**Draft Minutes**

**General Faculty meeting**

**December 15, 2011**

**122 Wallace Hall**

**12:20 p.m.**

**I. Call to Order:** The General Faculty Meeting was called to order by the Senate Chairperson, Prof. Tim Ruhnke, at approximately 12:30 p.m.

**II. Approval of minutes:** Printed copies of the minutes of the August 16th General Faculty Meeting (and of the proposed agenda for this December meeting) were available before the meeting and had been emailed to the faculty. Two minor corrections were accepted without dissent, and a motion to approve the minutes was passed.

**III. Approval of agenda:** A motion to approve the agenda passed.

**IV. Remarks from the Chair:** Prof Ruhnke reported on activities of the Faculty Senate and its Executive Committee since the last general faculty meeting, covering three main topics:

A. The committee to operate the honors program has been set up, and not without difficulty and hard work, notably by Prof. Genia Sklute (chemistry) and others.

B. The Senate criticized the expense of hosting the faculty-staff Christmas party, with the result that the location and scale of the party were changed.

C. The Senate received and discussed a report from Melvin Jones, interim Vice President for Business and Finance, on the financial situation of the University and the budget proposals for the coming year. Prospects are “risky”.

**V. Business:**

**A. PEIA Medical Coverage**: Joshua Sword, Employee Representative on the financial governing board of the Public Employees Insurance Agency, provided an informative report on imminent changes in health insurance provisions. Inflation in medical costs has been 6%, but the increase in state-provided funds was only 4%, which is the overall inflation rate of the economy. The rising costs of providing health care have previously been met in two ways, i.e.: premium increases and increases in the deductible amount. This year, however, there will be a reduction in benefits. The law requires that the money for these benefits be shared in a proportion so that the employer (state) pays eighty percent and employees pay twenty percent, and this limited the amount that premiums could be raised.

Mr. Sword provided a long list of changes in benefits, and increases in the specified amounts required for copays. Retirees face a 9% increase, and there is a lot of concern that, because of the looming ten-billion dollar liability for health care for future retirees, (called OPEB), there will be deeper cuts in retiree benefits, perhaps in the form of a “cap” on the percentage that may be allocated for retirees. In response to questions, Sword noted that if the present changes were insufficient to close the gap between costs and revenue, there would be more cuts next year, and he was unable to answer a question about coverage for non-diagnostic testing.

**B. 1. Presidential Search and President’s Contract:** Prof. Thomas Guetzloff, faculty representative on the Board of Governors, reported that the BoG has chosen a firm, Greenwood/Asher & Associates, Inc., which will handle the search for a new president. The planned time-line for the search was displayed on the screen. The Board of Governors will choose a search advisory committee of twelve people connected with the University, including two faculty members, to be appointed in January. To be a member of the search advisory committee, a person would have to agree to keep the committee’s activities confidential until after some interviews to be held in April or May.

Discussion ranged over a variety of aspects of the search. The faculty should choose members for the committee who are supportive of the mission of the university, who understand that the University needs a president who will be a fund-raiser and a leader, and who will interact with the faculty.(Ruhnke, Magan, Ladner) Prof. R. Ford proposed that the faculty set up a steering committee to discuss this selection of faculty members to recommend to the BoG for the search advisory committee. A variety of conditions for this selection were proffered, e.g., a research person, a person who appreciates the “historically black” aspects, one who understands the nature of the Land Grant university. Faculty asked why the interviews were scheduled so late, i.e., April and May, to which Prof. Guetzloff replied that the Board had kept the dates deliberately vague, but that the consulting firm (which has handled searches for WVU and the HEPC) considers the time-line realistic. Ruhnke noted that Mr. Larry Rowe, the BoG chair, is trying to move the process along swiftly. After a discussion about the faculty’s time-line for dealing with this issue (involving Armstrong, O. Banks, R. Ford, T. Ford-Ahmed, Ladner, Lewis, Lucas, Marrash-Minnerly, Ruhnke, Vaughn, and others), a motion was made, seconded, and passed, “To empower a committee to recommend two faculty members to serve on the search advisory committee or otherwise to respond to the request by Board Chairman Rowe.”

**B.2 President H. W. Carter’s Contract:** Projected on the screen was language from part 12 of the five-year contract which is being amended by a special personnel committee of the BoG, including Governors Rowe, Williams, Brothers-Smith, and possibly another. It was pointed out that Prof. Guetzloff, who as a BoG member probably knows more than the rest of the faculty, is under an obligation of confidentiality to the Board. Other faculty noted that it seems that President Carter expects to continue his employment in some capacity, after he has retired as president. The BoG is about to approve the modified contract, after considerable debate. Many faculty expressed the idea that such matters are, or should be, public, while others recognized that state law allows for discussions of personnel matters to be confidential, though the final result will have to be public. Discussion pointed out that the lingering presence of the retired president may inhibit the new president as well as the search for the new president. President Carter’s future duties are assumed to be in the area of fund-raising, and this has not been one of his talents. Profs. Ladner and Ruhnke pointed out that the BoG will decide what Dr. Carter’s duties are, and that it has not yet made this information public. Others said that money for his salary could be much more productively spent on other activities, in this “risky” financial period, and someone estimated that it would amount to 60 or 70 dollars per student. Some felt that the faculty could put pressure on the BoG by going public with these complaints, and this led to a discussion of the effect of such publicity on the University as a whole. A motion that “the faculty request the BoG to inform the faculty of whether Dr. Carter has resigned as of June” died for lack of a second. Numerous professors urged their colleagues to attend the coming meeting of the BoG and express their ideas and feelings to the Governors in person.

**C. Financial Status of WVSU:** According to Prof. Ruhnke, in an earlier report to the Faculty Senate, the interim Vice President for Business and Finance, Mr. Melvin Jones, noted that financially, there is very little “cushion”, that there may be a “negative balance” at the end of the fiscal year, and that the situation will worsen next year because of the emigration of the Community and Technical College, but that the Chancellor of the Higher Education Policy Commission endorses adding money to the WVSU allocation, which, if it happens, would get the institution to a “zero balance” for the next year. The University needs to pursue both legislative relief and student recruitment to relieve the financial stress. In the discussion that ensued, a question was asked about the effect of “indirect costs” which is a category of income from research and other grants. It was reported that Vice President Jones states that such funds are in an identified account in Academic Affairs.

**D. Holiday Party, Graduation on Campus:** The Senate has been pointing out to the Administration some costly activities which could be modified to save funds, specifically, graduation and the traditional holiday party for the faculty and staff. Graduation, while partially covered by a graduation fee imposed on the graduating students, is heavily supported with funds from general revenue, possibly $16,500. There is a dinner that costs 12-13 thousand dollars, and the use of the Civic Center costs 10 or 12 thousand dollars. The suggestion has been made that graduation be held on campus, (a practice that was common many years ago), although there is not an arena or auditorium large enough for the entire commencement crowd. Also, the Senate has “gone at it” with the administration three times on the idea that the traditional holiday party is a financial drain that could be reduced, with the result that the party will be held on campus and no University or Foundation funds will be used to pay for it. One comment was that probably university personnel will be setting it up.

**E. Phased and/or Early Retirement:** Prof. James Spencer, who has worked with the idea of phased or early retirement for years, reported that VP Jones wants to create a “phased” model under which faculty could partially retire. Years ago, there was an effort in this direction, but the result was some sort of early buyout which would benefit people who wanted to retire completely, but did not allow a gradual reduction of duties. It was moved and seconded that “Prof. Spencer be authorized to look into this matter and asked to report on it in January.” The motion passed.

**VI.** It was moved and seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed.