Northwestern University

Weinberg College of Arts & Sciences
Minutes of the May 1, 2018 faculty meeting

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m. in Harris Hall by Dean Adrian Randolph.

I. The minutes of the faculty meeting on February 13, 2018 were approved as submitted.

II. Dean Adrian Randolph read the recommendation that degrees be conferred to students who have successfully completed their degree requirements during the 2018 academic year. A total of 762 students enrolled in WCAS will be awarded the BA degree in June 2018, along with two Bachelor of Philosophy degrees and 16 Bachelor of Science in General Studies degrees.

The faculty unanimously approved the recommendation.

III. Director of Development Kim Buckley presented a report on the College’s development status. She began by listing the reporting structure in the Office of Alumni Relations and Development, with all sections reporting up to Robert McQuinn, the vice president of alumni relations and development. She noted that all schools and units report to Julie Allen, the associate vice president of alumni relations and development. Each school or unit has a director of development. In the case of Weinberg College, this is Kim Buckley. Weinberg College has a team of seven dedicated to fundraising for the College. A staff of 350 works to raise funds for the University.

The We.Will campaign has been quite successful. Prior to the campaign, the University had been raising $250 to $350 million a year. Post-campaign, the University has raised $500 million to $600 million a year. The campaign looks to broaden the community of donors, as Northwestern has previously been on the lower side of alumni giving, with a participation rate of 25 to 27 percent, while many peer institutions boast a rate closer to 50 to 60 percent. The We.Will campaign aspiration rate was set to 40 percent.

The College reached its original campaign goal of $250 million in September 2016. The success continued, with $320 million in funds raised for the College alone. In terms of participation, the top-ranking units at the College last year were the Department of English, with a gift of $10 million to start a new MFA program, and the Waldron Student-Alumni Connections Program, which received a named endowment of $4.2 million.

Director Buckley encouraged departments and programs to participate in giving by sending emails and thank-you notes to those who have donated via the gift reports. She encouraged departments to send newsletters and updates to maintain connections to their alumni (and highlighting donors), and encouraged chairs and directors and faculty to talk to their ARD representatives about alternative ways to make connections and inspire donor engagement.

Associate Dean Danny Fisher wondered how the ARD staffing had changed prior to the campaign. Director Buckley noted that for the College specifically, the staff had grown from three dedicated staff members to its current structure of seven.
IV. Associate Dean of Finance and Business Operations Danny Fisher presented a report on College finances. He began by detailing the University’s finances via the balance sheet. He outlined the total net assets and total liabilities, and noted that the University’s balance sheet is strong. He also noted that the University’s endowment has been growing year over year, and that the number associated with land, buildings, and equipment continues to grow, increasing the University’s net assets year over year. He observed that in previous years, buildings were funded by gifts, whereas more recently, they have funded through debt. However, the net asset continues to grow, which indicates the continued strength of the University’s foundational finances.

Associate Dean Fisher also presented the University’s Statement of Operations, which lists the University’s revenues and operating expenses. He noted that salaries, wages, and benefits were the single biggest expense at the University. He explained that “depreciation” and “interest on indebtedness” accounted for expensing, interest payment, and depreciation once a building was open. He noted that the University’s growth and expenses surpass the growth and revenue at the moment. The University over time has had a large excess in operating revenue, less so in recent years.

Associate Dean Fisher concluded by stating that the University is strong from a balance-sheet standpoint, but would continue to scrutinize and reduce spending at the operating level the operating level, in an effort to avoid taking special payouts in the future.

Dean Mary Finn wondered if students could expect year-over-year tuition increases. Dean Randolph noted that the tuition increases are a progressive shift — the rate hikes disproportionately affect those who do not qualify for financial aid, and both the University and College prioritize investing in financial aid.

Associate Dean Fisher discussed the College’s finances. He began by detailing the College’s operating activity. He noted that the College has had a positive operating performance in the aggregate over the last four years.

Dean Fisher also reported on the operating activity in the Office of the Dean, noting that most faculty salaries (the highest operating expenses) were paid directly by the dean’s office. He remarked that while the balance sheet in the Office of the Dean reflected a positive performance as recently as 2014, it has since increased its spending on operations and has seen a major growth in expenses. These include College initiatives such as “services and professional fees” (which include faculty hiring), “travel, conferences and promotion” (which include the growth of the Arch Scholars program, which supports students from under-resourced high schools), and finally, “operations, plant, rent and equipment,” which include furniture and moving (associated with faculty hiring). He remarked that within the departments and programs, funds continue to sit in faculty and department accounts.

Dean Fisher presented a report on fund balances within the College. He shared that “unrestricted funds” are declining, while many of the highly restricted funds continued to be unused.

Dean Fisher detailed the College’s investments over the last few years, beginning with the competition for excellent faculty, and the research initiatives that have enhanced the College’s eminence. The College invested alongside the University in world-class facilities for a world-class university. He noted that one of the dean’s most important initiatives was the investment in student success, prioritizing equal access and the equal experience of all students. Examples include the expansion of advising services and the Arch Scholars Program and the reduction in
the student-faculty ratio from 8:1 to 7:1. He also remarked that service-oriented staff are needed to support our faculty and students, so the College has expanded staff services in some key areas.

Associate Dean Fisher also reported on the College’s focus on the efficient use of resources, noting that they had reassessed the organizational decisions of last five to 10 years, evaluated the best models for support, and reviewed areas where manual processes could be automated. Under the finance umbrella, he remarked that they had implemented a revised resource allocation model within College units, focused on initiatives with the highest return on investment, and reviewed the financial structure to unlock existing resources. At the University level, he noted that they had begun a position approval process, had reviewed capital resource planning, and revised the budgeting process.

V. Dean Randolph thanked retiring faculty: Stewart Adam (Spanish & Portuguese), Frances Aparicio (Spanish & Portuguese), Marcia Gealy (Writing Program), Jeanne Herrick (Writing Program), Penny Hirsch (Writing Program), Richard Joseph (Political Science), Hilarie Lieb (Administration and Economics), Daniel Linzer (Molecular Biosciences), Douglas Medin (Psychology), Mark Sheldon (Administration Philosophy), David Van Zanten (Art History), and David Taylor (Physics and Astronomy).

VI. The Dean thanked the faculty in attendance. The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Courtney Essenpreis, assistant to the dean.