

Council of the Princeton University Community Minutes, February 11, 2008

Minutes of a meeting of the Council of the Princeton University Community held Monday, December 10, 2007, in Betts Auditorium, School of Architecture. Present were council members Mr. Ayalon, Ms. Bakanic, Ms. Bulow, Mr. Burstein, Professor Cook, Ms. Dickerson, Mr. Dwoskin, Provost Eisgruber, Mr. Field, Professor Fiske, Ms. Harris, Professor Hasty, Ms. Heisler, Mr. Hernandez, Ms. Hogarty, Ms. Hummer, Ms. Hutzley, Mr. Joshi, Ms. Langberg, Professor Lyon, Dean Malkiel, Mr. McCrudden, Mr. McDonough, Ms. McGinty, Mr. No, Professor Nunokawa, Ms. Rosen, Ms. Saliccioli, Ms. Saltz, Ms. Silver, President Tilghman (chair), Dr. Varrin, Ms. Wang, Mr. Wang, Mr. Weinstein. Ms. Halliday served as secretary.

President Tilghman requested and received approval of minutes of the December 10, 2007 meeting as circulated in advance of the meeting.

In keeping with the Council's efforts to be informed about topics of central importance to the University, in the recent past one Council meeting of the year has been a "town-hall" meeting with President Tilghman. The current meeting was dedicated to that purpose, and, as in the past, the President opened with a brief report about areas of particular concern and on which she is particularly focused at present. She offered to take questions then from the audience.

Capital Campaign

She began with the 5-year capital campaign launched officially this fall. The goal is ambitious -- \$1.75 billion -- and the principal targeted areas of need are broad. In some areas, such as financial aid, where Princeton has played a leadership role, the hope is to sustain and enhance excellence. Other targets of opportunity will allow the University to respond to new fields of intellectual inquiry or deepen the intellectual reach of programs. One example is the relatively new field of neuroscience which requires expansion of the faculty, additional support for graduate students, and laboratory and teaching facilities. Support for the Lewis Center for the Creative and Performing Arts will allow the University to move the arts closer to the center of the curriculum. She noted the high and sometimes unmet student demand for classes in the arts. The campaign would provide expanded opportunities and new venues, many located in a new arts neighborhood planned for the area around McCarter Theatre. The President underscored that the campaign is more a marathon than a sprint to the finish, but also mentioned that she had just returned from a fund-raising trip to California and Washington States and was about to embark on a trip to the far east.

Campus Plan

The 10-year master plan for campus is now complete, and the President remarked on the work that is underway to carry out the plan, especially as it relates to the sciences, grouped in the Washington Road neighborhood where facilities for neuroscience and chemistry are being built and the Lewis Science Library will open later in the year. Enhancements to the School of Engineering include new facilities to support research and teaching efforts in alternative energy and climate change.

Overarching themes of the campus plan that will impact all members of the University include attention to landscaping and sustainability efforts. The appointment of a University landscape architect, Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, allows such concerns to be an integral part of the planning of new facilities. Recent efforts include plans to regain the natural watershed area as part of the construction of new science facilities along Washington Road and the creation of a new campus green, similar to McCosh Courtyard, where the new building for Operations Research and Financial Engineering is being built across from the Friend Center. This planning effort includes attention to pathways to connect disciplines through a mix of landscape and beautiful architecture. Attention is being given to sustainability in the new facilities, including opportunities to capture rain water underground for landscape use.

Addressing traffic and parking challenges is also part of the campus plan and is especially important in a region that has few good mass transportation options. The University is gathering data to understand the problems better, and this information will also help the University think through long-term housing options, especially for graduate students.

The President urged members of the community who are interested in the plan or who would like to comment on aspects of it to read the brochure that was mailed to all alumni with the recent PAW and is available now on the Web [<http://www.princeton.edu/campusplan/>].

