

Report from the Faculty Senate President to the Radford University Board of Visitors Academic Affairs Committee

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It is an honor to meet with the Board of Visitors Academic Affairs Committee today to discuss the progress and state of Academic Affairs at Radford University. I am very pleased to report the good news that the overall state of Academic Affairs at Radford University is **strong**.

This is my eighth year at Radford University and I have seen us face some difficult challenges during this time, including significant challenges associated with the implementation of our new core curriculum. Many of you in this room are well familiar with the details, and I find it unnecessary to revisit them in this setting. The main point I wish to make on behalf of the faculty is that **things have improved significantly** in our Academic Affairs division.

First, I am privileged to work with an outstanding group of Faculty Senate Executive Council colleagues this year in Vice-President, Dr. Jerry Kopf; Secretary, Dr. Kim Gainer; and At-Large Representatives, Dr. Margaret Hrezo and Dr. Jake Fox. These individuals are a thoughtful, hard-working, collegial and productive group, and together, I know we will accomplish much in the coming year. I hope you will have an opportunity to meet all of them. Further, our opportunities for success are magnified because we have the privilege of working with a highly dedicated and collaborative Academic Affairs Leadership Team.

In the recent past, Dr. Joe Scartelli generously and effectively served as our Interim Provost for 18 months and guided our university through a transitional period with great commitment and love for this institution and the heart and grace of a gentleman. I recall the standing ovation he received from our faculty following from his time in service in that position, and he most certainly deserved it.

We are now privileged to work as faculty under the energetic and thoughtful guidance of Provost Sam Minner, whose presence on our campus has invigorated our campus community, and at least for me, been inspirational. Provost Minner has demonstrated outstanding, honest, transparent, and productive leadership during his first year. He has been very involved with our faculty, our Faculty Senate, and our Faculty Senate Executive Council, and he carries out high-trust behaviors such as described by Stephen Covey (2006) in his book, *The Speed of Trust*. These are behaviors such as “talk straight,” “demonstrate respect,” “create transparency,” “deliver results,” “listen first,” and “extend trust.” I sincerely believe that the 2012-2013 academic year will be our best year ever in Academic Affairs, and I stand before you committed to collaborating with my faculty colleagues and with our administration to help make it be exactly that.

In May, shortly after my election as Faculty Senate President, Provost Minner invited me to begin participating in the weekly meetings of the Academic Affairs Leadership Team, or Dean’s Council. From the faculty perspective, this was an innovative and well-received invitation that showed genuine interest in encouraging regular and transparent communications between our faculty and

administration. The entire Academic Affairs Leadership Team has been extremely welcoming and collaboratively-spirited in my continued participation in those meetings.

This summer, I approached President Kyle with a request on behalf of our faculty to likewise include faculty representation on the President's Cabinet. Beginning with the August 9 meeting, the President graciously invited me to serve on the Cabinet as Faculty Senate President. The faculty are very pleased with and encouraged by this decision, as it reflects a commendable innovation in leadership that can hopefully help to build stronger relationships and improved communications between our faculty and upper administration.

Moving on, I would like to discuss several of the exciting ongoing university-wide initiatives in which faculty have been involved since the May meeting of the Board of Visitors, in some cases in partnership with staff and students. I will also discuss several of the Faculty Senate initiatives for 2012-2013. I will keep the summary of each item brief but would be glad to answer questions about any of these items, so please do not hesitate to stop me at any time:

Examples of Ongoing Initiatives

Internal Governance Reform:

One of the most significant and important undertakings among faculty, AP faculty, staff, and students alike in the coming year will be in the area of internal governance reform. I will keep the summary of this item brief today because I, or whichever faculty member is selected as the Board representative, will go into the process and timeline in some depth at tomorrow's full Board meeting. Internal Governance at a university is the formal structure and framework for governance, with the inclusion of the Board of Visitors, President, the President's Cabinet, the Student Government Association, the Faculty Senate, the AP Senate, and the Staff Senate, as well as necessary committees and/or councils. Radford University has a strong commitment to collaborative governance, the willingness to listen to all ideas, to respect competing concerns, to evaluate the merits of many alternatives, and to communicate to help build consensus. Successful collaborative governance allows the university to address complex issues and be adaptable to changing needs.

