

**To: Faculty Senate**

**From: Steven Samaras, Chair, University Lectures Committee**

Cc: Wade Znosko, Alec Hosterman, Robert Marmorstein, Vicki Palmer, JoEllen Pederson, Ann Cralidis  
Shahbaz Aftab (student rep), Alice King (student rep)

**Subject: Annual report of the Committee**

**Date: April 19, 2018**

Dear Faculty Senate Executive Committee,

**Purpose** – The purpose of this committee is to organize and promote an excellent Simkins Lecture program and Raft Debate each academic year. The Francis B. Simkins Lecture Series is the oldest and most prestigious speaker series at Longwood and our efforts consist of soliciting nominations, selecting and scheduling the speaker, advertising on campus and in the community, and planning the speaker's visit to Longwood. This lecture is ideally run each fall. In the spring, this committee organizes the Raft Debate. The Raft Debate includes a Longwood-centric panel representing multiple disciplines in a debate-style format. Faculty panel members present arguments based on evidence from scientific literature, pop culture, and their own research in order to convince the audience to select one of them to be the sole survivor.

**Members** - Diversity of faculty interests is critical. We try to select from among the proposals, a speaker with the best chance of attracting interest from the many disciplines across campus. Having seven faculty and two student members is essential in order to succeed in scheduling the events, arranging transportation, advertising on campus and in the community, and to address any other logistics issues. The student members on the committee represent a large portion of our audiences for the two events and add critical insight into the selection of the speakers. Student members also help in the planning process.

**Evaluation** – Each of the 2016-17 events were very well received. We included a scale on our audience survey form asking attendees to rate their experience from one ("not satisfied") to ten ("very satisfied"). The average score for the 2016-17 Simkins Lecture was an 8.35, and the average score for the 2016-17 RAFT Debate was 8.59. People enjoyed the breadth of topics and ideas presented, with the only suggestions for improvement (aside from only a very few criticisms respecting the presenters' ideas or the general topic covered) being adjusting the location of the RAFT Debate. The 2016-17 RAFT Debate, was held in Hull Auditorium this year. There were more than a few survey comments related to the high temperature the standing room only crowd generated. We kept many of the survey suggestions in mind planning for the 2017-18 events which were both held in Blackwell. Survey information for the 2017-18 events was just collected and has not yet been compiled and analyzed. We would be happy to provide these to the Faculty Senate early in the fall if so requested.

**2017–18 Events** – The Simkins Lecture and Raft Debate were recently held on April 10 and April 3 respectively. For the Simkins Lecture, we received nine proposals and the final selection was difficult. This year marked the first time that a Simkins proposal was submitted as a collaborative effort of two

different departments. The speaker this year was Dr. Diane Langemo and was recommended by both the chair of the Nursing Department and the dean of The College of Business and Economics. Diane was able to meet with nursing and business students; including a professional development opportunity for the Student Nurses Association (SNA). The Simkins Lecture was well attended by approximately 150 or more.

The Raft Debate, as usual, was a fun evening with a lot of tongue-in-cheek humor. The competitors for the only seat on the life raft were:

Economics: Dr. Melanie Marks  
Biology: Dr. Dale Beach  
English: Dr. Brett Hursey  
Devil's Advocate: Dr. Eric Moore

**Plans for 2018-19** – One goal we have for next year is to move the Simkins Lecture back into its traditional fall semester schedule. The call for proposals and waiting for proposals is a process that takes time and has prevented us from holding the event in the fall. Of the nine proposals we received for this past lecture, we found out that a few would be possible for the upcoming fall semester. The committee may be in a position to send out a call for proposals at the end of this semester in order to get the process going a little earlier in the fall.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to contact the committee through me.

Sincerely,

Steven Samaras  
Chairman, University Lectures Committee  
Assistant Professor of Management, Department of Management & Marketing, College of Business and Economics