

**Faculty Senate Working Session
to Discuss Faculty Hiring Policies at CNU
March 11, 2005
3 p.m. GOS 111**

President Purtle called the session to order at 3:10.

Senators Present: Doughty, Doyle, Grau, Hicks, Kidd, Knipp, Purtle, Schwarze, Underwood, Wheeler, Whiting. Senators Absent: Berry, Cartwright, Vachris, Wymer. Guests Present: Provost Summerville; English Department Chair Dr. Scott Pollard; English Department members Dr. Jean Filetti, Dr. Kara Keeling, Dr. Roberta Rosenberg

The Provost made an opening statement in which he indicated the difficulties posed by the questions of prospective students' parents: they ask where CNU graduates go to graduate school/medical school/law school. Answering that question has been difficult according to the Provost, as that list of schools is neither extensive nor impressive, given the information that has been reported thus far to his office by departments. He indicated he had realized that this second massive faculty recruitment effort (the hiring of 30+ faculty in a second year) was a chance to hire more faculty from top schools. According to the Provost, in the administration's view hiring faculty from top graduate schools would also increase the chances of CNU students attending top graduate schools because CNU faculty from those schools would be able to write letters to or call their alma maters and encourage them to accept CNU graduates. Therefore the Provost created a memo, dated Jan. 5, 2005, which indicates departments should refer to the Gourman Report for information regarding top schools and programs, and make an active effort to recruit from such schools. He wishes he had sent the memo earlier to enable departments additional time to comply with his requests, but that he is unable to undo its timing.

Senators and guests then responded with the following points, questions, and proposals:

- Whether there is evidence, outside of lists, that the Provost might consider to affirm a program's status as a 'best program,' especially if no disciplinary list is extant (as is the case in many specialties). Faculty members have disciplinary expertise the Provost may be unaware of, expertise that leads them to make judgments about program quality. What evidence from this expertise would the Provost find helpful in his decision making? Would he like to see the credentials of the scholars with whom candidates have studied, for instance?

The Provost indicated he thought the point was un-academic. In his view it asserted that a point was knowable by one party (the faculty member or department) and not knowable by another (the Provost). In a followup, the Provost did indicate that he had received strong rationales for several recent hiring recommendations, including at least one departmental hiring recommendation that regrettably had been turned down.

- The usefulness of employing such lists in hiring, given that hiring is a complex process that must weigh myriad factors. Also, has any correlation been established between where CNU faculty members attended graduate school and their success at CNU?

The Provost indicated that our current search process is unreliable—that there is a great deal of noise in the system that nearly overwhelms the message—and that it doesn't guarantee that a candidate will be successful at CNU.

- Whether department-generated lists of best programs would be useful to the Provost's decision making, provided such lists are offered (with supporting evidence) to the Provost at an early stage of the search—that is, in advance of the commencement of the search process.

The Provost indicated this might be helpful.

- The problem of assuming that holding a PhD from a certain institution is the most salient factor in helping a student get admitted to graduate school at that institution. A better method might be to rely upon (and tell concerned parents of) the professional achievements of CNU faculty outside of graduate school—their reputations and contacts in their fields based on their scholarship, research, and other professional activity—that create a network that will enable them to assist the best CNU students to enter the programs best suited to their interests and abilities.
- The ethical issue that exists for some departments, whose fields are crowded with unemployed MAs and/or Ph.Ds, in recruiting numbers of students to attend graduate schools.

The Provost indicated that we do have an obligation to let these students know of the current state of the job market, but that if their hearts are in it, we should do everything we can to help them go to the best schools.

- The fact that the quality of the faculty and the quality of faculty-student interactions is CNU's principal strength in the eyes of its students, as evidenced by the results of the latest Student Satisfaction Index and cited by Retention Consultant Charles Schroeder's reports. It should be noted that this result has been produced by faculty who hail from a variety of institutions, including but not limited to "top schools."
- The concerns of current junior faculty in several departments that lists such as the Gourman Report might be used to make promotion and tenure decisions.

The Provost indicated that a faculty member's performance in a rigorous tenure process is the only determinant of promotion and tenure at CNU. He indicated that this is the institution's position, and that it will not alter.

The Provost left at 4:20. After further discussion it was agreed that the hiring issue will appear on the March 18 Senate agenda (regular meeting) for further discussion and possibly further action. The session adjourned at 4:55 p.m.