



Faculty Forum

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**On Edge
Mark Mattheis**

Finally. The last scheduled day of class for the semester. I tell my students on the first day of class that the person in this room who will learn the most during the semester will be me. This opinion has held true with my position as a faculty fellow publishing the forum. My outlook at the beginning of the year and the one I hold now, have changed. I can see the campus in a new light. In essence I have learned.

What I have learned is that we are a campus on edge. We started the year with the hope of new leadership. But, with anyone new there is a period of finding the vision. The 20/20 commission first focused our sight far into the future. Program prioritization then made us don reading glasses and take a closer look at ourselves. Since then we have experienced there is always a personal side to every job. We are not just titles with power we are people who care for our own.

The November election results turned the state in a new direction. There are no checks and balances when one party rules. Legislative priorities have driven us to tighten our belts yet again, using new holes to keep up the pants with assumed deep pockets. Changes are coming fast and furious from the state, which put administrators on edge.

By listening I have learned there are many ideas that seldom turn into suggestions. The Faculty Forum is the platform where these suggestions can be made. If you have kept up with this year's issues you will have found few articles submitted. I have learned that by putting words on paper faculty expose themselves to perceived repercussions. Not just here, but an electronic article or even print could hurt their job prospects elsewhere. When would you ever imagine faculty keeping their collective mouth shut? Faculty are on edge.

The big picture brought us a year where calendars ended but the world did not, economies crashed, asteroids came close, and dictators rattled their sabers. This academic year has been one global issue after another. It seems that at times even the whole planet has been on edge. My personal edge is the brink of the tenure process. I will be the first in our young department to be scrutinized. I have now heard enough stories about going up for tenure. It seems to boil down to what I have accomplished and who will be on the committees. My work history is what it is, but there have been a few changes in personnel. I have worked under two chancellors, three provosts, three deans, and seven department faculty members have departed the premises. Who will be around to say grace next year is hard to tell. I'll find out the future just like everyone else, one day at a time.

So for the last issue of the year let me leave you with this. Let us use the edge to remind ourselves why we are here. Life is too short to leave the words unspoken. Have passion in your work and compassion for those with whom you work. Embrace the day for the potential it holds

and never give in to the naysayers in life. Speak your mind for it may be a solution for progress. Make plans for the future, but always strive to live in the moment. For good or bad whee all are truly family at Western. Take care.

Faculty Senate Chair Report
Mary Jean Ronan Herzog

Committee Appointments. I asked the general faculty for nominations for the following committees, and received more than fifteen nominations within a few days. Go, Faculty!

1. Information Technology Council (one faculty member)
2. Infrastructure Technology Committee (one faculty member)
3. Paul A. Reid Awards (two faculty members)
4. Athletics Committee (one faculty member)

Ombuds Office. Sometimes things take a long time. At the first Senate Planning meeting of the year, Chris Cooper, chair of the Faculty Affairs Council, brought up the Senate resolution to create a position for an ombudsperson. It passed on January 23, 2008, and Senate leadership followed up year after year. This year, the UNC Faculty Assembly and Staff Assembly both encouraged the development of ombuds offices throughout the system and invited the Ombuds Office at Chapel Hill to give presentations. I brought it up with our provost, Dr. Brenton, during our fall conversations, and she was very supportive of our need to have such a position/office. Dr. Brenton has a background in conflict resolution and sees the ombud as a very positive approach, and she talked to Dr. Belcher about it. In the meantime, Mary Ann Lochner was advocating for such a position, with the understanding that an effective ombud can help resolve conflicts in the early stages before they get out of control. And, the WCU Staff Senate has also been advocating for an ombuds office.

The end result is that Dr. Belcher has approved an ombuds position which may be similar to the new one at Appalachian State (a full-time faculty member with half-time release to serve as an ombud). Details will be worked out, but our ombuds office will be available to both faculty and staff. Hooray!

Hearing, Grievance & PTR Procedures. The Rules Committee has been working on clarifying and simplifying the procedures and steps in the Grievance, Hearing and PTR appeal committees. I sent suggestions for changes and clarifications that I received from faculty throughout the year to the Committee in early March. This is important work, and the end results are expected to make these processes much more effective. However, it is also tedious and time-consuming and requires the committee to proceed carefully and systematically. Erin McNelis, chair of the Rules Committee, has posted the documents on Sharepoint, in the folder labeled, "Grievance_Hearing_PTR_Appeals_Process_Flow_Charts."

Senate Restructuring. The Senate leadership started examining the Senate organization last summer. This included looking at what other senates do, how they are organized, etc. The UNC Faculty Assembly distributed a best practices paper on effective senates. I plan to follow up on this issue, and will ask the senate leadership to discuss how we should proceed.

Proposed Senate Schedule for 2013-2014: Open Faculty Caucuses for 2013-14:

August 30, Friday 3 – 5 p.m. in U.C. Illusions

January 24, Friday 3 – 5 p.m. in U.C. Illusions

Faculty Senate Regular Business Meetings for 2013-14: Note: unless indicated otherwise, meetings are 3 – 5 p.m. in the University Center Multipurpose rooms.

August 28 (Overflow September 4) Wednesday

September 26 (Overflow October 3) Thursday

October 23 (Overflow October 30) Wednesday

November 21 Thursday (Overflow December 4, Wednesday*)

January 22 (Overflow January 29) Wednesday

February 20 in Health and Human Sciences Building (Overflow February 27) Thursday (Do we want to hold this in HHS?)

March 26 (Overflow April 2) Wednesday

April 24 (Overflow May 1) Thursday

*Note, change due to conflict. Faculty Senate Planning Team Meetings for 2012-13: Note: these meetings are each on a Wednesday, from 12 – 2 in the UC Dogwood Room.

August 21, September 18, October 16, November 13, January 15, February 12, March 19, April 9

Other Key Proposed Dates:

Friday, March 14 (nominations for all University Elections run by CONEC due, proposed ballots emailed to faculty for review)

Friday, March 21 (last day to submit write-in nomination for ballot)

8 a.m. Monday, March 31 through 8 a.m. Monday April 7, University Elections Voting Period
5 p.m. Wednesday, April 2 (no later than the first Wednesday in April), all College Senator election results must be submitted to Secretary of the Faculty by this time.

Thanks:

Thanks to all Senators, Planning Team, Leadership and Ann Green for your work and participation this year! A special thanks to the Senators who are finishing their term at the end of this semester: Cheryl Daly, Christopher Hoyt, Libby McRae, Steve Miller, Wes Stone, Ben Tholkes, Erin Tapley, and Leroy Kauffman, who will continue work with the Senate as Chair-elect.

Respectfully submitted, Mary Jean Ronan Herzog

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For additional information about the Faculty Forum or to submit an article please contact:

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