Faculty Senate Report to the Board of Trustees
July 2012

- Internal Senate Updates
The new Senate year began with a double whammy: the impending separation of service of our long-standing Senate and Grievance Board coordinator Ms. Cathy Sturkie, and the need to leave our Senate home in the Strom Thurmond Institute. We are grateful for the unfailing support of Dean of Libraries Kay Wall and Provost Helms in securing a new home and new coordinator in a fashion and on a timescale that accommodated our needs.

I have instituted a monthly Senate President newsletter to enhance communications from the Senate across campus. The first three newsletters are available online at: http://www.clemson.edu/faculty-staff/faculty-senate/president-newsletter.html

- Senate Activities
The Senate was active prior to its July recess, endorsing academic policy changes needed to facilitate the Banner implementation, approving a Faculty Manual change allowing lecturers to serve on Department curriculum and advisory committees, and passing a change in the Faculty Manual related to evaluation of teaching. This last change, which attempts to move faculty teaching evaluation out of the hands of students exclusively, deserves additional comment. First, I want to commend Provost Helms for supporting this change, which I believe has enormous potential to position Clemson in a distinctive leadership position for the benefit of its students.

The historical onset of student evaluations 4-5 decades ago coincides with the nationwide phenomena of grade inflation and reduction in reported student workload. Of course, correlation does not equal causation, but there are highly quantitative behavioral models (e.g., http://environment.yale.edu/kotchen/pubs/gradeval.pdf) demonstrating that the use of student evaluations naturally leads to these results. The result of overreliance on student evaluations is, unfortunately, the subject matter of Academically Adrift — a report that argues the existence of a lack of meaningful impact of colleges and universities on educational outcomes. Some of those arguments were made during the development of our own Quality Enhancement Plan during the past few months. The changes endorsed by the Senate present the opportunity for Clemson to stop doing what other universities are doing and what appears to be driving undesirable unintended consequences for our students.

I want to go further, though, and note that the onset of student evaluations also coincides with the onset of marked declines in student mental health and increasingly manifest and detrimental consequences of student substance abuse. I know that the tragic consequences of these phenomena are a matter of utmost concern to this august body and the full Board; they are a matter of concern to faculty as well. What I want to suggest is that because these issues have part of their origin in academic and external policies, they are not best addressed as exclusively student affairs issues—they are academic issues as well. The Senate stands ready to work with the Board and the administration in addressing them.
• **Issues in the Coming Year**

I expect the Senate to work on myriad issues in the coming year. I have asked our Welfare Committee to investigate benefits and implications of changing our Department head system to a true first-among-peers Department chair system, and to work with HR in considering improvements to sick leave policy for lecturers. I have asked our Scholastic Policies Committee to consider benefits and implications for contextual transcripts for Clemson students. Our Policy Committee will soon begin work to policy revisions related to the evaluation and advancement of lecturers, and the appointment of interim Department Chairs.

The Senate has received a number of concerns expressed by faculty related to: the effects of the new managed print service policy on faculty productivity, the rationale for and equity of the new low emission vehicle parking policy, compensation relative to market, University strategy and decision-making processes guiding faculty hiring and perceived non-core initiatives, the e-portfolio policy, the quality enhancement plan, the role of economic development and agriculture and extension at the University, student access and selectivity and credentialing, and the University mission statement.

I’m pleased to report to the Board that the Senate has been working productively and collaboratively with President Barker, Provost Helms, and VP of Finance and Operations Dalton to explore some of these issues. It’s a pleasure to thank them for receiving these concerns and working collaboratively and in good faith with Senate leadership and faculty representatives to address them. The fruits of this work are in reach: examples might include development of systematic, well-defined, and data driven processes to guide compensation decisions and faculty hiring.

• **Closing Thoughts: Clemson and U Va**

I’m sure the Board followed with interest the recent kerfuffle at UVa. Lost in this episode, but of great interest to me, was Rector Dragas’ enumeration and description of challenges facing UVa that guided her actions. These challenges included declining state and federal funding, the development of online and massive enrollment courses by other institutions, the need to carefully deploy scarce resources, the pressures of stable faculty workload and student educational experience, declining faculty compensation, and the need for increased transparency and accountability related to productivity and educational quality.

These certainly must sound familiar to the Clemson Board of Trustees! However, they also sound familiar to the Faculty Senate—these issues, which are deeply intertwined, are of keen importance and abiding, passionate interest to faculty. My observation is that when stakeholders at Clemson work together in a manner that does not depend upon other parties surrendering or compromising their interests and concerns, but instead focuses on mutual accommodation of their interests and concerns, they can do great things. My commitment is that the Senate will continue to work in such a fashion with you and the administration so that we can respond, not react, to these great challenges of our time.
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Respectfully submitted,

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