

General Faculty Address - August 14, 2000

By Gayle Marie Weitz, 2000/2001 Faculty Senate Chair

Greetings! I welcome you all to the one-hundred-and-first time this faculty has convened for a new Fall term. And aren't we looking good -- full of purpose, high hopes, and detailed syllabi! We are a hard-working, productive, effective faculty. There's good reason national surveys consistently rank Appalachian State University as one of the best buys for students in the entire nation. Turn and look at the faculty in this room, and you have the major reason.

The two things I like least about being a professor are grading papers and writing letters of recommendation. Now I've added a third thing that I like least: writing speeches. I've been frustrated partly by trying to juggle my sense of native optimism with the nagging sensation that we've got some big problems here that need our attention. How do I communicate adequately, in this or in any speech, my confidence that we can work well and productively with our administration to overcome the things that bug us, and yet point out firmly and without apology that there are things that bug us?

I became a professor because I believe that people can change for the better, that I can help in that change, that learning is the most positive change that any person can experience in a lifetime, and that a teacher who helps a student find the individual pathway to positive change is the greatest benefactor that person will ever have.

Similarly, I decided to join the Faculty Senate four years ago because I also wanted to help effect positive change here at Appalachian. Nick Biddle was Chair, we were considering university reorganization, we were discussing reforms to DPCs, among other things. It seemed to me that Appalachian was alive, ripe, and ready to bloom. And I wanted to be part of the positive changes!

Today, in spirit and in name, Appalachian has become a respected Comprehensive University. It is no longer a teacher's college. The faculty here continually rank at or near the top in student satisfaction. And they are doing work that is recognized nationally and internationally for its contribution to that what we might call the "archive of knowledge about our world." But structurally and in the practical day-to-day matters of budgets and decision making it has not caught up with that new reality.

We need to recognize that these accomplishments are not done because of the institutional structure here, but rather often are done in spite of it. We have science laboratories that are outdated, a library that is deficient, and a salary structure that puts us at or near the bottom across every rank.

So now, four years after joining The Senate - in fact, during a lunch last week - a colleague, friend, and fellow Faculty Senator expressed frustration that The Senate had accomplished nothing, NOTHING. I disagreed and listed some accomplishments: maternity leave policy, mandatory Chair term reviews/re-appointments, major overhaul of the Faculty Handbook. . . . But he just scoffed at these, implying there was so much more that needed to be done (such as increasing salaries, obtaining a 3/3 teaching load, implementing effective faculty governance. . . .) and that change was too slow. I thought about this for a long while.

Perhaps change is too slow? Certainly if you are teaching a four course load, (as opposed to the three course load that of over 70% of our faculty teach) you might think that change is too slow. Certainly if you are toward the bottom of the pay range for your rank, you would think that change is too slow. Certainly if you're afraid to speak your mind for fear of retaliation by your Chair, you too probably think change is too slow. Certainly if you work hard on committees and make substantive recommendations and get only a pat on the back and then silence and no action, you too probably think change is too slow.

Or perhaps you harbor the despairing opinion that positive change is not possible here. Some arrive at that opinion because they see nowhere to go with a problem. Maybe they can't go to their Chair because the Chair is the problem, and the Dean always backs up the Chair, and the Provost backs up the Dean. Or maybe they go to the Equity Office, which has a reputation of protecting the administration. Or maybe they go to the Grievance Hearing Committee, which has no real power. So, often by default, the Faculty Senate has become a place where faculty bring their problems. Our issues nearly always come from the general faculty, who take the time to contact senators with complaints. We do our best to research these issues, debate them, and recommend action. These recommendations are then forwarded to the Provost, who then makes a recommendation to the Chancellor, who then makes a recommendation to the Board of Trustees. . . .

Yes, change is slow. Change is even often derailed. But change, my friends and colleagues, is still possible. Not only that, change is necessary, and furthermore inevitable. The kind of changes currently

sought by the Faculty Senate (guided by issues brought to us by you) fall into three main categories: salary, workload, and governance, which are all interrelated.

Let me go into the salary issue for a moment. We receive faculty salary money in a budget line called 101-1310. There are a finite number of dollars in that line. A judgment must be made as to how much of that money goes to salaries and how much of it goes to new positions. The more positions, theoretically, the lighter the workload - but the lower the salaries. (For example, every additional academic administrative position -- like an Assistant Dean or Assistant Chair -- decreases the average faculty salary and increases the average teaching load, creating less faculty in the classroom and less money available for pay increases.)

Over the last few years The Senate has been looking at just how 101-1310 money is being used. The General Administration in Raleigh is clear on how it is to be used - for salaries of regular term instructors. However the Faculty Senate's Budget Committee found that over \$600,000 of this money has been used to fund a variety of positions that are not instructional in nature: coaches, development officers, advisors, and associate deans, to mention a few. (How much higher would our salaries be if we followed the GA rules on the use of 101-1310 money?) Fortunately, the administration has agreed to gradually make all 101-1310 money go toward regular term instructors. In fact, this year \$150,000 has been "returned" to this fund. (The Provost will be notifying us soon (today?) as to exactly where this money is going this year - new positions and/or additional money for raises?)

