

Presented on August 22, 2005 in Farthing Auditorium during University Faculty Assembly meeting by Dr. Michael Moore, Faculty Senate Chair.

Good Morning.

The weather is beautiful; students are all over the place and faculty can't find their usual parking spaces. Buildings are still being renovated, torn down and built up. And, we have new, quite nicely configured walkways in the center of campus; but I hope the settling bricks outside I.G. Greer Hall will be fixed before water and then ice accumulates.

Last year this meeting was dominated by a sense of new beginnings: Chancellor Peacock spoke of dreaming new directions and building a leadership team. A quick response to the latter was: whose leadership team? And what will it do?

We are getting a good sense of that after one full year. Quite a bit has happened, much of which has already been addressed by Provost Aeschleman this morning and I'm sure Chancellor Peacock will provide additional context.

But it is clear: Appalachian State University is adding to its core of undergraduate education, expanding its educational mission, and seeking new professional offerings. This is a very large university to still have the identifying tag of being a "comprehensive," and the role of faculty in collegial management of this growth with administration will be crucial to our successful future.

My main concern this morning is to highlight two ways in which Faculty and Faculty Senate, which represents the faculty in our administrative structure, can lay foundations for secure and innovative professional accomplishment that will improve the quality of our students and their opportunities for success, and thus improve our reputation as a respected university faculty. One is by undertaking a full review of faculty evaluation practices and support for faculty development. This should encourage a more secure and active faculty, which, in turn, will attract more quality students--who in turn, of course, stimulate the faculty.

A second way is for faculty, led by the Faculty Senate, to review thoroughly the Senate's role in the governance of Appalachian and its representation of faculty interests and its discussion of university issues. Shared governance underwrites the highest quality faculty and faculty voice in this university. The Faculty Senate is the primary means by which this essential value is protected and used to the benefit of the university. Senate, too, should lay foundations for its future as the official voice of the faculty at Appalachian.

We are fortunate to have as provost a person who has been in the trenches in both research and comprehensive universities; who is an experienced, productive scholar, teacher, and administrator, and who understands faculty values, and is committed to working with faculty to improve our professional lives and thus the quality of Appalachian. Stan Aeschleman believes fundamentally that faculty must share in governing and must take responsibility for their own professional lives. The new pre-tenure contract structure and automatic stopping of the tenure clock for major personal needs, were his initiatives. They are examples of policies that improve faculty security, and our recruitment and evaluation of probationary faculty—to everyone's benefit. But, they also require further consideration of their full influence, when implemented.

We are fortunate to have as chancellor a person absolutely devoted to this university. For those who might think that Ken Peacock's enthusiasms might get out-of-hand, it is important to note that he is really a cautious person. He seeks the fullest input from all sectors of our university while being as open as possible to faculty as well as other voices, before committing us to a course. It also means he must seek as much funding as possible to underwrite our changing needs. So far, a fair assessment is that Peacock has been successful in both areas.

Second-level administrative leadership is also being organized. So, let me take this opportunity to welcome Randy Edwards as the interim dean of the Walker College of Business, and another new leader who fits the mold—Bob Lyman, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Bob Lyman, like Stan, has proven, productive experience as a teacher, scholar and administrator, in research and comprehensive universities; he is committed to faculty shared governance and to helping faculty improve our professional lives. He, too, understands faculty values and needs. So, North Georgia's loss is our gain; although I'm not sure North Georgia yet knows he is in Boone, not Dablonaga. According to the website for the North Georgia College of Arts and Letters, Lyman is still their dean. Regardless, he has a major role to play in leading our largest college and the base upon which the university curriculum is built. Again, welcome Bob.

Let me briefly address Faculty Senate business over the last year, before saying a little more about faculty development at Appalachian.

Serious issues arose last fall that led Senate to unanimously recommend a faculty-supervised University Committee responsible for advising about textbooks and scholarly activities of the University Bookstore. At the same time, Senate overwhelmingly recommended the elimination of the textbook rental system—an old, old saw here that previously never got a full hearing by responsible administrators. Now, of course, rising costs of higher education have become a hot-button issue, and textbook rental has received attention as a possible means of combating cost.

