Council of the Princeton University Community
Minutes, October 1, 2012

Minutes of a meeting of the Council of the Princeton University Community held October 1, 2012 in 101 Friend Center. Present were Council members Ms. Alivisatos, Prof. Bhatt, Ms. Buff, Ms. Bui, Mr. Bud, Prof. Chen, Ms. Cherrey, Ms. Clifton, Mr. Cook, Prof. Davis, Mr. DeLeon, Mr. Diskin, Ms. Doyle, Ms. Durden, Mr. Durkee, Mr. Easop, Provost Eisgruber, Prof. Harman, Dr. Hourihane, Mr. Keller, Ms. Kim, Mr. Kugelmass, Mr. Maisel, Dr. Matthies, Mr. McDonough, Prof. Meyers, Prof. Morel, Dr. Neglia, Mr. Okuda-Lim, Mr. Riley, Mr. Robertson, Ms. Scott, Ms. Shori, Mr. Stolzenberg, President Tilghman (chair), Ms. Wright, Prof. Wysocki, Dr. Yao, Mr. Zhu; Ms. Halliday was secretary.

Order of Business; Committee Assignments

The President called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m., and after the roll call she thanked the members of the Council for their service. She turned first to opening of the year business. On recommendation from the council’s Executive Committee the Order of Business (Appendix A) and the standing committee assignments (Appendix B) were approved. The Council delegated authority to the Executive Committee to fill committee vacancies.

Question and Answer Session

The President noted that each Council meeting begins with a question and answer session, and she encouraged members to submit questions in advance so that those who can best answer them can be present at the meeting. In response to questions about the academic calendar and how it is developed, the President said that the academic calendar is the responsibility of the faculty. In a discussion a few years ago about possible changes, no consensus could be reached among the faculty or students about what changes would improve the calendar. For example, Princeton’s emphasis on independent work is an argument for scheduling exams and paper deadlines after holiday break. On the other hand the current calendar makes it difficult to sustain engagement with a course and complicates travel plans especially for international students who wish to go home for break. There is current interest in reopening these discussions.

Office of Disability Services

The President introduced the Director of the Office of Disability Services, Eve Tominey, who had been asked to describe for the Council the work of her office. Since October 1 marks the sixth anniversary of the office, Ms. Tominey called this a particularly good opportunity to look back and to the future. (The Provost in an aside in a later discussion noted the office’s “extraordinary” accomplishments of the past 6 years.) The office has succeeded in establishing smooth collaborative efforts among students with disabilities and academic and administrative offices and has centralized services. Ms. Tominey described the processes followed by her office, beginning when students self-identify as having a disability. Her office works with them to determine that the disability meets university and legal standards and approves reasonable academic accommodations. She and her staff help students make the transition from the high school setting to college where the level and type of academic work can be more intense and where there may be a greater array of resources.
available to the student to meet needs. The office works with a wide variety of University
departments to help arrange accommodations including academic departments and the Office of the
Dean of the College, the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Students (for housing and dining
needs for example), and administrative units like design and construction.

Ms. Tominey described seven categories of disabilities and gave the percentage of students
who self-identify to her office in each category. She noted that the category that is likely to grow
the most is psychological disabilities. Dr. Neglia, Associate Director of Medical Services at
University Health Services, gave examples of medical special needs which vary widely from
mobility issues to seizures. Many students must deal with these challenges on a daily basis, and the
University does its best to give them the tools necessary for them to succeed.

Ms. Tominey noted that in 6 years the office has made significant progress both in terms of
technological advances that, for example, convert documents for students who are unable to read
textbooks, and in terms of communication with students with disabilities and with all students to
make them aware of the office’s services.

During the discussion that followed, Ms. Tominey described the ways her office coaches
students to be advocates for themselves and how to select courses wisely. It was noted that not all
students disclose their disabilities, especially graduate students, and she encouraged students to seek
advice from her office. She mentioned a new student group, the Princeton Mental Health Forum;
she looks forward to working with them.

A copy of the Powerpoint presentation used during Ms. Tominey’s report is attached as
Appendix C.

