate School
- Creation of an ombudsperson capacity for USC

The tenure and promotion season is well underway. The Provost reiterated that the area of service is carefully examined in the tenure and promotion process, and he devoted some of his remarks to emphasizing the importance placed on teaching. The teaching category is scrutinized thoroughly. Particular pieces examined include, but are not necessarily limited to, student evaluations of teaching, peer review of teaching, directing student research and the mentoring of students. Reviews and evaluations, as per unit criteria, are frequently examined relative to unit norms or averages. Likewise, mentoring of students and the direction of student research is relative to the norms and expectations of the discipline or field. Directing doctoral dissertations and undergraduate theses both are given priority, where appropriate.

In response to a question from the audience, the Provost described the purpose of the new Center for Teaching Excellence. The Center is designed to support the teaching needs of early career, mid-career, and senior faculty, as well as graduate students and all teaching professionals at USC.

### **President Andrew Sorensen**

President Sorensen apologized for being tardy, having just arrived from presenting the University's budget to the Higher Education Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee chaired by Representative Chip Limehouse.

The President made several comments regarding the Center for Teaching Excellence. Since he was instrumental in establishing similar programs at both the University of Florida and the University of Alabama, he knows firsthand how such a program can become a "terrific asset to improve the teaching throughout the University."

There are several aspects of the Governor's proposed budget that President Sorensen finds disturbing. For example, the proposal to increase sales tax and eliminate or drastically reduce the property tax is daunting because USC purchases a huge number of goods and services on which it pays sales tax. If the proposal goes through, USC will be hit for a \$2.8 million increase in sales tax.

Another disturbing fact is that state appropriations for higher education are precisely the same in 2006 as they were in 1996. It is the President's opinion that looking at the percentage of the state budget devoted to higher education is not an accurate barometer of state support of higher education. A more revealing indicator is the per capita support for FTE students. Over the past ten years, as USC has seen a substantial increase in total enrollment, the state of South Carolina has decreased by 26% the support per FTE student. In stark comparison, this indicator in the

neighboring states of North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida has increased over the same time period.

Politicians continue to discuss the need to cap tuition. The President would be happy to place a cap on tuition if he could, at the same time, place caps on utility bills, insurance premiums, and other services whose costs continue to rise. It is not reasonable to be faced with increasing costs on one hand and a decrement in state funding on the other, and not be able to use tuition to compensate.

Last week, President Sorensen and James Barker, President of Clemson University, made a presentation together to Bobby Harrell, Speaker of the House of Representatives. This was an historical moment for the state of South Carolina, where traditionally different universities hire lobbyists who then engage in “subterfuge and clandestine, surreptitious activities”. The Speaker was so overwhelmed by this event that he asked the official photographer for the Legislature to take a picture of the three officials (Sorensen, Barker, and Harrell) standing together in the same room. President Sorensen hopes that this will be a harbinger of collaboration in the years to come.

The University recently purchased 29 acres along the Congaree River, where bike paths and pedestrian paths will be laid in the flood plains. \$2 million is being requested by the College of the Environment for the purpose of studying ways to improve the quality of the river. There will be no building construction within the flood plain. The baseball stadium will be built on the higher grounds. The President hopes that USC might form a women’s crew team and that our students and the general public will use the area along the Congaree for recreational purposes.

President Sorensen concluded his remarks with a reminder that any op-ed pieces written by faculty and sent to publications such as local newspapers should include a statement indicating that the views stated in the piece are not views of the University. Explicit instructions for op-ed pieces are available in the *Faculty Manual*.

## **5. Report of the Chair**

Chair Gene Reeder shared with the faculty that the Committee on Scholastic Standards and Petitions is considering a proposal from the USC Student Government to institute a grade forgiveness program that is consistent with similar programs at many of our peer institutions.

In response to a request at the previous meeting from Professor Karen Fox (Medicine), Dr. Reeder has referred the issue of faculty participation in the decisions of the Faculty Advisory Committee as part of its charge to look at the structure and function of all Faculty Senate Committees.

Chair Reeder announced that the third floor of McCutchen House now has wireless networking capabilities via a VPN. This development will be helpful for those who have committee meetings at McCutchen House.

## **6. Unfinished Business**

There was no unfinished business.

## **7. New Business**

Chair Reeder announced the “open mike” session of the meeting and asked if there was any new business to discuss. Professor Alvin Fox (Medicine) gave an overview of an intellectual property issue that has been plaguing him and his wife, Dr. Karen Fox (Medicine), for a number of months. He feels strongly that the University should prepare itself for any future difficulties of a similar nature by taking a close look at how the Intellectual Property Office operates and how it relates to the function of the Faculty Senate’s Intellectual Property Committee. President Sorensen assured Dr. Fox and the faculty that he enthusiastically endorses the proposal to expand the function of the Intellectual Property Committee to have more involvement in the monitoring of activities within the Intellectual Property Office. However, the proposal needs to come through the appropriate committees and be ratified by the Faculty Senate before the President can take any action. Chair Reeder again assured the faculty that the issue will be addressed in the appropriate venues.

## **8. Announcements**

The next meeting of the Faculty Senate will be held on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006 at 3 p.m. in the Law School Auditorium.

## **9. Adjournment**

A motion was made, seconded, and passed to adjourn the meeting.