Council of the Princeton University Community
Minutes, February 13, 2012

Minutes of a meeting of the Council of the Princeton University Community held February 13, 2012 in 101 Friend Center. Present were Council members Ms. Alberts, Alivisatos, Ms. Alversa, Ms. Bell Blackburn, Professors Bhatt, Bocarsly, Ms. Capewell, Ms. Cherrey, Professors Delue, Dolven, Ms. Doyle, Mr. Durkee, Mr. Easop, Provost Eisgruber, Professors Fiske, Harman, Mr. Immordino, Professor Kang, Mr. Kao, Mr. Keller, Ms. Kim, Professor Kruse, Mr. Lindsay, Dr. Mattheis, Mr. McDonough, Ms. Mellby, Mr. Mulcahy, Professor Oppenheimer, Ms. Poladian, Mr. Pretko, Ms. Ridgeway, Mr. Smith, Dean Smith, President Tilghman (chair), Professor Wuthnow; Ms. Halliday was secretary.

The President called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m. Minutes of the December 12 meeting were approved as circulated in advance of the meeting. She noted that this would be a town hall meeting, so she suggested that any questions be held for discussion after her report.

Recent Faculty Awards; Update on the Lewis Center

The President began with brief remarks about recent developments of importance to the University. First, she mentioned two reasons to celebrate. Anthony Appiah, the Laurance S. Rockefeller University Professor of Philosophy and the University Center for Human Values, would receive the National Medal of Humanities in recognition of his role in public intellectual life. Former Professor of History at Princeton, now University Librarian at Harvard, Robert Darnton would be recognized as well. Later in the meeting a member of the audience pointed out also that the previous evening Professor of Music Steven Mackey had won a Grammy Award.

The second cause for celebration concerns positive developments for planning the Lewis Center for the Arts. After years of discussion, Princeton Borough and Township approved zoning changes that will allow the University to proceed with this transformative project at a location near the Dinky station. She recognized two members of the administration for their key assistance in bringing about this success, Vice President and Secretary Robert Durkee and Director of Community and Regional Affairs Kristin Appelget. The most significant points of contention with members of the municipalities concerned moving the Dinky terminus 460 feet south. Referring to a map of the new center, the President drew attention to key aspects of the project which include improving traffic patterns in part by creating a traffic circle at the interaction of Alexander Road and University Place. Parking is incorporated into the plan with improved access to the west garage. Rick Joy, an architect from Arizona who has worked closely with the Lewis Center architect, Stephen Holl, has been chosen as the architect for the transit complex, which, she reassured the audience, includes a WaWa. One change in the siting of the arts center is a move to the south and introducing landscaping on the northwest corner across from McCarter Theatre. The Center includes music rehearsal spaces; dance and theater rehearsal and practice spaces; a black box theater; and offices for faculty and visitors and fellows. The separate buildings are connected at basement level by a “forum” space. The outdoor plaza includes a decorative pool of water that allows light to penetrate to the basement spaces below. The orientation of the Center has been changed to focus on the community instead of looking inward toward campus.
The two existing stone train station buildings will be transformed by Rick Joy into restaurant spaces.

During the discussion that followed a question was asked about two lawsuits brought against the University focused on moving the Dinky terminus. Legal advice to the University indicates that the law suits have no merit; rather they are designed to slow down the project. In response to a question about a likely date for ground breaking for the complex, the President reminded the audience that this is a long-term project. Site approvals will need to be gained and then necessary and extensive infrastructure work will have to be accomplished in order for the project to start. It is likely that the complex will be dedicated in 2017. Regarding questions about the area south of the complex along Alexander Road, it was noted that a proposal to develop the area for mixed use is before the zoning board, and the plan is to develop that section of Alexander Road for faculty and staff housing as well as a small amount of retail space. The Township is in favor of the plan. Throughout the planning stages, the Township has been a good partner with the University. New Jersey Transit is fully supportive of the plans to move the Dinky. Governor Christie on occasion has also voiced his support.

Discussion about the funding for the project gave major credit to Trustee Peter Lewis ’55 whose generous gift of $101 million is largely responsible for the University being able to pursue these goals. Fundraising continues, and the President underscored that there remain municipal approvals yet to be gained. However, with the zoning board approvals now in hand, the University can enter into conversations with donors with the specific location for the Center now decided. She referred the audience to the homepage story on the center which includes the map of the area and plans for the facilities. [http://www.princeton.edu/artsandtransit/]

The President described plans to address traffic patterns along Alexander Road which include installing a traffic light to allow traffic to enter and exit parking sites more easily. Analyses conducted by transportation experts suggest that this will improve traffic along Alexander Road and safety for pedestrians.

In response to a question about the decision to change the siting of the buildings to allow for greenspace across from McCarter Theatre, the President noted that by not building any facility on the corner of University Place and Alexander Road the University is able to optimize the use of space in that area and safeguard the possibility for expansion.

The President noted that there are no plans to do anything at the moment with New South building. The facility seems to be serving well the Lewis Center programs now occupying the building. The spaces freed up in 185 Nassau Street once the new center is built will continue to be used for the arts, with rehearsal and performance spaces maintained and with visual arts facilities likely expanding.

Federal Budget Outlook

Noting the dependence of universities on federal dollars especially to support scholarships and research, the President reviewed President Obama’s FY13 budget proposal in light of University objectives. In spite of difficult financial times, in general funding for education and research has been preserved. Pell grants, NSF, the Department of Energy, and NEH would have
small increases according to the budget proposal; NIH would hold steady which in practical terms means it would lose ground. The outlook for the Plasma Physics Laboratory is complicated by federal funding agreements for ITER, the international energy laboratory in France, which would decrease federal funding for national laboratories. She reminded the audience that this budget must be approved by Congress.

**Freshman-Year Rush Ban**

Finally, the President noted that the committee chaired by Dean Deignan focused on implementing the ban on “rush” for Greek societies in freshman year is aiming to report later in the spring on their recommendations.

Questions and discussion followed. In response to a question, the President described a newly formed ad hoc Trustee committee on diversity. The President explained that the committee would focus on faculty, graduate students, and senior administrators since the University does not do as well as it would like in these areas with respect to gender and racial diversity. The committee would take a year to develop innovative ideas with the goal of making Princeton a leader in how the University can reflect the nation’s diversity.

Students expressed interest in increasing technology in teaching. Filming courses and making them available to students could help undergraduates in the course selection process. The President acknowledged that the University is actively exploring interactive learning online and has in mind three main goals: to improve and make more effective how Princeton teaches its own students; through our successes, to help other educational institutions improve their teaching; to make Princeton courses available outside the University. With respect to the last goal, the President gave the example of Stanford University where a course offered by two of its faculty in electrical engineering that was developed into an online, computer-based course drew attention from thousands world-wide. The Provost warned that the success of these efforts is yet to be proven in terms of the quality of the experience and the possible impact on the perceived quality of the Princeton experience. A group of interested faculty has been asked to review possibilities, and students would be included in these discussions.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Halliday
Secretary