Our current internal governance document is outdated and also a bit cumbersome or unclear in places, sometimes making it challenging for proposals to become policy. Dr. Erin Webster Garrett, working on internship from the Provost's office, is coordinating the reform effort. Collectively with Dr. Webster Garrett, the Presidents of the Faculty Senate, AP Senate, and Staff Senate, as well as numerous other leaders on our campus, are together coordinating what we anticipate to be an approximately two-year effort toward improving our collaborative governance structure. Tomorrow, we will address potential ways for the Board to be supportive of this effort.

Child Development Center Initiative:

In its past, Radford University offered child care availability for its faculty, staff, and students, but those facilities no longer exist. Since then, faculty, staff, and students alike have expressed a strong and clear need for high quality, affordable child care availability in Radford, since the options at present are extremely limited and practically non-existent. This summer, a new Child Care Task Force was convened and I was tasked with the initial effort of getting the project up and running again. In July, Provost Minner invited Ms. Nancy Miller from the Kirksville Child Development Center in Missouri to

consult with our group regarding possible approaches to addressing our needs using a nonprofit 501(c)(3) model. Since then, our group has already made great progress in reviewing additional nonprofit and for-profit models, meeting with representatives from existing nonprofits as well as child care facilities around our area for advice and consultation, visiting one possible site for a child care facility and researching additional possible sites, meeting with the Radford Vice-Mayor, Dr. Richard Harshberger to discuss possible collaborations on this initiative between Radford University and Radford City, and beginning to brainstorm ways to keep costs manageable for a diverse cross-constituency of Radford faculty, staff, students, and community members. This initiative will be one of our top priorities in the coming year.

We are delighted to now have three outstanding co-leaders for the initiative: Mathematics education faculty member, Dr. Agida Manizade; library night supervisor, Ms. Bethany Mott; and fixed assets and accounting support technician, Ms. Sandy Beland. We are hopeful that this effort will yield a new child development center in approximately fall 2013. Such a center would not only support the needs of our faculty, staff, students, and community, but also be a tremendous learning laboratory for our students across majors—such as early childhood education, nursing, and exercise, sport, and health education—as they carry out volunteer hours and internships with the children at the new facility.

COACHE Survey Implementation (Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education):

The COACHE Faculty Tenure-Track Job Satisfaction Survey is a nationally administered, valid survey through Harvard University's Graduate School of Education. Through its Faculty Senate and following from a recommendation by the Senate's Campus Environment Committee in consultation with Provost Minner, Radford University has entered a partnership with COACHE as one of hundreds of participating universities in fall 2012—including participating Virginia institutions of Christopher Newport, JMU, Old Dominion, UVA, VCU, and Virginia Tech. Survey administration will take place in October.

The COACHE survey provides extensive information on themes including: Nature of the work; resources and support; collaboration; tenure and promotion; internal governance and leadership; climate, culture, and collegiality; and global satisfaction; among other themes. A significant advantage of the COACHE survey compared to RU's annual Faculty Morale Survey is that the COACHE survey provides for comparisons for up to five peer institutions, from among those who participate nationally. Such comparisons can highlight Radford's relative strengths and areas of concern relative to peer institutions. Survey results may be disaggregated by gender and tenure status, among other variables. We look forward to reviewing the results together as a campus community to work toward positive change.

Initiative to Improve the Delivery of Core 201 and 202:

In the spring, the Faculty Senate identified concerns with the structural foundation and limited resources for the University Core A courses, particularly identifying concerns with the delivery of Core 201 and 202. Leadership in the SGA has likewise expressed concerns regarding University Core A. A motion was passed by the Faculty Senate in April calling for discussion and submission of a report with recommendations related to these concerns by the Provost, Chair of the Core Curriculum Advisory Committee, Chair of the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee, the Core Director, and the Faculty Senate President.

