

## **Minutes**

### **Faculty Forum Meeting**

**Thursday, November 17, 2005**

**Dolan Auditorium, 12:00PM**

1. The meeting started with several announcements:
  - a. Starting in January 2006, the university will have an open meeting time from 2-3PM on Wednesdays. The Faculty Forum meetings will be held during this period on the first and third Wednesdays of each month, as needed.
  - b. The Forum Executive Committee has hosted several small group discussions on faculty governance. Feedback is currently being woven into the proposed model.
  
2. Matt Berg (representing the Committee on Research, Service and Faculty Development) and Mary Beadle (Dean of the Graduate School) presented an update on the Faculty Development Survey, assisted by Cathy Anson. Much of the information on resources for faculty development can be found on the Graduate School's web page. Issues raised included: the possibility of year-long leaves supported by Grauel fellowships, concerns over the amount of "red tape" in applying for support (apparently often mandated by government regulations), the necessity of informing the Graduate School when applying for outside funding, the possibility of pursuing endowment funds earmarked for faculty development, and the possibility of increased mentoring for new faculty about development resources.
  
3. Fr. Robert Niehoff addressed the faculty for the remainder of the meeting. His remarks touched on many issues, including:
  - a. He hopes to engage more faculty directly at gatherings and meals planned for the Spring semester.
  - b. He plans to have the faculty more engaged with the Board of Directors, including lunch invitations for selected faculty members.
  - c. He hopes to start conversations with the faculty on certain subjects that are central to the university. Among these are
    - i. Producing a local document on academic freedom, in order to avoid outside fringe groups trying to dictate to us.
    - ii. Producing a better idea of what shared governance means to us, with more explicit descriptions of the roles of faculty and administration.
    - iii. Addressing problems of campus climate, involving lack of respect for students of color and problems with sexual assault. He called for increased diversity in faculty, administration, staff and students as an important step.

- iv. Enrollment challenges brought about by difficult Northeast Ohio demographics.
  - v. What our Catholic identity means to us as a university. Fr. Niehoff commented at length on the Catholic academic tradition and on what portions of the document *Ex Corde Ecclesia* would be a good base on which to build.
  - vi. Budgetary concerns that must be addressed quickly. He stressed that the university continues to look for ways to cut the budget as well as to improve student retention. He proposed unspecified administrative reorganizations as well as the hiring of a university attorney (to engage counsel in the process before problems get expensive).
- d. Fr. Niehoff then answered questions from the faculty.
- i. When asked about how our competitors are surviving while “buying students,” Fr. Niehoff pointed out that high discount rates have led to severe financial difficulties at CWRU and Xavier. In his view, a discount rate of over 40% is troublesome, while 50% is suicidal.
  - ii. Asked about teaching and research motivated by the spirit of *Ex Corde Ecclesia*, he responded that there are some positive ideas to be found in the document, notably involving the integrated wholeness of a true Catholic university curriculum. He cautioned that this doesn’t mean that every course must have a theological component, but rather that there should be a place for all kinds of knowledge, each respecting the others, within the whole. This suggests that as faculty we need to consider the “total student,” rather than just classroom teaching and research.
  - iii. Asked about retention, Fr. Niehoff stated that our retention rate is good (82% freshman to sophomore year), but could be much better. He plans to make the Retention Committee more active this year to address this issue.
  - iv. Asked about enhancements to student life, he pointed out that our wider recruiting region will force us to have more activities on campus as fewer dorm students go home for the weekend.
  - v. Asked about the discontinuing of the “Freshman Reports” (apparently a Banner-induced stoppage), he replied that he hopes the Retention Committee is looking into this.

The meeting finished at 1:20PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Paul Shick