Adapted from the May 2, 2008 Minutes of the University Senate

**Presentation by Dr. Robert Langran on the Early History of the University Senate**

Dr. Langran began by explaining how the University operated in the 1960s. Decisions were made by the Administration, in a hierarchal manner. He noted that in the spring semester of 1969 the University initiated a tuition raise for the next fall semester. Many of the students complained that the notice came so late in the semester and that the increase was so high that they were unable to return and it made it difficult to get into other schools. The students decided to protest by going on strike. A compromise was reached stating that the tuition raise would be rescinded for the fall and would be re-examined. In the interim, an organization would be formed to start university wide governance at Villanova. This group of twenty-three people from the various constituencies met during the summer to come up with a University governing body. These many viewpoints were meshed into a constitution and by-laws. Since this carried over into the fall semester the name of the group was then changed from the Summer Commission on University Governance to the **S**pecial **C**ommission on **U**niversity **G**overnance. In the spring of 1970, the Board of Trustees approved the constitution and by-laws and the University Senate began the next September.

He reminded everyone that this is a very unique senate in it is a tripartite. They found that no other schools had a tripartite governing body. Tripartite in the original Senate meant twelve faculty, twelve students, twelve administrators plus two alumni. He also noted that the Law School felt that if they were going to be part of this, then they must have a special status because of the different Law School rules. This is the reason why, in the constitution, it has a unique status.

Dr. Langran stated that their goal was to make a body that has substance to do some things, but not everything. One of their main issues was the principle of subsidiary. By that, he meant that if something can be accomplished on a lower level then it should be. He went on to say that not everything should come to the University Senate. Dr. Langran stressed was that the Senate should not be involved with items that belong mainly to one college. They wanted to portray the body that would be a university wide group. He also stated that this does not mean that the Senate is the only body that can legislate. The President can legislate as can the Vice Presidents in their own areas. He clarified that the Senate legislates by recommending. He noted that the President or the Board has veto power with no overriding either of their vetoes.

Dr. Langran noted that at times, in those early days of the Senate, it could prove very frustrating because they had a very conservative president who did not always agree with the Senate’s actions.

He feels that the formation of the Senate ushered in some other areas of governments. The faculty was able to form a Faculty Assembly. Even though they did not have legislative power, they could express their feelings. Also, the faculty in the Senate would all meet as a group to discuss an issue. Therefore, they could go in with one faculty voice. They would then “politic” amongst the students and administrators. By gaining a consensus, they knew they would get a motion passed. He noticed that the idea of caucusing is rarely used today. The faculty then suggested that they have a more representative body. This became the Faculty Council which today has evolved into a Faculty Congress. More recently, the Senate played a role in the formation of the new University Staff Council.

Dr. Langran finished his presentation by reminding all that they should be very proud to be a member of a group such as this and that it will take hard work to live up to what the role of the University Senate should be.