

Faculty Senate Meeting
Thursday, April 23, 2009, 3:30 p.m.
Hull Auditorium

A special meeting of the Senate was held in Hull Auditorium for the purpose of a dialogue with the Rector of the Board of Visitors about Longwood's future and the qualities and skills a president should have to lead the University at this time.

The following members were present:

Dr. Jennifer Apperson	Dr. Jim Haug	Dr. Rená Koesler
Dr. Vonnie Colvin	Dr. Chene Heady	Mr. Mark Lenker
Dr. Linwood Cousins	Dr. Ryan Hebert	Dr. Eric Moore
Ms. Kerri Cushman	Dr. Sue Hildebrandt	Dr. Gene Muto
Dr. Roy Creasey	Dr. Chris Jones	Dr. Keith Rider
Dr. Larissa Ferguson	Dr. Debra Kelley	Dr. David Shoenthal
Dr. David Hardin	Dr. Ed Kinman	Dr. Pam Tracy

The following members were absent: Ms. Kerri Cushman, Dr. Mikie Flanigan, Dr. Jackie Hall, Dr. Evelyn Hume, and Dr. Jim Riley. Many faculty members were also present.

Dr. Amoss introduced Ms. Marge Connelly who talked briefly about her introduction to Longwood some years ago and her interest in the University and its future. She spoke about the search process and the importance of faculty involvement and asked for faculty assistance in making referrals if they were aware of outstanding potential candidates. She then posed three questions:

What are the key challenges of the next five years?

What are the attributes the next president should have to address those challenges?

What does Longwood offer that it is important not to lose?

The first and most often repeated answer to the question about what Longwood should retain was the need to recapture the close faculty-student relationship fostered by small classes when faculty can know students' names and have time for individual conferences and assignments tailored to student needs and the best possible outcomes. Alumni surveys have indicated that all valued the faculty-student relationships. Closely related to that was the need for more time to do work well. The faculty feel pulled in several directions and overloaded in their primary task of teaching and mentoring students.

There was a stated wish also for a President who inspires faculty as scholars, who provides tangible support for scholarship and professional travel and research, for a president who is a champion of the faculty. Faculty want to feel like a partner in the educational endeavor, not a resource to be exploited, and want to be supported in upholding high standards. Too many think that there is nothing they can do about the things they think need to be changed, and that contributes to low morale. In addition, the sense of faculty engagement with each other and with the university has been affected negatively by the discontinuation of a listserve which facilitated communication.

Several faculty members emphasized that student retention is influenced by faculty retention and expressed alarm at the hemorrhaging of the faculty and of the difficulty attracting top candidates to the University. Departments have been turned down by their top candidates, and sometimes by their second choices. Faculty load and salaries are major factors in discouraging candidates who really would

like to be on a small campus with a culture like Longwood's, one that offers many of the advantages of a private college for the cost of a publically assisted one.

Longwood's significant growth has caused some of the problems a new president will need to address. It has been a small college and needs help and support in adapting to change if growth is to continue, and if it is to preserve the intimacy and sense of community that Longwood has always stood for and that make it distinctive. The administration has grown and other services have expanded, although library hours and counseling services are inadequate and additions to and support for faculty have not kept pace.

Some faculty are actively researching grant opportunities to help them do what they think is needed for students. A grant officer would be of tremendous help in this endeavor which is extremely time-consuming but an important way to augment resources.

Several people addressed the issue of diversity. Some felt that with the increase of special populations on the campus subsets were developing that impeded the larger sense of community that used to be prevalent on campus. While retaining the advantages of size, it is important to broaden diversity—even internationally—and yet retain a sense of community and of a community within the community of Farmville.

Other needs identified include the need to streamline bureaucracy, transparency in decision-making and good communication, support for innovation in technology and pedagogy, and an examination of the move to Division I, especially given the fact that Longwood is not in a conference.

There are a number of things faculty think it important to consider in evaluating candidates for the presidency in addition to those implied above. His or her vision of what Longwood is and where it should go; the obvious skill sets for raising money and representing the university to the outside world; how the candidate sees the roles of the Provost and VPAA and the deans, and of the other administrators. It is also important that the president live by and honor the values he articulates, and that the Board be able to cut through claims to real commitments.

When Ms. Connelly was asked what she thought the university needed, she listed raising of resources, especially because of the eroding state support and the need to address current concerns like class size, someone who can make tough, even Draconian calls since the university may be spreading its efforts too thin, and managing and developing the administrative leadership.

The faculty thanked her for coming to the meeting, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:55.

Susan May