

TO: Dr. Marsha Bollinger, Dr. Beth Costner, Dr. Cheryl Fortner-Wood, Dr. Cara Peters,
Dr. Tom Polaski

From: Dr. Anthony J. DiGiorgio, President

Date: June 9, 2009

I have received the record of the actions recommended by the Faculty Conference on April 24, 2009. In accordance with our established protocol, this memorandum is to indicate within 30 days of receipt of those recommendations, areas of approval and disapproval with the recommendations.

First, allow me to commend the Faculty Governance Review Committee of the Faculty Conference for a thorough and thoughtful job in reviewing and revising the bylaws of the Faculty Conference. From all reports, the Faculty Governance Review Committee undertook its responsibilities seriously and with the best interests of the University in mind. The product of all the good work is a streamlined governance process that, I believe, will serve the faculty and the University well.

Likewise, I approached my responsibility to review the recommendations of the Faculty Governance Review Committee and the Faculty Conference in the same spirit. After a very thorough review of the documents, I can and do accept all of the recommendations except for the following specific recommendations within the proposed Faculty Committee on University Life and the Faculty Committee on University Priorities.

First, with regard to the Faculty Committee on University Life, my concerns are largely semantic and could be easily resolved with some editorial changes. Specifically, in the second sentence, the phrase “have the authority to” is best stricken because the committee has the responsibility to look into issues and bring them forward for consideration, but is not empowered to make changes per se. The current phrasing implies the authority to do so. In the fourth line “to effect” would better be “to facilitate” and it would add clarity to add to the end of the same sentence the phrase “as needed.” Finally, the phrase “the

concerns received” in the fifth line does not appear to add value. All of these editorial changes would add to the clarity of the charge.

As suggested above, the charge would read as follows:

Faculty Committee on University Life. This committee shall be responsible for examining issues submitted by faculty members that affect the conduct of university life, and ~~shall have the authority to~~ address these issues by communicating directly with appropriate administrators and members of the University faculty and staff to understand the issue more fully and to ~~facilitate~~ effect a ~~positive~~ resolution to the concern ~~as needed~~. The committee shall report ~~the concerns received~~, its findings, and the status of the issues to Faculty Conference, to the Committee on University Priorities, and to the President at least once each semester.

The committee shall consist of nine members: two members elected from each of the degree-granting colleges and one member elected from the Library faculty. At least one member elected from each of the degree-granting colleges and the member elected from the Library faculty shall be tenured. The Chair of the committee shall attend open meetings of the appropriate committee of the University Relations Committee of the Board of Trustees.

With regard to the Faculty Committee on University Priorities, I appreciate and support the intent of this recommendation. There are sufficient concerns with the proposal as submitted, however, that preclude a positive consideration at this time. The major thrust of the committee’s work, (i.e. consolidating single purpose committees into one committee with a broader purview and with a focus on the future,) is a major step forward and provides a strong foundation for a positive next step. I will speak to that possibility after I provide specific reasons for my current concerns.

My concerns with the proposal as submitted are as follows:

- First, setting a predetermined number of meetings with the President and Executive Officers is not feasible. Committing to at least one each semester with others to be scheduled as needed would be appropriate.
- Next, charging the chair of this committee to “raise serious and immediate faculty concerns and questions” at Faculty Conference is a dramatic departure from past practice. It has been the custom at Winthrop that all faculty members, including all committee chairs, may ask questions and/or make comments at Faculty Conference at will. The idea of singling out one of many committee chairs in the bylaws with that charge does not appear to be in the spirit of past governance practices. In addition, any faculty who do not wish to express their views at Faculty Conference for whatever reasons have multiple other avenues available for expression of concerns and questions either directly, anonymously or through surrogates.
- Third, it has also been the University’s practice to provide a copy of the University’s annual budget allocations for review by faculty and staff. That document has and will continue to be available in the Dacus Library by November 1 of each year and be available to the committee as well, As for quarterly updates, the same quarterly allocation status reports that are provided to the Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees as well as the full Board of Trustees would be available to the committee.
- Finally, the benefits of combining the membership and functions of this committee with the financial exigency process at this time and in this manner are not readily apparent. As there currently is a committee that permits faculty input and involvement if and when a financial exigency is declared by the President, there would be no loss of prerogatives if the proposed committee’s charge does not include this element. It would appear prudent to proceed with a Faculty Committee on University Priorities without the financial exigency elements at this time while conversations about form, function, and fit continue.

For these reasons, it will not be possible to move forward with the Faculty Committee on University Priorities as proposed. It would be possible and beneficial to move forward with a committee as suggested below as we continue to have conversations about the wisdom of combining financial exigency within the framework of the Faculty Committee on University Priorities.

A suggested charge for the committee as discussed above follows:

Faculty Committee on University Priorities. This committee shall be responsible for meeting at least once per semester with the President and the other Executive Officers of the University to provide a faculty perspective on admissions policy, planning, objective setting, and resource allocation, as well as other areas that are important to the University's future.

The committee shall consist of eight members: one member elected from each of the degree-granting colleges, one member elected from the Library faculty, one member elected from the faculty of University College, and one member elected by the Graduate Faculty Assembly. All members of this committee shall be tenured. The Chair of the Faculty Conference shall serve as an ex officio member with vote. The Chair of the committee shall attend open meetings of the Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees.

Again, my thanks to you and all involved for a thoughtful and thorough review. Although issues remain to refine and resolve, I believe the University will be well served if we move forward with the actions outlined above. I will be happy to discuss these matters at your convenience.