



University Senate

**VU Academic Policy Committee
Minutes of the October 7, 2009 Meeting**

Present: Akoma, Hill, Japaridze, Johannes, Jones, Kerns, Klein (Chair), Lindenmeyr, McLaughlin, Modena, Pagano, Perry, Sharts-Hopko, Zamani

NIA: Ahmadi, Bartlinski, Gustafson, Qadeer, Styer, Willens

1. Prof Klein reviewed several projects carried over from last year: APC's review of the CATS and the evaluation of teaching; the Faculty Handbook; and the working group on digital infrastructure established by APC and University Librarian Joe Lucia
2. We agreed that our major project for the coming year concerns the search for process for a new VPAA/provost/chief academic officer. Prof Klein announced Fr. Peter's plan to hold open town meetings on this issue. We decided to devote our November meeting to this issue.
3. VPAA Johannes revealed that the University has stepped back from the project, discussed last year, of achieving a national ranking and instead opted to pursue a "national reputation." As a result, expansion of PhD education at VU is on hold. The major reason is cost. The Committee met this disclosure with surprise and indicated that faculty would find this a reversal of policy articulated by senior administrators. Prof Johannes replied that last year's discussions of national ranking were speculative in nature and had never been adopted.
4. VPAA Johannes presented the results of conversations among the deans and associate deans and select faculty regarding research at VU. Unsurprisingly, the most important issues in promoting research are time and money.
5. Items 3 and 4 sparked a wide-ranging conversation about research, faculty recruitment, undergraduate and graduate education. Issues raised include:
 - a. The need to think of VU as a mosaic of different schools and programs, each with their distinctive strengths and needs
 - b. The importance of postgraduate education with respect to academic excellence and faculty recruitment
 - c. The counterproductive effect of the currently-prevailing language of a "balance" between teaching and scholarship. "Balance" sounds like a euphemism for "compromise." Something like "a national/world class scholar who is passionate about teaching" would make more sense. Several of the deans present suggested a meeting of associate deans to hammer out new language.
 - d. The way in which considerations of cost and considerations of academic excellence are balanced in university decision-making. Members of the committee expressed concern that the University's question often seems to be, "How cheaply can we do this?" rather than "What do we need for excellence?"
 - e. Concerns that the VU Board needs more contact with active researchers and richer sense of the scholarly life of the university. Prof Pagano suggested that APC might initiate some programs in conjunction with Board meetings.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Klein