



WILLIAM & MARY

CHARTERED 1693

Faculty Assembly Minutes, July 25, 2023

3:30 – 5 pm

Location: Zoom

Zoom: <https://cwm.zoom.us/j/91047315062>

Officers Present: K. Scott Swan (Faculty Assembly President), David Feldman (Vice President), Nicholas Popper (Secretary)

Other Members Present: Chuck Bailey, Josh Burk, Christopher del Negro, James Dwyer, Marjy Friedrichs, John Gilmour, Aaron Griffith, Marc Sher, Evgenia Smirni, Betsy Talbott, Brett Wilson

Members Absent: David Armstrong (Faculty Representative to the Board of Visitors), Mark Brush, Katherine Guthrie, Erin Hendrickson, Jessica Martin, Randi Rashkover, Cristina Stancioiu

Others in Attendance: Peggy Agouris (Provost), Camille Andrews, Chris Howard, Terry Meyers (Parliamentarian), Mary Oberlies, Christy Porter, Robert Scolnick

1. Call to Order

President Swan called the meeting to order at 3:33 pm.

2. Provost's Remarks

Provost Agouris made general remarks welcoming new members and espousing collaboration.

3. President's Remarks

President Scott Swan described goals and ambitions for the year for FA. He then laid out the process for retreat and potential topics. These included: contending with changes to affirmative action law, to accreditation, the status of enrollment, the new school (CDAP) under discussion,

the seven Faculty Assembly priorities carried over from last year and the status of their individual white papers, and a range of innovation initiatives. Further potential topics for discussion included how to contend with the emergence of ChatGPT, concerns over grade inflation, management of academic integrity issues, and development near the streams of Matoaka.

4. Assignments to Committees

All agreed to committee assignments. Christopher Del Negro, as a new member, asked about what the committees are.

Former President John Gilmour gave a brief synopsis of the Academic Affairs Committee, Faculty Affairs Committee, Committee on Planning and Resources (COPAR), and the Executive Committee.

5. Discussion of new business.

The floor was opened for general discussion, including of retreat.

Provost Agouris praised collaboration with FA.

Swan discussed practices of trying to include a broader reach of faculty than has typically engaged with FA and introducing more transparency into our meetings. As continuance from last year, Zoom access to the meetings will be available for any interested faculty.

6. Meeting Days for FA

Swan then announced the preliminary schedule for FA meetings.

7. Discussion of Data School report

Brett Wilson expressed a concern over the lack of clarity concerning the financial dimensions and impact of the various models articulated in the report.

President Swan responded that this is often how business decisions are phased but did say it would be useful to know sooner rather than later.

Marc Sher noted that there was a crucial distinction between the prospective school and the existing Business and Education schools in that the new one would be advising freshmen, and that its structure would need to accommodate the range of elements this entails. Similarly, he expressed his appreciation for the interdisciplinarity and experience of knowing people across domains that is so crucial to the W&M experience, and that he hoped would be preserved. He

also expressed concern that, were it to take the form of a new School, the change would almost double the service load of Area III depts that were not part of it.

Swan clarified that Business does advise freshman.

Betsy Talbott noted that the Education school increasingly does too.

Vice President David Feldman observed the generally negative responses to the option presented in the survey to the option of having the new school be a separate graduate school, and he noted that he thought this reflected inadequate information and rumor.

Del Negro reported broad support for the report amongst his community in the Integrated Science Center. But also emphasized the need to retain interdisciplinarity and liberal arts education.

Evgenia Smirni expressed lack of clarity as to the prospective difference between the grad school option proposed in the survey and what we have now.

Bob Scholnick expressed disappointment at the lack of planning granularity in the proposal and that there was little engagement with the costs and process of implementation.

Smirni responded that this was in response to the charge, and also pointed out that a full detailed analysis of implementation for all three options was not feasible.

Chuck Bailey noted that this report is as it was advertised and fulfilled the charge given to the committee responsible for it, but expressed concern that the next stage of its conceptualization will be taking place when its ultimate shape will have already been decided. He also observed that some of those who would be part of this new school want it both ways: to both have a means to enhance graduate education while also benefiting from work done within Arts & Sciences. He expressed that many faculty who are in similar disciplines (that is to say, Area III) but who do not feel either invited into or naturally part of the new schools are feeling left behind.

Scholnick pointed out that it is not clear what new is made possible by a new school that would not be possible if done within A&S.

Gilmour expressed enthusiasm for the report as fulfilling its charge. He proposed that we should perhaps express preferences on the basis of the report as a way to help Provost Agouris move forward.

Provost Agouris concurred.

Wilson asks who is going to make the final decision.

Swan answered that it would be the provost's decision but clarified that we have a powerful advisorial role.

Terry Meyers (Parliamentarian) posted the language from constitution in the chatbox.

Nick Popper said that there is not very much in the document on how the options would affect the experience of people in other departments to allow them to judge, such as financial costs, or service load. The current procedure asks faculty to judge in the abstract things that would affect them concretely.

Wilson rephrased Popper's comment as: "What should a school of data science and computing at W&M look like?" is a different question than "How should data science and computing be best integrated in a W&M education?"

Provost Agouris pointed out that in terms of costs, we also have to think of the cost of doing nothing and not seizing opportunity.

Aaron Griffith says that those he's spoken to are unclear on motivations behind all this. He continued by pointing out that the motivations expressed in the document, such as increasing reputation and increasing faculty, are shared by other departments that are not discussing the formation of new schools.

Wilson agreed, noting that the case for increased autonomy needs to be framed as good for W&M not just for the departments.

Smirni responded by citing her previous presentations and discussions, including the main point that it is just following nationwide trends – including amongst our peer institutions – concerning Computer Science and Data Science education. Notes that the costs would be significant in terms of reputation, status, prestige, retention, and more. Pointed out as well that undergraduates pursuing studies in these disciplines would be negatively impacted by operating in an environment that was not considered cutting edge, and that students who were able to do so have access to very promising careers.

Del Negro reinforced further that a new school would benefit undergrad research and recruitment.

Wilson reiterated that the advantages to disciplines like Computer Science seemed unmistakable, but that the potential negative consequences for others at W&M were not receiving due attention.

Smirni reiterated that the potential negative consequences for Computer Science of not acting quickly were being underestimated.

Popper observed that it seems like something needs to be done, but the question remains of how it is going to be done in a way that supports and perhaps even enhances other units.

Feldman agreed, pointing out that this is the next phase of discussion about this.

Provost Agouris stresses that it's important to understand what the costs are of stasis and emphasized that responsibility – both in terms of the impact on W&M more broadly and the costs of not moving quickly enough and watching the Computer Science department suffer – lies with her office.

Scholnick observed that the Business and Education school took time but have been fully integrated into the W&M education.

Wilson expressed hope that those making the decisions would think about the community more broadly than in limited departmental terms.

Swan summarized the discussion.

8. Adjournment

Sher moved to adjourn, and Popper seconded. Swan adjourned the meeting at 5:02 pm.

Prepared by Nicholas Popper