In addition to increasing faculty salaries (or reducing workload) through 101-1310 funds, we may get some help from the General Administration, because they are conducting yet another study of salaries. (Perhaps if they would take the money used to pay the consultants who do these salary studies and put it into the salary pool we would not be falling so far behind the other state systems?) We will see what this study reveals in the coming months.

Another possible avenue for increasing faculty salaries could come from a tuition increase. As you may know, several UNC campuses instituted tuition increases with two-thirds of the money being targeted for faculty salaries and one-third for financial aid. Raising tuition is not something that should be done lightly. North Carolina has some of the lowest tuition in the United States for its state-supported schools. There are many positive benefits to having tuition low. However, if having low tuition means that you cannot afford the teachers and the facilities to give students a high quality education, then low tuition is no bargain. A balance must be struck. The General Administration appears to be expecting the rest of the campuses to also raise their tuition next year. I would hope those tuition increases would go to support salary supplements for every member of the faculty (with the possibility of directing a portion of the money to new positions in departments where there is a critical need). The administration cannot ask us to support a tuition increase if much of that money is not going to be used to raise us out of the salary cellar we are in. I encourage you to vote for the Bond Referendum to ensure that money for capital expenses will not need to come from a tuition increase, among other reasons.

Low faculty salaries at Appalachian remains a major concern of faculty (refer to [chart](#)). Departments on campus are having trouble competing on the open market for the best and the brightest candidates. To help with this, starting salaries are raised. Which in turn causes salary compression at the middle and upper ranks, eroding morale in those who have given years of service to the institution. The salary situation at Appalachian has to be addressed. And we need to do this now, before the quality of this university suffers further.

We also need to deal with issues relating to workload. A three-course load should be the standard at a Comprehensive University. Let us accept this as our target and work toward that end.

We also need to address issues relating to shared governance. Historically, faculty have not shared in making decisions at Appalachian. Many believe this needs to change. I don't know anyone on this campus who believes we live up to the standards of shared governance outlined by AAUP. Wouldn't things be better for us all if more faculty would participate and strive for shared governance? Appalachian faculty would like to have a seat at the table. We need to make shared governance a reality at Appalachian. (This fall there is a meeting on "shared governance" being sponsored by AAUP in Washington D.C. that several Senators will be attending. (Thanks to Harvey for providing this funding.)) We hope to get some new ideas on how to complete the transition to a true Comprehensive University involving a self-regulating community of scholars. I should add that this does not imply more committees, but rather a better organization of what we currently have.

It is time for change at Appalachian. And these changes need to yield substantive gains NOW in the areas of salary, workload, and shared governance. Please participate in and support the efforts of this year's

Faculty Senate as we continue to try to open communication, change policy, and alter the structure of ASU toward our common goal of making Appalachian the best Comprehensive University it can be. Thank you. This ends my formal remarks for the faculty. Now I would like to open a dialogue between you, the general faculty and us, the Faculty Senate. Representing the Faculty Senate are the Chairs of the Faculty Senate committees. You have been provided with their names and their respective committees, and a tentative list of topics the Senate hopes to address this year. We have several microphones in the audience so you may now voice your comments, questions, and concerns to us.

Standing Committees:

- Academic Policy Committee - Paul Gates
- Budget Committee - Sandie Gravett
- Campus Planning Committee - Bill Dobson
- Committee on Committees - Mike Moore
- Welfare and Morale Committee - Chip Arnold
- Welfare of Students Committee - Patrick Rardin
- Handbook revision - Stella Anderson
- Merit - Jeff Bortz
- Deans' evaluation - Jeff Butts
- Workload - Andy Koch

Proposed Faculty Senate agenda for 2000-2001:

- August 14 - Goal setting, Committee work session, Bond referendum
- September 11 - Faculty Handbook, Chair elections, Contract agreement
- October 9 - Tuition increase, DPC/Search committees, Teaching portfolios/Post tenure review
- November 13 - Merit pay, Role of the Chair
- December 4 - Administration's evaluation process, Rental texts
- January 8 - Faculty salaries, Grievance process
- February 12 - EEOC, Core curriculum
- March 19 - General College advising, Faculty reporting processes
- April 9 - ASU organization, Emeritus privileges
- April 30 - Accomplishments, Carryover to next year

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There are 9 Category IIA schools in the UNC system. Here is a comparison of where Appalachian salaries rank with each one. (Scale 1=\$1000)

Institution	Professor	Associate	Assistant
East Carolina	-4.5	-1.7	-2.5
Fayetteville State	-2.2	-0.7	-4.5
NC A&T	+0.7	-3.9	-5.7
NCCU	-9.1	-3.1	-3.6
UNCC	-9.2	-2.6	-2.5
Pembroke	-5.9	-0.6	0.0

UNCW	-0.9	+0.9	-3.6
WCU	-0.9	-0.2	-1.4

Appalachian slightly edges out NC A&T at the Professor level, UNCW at the Associate level and ties Pembroke at the Assistant level. All other categories are at a deficit.