

Approved November 14, 2007

### Minutes of 10.17.07 Faculty Assembly Executive Council (EC) Meeting

Present: All EC members except Amruth Kumar and Marcia Sexton; (late: James Morley)

The meeting began at 9:00 with the EC meeting alone. At 9:30, President Mercer and Provost Barnett joined the EC meeting as scheduled.

#### EC-Only Session (9:00-9:30)

The following were discussed:

1. Sabbaticals: Faculty Assembly President Karlin updated the EC on the status of implementing the Sabbaticals negotiated in the new AFT contract. The administration has announced to the campus that up to six Sabbaticals will be awarded for 2008-2009, and that up to the full amount authorized by the State will be available for award in subsequent years provided appropriate criteria are established and implemented. EC agreed to recommend to the Provost that a faculty Task Force be formed to draft such criteria for implementation beginning for proposals submitted in Fall 2008. EC also agreed to recommend that the Task Force be composed of one tenured faculty member from each academic unit, one ex-officio member from the AFT local Executive Committee, and one ex-officio member from the Faculty Assembly EC. Recommendations from the Task Force will be brought through the EC to the Faculty Assembly and then forwarded to the Provost early in the Spring 2008 semester.

Action Item: Recommend to Provost formation of the Task Force and clarification of the charge.

2. Strategic Plan: The third revision/final draft of the Strategic Plan has been posted on the Intranet and forwarded to the Board of Trustees for discussion and vote. Many of the revisions suggested by EC to the first two drafts have been incorporated in the final draft. EC reviewed which of its suggested revisions to the second draft were incorporated in the final draft and which were not, so implications could be discussed with President Mercer. Areas and language identified for clarification included 1) Consequences of resource allocation stemming from description of the College's liberal arts commitment, 2) Need for recognizing and supporting the primary role of the faculty in furthering student learning, 3) Importance of enhancing the academic/intellectual aspects of the College community's life, and 4) Value of specifying shared collegial as part of the College's cultural norms and operational mode.

Action Item: Convey to President Mercer and Provost Barnett the faculty position on the four items identified above relative to language in the final draft of the Strategic Plan, and receive clarification on the administration's position on those items.

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EC Session with President Mercer and Provost Barnett (9:30-11:10)

The following were discussed:

1. Task Force on Criteria for Sabbaticals (working title) (to be implemented for applications submitted beginning in Fall 2008): EC recommended the formation and composition of this Task Force to President Mercer and Provost Barnett. The recommendation was accepted. Task Force charge and completion date were discussed; and distinctions between AFT contractual jurisdiction and EC consultative role to Administration were stated. Discussion regarding the Task Force's charge identified the need to formulate criteria that will accommodate disciplinary differences in scholarship and recognize excellence in sabbatical proposals. Discussion also included the need for academic planning at the unit and program level that would allow faculty equal access to sabbatical consideration regardless of the courses they teach. President Mercer expressed willingness for future academic planning that accommodates the potential ability of every faculty member to take an earned sabbatical every seventh year, if the state were to allow the College to award that number of sabbaticals.

Action Item: EC will draft the Task Force's charge and composition, share the draft with the AFT local, and forward it to Provost by day's end for timely college wide distribution.

2. Strategic Plan: President Mercer confirmed that the final draft of the Strategic Plan as posted has been submitted to the Board of Trustees, and explained the process for consideration of the Strategic Plan by the Board of Trustees. An intention of the Strategic Plan's focus on three goals (academic excellence, fiscal soundness, and engagement internally/externally), and its relatively lean tone in addressing these, is to expedite the Plan being operationalized through development of three-year rolling plans at the unit level. Such mid-range operational plans will both reflect specific priorities and strategies at the local level, and guide more meaningful discussion and allocation of attendant resources.

The four items identified by EC for clarification (see #2, above) were then addressed

- a. Consequences of resource allocation stemming from description of the College's liberal arts commitment: President Mercer said that the Strategic Plan's language reflected the realities of the College in which the liberal arts is the foundation for and integrated into all programs, and the importance of not having a culture perceiving there to be a two-tier academic program. Provost Barnett said that many liberal arts academic models are highly "silo'd" with strong disciplinary boundaries that are inconsistent with the interdisciplinary strength central to Ramapo's mission. Feedback from a recent Accrediting team illustrated the extent to which Ramapo College's professional programs apply the liberal arts foundation from their General Education courses in their professional studies. EC clarified and restated the importance of not downgrading the College's commitment to the liberal arts and, specifically, of not diminishing resources for liberal arts programs at the College.
- b. Need for recognizing and supporting the primary role of the faculty in furthering student learning: EC recognized and affirmed the language change in the Strategic Plan from meeting student needs to delivering student learning. EC restated the

importance of recognizing and supporting the central role and responsibility of the faculty in achieving academic excellence, including having adequate numbers of faculty and support for ongoing development of faculty as scholars and teachers.

- c. Importance of enhancing the academic/intellectual aspects of the College community's life: The value of ensuring that advancing community engagement includes enhancing its out of class academic/intellectual aspects was restated.
- d. Value of specifying shared collegial as part of the College's cultural norms and operational mode: EC restated its interest in seeing this formally affirmed in writing, as written documents ensure continuity of principles and practices through transitions of any individuals.

Action Item 1: President Mercer suggested that when the Strategic Plan is passed, its distribution could be accompanied by a cover document in which he clarifies commitment to items such as those identified in this discussion.

Action Item 2: EC suggested a task force representing various constituencies to explore and recommend actions to advance the academic/intellectual aspects of the College community's life.

3. Budget: EC raised concerns expressed by some regarding visible signs of significant expenditures on non-academic items such as tress, walkways, and sculpture at a time of fiscal constraint. President Mercer explained that such "cosmetic" expenditures are mandated by the state and/or as part of capital expenditures, and are outside of discretionary funding decisions to be made by the College.
4. Parking: EC updated President Mercer and Provost Barnett regarding the status of creating parking mechanisms allowing faculty, staff, and students to park as close as possible to where they work and/or learn. EC representatives to the Parking Committee have made several recommendations over the past several months, and the Committee is considering several alternatives.

Action Item: EC asked the President and Provost to direct the Committee to recognize the legitimacy of faculty concern for prompt creation and adaptation of a parking plan that accommodates the needs of those working in the areas of the campus furthest from the lots traditionally designated for faculty/staff (those working in G and ASB wings), and to report expeditiously.