

Address to the Faculty - January 8, 1998

Dr. Howard S. Neufeld, Senate Chair

Good Morning, and welcome to the General Faculty Meeting for the spring semester, 1998. I hope you all had a relaxing holiday season, and are ready for another semester of classes. Today I want to relate what the Senate has accomplished over the past semester, and our plans for the rest of this semester. After my comments, Sara Zimmerman, Vice-Chair of the Senate, will discuss upcoming elections for the Senate, and for college and university wide committees.

During the past months the Senate has been busy with a variety of issues. Let me first present our major achievements, and then discuss briefly some issues that we will all face in the ensuing years. First off, we have fixed the email problem. The Senate, Chancellor, and Office of Academic Affairs will retain the right to send messages and information to all faculty via the faculty list serve. However, the list serve is now read only, and moderated so that only official Senate and Academic affairs business can be posted to it. For those faculty who desire a conduit for discussion, the Senate, in conjunction with Academic Computing Services (my compliments to Dr. Doug May for facilitating this) will set up a new list serve, entitled FacultyVoice, which you may voluntarily subscribe to, and which will be moderated by Dr. Len Bliss. This should alleviate the annoyances that we experienced earlier with the faculty-wide list serve.

Second, the Faculty Voice will be resurrected this semester, with Dr. Peter Villanova as the editor. The first issue will be hard copy, but afterwards we will make the transition to an electronic version, posted to the Senate WEB page. We hope to make this a regular feature, with about 2 issues per semester. If any of you would like to contribute to the Voice, please contact Dr. Villanova with your ideas. Although we're still working on our WEB page, we are making progress in our goal of having all the minutes routinely posted to the WEB page for your perusal, along with a compendium of resolutions, and their status, that have been acted upon by the Senate.

The Senate recommendations for changes to the Handbook were sent to the Board of Trustees in December, where they were all approved. This now means that the terms for chairs clause, which I inadvertently thought had been sent to the Board of Governors when I addressed the faculty in August, is now truly at the Board of Governors. After discovering that the clause had been sitting in Academic Affairs for several months, the Senate passed a resolution stating that changes to the Handbook made in the fall semester be brought before the Trustees at their December meeting, and those made in the spring at their June meeting. This should help move changes along and reduce the time needed for their ultimate approval.

The grievance clause that was forced on the Senate in the spring, and which was amended by the Senate, has been found to provide satisfactorily for faculty rights, according to an analysis performed by the AAUP. Even though the Senate eventually got a clause that preserved faculty rights, Senators maintained their objections to the manner in which the Board of Trustees brought the issue to the Senate. In a follow-up, the Senate will be sending the Board of Governors a letter detailing their objections, and asking that in the future, the Senate be given adequate time to fully discuss Handbook changes, and to be able to convene faculty forums for wider input on such changes.

In another matter, the Senate has passed a resolution asking that the Administration approve a new committee, called the Faculty Grievance Assistance Committee, whose charge is to assist faculty who are contemplating bringing a grievance before the Faculty Grievance Hearing Committee. This was done to help faculty decide whether or not their grievance has sufficient merit to proceed with formal hearings, and to assist the faculty member in preparing his or her grievance. The committee would be composed of former members of the Grievance Hearing Committee. This was done to avoid potential conflicts of interest between the Committee Chair and the potential grievant. Academic Affairs has indicated that it supports this measure.

The Senate has also approved changes to the Handbook regarding Chair evaluations. The changes now mandate only one meeting a year, in the spring, (which for most departments has been the de facto standard), while for initial appointees, a follow-up meeting should be held immediately after their first semester of service for additional planning. The new terminology allows for written replies to a Chair's

evaluation by a faculty member.

The Senate is moving cautiously on DPC reforms, due to their legal implications, but progress is being made. For example, it is now clear that departments can form search committees to assist in the hiring of new faculty, as long as the search committee is either elected or appointed in some official manner and a record is kept of who serves on the committee. This is a great improvement over past practices, which allowed for only the chair and the DPC members to evaluate prospective job candidates, and enables a larger number of faculty to participate in the hiring process.

Another contentious issue is post-tenure review. A post-tenure review committee has been formed here at ASU, and as mandated by the GA, will be studying ways to implement this procedure on our campus. The Senate, of course, will follow the results of these deliberations very closely.

And now a few issues that the Senate will be addressing this semester. An ad-hoc committee was formed to study maternity leave/child care issues on campus and to determine a possible campus-wide policy for maternity/paternity leave. Some of you may have received a survey form from the committee as you came to this meeting, while everybody will eventually get this same form via email in the next day or so. We would appreciate it if you would take the time to fill it out and either mail or email it to the Senate. If you can't complete it here at this meeting, just mail it back to the address on the form. This is an extremely important issue, and we need your valuable input in order to develop a working policy for ASU.