**Trustee Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity**

Deborah Prentice, Professor and Chair of Psychology and co-chair of the Ad Hoc Trustee
Committee on Diversity updated the council on the committee’s work. Her Powerpoint
presentation, attached here as Appendix D, gives the President’s charge to the committee which
focuses its work on graduate students, faculty, senior staff, and postdoctoral fellows, categories
where efforts to date to increase diversity have not been as successful as for undergraduates.
Professor Prentice described the committee’s efforts to collect data through a review of the existing
literature, surveys, and data that exist on campus. Over the years campus demographic data has
been collected often by different departments. The committee hopes to analyze this rich source of
campus information and also to establish a baseline of longitudinal data in a useable format that can
be maintained going forward.

Among the early emerging themes is the importance of a holistic approach to recruiting,
considering the “pipeline” of applicants across departments as well as within one particular
department. Numbers matter: hiring one person adds diversity but won’t produce a sustainable
diverse environment. Princeton’s focus on individual academic departments and decentralized
hiring suggest the need for approaches other than a centralized administrative mechanism. She also
emphasized the importance of incentives and accountability.

The committee hopes to finish its report in April.
Academic Integrity

President Tilghman referred to recent events at Harvard University regarding alleged academic dishonesty. The allegations had received wide media coverage, and given the prominence of the topic, the CPUC Executive Committee thought a discussion about academic integrity would be timely. Introducing the discussion, the Provost referred to the events in Cambridge as a “teachable moment” given Princeton’s mission of scholarship and teaching and the fundamental importance of academic integrity to that mission. At its simplest level, academic integrity means acknowledging any outside source; in reality, the concept is complicated enough to warrant its own booklet, Academic Integrity at Princeton. When in doubt, students have a responsibility to ask their professor about acknowledging outside work; faculty have a responsibility to be explicit about the rules of their courses. He introduced Deputy Dean of the College Clayton Marsh and his colleagues to provide additional context.

Dean Marsh introduced his colleagues who could serve as resources to students and faculty when they have questions about academic integrity: Dean Cole Crittenden from the Graduate School; Deans Kathleen Deignan and Tori Jueds from ODUS; Dr. Carol Porter from the McGraw Center and Dr. Amanda Irwin Wilkins from the Writing Program.

Dean Marsh referred to the changing culture that presents new challenges for our understanding of academic integrity. Extensive use of the Web to provide easy-to-find and readily accessible information can lead students to ask “How can something so easy be so wrong?” Collaboration can pose its own questions, and the dean offered one example of a syllabus from a computer science course that gives a detailed description of what is and what is not admissible with respect to collaboration. It was noted that the computer science course quizzes students on their understanding of the policy. He contrasted these instructions with other examples of course syllabi that leave room for misinterpretation.

Discussion followed in part about the University’s Honor Code and how that influences academic integrity on campus. Dean Deignan noted that while students do fail to abide by the Honor Code, it is an important collective statement that is introduced to students as freshmen before they begin their career at Princeton. Freshmen must complete a statement about their understanding of the Honor Code before they begin classes, and she believed that the Honor Code is an important part of Princeton’s culture and important in defining students’ attitudes especially toward academic integrity. She referenced research by a Princeton graduate concerning honor code traditions at a number of institutions and his finding that those institutions with a strong statement about academic integrity fare better than others in developing a culture that respects academic honesty. All regulations concerning academic integrity are a compact among the members of the University community. It is important for faculty to bring questions about academic integrity forward to the Deans of Undergraduate Students and not to address questions on an ad hoc basis.

Different courses or faculty may interpret rules, about collaboration for example, differently. Different approaches to teaching are expected and are necessary in an institution that covers so many diverse topics. The problem often is in communicating what the expectations are. Students suggested that how information about course regulations is presented can make a difference, and suggested that the University adopt a standardized way of presenting the information. For example,
course expectations concerning collaboration could appear on the first page of every course’s Blackboard site.

Noting the lateness of the hour, the President thanked the panel participants, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Halliday
Secretary