FACULTY SENATE COMMITTEE ON STUDENT AND FACULTY HONORS
September 26, 2003

MINUTES

310 Gore Hall 8:30-10:00 a.m.

Members Present: Linda Gottfredson (Chair), Darren Beck, Lilly Burris, Philip Flynn, Pablo Huq, Katherine Kerrane, Shelley Provost-Craig, Christina Smiraglia, Diane Wright

I. Selection of day’s recorder.

II. Minutes of May 16, 2003, approved as written.

III. Announcements
   A. Introduction of new members. With four new members being appointed in the last few weeks, the committee now has its full complement of members. All were asked to confirm that they are able to access the secure section (“committee login”) of the committee website, http://www.udel.edu/facsenhonors.
   B. Description of SFH Committee’s major recurring duties. They are to review applications for including new awards in the University’s Honors Day Booklet, administer the University’s Excellence in Teaching and Advising Awards, and administer the Francis Alison Faculty Award. In the last few years the Committee has undertaken several special projects, which should be mostly completed in the current year: restructure the Honors Day Booklet, create and automate a web-based system for collecting and analyzing nominations for the Excellence Awards, and create a Committee website that informs the UD community about the awards nominations process and provides a secure work area for committee business. They are all meant to further improve the efficiency and credibility of the awards process.
   C. Chair’s meeting with Karen Stein, President of Faculty Senate. Completion of the Committee’s projects requires several policy decisions by the Senate leadership, all relating to the technical support required for developing and maintaining the Committee’s web-based projects. Linda met with Karen Stein on September 22 to discuss the decisions and resources we require.

Linda shared with the Committee the list of “constraints and questions” that she gave to Karen. They cover such matters as who should be responsible for hosting the Committee’s (computer) server, who can we call on for technical assistance with developing and maintaining web pages and using less common software (e.g., Access), and who (which job positions—committee chair, Senate staff, technical support) should be responsible for the various classes of tasks that must be accomplished during the year (administrative/clerical, technical/computer, and communication).
Diane suggested that the Committee and the Senate both consider participating in B&E’s Corporate Associates program, which involves a graduate student working 20 hours a week with a corporation. She will check on that possibility. Diane also suggested that the tasks remaining in the Committee’s projects might be sufficient to justify applying for another MIS student team for the spring semester.

IV. Review of Honors Day Booklet project and remaining tasks.
   A. Linda briefly reviewed the aims and activities of this subcommittee’s work. She reported from subcommittee chair Bob Davis, who could not be present, that he is working with Connee McKinney in Publications to implement the format changes we discussed last year. Katharine elaborated by describing for new members the old alphabetical format, which buries the largest awards (such as the Excellence in Teaching and Advising, Warner and Taylor student awards) among minor awards.
   B. Subcommittee members Katharine and Shelley reported that many but not all departments had supplied the necessary information about their awards, and that the proposed “ruthless” winnowing of the booklet may not be possible because it might antagonize past and potential donors who fund various awards. This issue needs to be examined further.
   C. A second issue requiring more study is the lingering question asked by one faculty member several years ago, namely, should any awards in the University booklet are race or gender restricted? (Some are.) Is this practice legal and, even if so, is it appropriate in the Committee’s view? The Committee asked Linda to forward to Bob the request that he ask the UD administration what it (or its lawyers) have concluded about the legality of awards restricted to only certain races or genders (e.g., Bessie Collins, Pauline Young Awards). Are awards for high accomplishment affected by the laws and court decisions on affirmative action in student admissions? Also, would the legality of an award depend on who confers, funds, or in any other way sponsors it (e.g., private donors vs. UD)? Shelley suggested that we also see whether the matter is or could be within the scope of the current AAUP Contract or future AAUP bargaining.
   D. Subcommittee members suggested that they would probably need to meet before the next scheduled SFH meeting on October 17. Linda agreed to contact Bob Davis about setting up such a meeting. The subcommittee needs to set a timeline for completing tasks, because some are more urgent than others. For instance, departments will start in December submitting awards for inclusion in the Honors Day Booklet.

V. Review of Database and Website projects
   A. Linda reviewed some of the history and work on these related projects. She also circulated copies of the draft Database/Website Manual and the Timeline of Tasks and Procedures which have been developed to aid future chairs. Both will be put on the secure website for use and revision.
   B. There was much discussion of the need to have sufficient technical expertise on or associated with the Committee to assure that the Excellence database system and ancillary tasks be carried out in a timely and accurate manner. While much has been automated, it would still take considerable time for a chair to read the Manual, which walks one through all the non-automated procedures. These constitute the various “nodes of human vulnerability.” While they are simple, they do require some elemental
familiarity with multiple technical systems (unix, Access, html, etc.). The Committee currently cannot count on having any such person on the committee or available to them. To date, it has relied on volunteers, good luck, and a lot of begging. Committee members discussed the merits of various possible solutions, both short- and long-term, including that the Senate’s administrative assistant be given the necessary technical training, CoCAN should always recruit a sufficiently expert faculty member for the committee each year to handle the technical work, each year enlist a graduate student in the Corporate Associates program, and some support units on campus (e.g., IT) be assigned responsibility for providing relevant technical expertise for the Excellence database system. Shelley and Diane also suggested the development of wizards to handle tasks that now constitute nodes of human vulnerability.

C. There is likewise need for short-term and long-run assistance for developing and maintaining the Committee’s website. Diane suggested that the Committee might solicit another MIS student team for the development work that remains.

D. Linda agreed to work with Diane on possible enlistment of MIS student teams and graduate students in the Corporate Associates program, and also to keep working on a workplan for finishing the website.

VI. Other tasks involving SFH policies and procedures

A. The restructuring of the Excellence Awards system is meant to protect and enhance the credibility of the awards by, among other things, authenticating nominations and increasing their number. After discussion, the Committee concluded that campaigns are the biggest remaining threat to the perceived and actual integrity of the awards. Which kinds are OK, if any (chair initiated, student initiated, etc.?) Self-initiated campaigns are already forbidden.

B. Review Alison Award procedures and role of Alison Society in improving the number and completeness of dossiers submitted.

C. Look into query by Aerospace Studies about whether fulltime UD instructors who are Active Duty Air Force Officers (and thus not paid by UD) might be made eligible for the Excellence Awards.

D. Consider clarifying criteria for Excellence in Advising Award (a response to a complaint about them)

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50.

Respectfully Submitted,
Linda S. Gottfredson