

General Faculty and Staff Meeting Address – August 17, 2011
Jill Ehnenn, Faculty Senate Chair, 2011-2012

Good morning, faculty and staff colleagues, Chancellor Peacock, Interim Provost Baumhover, and other friends and supporters in the audience. I bring greetings from Faculty Senate and updates about recent achievements, and this coming year's plans.

Despite budgetary hardships, and the related hardship of doing more with less, the dedicated faculty on the Senate accomplished a tremendous amount last year, starting, of course, with the Provost search. Senate significantly shaped the search criteria and was involved in the campus interviews. When we heard Lori Gonzales say "A question came to me when I was reading the Faculty Senate minutes last night" we were sold! I know she'll be hardworking and a strong advocate for faculty governance.

Last spring we also joined with our sister institutions in a resolution to the UNC General Administration that, in the aftermath of recent court cases, reaffirms academic freedom and asks that the UNC Code be appropriately modified. Here at home, we expanded the membership of our committees and councils to include representatives from University College and the College of Health Sciences; stopped a university-wide Fit For Duty Policy that would have been more intrusive than helpful; modified the Handbook attendance policy to include language on religious observances; got Academic Affairs to put all mandatory and recommended syllabi policies on one webpage for faculty ease; and put together recommendations about steps that should be taken as the university thinks about moving toward the next Carnegie Category, or DRU status.

I have been particularly pleased with the grassroots nature of some of our initiatives—such as when faculty member Bud Gerber came to Senate with a request that we make the standard expectation of student workload more explicit and visible in campus documents. Now from the undergraduate bulletin to the consolidated syllabi policies page, students will know to expect 2-3 hours of work outside of class for each hour in class. Senate has and will continue this year to solicit faculty opinions, as we did in last-semester's survey of tenure-track faculty on promotion and tenure procedures. We also will continue to improve efficiency and good-will through collaborative relationships with the chairs, deans and other administrators, as when we asked the Interim Provost to form a task force to address his desire to streamline our Promotion and Tenure process. All of these are great examples of true faculty governance at work, as was the extremely well-attended vote at the end of last year that resulted in changes to the Faculty Constitution that finally bring Appalachian's DPCs more in line with best practices for promotion and tenure, nationwide.

In short, last year your Senators were busy indeed. I also tried to do some useful things on my own when given the opportunity: thanks to productive conversations with Tim Burwell and Greg Lovins we now once again have the salary book—the BD.119--available through library reserves and online; I asked Athletic Director Charlie Cobb to hold a faculty-only focus group on the football feasibility study last spring and he arranged to have two; discussions with the Dean of Students have led to updating the student code of conduct to include electronic environments; and I had numerous conversations with Bobby Sharp during the process of putting together a new list of institutional peers.

This year, among other things, Senate will work closely with the new Provost, Lori Gonzales, to address the top items that I know are on our joint “to do” list: developing actions in response to two recently completed reports. After processing survey responses from over 300 faculty, the Gen Ed Review taskforce has recommended some significant improvements to the Gen Ed program. The Taskforce on Promotion and Tenure has recommended a streamlined format for P&T dossiers, universal DPC ballots for increased accountability and fairness, and that we have campus-wide discussions about requiring external letters and college promotion and tenure committees, both of which are common practices among our peers. These two matters-- curriculum and credentialing-- are central to what faculty do and who we are—and I am dedicated to making sure that any changes that occur will have had a widespread airing with the faculty at large and have also been thoroughly considered by Faculty Senate. Senate also will be working closely with the new Provost as we work to overhaul the Faculty Handbook, correcting inconsistencies with itself and the Resource Manual, and importantly, addressing the section on Faculty Grievances. I also intend to be a fierce advocate for reinstating the OCSAs that are central to creating conditions conducive to the highest caliber of faculty scholarship and professional development.

Finally, as you may have noticed in recent email, Senate already has been busy though the semester has not officially started. In a special Senate session this past Monday, we passed a resolution for the Chancellor to consider as he puts together the budget reduction plan due to the GA tomorrow. This resolution urges the Chancellor to institute a 2-4% “administrative fee” similar to those already in effect at most of our sister institutions. It would enable the non-teaching areas of the university that have multiple revenue streams to help out areas of the university that depend solely on state support. Faculty Senate has asked that at least half of this fee’s proceeds should go directly to the state-funded academic units to help replenish our operating budgets, which will otherwise be cut 35-40%.

