Minutes of a meeting of the Council of the Princeton University Community held September 26, 2011 in 101 Friend Center. Present were council members Ms. Alberts, Ms. Alivisatos, Ms. Alversa, Mr. Ayyar, Ms. Berthier, Prof. Bhatt, Ms. Cherrey, Ms. Dagci, Prof. DeLue, Prof. Dolven, Ms. Doyle, Mr. Durkee, Provost Eisgruber, Ms. Ettman, Prof. Fiske, Prof. Harman, Mr. Henneberg, Mr. Immordino, Prof. Kang, Mr. Keller, Ms. Kim, Mr. Kusserow, Mr. Lindsay, Prof. Lyon, Dr. Matthies, Mr. McDonough, Mr. Mulcahy, Prof. Oppenheimer, Ms. Poladian, Mr. Pretko, Prof. Rosen, Mr. Smith, Dean Smith, President Tilghman (chair), Mr. Tully, Mr. Wangensteen, Prof. Wuthnow, Mr. Yaroshefsky; 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 in vacancies of committees.

Question and Answer Session

The President noted that each Council meeting begins with a question and answer session, and she encouraged members of the Council to submit questions in advance so that those who can best answer them can be present at the meeting. There were no questions for the current meeting.

Introduction of Dean of the College Valerie Smith

President Tilghman introduced the new Dean of the College, Valerie Smith, Woodrow Wilson Professor of Literature, describing her as a distinguished faculty member of Princeton University faculty, a winner of a President’s Distinguished Teacher Award, and the first chair of the Center for African American Studies. Dean Smith reported that her first weeks in office had been spent listening and meeting with offices around the University. She reminded the Council that the dean of the college has oversight for every aspect of undergraduate academic life from the curriculum to international programs to examinations and standing. She summarized recurring themes she has heard during her recent campus meetings: the University has amazing students who are emotionally generous and creative; the University makes available extraordinary resources including its financial aid program; the University is committed to all measures of diversity and to a broad international vision.

Rights Rules Responsibilities Language concerning Sexual Misconduct

The Provost introduced proposed changes in the sections of Rights, Rules, Responsibilities concerning sexual misconduct by noting that during the summer the federal Office of Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education had issued a “Dear Colleague” letter to universities regarding sexual harassment and sexual assault and highlighting areas for improvement. The provost formed
working groups under Vice President for Campus Life Cynthia Cherrey and General Counsel Peter McDonough to develop proposals about ways the University could best address the issues raised in the OCR letter. A background memorandum about these issues addressed to the Council’s Executive Committee from the Provost is attached as Appendix C. The Provost noted that the working groups had developed proposals related to procedures of the faculty-student Committee on Discipline, and these had been brought to the faculty for consideration and adoption earlier in the week. These changes and actions, confined to student-only discipline procedures, had been approved at the September 16 faculty meeting. (For information, these changes are described in Attachment 3 to the Provost’s memorandum.)

Other suggestions developed by the working groups related to the language of the rules that apply to all members of the University community regarding sexual misconduct. The Provost noted that the proposed changes are largely clarifications meant to help define terms used and to direct individuals who believe they have been victims of sexual misconduct to resources for help. No substantive changes are being proposed nor are any new rules. But since changes to the language explaining these rules are extensive, it was thought best to ask the Council to act on the proposals. He noted that the Council’s Executive Committee had reviewed and approved the changes earlier in the month and now brought the changes to the full Council for action. A copy of the new proposed language and a copy of the sections as it appeared in the 2010-11 RRR are appear as Attachments 1 and 2, respectively, to the Provost’s memorandum.

During the discussion that followed a council member noted that in defining rules and regulations it is easy to be either too general or too specific, neither with good or even acceptable consequences. Was the Provost and those who had worked on these changes satisfied that the changes struck the right balance and were helpful? The Provost responded that he was pleased with the outcome and that the level of detail now provided in defining sexual misconduct was helpful. In response to a question about the frequency of violations of sexual misconduct on campus it was noted that there are few cases that come to the Committee on Discipline but more that are reported to the SHARE office.

The changes as they appear in Appendix C-3 were adopted upon motion made and seconded.

Update on Implementing Recommendations from 2010-11 Working Groups

Vice President for Campus Life Cynthia Cherrey updated the Council on implementing recommendations from last spring’s Working Group on Residential and Social Life and building on the recommendations from the Steering Committee on Women Leadership. Initiatives to enhance campus life, for example through campus-wide social events and a campus pub, were being reviewed by committees. A new committee chaired by the Dean of Undergraduate Students would be considering how to implement the policies on Greek societies, in particular, the new policy to be in place next year that would prohibit first-year students from affiliating with fraternities or sororities. Anticipated outreach efforts to seek student views and suggestions include open forums, and the goal is to have recommendations to discuss in the spring for implementation fall 2012.

During the discussion that followed, Ms. Cherrey confirmed that rethinking orientation for freshmen is part of this year’s agenda with a goal to create a greater sense of community. Students
asked about membership on the Dean of Undergraduate Student’s committee, and Ms. Cherrey outlined outreach efforts noting that students have been encouraged to self-nominate. The goal is to have a diverse group of students and administrators which includes student members of Greek societies working on implementation of these policies. Students asked questions about penalties next year for violating rules regarding Greek Societies and freshmen, and how the rules would be enforced. The President noted that questions like these are part of the charge to Dean Deignan’s committee, and demonstrate why the decision was made to defer implementing the new policies until next year. She also reminded the Council in response to a question that all forms of hazing violate University regulations, and rules regarding hazing will be enforced for all groups.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Halliday
Secretary