A recent survey of most of the comprehensive schools in the UNC system revealed, not too surprisingly, that ASU is near or at the bottom when it comes to rewarding faculty for promotion and tenure. Currently, the policy at ASU is \$300 for tenure and promotion to associate from assistant, and \$400 for promotion to full professor. This pales in comparison to the \$2,000 offered for promotion to full professor at NC Central, or the \$1500 offered at UNC- Wilmington, or even the \$1000 at WCU. The budget committee of the Senate has studied the issue and will be recommending that tenure and promotion be separated in terms of their rewards; that the amounts be upped substantially, and that promotion to full professor be increased to levels competitive with other UNC institutions. Dr. Durham has indicated that he has the flexibility to increase the reward structure, and we will keep you posted as to how this comes out.

Selected faculty, staff and students will be attending a workshop on January 24th to discuss the strategic planning report for ASU. This is a follow-up meeting to the Leadership conference convened last semester, but which will focus on internal inputs from the ASU community, in contrast to the previous one which solicited mainly outside opinions. While the workshop can not accommodate all 650 faculty now on board here at ASU, we do welcome additional interested faculty who would like to attend. If you'd like to participate, please contact me at the Senate office. Because space is limited, we'll handle this on a first come, first serve basis.

Finally, a few words on two issues of concern as we approach the new millennium, if I may use what is rapidly becoming a worn out cliché. The first issue is distance learning. As new technologies come into use, as financial support for colleges continues to be tight, and the number of potential students continues to grow, there is increasing pressure to expand our reach to the non-traditional student, and to offer courses off-campus for those who can not make the journey here. In addition, new "virtual universities" are springing up all around us, offering courses and degrees either via videotaped lectures, or the Internet. Just this week I received a brochure from an internet university offering canned lectures from Harvard, and other notable colleges. Will the professoriate become outmoded? Will the traditional lecture/laboratory experience be surpassed by computer simulations, and internet connectivity? How will public universities compete with these new private, online universities? Is the traditional university experience a thing of the past?

My feelings on this are ambivalent to some degree. On the one hand, as Tevye the milkman would say, I can see the benefit of trying to reach out to a greater audience and of making use of new technologies. On the other hand, too great an investment in distance technologies, given our limited resources, could be a detriment to our ability to provide the traditional resident student with a quality

educational experience.

Part and parcel to getting a diploma comes the intellectual stimulation of interpersonal contact, whether it be student-to-student, or professor-to-student. Classroom interactions offer personal collaboration on a scale and intimacy not attainable with today's technology. There is simply no substitute for the on-campus experience. What kind of student will be produced that has worked in the isolation of their home for four years, compared to a student who has engaged in extra-curricular activities, laboratories in the sciences, and projects in the humanities. How will a cyberspace student take a field trip?

I think it is inevitable that distance learning will grow and expand in importance, and even fulfill, as it is doing to a small extent now, certain vital needs for students in surrounding communities. But the initial euphoria over the potential of distance learning is, I think, over hyped. Questions about its economic costs, its temporal costs, and the social consequences of learning at home are yet to be resolved. Currently, a large number of faculty, staff and administrators here at ASU, and at other campuses in the UNC system, are working on the challenges of distance learning. My gut feeling is that the traditional university student is going to be around for the foreseeable future. But to stay competitive in the changing milieu of educational opportunity, we must be prepared to carve out our special niche and to find new ways to enrich the on-campus intellectual experience.

The second issue is tenure. We've seen attacks on the tenure system increase over the past decade, with no let up in sight. In Massachusetts, former Governor Weld's appointment as head of the Board of Higher Education, James Carlin, a business person, has met with great disdain among faculty at the state colleges, particularly after he called for the abolition of tenure at all state institutions. His disparaging remarks about the professoriate reveal a fundamental lack of understanding of the role of higher education, and the means by which it should be achieved. We should all count our blessings that North Carolina has been spared such despotic leadership. But we can not let our guard down. The effort to do away with tenure is based on very flimsy data (it encourages lazy professors, keeps incompetent ones around too long, and so on). In actuality, incompetent professors are estimated to make up less than 2% of the total population of faculty, which to me says that 98% of us are doing a great job. I can think of no other industry that can claim such a high competency rating.

Tenure is the hallmark of academic freedom, and we must be vigilant in our efforts to preserve it. I think you are all aware of the phenomenon of the red tides, which kill thousands of fish, and the fact that Dr. Joanne Burkholder at NC State has been instrumental in its discovery. Her findings led her to conclude that the Neuse River was not safe for people at certain times. Some mid-level beauracrat wanted her fired from NC State for her remarks, because it would hurt tourism. But tenure prevented that from happening, and the beauracrat I understand was himself fired. Examples like these, and others, serve as all the justification we need to keep the tenure system in place. The Senate will be watching very closely to see that post-tenure review does not open to the door to eventual elimination of tenure in North Carolina.

Well, that brings me to the end of my comments. In conclusion, the current Senate has accomplished a great deal over these past few months, and I want to thank each and every Senator for their hard work and long hours. I hope that we, your Faculty Senate, have done well in your eyes, and for us to be as productive this coming semester as the past one. When I think of all that we have done these past few months, I am reminded of one of my favorite phrases from the poem Maud Muller, by John Greenleaf Whittier: "For all sad words of tongue and pen, The saddest are these: 'it might have been.'" I am confident that this Senate will have very few "might have beens"!!