Minutes of a meeting of the Council of the Princeton University Community held March 9, 2015 in Betts Auditorium. Present were Council members Ms. Banks, Mr. Boyle, Professor Braverman, Mr. Brown, Ms. Buff, Professor Burnett, Ms. Burnett, Mr. Cannon, Mr. Chang, Ms. Cheng, Ms. Cherrey, Ms. Clifton, Ms. Czulak, Mr. Davidsescu, Mr. Durkee, Mr. Edington, President Eisgruber (chair), Ms. Hakim, Professor Hare, Professor Harman, Mr. Hines, Ms. Johnston, Mr. Keller, Mr. Khoury, Provost Lee, Dr. Matese, Dr. McClure, Professor Meyers, Mr. Mozley, Mr. Nan, Mr. Nuckols, Mr. Okuda-Lim, Ms. Principi, Mr. Ravikumar, Ms. Romero, Dean Smith, Professor Stilz, Mr. Voelcker, Professor Wysocki. Ms. Halliday was secretary.

Approval of Minutes

The President called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. After the roll call he asked for and received approval of minutes of the February 9, 2015 meeting as circulated in advance of the meeting.

Questions and Answers

Through members of the Undergraduate Student Government, students asked whether decisions about weather-related closures could be made earlier than 6:00 a.m. Executive Vice President Treby Williams described the process by such decisions are reached including reports from dozen of university administrative and academic units and consultation with weather forecast resources. Given uncertainties, even at 5:00 a.m. forecasts can be uncertain. Complicated calculations must be taken into account to ensure that services can continue for residential life and academic classes, and safety is a high priority. Mr. Okuda-Lim thanked Ms. Williams for providing a fuller picture of the complexity of the decisions.

Graduate Student Career Resources

At the President’s request, Dean of the Graduate School Sanjeev Kulkarni opened a discussion about graduate student career resources. Supply and demand of academic positions, as well as personal decisions to pursue careers outside academia have resulted in increased interest in alternative career paths. In conjunction with campus partners such as the McGraw Center, Career Services and academic departments, several new initiatives have been developed recently. For example, a University administrative fellows program has paired students with administrative departments to gain work experience in these units. In cooperation with Career Services the school has led discussions for students with Trustees about alternative careers. Princeton University Press has fostered interactions with students who might be interested in a career in publishing or in learning more about getting their own work published.

The dean introduced Amy Pszczolkowski, associate director of graduate student career counseling in Career Services who spoke about the growing importance of serving graduate students as part of Career Services’ mission. Partnering with centers and academic departments as
well as alumni, Career Services has introduced programs such as skill building. Members of a panel representing a variety of academic departments then described examples of recent initiatives. Beginning with Professor of Philosophy Sarah Jane Leslie who spoke about the work of the strategic planning task force on the future of the Graduate School whose charge includes career paths for graduate students. As context, she mentioned that the highest number of students who get jobs in academia are in the humanities; on the other end of the spectrum are scientists and engineers only about 20% to 30% of whom go into academia. To cover this broad spectrum of interests, a set of best practices are being developed for academic departments to support students looking for all kinds of jobs. She underscored the importance of having partners like Career Services and noted that the development of a strong alumni network was also important.

Professor of Economics Stephen Redding described the mentoring and support efforts of the department to help students succeed in interviews held at the annual professional meeting for economics. Preparation starts in the summer with communications to students eligible to begin the job process. To help students succeed in this interview process, the department assists with written presentations and provides professional help with oral presentation skills. Members of the department coach students; mock interviews are organized; and a departmental manual was developed to help navigate the job market process. Alumni have given generously of their time to answer questions from students about career paths. Career Services is an important resource, especially for helping students package their resumes for non-academic jobs. At the moment, about 50% of students pursue careers in academia while others take positions in government, in organizations like the World Bank or the federal reserve and in consultancies.

Finally, Mark Esposito, a graduate student in Molecular Biology, described a student-led initiative. About 20% of students in his department take positions in academia, and providing more information to faculty about alternative careers would be helpful. The graduate students in Molecular Biology have instituted a student-led career symposium held every 4 to 5 years. Alumni are invited to talk about their careers and how they got chose them. The symposium provides an excellent opportunity for networking, for raising student awareness about career opportunities and for making alumni aware of the significant student interest in careers outside academia. Mentoring relationships have developed as a result of these symposia. Going forward, the hope is to broaden these efforts to include other sciences and to increase efforts to attract representatives of local research enterprises to broaden the network of mentors and advisers.

During the discussion that followed Professor Leslie and Dean Kulkarni talked about the efforts of the Graduate School strategic planning working group to identify ways to help faculty and departments provide advice and support during job searches. Strengthening the support systems outside the departments through Career Services and the Graduate School as well was noted. Developing and maintaining strong alumni networks can best be done by at the departmental level; departments as well as students reap benefits from these connections. Students said they would find useful having a template of how to navigate the job market including deadlines and steps to take, and the working group is considering how to tailor a general blueprint to individual departmental needs. Cultures and climates change, and convincing faculty of the importance of helping students interested in non-academic careers is essential to the success of these efforts. On the alumni front, the Graduate School is looking for ways to enhance the alumni data base so that identifying alumni resources in various fields would be easier.
Princeton Perspectives Project

The President thanked the panelists especially for their presentations. He then introduced Dr. Alexis Andres, Director of Student Life at Butler College, and Shawon Jackson ’15, former USG president, who have been instrumental in developing the Princeton Perspective Project. They presented a video of testimonials from students to illustrate the goals of the project which aims to change the culture around set backs and failures. A new website (http://perspective.princeton.edu/about-PPP/about-PPP) has resources for students to help them affirm that setbacks are a normal part of a successful life. A campaign was launched in the fall around the time of greatest stress for students. They hoped that CPUC members would take advantage of the website and spread the word about these resources. During discussion, a concern was voiced that those most in need of these resources might not be aware of the project. Dr. Andres and Mr. Jackson noted that efforts were increasing to reach out to members of the community including coaches, residential college advisers and faculty advisers to help get out the word. Mr. Jackson ended by introducing the new student leader of the program, Mary Heath Manning ’17.

Special Task Force on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Provost provided an update about the Task Force on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. The steering committee and the working groups (on Policy and Transparency; Academics and Awareness; and Structure and Support) have all begun work. As an example of some of the questions that are being addressed, the Provost mentioned a review of the accessibility of policies that address bias and what are the resources to address bias; what skills and competencies do we need to work successfully with individuals different from ourselves. The task force has started to collect information using focus groups. Faculty have proposed public lectures about diversity and inclusion. Vice Provost Minter drew attention to options and resources available to members of the community who feel they have experienced bias. Her office’s website (http://inclusive.princeton.edu/) provides information including confidential resources, as well as the anonymous EthicsPoint Hotline.

The President thanked all members of the task force for their work.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Halliday
Secretary