Dear Senators,

The next meeting of the Senate is October 7 Wednesday, noon - 2 pm, in the Founder’s Room (Lovett Hall). Lunch will be available from 11:30 am. The minutes for September have been approved without change and posted at the Senate website. An October 7 folder has been created under Senate Owlspace / Resources to hold supporting documents (presently Honor Council report, and report of the Subcommittee on Academic Matters, SAM, co-chaired by Jim Coleman, which has been distributed to all of Rice community).

The agenda will divide between up to 30 minutes for an open Senate meeting and about 90 minutes for an executive session (closed) concerning the FMRC interim report and related reports.

The Senate Executive Committee met September 30 Wednesday to discuss the Senate meeting agenda. We met with Don Morrison (Chair, FMRC) concerning his meeting (September 16) with the Rice board and to discuss how to proceed. We met with Mike Wolf (a college master) and Evan Siemann concerning the Honor Council (Siemann) working group report.

On the basis of these discussions, the Senate Executive Committee approved the following draft agenda for October 7.

Noon - 12:30 pm (approximately)

1. Call to order (noon)
2. Announcements - please note that we are looking for a volunteer to be Convenor (who must be a Senator)
3. Reports of officers and standing committees (none are anticipated)
4. Working group reports (none are anticipated)
5. Unfinished business - Motions A and B of the Honor Council working group will be brought forward for action. The Senate Executive Committee recommends approving Motion A (recommending that the Graduate Council design a separate process for graduate students) and recommends continuing to table Motion B (recommending that the Honor Council consider separating major and minor violations, for reasons to be discussed). The working group report (including motions A and B) has been placed in the October 7 folder.

Motion A - Graduate Council create a separate process for graduate students
Rice APPEARS unique in having undergraduate and graduate students
handled by the same Honor Council process. Faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students all supported creation of a separate process for handling violations by undergraduate vs. graduate students in online surveys. We recommend that Graduate Council work to develop a new process, perhaps at the level of division, to handle academic violations by graduate students. This proposed new process would be presented to the Faculty Senate in the 09/10 academic year for discussion and possible consideration by the Board of Trustees.

Motion B - Honor Council create an option for faculty and students to resolve minor violations outside of a formal Honor Council process. Surveys indicate strong support by faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates for a revision to the Honor Code to allow for resolution of minor violations directly between faculty and students. Indeed, this seems to happen commonly already. Formalizing the types of violations and potential penalties that could be handled in this fashion would increase consistency and fairness and allow Honor Council to focus on more serious violations. We recommend that Honor Council work to develop a set of guidelines that would specify the types of violations that should be handled directly between faculty and students and the penalties that could be assessed. A consideration of a greater role for faculty in the Honor Council process should be included in this discussion. These potential new guidelines would be presented to the Faculty Senate in the 09/10 academic year for discussion and possible consideration by the Board of Trustees.

6. New business - update on Senate Working Agenda for 2009-2010. The Senate Executive Committee recommends the following working group charges which have been reviewed by the working group chairs:

Study of "grade inflation" and academic honors (Chair Randy Batsell)
Draft Charge:
To conduct a study into "grade inflation" and how academic honors (summa, magna, and cum laude) are and should be awarded to undergraduates. The group will work with the Dean of Undergraduates, the Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum (CUC), the Registrar, and other relevant parties to establish facts and options. The working group will report its findings and recommendations to the Senate when it has concluded its work.
Review of Appeals, Grievances, and Hearing Process (Chair Randy Stevenson)

Draft Charge:
To examine the process, precedents, and recordkeeping involved in the appeals, grievances, and hearing authority of the Senate Bylaws (5.5). To study what rights of appeal are and should be accorded to faculty not holding tenure-track appointments. The working group will report its findings and recommendations to the Senate when it has concluded its work.

The working agenda for the year is the province of the Senate. I have received some recommendations for action from Senators, on which I will report.

7. Adjournment to Executive Session (separate agenda). The Subcommittee on Academic Matters (SAM) report, containing subcommittee reports for Research and Education, has been distributed publicly at this point. The report is available within the meeting folder. The FMRC interim report remains available within a secure website (http://rice-bmc.rice.edu); look to the left toward the bottom for FMRC. (There are certain subcommittee reports also available there.)

Duane Windsor
Speaker, Faculty Senate