Alcohol Coalition

Finally, the President described a new initiative to address high-risk alcohol use by a broadly representative committee formed this fall. Professor of Electrical Engineering and Master of Butler College Sanjeev Kulkarni and Agatha Offorjebe '09 cochair the coalition which invites campus comment, especially from students, on how to address this serious problem. The President recounted one reason for her own concern – a hospital visit to a student who was on the verge of death because of alcohol consumption. She noted that the coalition is hosting a series of workshops on different themes related to the problem, and encouraged all to participate. The website, <http://www.princeton.edu/campuslife/acc/> has additional information.

The president then opened the floor to questions.

The first set of questions and comments, all from students, focused on alcohol abuse. The President, echoed by Professor Kulkarni, underscored the important “win” to be gained if students participate in the work of the coalition and help identify solutions. Studies here and elsewhere suggest the importance of educating students early in their college careers – first-year students seem more at risk than other students. Students suggested ways to educate students about responsible drinking, noting that in some cultures where drinking is part of the culture, there are fewer incidents of high-risk drinking by young people. An Outdoor Action participant pointed to the education efforts about alcohol risks that take place as part of that program with freshmen, before classes begin. Here and elsewhere, successful advertising campaigns have been launched to educate students about pluralistic ignorance: the tendency to drink heavily because of the false belief that everyone else drinks heavily; the student ignores the true situation -- that most other students drink responsibly.

Later in the meeting the President reiterated the coalition's intention to listen to student opinion and its openness: "everything is on the table," including the proposed roles for resident advisers.

Members of the audience then opened a discussion about the new academic initiatives mentioned by the President. Students asked for more information about how to make the arts an academic "centerpiece." President Tilghman noted that consideration was given to creating a degree program or academic requirements in the creative and performing arts, but a more evolutionary approach was adopted. There is not sufficient faculty at present to support a new department, and faculty argued that a liberal arts education is essential preparation for the success of any artist. In neuroscience, Princeton's strength lies in the interdisciplinary approach that calls upon experts from all sectors of the community to bring a disciplinary depth to bear on these problems.

Graduate students remarked on the importance of travel to learned societies and conferences and the difficulty students have funding such trips. The Provost noted that the Priorities Committee this year considered a request for increased travel funds and had acknowledged the importance of such funding, but had asked the Graduate School as a first step to seek untapped resources and act as a clearing house for sources of support.

A member of the faculty, referring to the wide-ranging travel schedule the President maintains especially during the campaign, asked what she was hearing from alumni and others about Princeton. One question that the President addresses on a regular basis is how the University can justify a \$1.75 billion capital campaign given the size of Princeton's endowment, and why anyone should contribute to such a relatively rich institution. One of her responses is personal and directed at each individual – for each alumnus/a, someone in the past gave funds to support his/her education. Tuition and fees never fully cover the costs of a Princeton education, and contributing to Princeton is returning that favor. Her other response addresses the misperception that private universities provide only "private" good – they benefit a lucky few who are selected out of thousands of applicants. In truth, universities represent a public good. Education is one of the last and best means of social mobility among classes in society. From their inception, and increasingly in recent years as government and private funding sources dry up, research universities are funding the scientific studies that are critical to the health and well-being of society. With respect to hesitancy to contribute to an institution with a large endowment, the President noted that endowed funds are most often restricted; there is little flexibility to apply them to new or expanded needs. So, to support initiatives like neuroscience or the arts, the University must raise new funds.

Students asked about improving recreational sport facilities, represented by the Stephens Fitness Center in Dillon which was almost always crowded. They asked about implementing satellite gyms in or near dormitories as an option. The President pointed to concerns about safety and monitoring these spaces as reasons why this alternative has not been pursued. But there are funds targeted to the renovation of Dillon, and its renovation is included among the campaign goals.

In response to a question from a graduate student about family-friendly policies, the President drew attention to steps recently taken to improve such programs for new assistant professors including automatic extension of the tenure clock for those with new children, new resources to help with childcare for those attending conferences, and plans to build a new childcare center.

An auditor asked about University policies regarding sign-ups for classes which have disadvantaged those who do not live in Princeton and are not alumni. The Vice President and Secretary said he would pursue the questions.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Halliday
Secretary