

REPORT OF CHAIR OF FACULTY SENATE  
FACULTY MEETING, OCTOBER 9, 1992

Good morning. For those of you who do not know me: I am Runi Mukherji, a faculty member of the Psychology Program, and Chair of the Faculty Senate and it is my pleasure to welcome you to the first Faculty Meeting of the 1992-93 academic year.

As you must be aware, the Faculty of SUNY College at Old Westbury last academic year ratified a new set of ByLaws amendments that established a Faculty Senate. The ByLaws also require that a full faculty meeting be held at the beginning of the Fall and Spring semesters and once before the Spring commencement. This is the Fall meeting of the Faculty, and another will be held within thirty days of the start of the Spring semester.

The Faculty Senate has met twice already this semester, and I would like to make you all cognizant of some of the issues that have already been brought to the floor of the Faculty Senate, some of the steps we have already taken, and, perhaps most importantly, of the general approaches that we will be taking in addressing issues of faculty governance that will be brought before us.

At the risk of re-stating what may be obvious to many of you but in the interest of establishing a context for some of the procedures and actions we have undertaken, I would like to quote to you a passage that outlines and describes the roles and responsibilities of the Faculty, taken from the statement on the government of Colleges and Universities:

The faculty has primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process. On these matters the power of review or final decision lodged in the governing board or delegated to it by the president should be exercised adversely only in exceptional circumstances, and for reasons communicated to the faculty. It is desirable that faculty should, following

such communication, have the opportunity for further consideration and further transmittal of its views to the president or board....

....The faculty sets the requirements for the degrees offered in course, determines when the requirements have been met, and authorizes the president and board to grant degrees thus achieved.

....Faculty status and related matters are primarily a faculty responsibility; this area includes appointments, reappointments, decisions not to reappoint, promotions, granting of tenure and dismissal....The governing board and president should on questions of faculty status as in other matters where the faculty has primary responsibility, concur with faculty judgment except in rare instances and for compelling reasons which should be stated in detail.

There has been an unfortunate pattern in the last several years: that administrative actions have taken place in arenas of primary faculty responsibility in many cases, in the absence of faculty input, and even more unfortunately in some cases, in contradiction to recommendations made by faculty committees. In addition, even when the administration has solicited input from faculty committees or sub-committees on specific issues and considerable effort has been expended by faculty to make judicious recommendations, there has often been either no follow-up, follow through or feedback on such recommendations; or, in many cases, subsequent administrative actions appears to have been uninformed by the will of the faculty.

It is possible that the will of the faculty as represented by recommendations made by faculty committees has not been communicated to the administration in a coherent and cohesive manner, or that we as faculty have not undertaken the responsibility of following up the fate of our recommendations in an organized and consistent fashion. It is also true that carefully crafted recommendations from faculty committees have come

undone by actions taken on the floor of faculty meetings. If these problems lie at the heart of the lack of convergence between faculty decision-making and administrative action, this is remediable. It is in this context that the Faculty Senate has adopted a series of procedures to govern the process of Senate deliberations. In the last Senate meeting, the Senate agreed to the formation of an Executive Committee consisting of the Chair, the Vice-Chair, the Secretary, the Treasurer, and the SUNY Faculty Senator, who will meet two weeks prior to the meeting of the full Faculty Senate, to set the agenda. All agenda items that require a vote of the Faculty Senate, are to be submitted to the Executive Committee, in writing, in the form of a resolution, supported by a rationale, stating clearly what actions are to be taken by the Senate, as well as any individuals or groups who should be apprised of this action. I should add that this model of procedures closely follows that of the University Senate, and that in her first address to the Faculty Senate, our President, Dr. Pettigrew, had herself suggested that we would benefit from a collaboration with the University Senate, especially in the area of operational details. We believe that adoption of these procedures will enable the Senate to be more effective in giving a coherent voice to the will of the faculty and to follow through to bring to fruition the recommendations made by faculty.

