

## **General Faculty Meeting, Apr 11, 2016**

### **1. Welcome to the General Faculty Meeting.**

### **2. Reading of the names.**

### **3. This year in the faculty senate**

### **4. Words of the Provost**

### **5. Q&A**

Welcome to the spring General Faculty Meeting. This is a time when we get together and reflect on our accomplishments of the last year, our gains and losses, and the issues that face us as an academic body.

Before we begin I would like to spend a few moments to recognize those that have come before and are no longer with us. I will only read their names, and show their faces (that is, if I was able to find an image online), and that's all I can do because to recognize all that they have accomplished in service to Rensselaer would be impossible in the time we have here today. So, I ask you to reflect on these names and recall what you can about them if you knew them.

<names>

And now, before I bring our provost up to give us a few words, I'd like to review the activities and accomplishments of the Faculty Senate over this past academic year.

### **Faculty Handbook**

Our first order of business was to complete the Faculty Handbook and this has been done and the handbook is now approved and signed by the President. In our last General Faculty Meeting we had considerable discussion on this, and we took it to heart and worked out the wording of this our contract with the Institute.

### **Eulogies and Biographies**

The faculty senate is implementing for the first time this year and new policy for soliciting and archiving biographical information on recently passed and retiring faculty members, so that eulogies for our colleagues can be distributed in a timely manner. The committee consisted of myself, Atsushi Akera, Les Gerhard and Assitant Institute Archivist Jen Monger.

### **Planning and Resources**

A Planning and Resources committee consisting of Professors Ken Simons, Paul Schoch, Dorit Nevo, Alexandra Hempel and chair Gregor Kovacic, has been charged with the tasks of soliciting and reviewing new ideas for revenue generation and cost savings from the faculty, to study the current situation in higher education in general and at Rensselaer in particular, and forward these results and ideas to the administration. I encourage all faculty to

proactively come up with good ideas for getting our institute out of the red, and to pass these ideas to the members of this committee.

### **Teaching Effectiveness**

Senators Dan Lewis and Diana Borca-Tasciuc are undertaking the task of collecting and reviewing information on how the different departments within Rensselaer assess teaching effectiveness.

### **Ombuds Office**

The Faculty Senate is also exploring the formation of an Ombuds Office, which will consist to faculty or staff who are trained in the art of conflict mediation. Although we wish it were not so, conflicts between faculty and between administration and faculty do occur and expert mediation serves to avert the escalation that could otherwise occur. Professors Jonas Braasch and Debbie Kamiski are looking into the way this is done at other universities.

### **Summer Arch**

The Faculty Senate has formed a committee to gather and disperse information, and to provides recommendations to the administration with regard to the Summer Arch initiative. If you are the only one left who is unfamiliar with this new effort, I encourage you to attend the forum being held in two days, wwdnesday Apr 13 at 2pm in Sage 4112. Vice Provost Linda Schadler will be there along with the committee that includes myself and professors Audrey Bennett, Lois Peters, Ken Connor, and Nancy Diniz.

### **Student Senate/Faculty Senate Relations are great!**

Over the past academic year a student representative has been in attendence for most of the Faculty Senate meetings, and a faculty senate representative has been in attendance for most of the Student Senate meetings. Our ability to talk and share accross the great faculty/student divide has led to improved discussions of sensitive issues such as academic honesty, evaluation of teaching assistants, and the poor state of the graduate student stipend.

### **Graduate Student Stipend**

On that issue, we are very glad to report progress. Attention was brought to the issue of below par doctoral student stipends by graduate student members of the student senate, whereupon Grand Marshal Marcus Flowers brought it to the attention of the Faculty Senate. That plea along with compelling data on peer and aspirant universities from Dean of Graduate Education Stan Dunn led to the passing of a resolution by the Faculty Senate to increase grad student stipends by \$3000 / year. The Administration reviewed the request, and a few weeks ago the funds for that raise were approved.

Finally, if you would like being in the thick of things and want to join this effort, elections are coming up for several open positions on the Faculty Senate, including three positions in the Executive Committee (faculty with previous experience in the FS are preferred), and senatorial positions in Science, Engineering, HASS, Architecture and a librarian. We are also looking to fill committee positions including on the Honors Committee, the Committee on Academic Standing, the Institute Curriculum Committee, and the Promotion & Tenure Committee. Please contact Vice-president John Tichy if you are interested in running for one of these positions. You will

find serving in faculty governance to be hard work but also very stimulating and rewarding work. Join us.

I'd like to remind you that after we hear from the provost the floor will be open for questions on any and all of these topics. And with that it is my great pleasure to invite our Provost Prabhat Hajela to give us some words of wisdom.