The issue is now getting a full hearing by the University Committee of faculty and students that is chaired by Glen Ellen Starr Stilling. Regardless of the ill-advised and ill-informed politicization of this issue, the committee seems to be doing just what we should expect of university investigations, finding, assembling, and interpreting reliable information that addresses the relative interests of receiving and providing long-lasting education. At bottom, this is quintessentially a faculty matter—what will be taught and how is solely the province of faculty; but obviously faculty should be sensitive to student situations. Yet, there are numerous, powerful interests beyond the university that affect textbooks and the education we entrust faculty to provide. At least, the chancellor will be well-informed when he makes this call.

Senate sought to develop a significantly closer relationship with the Foundation, an initiative that has been welcomed by interim vice-chancellor Jerry Hutchens and Foundation chair Robert Turchin. Chuck Pier has been actively participating in meetings assessing decisions about activities such as investments and fund raising. Senate seeks any faculty member interested in serving in this capacity to let us know. We have developed an application procedure for this.

The Foundation has begun to address its desire to support faculty work by committing \$50,000 for faculty scholarly and professional development. I want the Senate to work with the Foundation and Provost to establish the policies and procedures for awarding this money. This is welcome news; we hope it is just a beginning. Remember, the more the Foundation makes, the more faculty can find additional support for their work. We have a sound and growing Foundation; it deserves faculty support and it will benefit from faculty expertise.

Senate also established a committee on Faculty Retirement, which began its work last spring and will continue this fall. A report should be made by the end of the year. It will address the status of the emeritus rank and other means by which retired faculty, if they wish, can define their relationship with the university. We should be seeking improved information not only about retirement but planning for it; we should be seeking improved recognition for significant accomplishments over one's career at Appalachian. And, last, but not least, of course, thanks go to Kate Brinko and her staff in the Hubbard Center for working creatively to expand and improve new faculty orientation—and thanks also to Senators such as Brian Felkel and Gayle Weitz who participated. A useful and, I hope, successful addition was a day devoted to the interests of faculty who have come here—in the last two years.

And, now to Faculty evaluation and development.

We are familiar with the rising tide of concern about rote evaluation, intrusive evaluation, conflicting evaluation, and the policies and practices of their implementation. Evaluation is one of our main jobs—of students, of ourselves, and of administration. We should expect that, for instance, in merit rewards there must be in place clear, consistent, and agreed upon means by which to justify the result. And these should be openly and easily accessible to all faculty. This should be done at the levels of department, college, and Academic Affairs—wherever there are merit rewards provided to faculty. Nonetheless, necessary evaluation must be realistically fitted to faculty workloads. That must be an important concern, if evaluation is to have meaning and utility.

Personnel structures such as DPCs, annual report forms, and college level T & P committees as means of expanding faculty governance should be reviewed with our future needs in mind.

We should review and seek to expand support for faculty professional development, especially for faculty scholarly and creative work. We should examine what is the basic university-wide commitment to all faculty work and then consider additional opportunities in international research and teaching, the distribution of OCSAs, and other issues such as domestic concerns that affect faculty life.

Finally, there is the increasingly obvious issue of salary compression between the ranks. This must be addressed constantly over the years, if any significant remedy is to be achieved.

This university needs to assess plan its future, and the faculty not only must be a major part of both; but faculty must also assess and plan their unique worlds to promote the highest professional standards. If we don't; someone else will. And we might not like the results.

I may have gone on too long here, but we have important work to do in order to establish the bases for faculty to have as much control as possible over their professional lives at Appalachian and as much support as possible to do so successfully. And, we have an administration that also believes in shared governance and faculty participation. Even if it isn't all perfect, it is an opportunity to build foundations for a future of excellence. Real opportunities don't often enough come about. We need to snap this one up. Thanks for listening. I'm glad you're all here safe and sound, well, sound enough.

Thanks also to the many faculty who responded to our call for volunteers to serve on university committees. We will issue another call this fall. It's our responsibility to serve the university, even if it sometimes seems like very few want to take it on. Yet, it has to be done.

It's like the story of Joseph confronting the innkeeper and saying that he needed a room because his wife was pregnant. When the innkeeper said, "well its not my fault she's pregnant," Joseph snapped back, "Well, it's not my fault either; but she still needs a room."