Date: 3 October 2003

To: All Faculty Members

From: Janet McNew

Subject: President’s Report for October 2003 Faculty Meeting

1. Presiding Over the Faculty Meeting. As I write this, Tom Griffiths is wrapping up notes that are intended to replace those that I customarily offered before each faculty meeting. Most of you will recall that I started that custom to support the faculty’s interest in developing a more issues-centered faculty meeting, rather than one devoted to hearing administrative and committee reports. Among the first issues to be brought to my attention (by John Wenum and Mike Young) when I arrived on campus ten years ago was the question of how to modify faculty meetings to give the faculty more authority in setting agendas and running discussions. John and Mike proposed a set of changes (moving the administrative reports to the end of the usual agenda and creating a consent agenda, for example) in the Faculty Handbook designed to move in this direction, and some years later Chris Prendergast, when he was chair of CUPP, added another significant evolution when he developed the “Secretary’s Question” (now known as the “Faculty Question”).

Over the summer, I spoke with CUPP Chair Jim Dougan about trying out, on an experimental basis for this interim year, a further evolution toward enhancing faculty authority over faculty meetings. At his invitation, I discussed my thoughts with CUPP a couple of weeks ago. Essentially, I suggested that for the remainder of this academic year, I would invoke the President’s constitutional power to designate a replacement to preside over faculty meetings and ask the CUPP Chair to run the remaining meetings of the year. When I further suggested that in these circumstances, I would also not expect to make an oral report at the end of faculty meetings, CUPP members were kind enough to suggest that they had benefited from having had written notes from me in the past and that they would encourage me to continue that practice. Our conversation deepened my sense that the faculty benefits from keeping the President regularly involved with faculty business and with her/his identity as a member of the faculty.

The Constitution reads, in reference to The General Faculty Meeting, “The President of the University, or a designee in the President’s absence, shall preside.” Since we agreed that it is a good idea to have the President present whenever possible at faculty meetings, we do have the small sticking point of the constitutional assumption that a designee is named only when the President is absent. CUPP and I agree, therefore, that for the upcoming October meeting, I should preside over the opening of the meeting and invite the faculty to offer any questions or concerns about trying out this designation of the CUPP Chair to preside. Assuming that we will be able to address those satisfactorily, I will then ask the faculty to indicate your consent to this experimental arrangement, and if you do indicate consent, I will turn the meeting over to Jim.
2. **Establishing a Speaker’s Committee.** Since at least the time of the working group reports that set up our current General Education program, faculty members have asked for an all-University Speaker’s Committee that would allow better integration between the major speakers brought to campus and the curriculum. Because the funding for major speakers is held in several central budgets (primarily, the President’s Office but also the Provost’s Office, Student Affairs, and Student Senate), any community member wishing to advocate our bringing a major speaker has had to take the “tin cup” route of going from pillar to post looking for sponsors. Speakers for the major convocations—President’s International, Founder’s Day, Commencement—have likewise been chosen through various informal processes, some with great success, some less so.

This summer, I asked Carl Teichman, who has long been the presidential liaison for major speakers, to draft a proposed group that would bring the major funding sources for speakers together with faculty, student, and staff representatives. I then consulted with David Bollivar, Chair of the Nominating Committee, and Jim Dougan of CUPP and sought advice from their committees on establishing this group. Some members of those committees asked questions about how the Speaker’s Committee would relate to speaker’s budgets held by individual departments or in relation to grant funds. The answer is that the committee will have no authority over or relation to those speakers’ programs, unless and until a department wishes to combine those budgets with centrally held funds to sponsor a major or convocation speaker. At that time, they, like any other community member, can propose a speaker to the Speaker’s Committee.

The Committee will solicit and accept proposals for major speakers from all community members, will serve as a clearinghouse for recommending funding to those holding central speaker’s budgets, and will recommend to the President speakers for convocations and commencement. Because of these latter functions, the Committee will need to maintain close relations with the Board Honorary Degree Committee, which I also plan to activate this fall. The Board committee is a subcommittee of the Academic Affairs committee, is chaired by the University President, and includes the two faculty visitors to the BOT.

I will be happy to answer any further questions that you may have about my reasons for establishing this committee. I look forward to seeing all of you at Monday’s meeting.