In this context, let me apprise you of some of the issues that have come before the Senate:

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1. Basic Education:

In the past three years, three separate committees: the Basic Education Task Force, the CAP Committee, and the Graduation/Retention Task Force had examined the workings and the needs of the Basic Education program. Last academic year, in response to a number of inquiries about the status of Basic Education, Dr. Hall had said that the three reports had made a number of suggestions with respect to Basic Education, but that none of the reports had really prioritized the needs of Basic Education, and he requested that Faculty Council look into this matter. A sub-committee of Faculty Council was convened and they submitted a report to Dr. Hall on May 15, 1992, integrating the three reports and making specific recommendations that followed from the issues addressed by the reports, with a request for a response from Dr. Hall about the issues raised. Last week, the Senate sent another copy of the Faculty Council report to Dr. Hall and re-iterated our request for a response addressing the issues raised about Basic Education. Thus far, we have received no response. In the meanwhile, we learn that the staff of the Writing and ELS Centers have been terminated effectively next May, and that the academic programs are to submit proposals separately, for tutorial services for students in their programs. In his report to Convener's Council, Dr. Hall stated that support for tutorial services will not impinge on support for Basic Ed. However, the overall status of Basic Ed and the implementation of the recommendations made by Faculty Council still remain unresolved. We have requested that Dr. Hall clarify some of these issues in his report today.

## 2. New Degree Programs:

On September 17, CAP sent us a memo indicating that several proposals for new degree programs were registered with the State Education Department without Faculty or CAP approval. Ostensibly, this action was taken because of the "emergency" situation prevailing and the need for the publication of the new catalog. However, by the policies of the SUNY Board of Trustees and, as stated clearly in our own ByLaws, the approval for such changes in the curriculum are a primary faculty responsibility. The Senate had asked CAP to submit a proposal indicating what specific actions it would wish the Faculty Senate to take, and on October 5, we received a memo from CAP indicating that there was no action that CAP wished the Senate to take, but the Committee re-stated its position that no new degree programs should be implemented before faculty approval.

## 3. Committee Appointments:

The Chair of the Faculty Senate received a request from Dr. Pettigrew requesting that the Faculty Senate select two representatives to a Budget Committee. In the memo, Dr. Pettigrew indicated that she wished to expand the responsibilities of the existent committee to (and I quote) "an all College long range planning/budget implications structure." In response to this request, on September 25, the Chair of Faculty Senate asked for information elucidating the composition, purpose and responsibilities of such a committee, to facilitate the selection of Senate representatives at the October 2 meeting. The response to that request was not available at the time of the Senate meeting, and therefore the Senate sent another request for information to Dr. Pettigrew, and elected to send two observers

to the October 5 meeting of the Budget Committee, pending the receipt of the clarification, at which time the Senate will deliberate on the selection of representatives.

The President also asked for the names of two members of the Senate to be forwarded to her, from which she would select one person to serve on the President's Affirmative Action Committee. Again, the Chair of the Faculty Senate had asked for clarification of the composition and responsibilities of this committee, to facilitate the selection of representatives. As this information was not available at the time of the Senate meeting, the Senate sent a memo re-iterating the request for clarification and elected to send one observer to the meeting of the committee, pending the receipt of the clarification. Yesterday, I received a memo from Dr. Pettigrew elucidating the responsibilities and composition of these committees, and the Senate will discuss this at its next meeting.

In conclusion, I would like to remind you, although most of us need no reminder, that this year ahead is a critical year, not only because of the budget crisis that threatens us all, but also because we have a new governance structure in place, and we all have a stake in making it work. As faculty we need to support and participate in governance through committee service and attendance at meetings. We, in the Senate, in turn, will do our best to provide procedurally fair and efficient faculty governance that will let us speak and act clearly in the areas of faculty responsibility that I outlined earlier. The Senate should be a powerful vehicle to translate faculty will into observable action, and, as Chair, I am committed to discharging that responsibility to the best of my ability.

I will admit to some naivete, given my newness to the position. However, in the several years I have been a member of the faculty and having served on a number of committees, one lesson I have learned, and learned well, is that the readiness to serve, is not all. In order to make a difference, to transform will into action, one needs input, guidance, support and co-operation. I hope that you will extend to me all of these things, and that together we can work to make this place, our place, into a better place for all of us. Thank you.