

Minutes of the Faculty Senate Meeting
November 18, 2009
Founder's Room, Lovett Hall
12:00 P.M.

Senators present: Gregory Barnett, Randy Batsell, Steven Cox, Bridget Gorman, Jane Grande-Allen, Deborah Harter, John Hempel, Tom Killian, Phil Kortum, Mark Kulstad, David Leebron, Susan McIntosh, Matteo Pasquali, Albert Pope, Rob Raphael, Brian Rountree, Gautami Shah, Robin Sickles, John Sparagana, Randy Stevenson, Devika Subramanian, Yizhi Jane Tao, Duane Windsor, and Jim Young.

Senators absent: Sarah Ellenzweig, Eugene Levy, Scott McGill, Dale Sawyer, Evan Siemann, and Meredith Skura.

PROCEEDINGS

Duane Windsor, Speaker of the Faculty Senate, called the meeting to order and outlined the order of events for today's meeting: President David Leebron will speak first; with Don Morrison, Chair of the Faculty Merger Review Committee (FMRC), speaking second; followed by discussion. Windsor noted that the meeting was open to all faculty, but closed to students.

President Leebron spoke for 45 minutes, giving the assembled group of faculty members an update regarding the possible merger of Rice University and Baylor College of Medicine. President Leebron's comments are considered confidential at this time, but he stated that he expected to tell much of the same information at the upcoming plenary session of the faculty scheduled for November 23, 2009. In addition, Leebron said that he will soon release a 40-page document containing information on the possible merger, as well as the replies to the questions presented to him in the "Faculty Concerns" document prepared by the Faculty Senate. President Leebron answered questions from various Senators during and after his presentation.

Don Morrison, Chair of the FMRC, announced three updates to the FMRC Interim Report dated August 28, 2009. He distributed a short document entitled "Postscript to FMRC Report—Nov. 18, 2009" which included a revision to one condition stated in the report (#5), one additional condition (#7), and one additional risk (#7). Morrison stated that the revision to condition #5 is to stress that the \$250 million figure stated in the Interim Report is for expenditures at the Rice campus *alone*, not split between the two campuses of Rice and BCM. He said that the new condition added to the Interim Report (#7) is that any new faculty governance arrangements must be approved by the current Rice Faculty Senate. Morrison also stated that it was worth adding to the report one new risk (#7): In order to make the merger look like a success, pressure may come to move funds from current programs to collaborative activities. He stated, however, that the only safeguard against this risk occurring may be vigilance. With these changes to the Interim Report, the FMRC will consider their report as finished; a final report.

Morrison announced that the FMRC will meet via teleconference with Dr. Herb Pardes, President and CEO of New York Presbyterian Hospital, this Friday, November 20, 2009.

Morrison said that the report the Rice administration is preparing to release to the Rice faculty will provide new information which was previously known only by the FMRC members. He said that this may allow the FMRC to say things as a group that they previously were asked to keep confidential. Morrison also said that the Rice administration has let him see 100% of the important documents regarding the merger.

Morrison added that he had been asked by Duane Windsor to give his opinion as to how the upcoming November 23 plenary session should be run, but he said he will leave that up to the Senate. Deborah Harter stated that one of the most important things that Morrison could do at the plenary session was to give a clarification of the FMRC's work.

Morrison said that regarding the proposed survey of the faculty, he thought that it should be a descriptive type of survey; one that doesn't encourage action, but reveals opinions. If well done, he thought it could portray a subtler image of the landscape of faculty opinions than any resolution. For example, in addition to those who might be for, against, or neutral towards the merger, there are those who are uninformed, misinformed, skeptical, or uninterested. Morrison said that it would be useful to get an idea of the range of faculty opinions.

Robin Forman, Dean of Undergraduates, pointed out that long before a merger with BCM was considered, there were conversations at Rice regarding a desire to take advantage of the "life sciences century." He said that he was afraid that these carefully considered strategic choices will be diminished or considered to be suspicious by stating risk #7 in the document. Morrison replied that this risk refers to situations in which the administration might move resources from, for example, Southern history to medical history; these moves would make Rice weaker, they would endanger existing Rice programs.

Windsor then asked the Senators to review the questions on a draft survey he and Randy Batsell distributed. Meanwhile, Windsor discussed the new Merge-Fac list serv. Rice faculty may request membership on the list, and once approved by the Faculty Senate assistant, any email messages are sent un-moderated to the list membership. Three individuals with the status of emeritus faculty have requested membership. The Senate approved adding them to the list-serv.

Windsor said that this opinion survey would be sent to all Rice faculty members by John Cornwell of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. There was a discussion as to be best time to send the survey since the Thanksgiving holiday is approaching. Many Senators felt that the survey should be sent to the faculty immediately following the November 23 plenary session.

There was also a lengthy discussion as to the best timing for the special plenary session that the Senate is required to call due to the petition it received from Professor Moshe Vardi. Windsor stated that Vardi had requested a separate plenary session, not a combined meeting on November 23. Windsor agreed with this request, saying that it would be very difficult to hold both meetings in a 2-hour session. Windsor also stated that although there was no specific meeting date

requested by Vardi, he had requested that the special plenary session be held prior to the next Rice Board of Trustees meeting scheduled for December 9 and 10, 2009.

Batsell reviewed the survey with the Senators. There were several suggestions made for further revisions to the questions on the survey, including the order of the questions. All agreed with the suggestion to include the financial information now detailed by President Leebron instead of using more general terms. Another revision was to allow a “no opinion” option for several questions. Windsor stated that this opinion survey will allow all faculty members to express their opinions, and it contains an imbedded ballot.

Windsor stated that since the Senators had now submitted their thoughts about the survey, he would ask a group of three or four technical experts to finalize it. Morrison stated that the group ought to include people who have thought a lot about the issues involved with a merger, not just technical experts, and he volunteered to join the group. Deborah Harter requested that Matteo Pasquali and Bridget Gorman be included in the group, too.

The discussion returned to the two plenary sessions that will occur in the near future. Harter said she thought that having two sessions was preferred over one combined session for several reasons. First, she said there will be lots of new information presented at the November 23 meeting by President Leebron, the final report from the FRMC will be presented by Don Morrison, and discussion time is needed. Second, she said that separating the meetings will allow for the survey to occur between the two meetings. Third, she said that this timing may mean that no resolution will be needed at the (later) special plenary session. Harter also stated that it was crucial that Professor Vardi and all of the petitioners feel that they are a part of the process. She recommended that the date of the special session be announced at the November 23 meeting, and she recommended that the Senate determine the agenda for the November 23 meeting now.

President Leebron said that the Board of Trustees has been interested from the beginning in the Rice faculty’s opinion of the possible merger, but he said he thought that this opinion should be expressed carefully. He agreed with Harter that it was important for all faculty members to feel that the process was appropriate.

Tom Killian said he was concerned that there would be poor attendance at the regular plenary session on November 23 if resolutions were not allowed. Robin Sickles asked for an explanation of the difference between the two plenary sessions. Windsor then showed the group language from the Faculty Senate Constitution. In summary, any motions passed at a regular plenary session are *advisory* to the Senate, while any motions passed at a special plenary session called by petition must be submitted to the entire faculty for a vote. The Constitution states that the outcome of such a ballot vote takes precedence over votes of the Senate in case of conflicts.

A vote was held among the Senators who remained past 2:00 p.m. with four votes for one combined plenary session on November 23, and eight votes for a meeting to be held later than November 30. Susan McIntosh suggested that the faculty who assemble at the November 23 meeting be consulted regarding the future date of the special plenary session.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.