Appalachian's budget MUST follow its primary mission—the academic mission-- which is carried out by the academic core. As a university, we must not allow ourselves to become fractioned into silos—Athletics here, Student Development and Housing there--and forget what we are here for in the first place—the **academic mission**. Furthermore, even in the name of strategy, we must **not** allow ourselves to become cowed by those who unfortunately have contempt for education and educators. It might help to remember that, for better or for worse, our struggles are nothing new, as evidenced by Publilius Syrus, a Roman writer and poet who was moved, by frustration to say, more than 2000 years ago, “it is only the ignorant who despise education.” The misguided notion that a nine hour teaching load means faculty work only nine hours a week must be countered by the following kinds of questions: Does the radio or TV host only work the one hour their show is on the air? Do ministers only work the 1 or 2 hours they are running a church service? Do state legislators only work the 30 weeks a year that they are in session? Better put, are they only working the hours they are on the floor, casting their vote and being counted?

Unfortunately, it seems there is a national epidemic of anti-intellectual sentiment afoot that results in the devaluing of faculty, all faculty do for students, and the important discoveries faculty make through their research. Thus, I think it not inappropriate to preach a bit to the choir

in order to regenerate, at semester's start, our tired spirits and prickled self-esteem. The fruits of faculty labor are twofold: the students we shape and the new knowledges we create. These fruits are the future of the region, the state, and the nation. Students come and go; we, the faculty remain. And what marvelous things we do while also planning classes, grading, advising, counseling, mentoring, and yes, teaching a revolving parade of students! For example:

In the College of Fine and Applied Arts, Susan Doll received \$650,000 from the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Lead Technical Studies and Healthy Homes Technical Studies Program; and Marie Hoepfl received the Council on Technology Teacher Educator of the Year Award, an international organization that presents the award to one technology teacher educator annually. In the Hayes School of Music, Suzi Mills was awarded a Fulbright to go to South Africa; and Bill Harbinson has twice been awarded the Hinda Honigman Cup, which recognizes the best music composition written by a North Carolina composer and published during the last three years.

In the College of Business, Dr. Harry Davis has been the economist for the North Carolina Bankers Association for many years and dean of the North Carolina School of Banking; and Dr. Ken Brackney, was selected as the N.C. Association of Certified Public Accountants Outstanding Educator for 2011. Dr. David Nieman, College of Health Sciences, recently completed a 2-year term as Vice-President of the American College of Sports Medicine and currently heads the ASU research team at the Human Performance Laboratory at the North Carolina Research Campus in Kannapolis; last year his group obtained \$1.14 million in research grants.

In the College of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Jeff Hirst from Math recently received Appalachian's first ever Templeton Foundation Fellowship for his work on Hindman's Theorem; and in 2009, Dr. Jeff Bortz, a historian who works on the Mexican labor relations system after the Mexican Revolution was the first ASU scholar to receive the extremely prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship. Dr. Bill Hutchins from Philosophy and Religion has received his *second* National Endowment of the Arts Literature Translation Fellowship and will use the award to translate important novels written in Arabic. Dr. Barry Kurtz, the Lowes Distinguished Professor of Computer Science, and his colleague, Dr. Jay Fenwick, received a \$250,000 National Science Foundation (NSF) grant to explore the wireless tablets' applications related to computer science education. Finally, my fellow Faculty Senator, Dr. Tim Smith, from Anthropology, has led a project to publish the first social science text written in a Guatemalan Mayan language. It will be distributed to Mayan authorities and leaders as well as school officials, teachers and students in Sololá, Guatemala.

These, along with all the faculty who have published peer-reviewed books and articles that have advanced knowledge in their field—these are stunning, valuable achievements. Appalachian will always be a great teaching institution; but to continue to think of us as Appalachian Teacher's College or as an institution that delivers grades 13-16, is to grossly underestimate not only our potential, but where we **already** are. Let us make that perfectly and frequently clear to whoever needs to be reminded of it.

The University, like its students, intellectual discoveries, goals and policies, is a growing, changing entity, and the Senate, as the representative of the faculty, is an active agent of that change. Please talk to your Senators, and to me; let us know your concerns; volunteer to serve on a committee when the next election comes around, and most of all, enjoy your teaching and your research, perhaps remembering the words of Irish poet and dramatist William Butler Yeats, who wrote: *Education is not the filling of a bucket but the lighting of a fire.*

I wish you the best in the coming semester.