

Winthrop University Faculty Conference
August 23, 2002
2:00 pm
Plowden Auditorium

I. Approval of Minutes from April 12 and April 19 Faculty Conferences

Dr. Marilyn Smith, Chair of Faculty Conference, called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. with 122 faculty members in attendance. The minutes of the April 12 and April 19 Faculty Conferences were approved. (Two sets of minutes were subject to approval because there had not been enough time to distribute the April 12 minutes prior to the April 19 meeting.)

II. Welcome and Introductory Remarks

Dr. Smith introduced Dr. Kelly Richardson, Assistant Professor of English, as Secretary of the Faculty Conference. Dr. Eddie Lee, Associate Professor of History, was also introduced as Parliamentarian.

III. Report from the June 7, 2002 Board of Trustees Meeting

Dr. Smith noted that the meeting began with the Board's recognition of six departing members for meritorious service, including Dr. Jim Johnston.

The chair then noted that the Executive Committee reported they had given President DiGiorgio an "extremely positive evaluation." Since this was the highest rating he had received at Winthrop, they would recommend to the Agency Head Salary Commission the maximum available salary increase. Also, a one-year extension was added to his contract, making the expiration date 2005.

Dr. Smith next reported that Larry Durham, one of our Board members, will be serving on the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) Board representing teaching institutions. It had been determined that it would not be a conflict of interest for him to serve on our Board and the CHE Board at the same time.

The chair went on to state that the Academic Affairs Committee reviewed and approved the Distance Learning Committee's recommendations to revise the distance learning mission and goals per one of the recent SACS recommendations.

The chair next discussed three items that relate to faculty salaries. First, the Finance Committee recommended a 15% student fee increase for the administration to allocate according to the "expressed initiatives of the Board." Specially designated student fees cover the technology and capital improvement initiatives. The chair emphasized that the goal is to move faculty average salaries to a "leadership position with peers in the state." Secondly, in his report to the Board, Dr. Jim Johnston emphasized again the critical nature of faculty salaries and the need to continue to pursue salary enhancement as a goal. Finally, Dr. Giorgio highlighted our outstanding results on Performance Funding measures as "Exceeds Standards." The chair sees these three points as indicative of the work being done to address faculty salaries at Winthrop.

Finally, the chair reported that Mr. Bob Gahagan will serve as Chair of the Board of Trustees for 2002-2003. Also, Mr. Andrew Markners will be serving as the Chair of the Council of Student Leaders (which has replaced the Student Government Association) and will be invited to attend Board meetings to provide student perspective on issues; however, he will not be an official member.

IV. Report from the President

President DiGiorgio welcomed the faculty to the academic year and reminded them of the availability of his opening speech on the President's page (www.winthrop.edu/president) as that speech underscores several key ideas for the upcoming year.

He next discussed several ideas with the faculty. First, he reminded faculty of the impending weekend return of students and made a few remarks about the "pardon our progress" nature of the campus. After providing an example of some of the difficulties the construction crews have faced, he acknowledged the good work that Walter Hardin and his group have done as well as expressed optimism that the plans will be completed soon.

Second, the President noted changes in the Welcome Week schedule that will balance social and academic activities for the students. He explained that required mini-convocations would be held and thanked faculty who were participating in that effort.

Thirdly, the President made several remarks about possible "dark clouds" concerning the budget. The State was approximately 150-160 million dollars short of balancing the state budget last year, something that is required by law. The reserve funds have been depleted, and a deficit of approximately 140 million dollars remains. He has attempted to find out how the State will deal with this situation, but a solution has not yet been found. His "fear is that our current budget may be tapped to pay for last year's excess" and that is "problematic" because "we have already been advised that we needed to sequester at least five percent of this year's budget to go toward the probable budget shortfall this year. Unless revenues increase substantially, there will not be enough revenue in the state of SC to match the projections." The President reassured the faculty that funds had been sequestered to supply the 5% if that is necessary; however, any amount more than 5% would result in "some serious reckoning" to meet that request. The President did remind faculty of the progress that Winthrop has been able to make despite previous cuts. The President also stated that he gave a budget presentation to the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) two days ago. He did stress Winthrop's high performance standards.

The President concluded his remarks by reminding faculty of a few key upcoming dates: Sunday's arrival of students, Tuesday's Convocation, and Friday's Welcome Back party. He also asked faculty if they had any questions before welcoming them back again.

V. Report from the Vice President for Academic Affairs

After welcoming the faculty, Dr. Melford Wilson opened his remarks by expressing appreciation for the faculty's patience this summer as renovations of Bancroft have taken place. He also thanked those General Education committees that met this summer.

Dr. Wilson then discussed another change occurring this year. He encouraged faculty to be more mindful of the average-achieving Winthrop student instead of mainly focusing on high-achieving or low-achieving students. He explained that 90% of our SC students participate in the lottery scholarship program that requires students to maintain a B average. In Georgia where this program has been in place, 20-30% of students did not maintain the required average. In a pilot SC study, only 42% of students were successful. Consequently, Dr. Wilson asked the faculty to make a "mental shift"; he stated very clearly that he was not suggesting "automatic grade inflation or anything like that" but was instead asking faculty to help students by such things as offering special study sessions. Other support programs are being developed as well. Dr. Wilson also reminded faculty of the implications this "B" average requirement will have on advising because of the way transfer credit and grade point averages work.

VI. Introduction of New Administrators and Faculty

After commending the new faculty, Dr. Wilson introduced each of the Deans, who introduced new faculty from their respective divisions.

VII. Introduction of 2002-2003 Committee Chairs and Committee Reports

Before making introductions to the various committees, the chair clarified to faculty how to contact her and the chair of Academic Council. Marilyn Smith is listed under "Jessie Smith" in the directory, while Ginger Williams is listed as "Virginia Williams." She also noted that most of the committees have not met since April 19.

Dr. Ginger Williams, Chair of Academic Council, announced there was no committee report.

Dr. Will Thacker, Chair of the General Education Committee, announced that the General Education subcommittees, which met during the summer, presented preliminary reports at the Academic Leadership Retreat. Final reports will be in September 1 to be discussed, and then the General Education Task Force and Committee will make recommendations to Academic Council. Recommendations will then come to Faculty Conference.

Dr. Alice Burmeister, Chair of Faculty Concerns, stated there was no committee report.

Dr. Dwight Dimaculangan, Chair of Budget Priorities, said that he had had a report, but the contents had already been covered in the chair's remarks.

Pat Ballard, Chair of the Rules Committee, announced that the Kerley method and instructions are available on the Vice President of Academic Affairs' website

(www.winthrop.edu/acad_aff/). She asked that faculty who use the Kerley program make sure that their Excel program has security set to medium and not high.

Dr. Bill Naufftus, Chair of the Personnel Committee, stated that there was no committee report.

There were no other Committee reports.

VIII. Old Business

There was no old business.

IX. New Business

There was no new business.

X. Announcements

There was an announcement that there would be a Graduate Faculty Assembly immediately following the Faculty Conference meeting.

An announcement was made that five speaker sessions sponsored by the Teaching and Learning Center will be held this fall. Details may be obtained from the TLC website (www.winthrop.edu/tlc).

XI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Kelly L. Richardson
Faculty Conference Secretary