This summer, the aforementioned individuals held a series of meetings discussing campus concerns, with our key goal to create a proposal that might help develop consensus around the Core. Our team collectively designed a draft plan for addressing the expressed concerns, available online and to be shared at this afternoon's Senate meeting. Our report makes recommendations for simplifying and realigning learning outcomes with specific classes in University Core A, revising official course descriptions, and allowing for interested departments to submit course proposals to develop or re-design classes within their disciplines that meet the learning outcomes and include the appropriate assessments emphasized in Core 201 or 202 for university accreditation purposes. The report suggests that departmentally-offered courses would be treated as alternative courses to Core 201 and 202. A staffing plan would be developed by administration in the current academic year related to Core 201 and 202 as well as the departmental courses.

The Faculty Senate will discuss the report in the coming weeks and make related recommendations.

Task Force for Online Course Delivery:

In April, the Faculty Senate recommended the establishment of a university-wide task force on online course delivery whose tasks would include, among other things, development of an overall vision for online courses within the RU curriculum, some method to assist departments in examining which courses may potentially be taught online, plans for providing necessary faculty professional development for quality online instruction, and some method for assuring the quality of online course design. Task force membership is in the process of being completed, and the new team will begin its efforts in the near future.

Examples of Senate Initiatives

The Faculty Senate has an exciting and very active year ahead of us. All of the projects above are significant and ongoing and intersect with the Faculty Senate's work.

The Faculty Senate Executive Council, or FSEC, met many times this summer to fill internal governance and Senate Committees and to discuss our goals and objectives for the 2012-2013 Faculty Senate, among other efforts. The Faculty Senate has five committees: Campus Environment Committee, Curriculum Committee, Faculty Issues Committee, Governance Committee, and Resource Allocation Committee. The FSEC's process for drafting committee charges involved multiple steps, including reviewing recommendations made by each Senate committee in its continuity report from last year, contacting faculty from across campus—through our Senators—to invite anyone interested to submit their recommendations, and taking time ourselves in the FSEC to brainstorm and dream together about the positive changes we would like to accomplish and support in the coming year.

As the Senate's first item of business "passed" at our first meeting on August 30, 2012, we endorsed the Radford University Climate Action Plan and recommended that the President and the Board of Visitors adopt the Plan as Radford University's carbon neutrality roadmap.

As one of several recommendations supported by the FSEC and to be discussed by the full Senate this afternoon, we propose that the President of the Faculty Senate automatically serve as the non-voting advisory representative to the Board, whereas currently the Board selects a faculty representative from a list of three faculty members submitted by the Faculty Senate. This act of

deference to the faculty shows a spirit of collegiality with the faculty-elected leadership for this important role. I will address this topic in more detail again at tomorrow's Board meeting.

Examples of additional initiatives to be pursued through our Senate Committees include:

- Develop new policies on "Stopping the Tenure Clock" and "Family Leave and Academic Work"
- Examine faculty workload and overload issues and make appropriate recommendations
- Collaborate with the Vice President for University Advancement to review revenues and expenditures for RU Foundation accounts
- Follow up with campus administrators regarding what changes may be possible in response to feedback by faculty, students, and staff who attended the Accessibility Forums last year
- Review the university calendar, considering recommendations for possibilities such as implementing a fall break
- Make a recommendation regarding a +/- grading system for our undergraduate programs
- Collect and report data pertaining to the annual evaluation of Deans
- Make a recommendation regarding including Core Curriculum faculty representation on the Faculty Senate
- Make a recommendation regarding the term of service or reappointment process for department chairs or school directors and processes for determining faculty satisfaction with chairs and directors
- Make handbook recommendations regarding the faculty appeals and grievance processes
- Help facilitate discussions regarding the Honors Task Force report and potential new directions for the Honors Academy at Radford University

There are many initiatives on committees' agendas in addition to those I have just referenced. The full list of Senate Committee objectives is listed on the new Faculty Senate website, and committees also continue to generate new ideas for projects or issues to address throughout the year.

We look forward to working on these projects as well as in close collaboration with the Provost, deans, President, and other administrators on additional Academic Affairs or other university-wide initiatives as we continue to make positive changes on our campus. Additionally, I very much look forward to tomorrow's full Board meeting where the focus will be on considering possible new initiatives that may help us build relationships and foster new communications between our faculty and the Board of Visitors.

It will be a pleasure to get to know and work with all of you in the coming year, and I thank you for your time and attentiveness this afternoon. I have provided copies of this report and invite you to contact me at any time with questions or recommendations.

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