

The Senator

The Newsletter of the Wake Forest University Senate

Volume 2, No. 1

Carole Browne, President

Fall, 1999

Senate Involved in Local Controversies

The University Senate became involved in recent controversies concerning the trustees' decision about the holding of a same-sex commitment ceremony in Wait Chapel and the apparent attempt by the administration to control WFDD's investigation and reporting of the decision. In the midst of the controversy, the Senate passed a resolution on September 15, 1999 expressing concern over these events, sponsored President Hearn's "State-of-the-Union" address which was to include responses to questions submitted beforehand, called a special open meeting of the Senate to discuss the WFDD controversy, and has formed an ad hoc committee to investigate the relationship of WFU to WFDD. These are described in more detail below.

University Senate Resolution of September 15, 1999

In light of recent events at Wake Forest University, the University Senate reaffirms its support for free inquiry and expression in this community, both inside and outside the classroom.

It views with alarm the recent efforts by the administration to control the journalistic judgment of WFDD public radio. The administration should declare, without equivocation, that WFDD is free to pursue and broadcast any story it sees fit, in accordance with its existing mission statements.

It views with regret the decision by a committee of the Board of Trustees to declare that religious ceremonies celebrating same-sex unions should not take place in Wait Chapel. Wake Forest University should not determine matters of religious doctrine and practice. In this case, the University should leave such questions to the judgment of the Wake Forest Baptist Church, in free exercise of that community's religious faith.

State-of-the-Union Address Focuses on Trustee Request

President Hearn directed a substantial portion of his talk to the issue of the trustees' statement concerning the Wake Forest Baptist Church's desire to hold a same-sex commitment ceremony in Wait Chapel. At this time it appears that it was not the intent to dictate policy to the Church, that the Church is not forbidden to proceed with the ceremony, and that it will now take place in the chapel after all. Because of the urgency of this issue, there was insufficient time for the President to address the many other submitted questions, a sample of which are listed below. It is anticipated that the President will be invited to respond to these other questions at a future meeting of the Senate.

Reynolda Campus

1. Why do faculty have no role in determining the university's priorities?
2. (Concerning the WFDD controversy:) Since when has Wake Forest not supported the right to free speech of individual faculty and staff members, or the freedom of speech of the press? Does it not seem inappropriate that the public radio station licensed to WF is under the direction of the university's PR office?
3. Is there a faculty committee charged with administering the University's nondiscrimination policy? Were they advised of the same sex union issue?
4. Why is a new façade for Wingate Hall more important than faculty and staff salaries?

Bowman Gray Campus

1. What is being done to address the continued lack of diversity in senior leadership at the medical school?
2. Richard Dean has stated that receipt of tenure at the medical school is not a guaranteed salary for the rest of one's career. How does this apply to individuals who have been on the faculty for many years and were tenured at a time when there was an understanding that if one continued to perform, one's job would be guaranteed?
3. Why was a conference on gay-related issues forced off the Medical School complex last spring?

VP Boyette Responds to WFDD Questions at Special Senate Meeting

A special, open meeting of the Senate was called for September 22 to discuss the WFDD controversy and hear vice-president Sandra Boyette's remarks concerning the issue. Boyette offered a prepared statement reaffirming her commitment to a free press and apologizing for her decision that inserted her into the editorial process. She had requested that WFDD restrict its news coverage of the story to the statement of the Board of Trustees. Because the Trustee statement on the question was a carefully considered document, she wanted the radio station to report on the statement without "interpretation." She had hoped this approach would produce clarity rather than censorship.

Boyette noted that she had appointed a faculty advisory committee to conduct a complete review of editorial policies at WFDD, make comparisons with practices at other universities, and offer recommendations as deemed appropriate, including recommendations concerning structural issues of governance and oversight. A number of questions were asked concerning this new committee, disciplinary actions taken against WFDD staff, and Boyette's view of WFDD staff's actions.

Senate Forms Own Ad Hoc Committee to Investigate WFDD Situation

The University Senate has formed an ad hoc committee to investigate the relationship of Wake Forest University to WFDD public radio. The committee will be chaired by Ron Wright, a member of the Senate, and will include Sarah Watts (History) Michael Curtis (Law) Eric Carlson (Physics), Allin Cottrell (Economics), Jack Flear (Politics), Steve Boyd (Religion), and Gale Sigal (English). Although the university has established a committee to examine the editorial policy at WFDD, the charge of the Senate committee will be broader, and will include an investigation into charges that staff members at WFDD have been threatened and/or reprimanded in response to speaking publicly about events at the station.

Dean Gives Medical Center Report

At the first Senate meeting of the year, Richard Dean, Vice President for Health Affairs, spoke about the impact of managed care on the academic culture of the medical school. After years of rapid growth, two factors have contributed to a leveling off or even a drop in revenues to medical schools: controls imposed on referrals, physicians fees, and services by managed care, and a change in the way the government calculates Medicare reimbursements.

Wake Forest was among the first medical schools nationwide to adopt "mission-based budgeting" to deal with a loss of income due to declining clinical revenues. Mission-based budgeting requires that an institution clearly establish its goals, the components required to meet these goals, the cost of maintaining these components, and how they are to be supported. Although this makes sense, from the faculty perspective, mission-based budgeting requires that faculty activity and productivity be clearly measured so that only those activities relevant to the goals of the school are allocated valuable resources. The idea of quantifying productivity in terms of the number of hours devoted to a particular activity is a new one, and disturbing to many faculty.

The Senate invited V-P Dean to speak because of concern about the impact of mission-based budgeting on the academic culture at the Wake Forest University School of Medicine. At the Bowman Gray campus, non-clinical faculty are now expected to generate 75% of their non-teaching, non-administrative salaries. Clinical activities can be readily quantified, and are designed to be self-supporting. But non-clinical activities are more difficult to measure. How does time spent preparing lectures factor in? Grading exams? Mentoring students? And how is research productivity to be measured? By numbers of papers published? Monies procured? Does time spent on grant review panels or reviewing articles for journals, which currently are not officially allocated under mission-based budgeting, contribute to the goals of the institution? Is there no longer such a thing as a tenured appointment at a medical school? If one's tenured position is dependent upon generating the funds to support one's own salary, what does that mean? Under mission-based budgeting, the institution can presumably no longer afford to carry this salary.

Vice President Dean was sensitive to the many issues raised by mission-based budgeting, and hopes that as the new policies fall into place, faculty adjustment will be made easier. He is also pleased that the WFU medical school has been a leader in adjusting to the economic realities of managed care, and has escaped the financial crisis now faced by so many other schools. Yet, the effect of these realities on the ability of medical schools to compete successfully for and retain the best and brightest faculty remains to be seen.

