Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Arts & Sciences Council

Thursday, March 7, 2019

Call to Order (3:30 pm)

José María Rodríguez García (Chair) welcomed everyone to the March Council meeting and announced that today’s agenda revolves around a Council conversation on faculty governance. He also wanted to provide an update on Council activities this year. The first order of business, though, is approval of the February minutes. There being no amendments, the minutes were approved unanimously.

Rodríguez García began by saying this is the last meeting of Council with a strictly academic content. April’s meeting will include the election for ECASC and then the awards ceremony for the teaching prizes, which for the first time in a number of years were awarded by the re-activated Committee on Undergraduate Teaching, Academic Standards and Honors (CUT). CUT Chair Jakob Norberg has reported that there was a large number of nominations and that the committee worked efficiently and with the input of the ex officio members. So the last meeting of Council will be a celebration of what we do, since the election of four Council members to ECASC is also a celebration of faculty governance. After the award winners are announced at the April 11th meeting, Council will host a reception for the winners. Rodríguez García encouraged members to stay and socialize.

Turning back to today’s conversation on faculty governance and service, Rodríguez García said the two faculty endeavors are interconnected, but not the same. He would never say that governance is necessarily a part of service or that service is necessarily a part of governance, but they inform each other and the same faculty who are very active in governance tend to be active in service. Governance consists of coming together, organizing ourselves and articulating our thoughts in a voice that may represent all of us in our diversity of interests and viewpoints because we remain responsive to others’ concerns and opinions and because at all times we remain open to the negotiation of conflicting positions. Governance fundamentally involves attendance at meetings, deliberation, and voting. Service has more layers to it and spans the plethora of smaller tasks undertaken primarily by smaller committees. Those subcommittees implement policies and help run programs – they’re part of our administrative or government structure – while the Council makes decision on how to run those day-to-day operation – it concerns itself with governance rather than government, if I’m allowed that subtle distinction. Service is the things that we routinely undertake together or that we regularly take on to make the lives of our colleagues and students better when we’re not teaching or doing research even if at the same time service is the unheralded labor that makes teaching and research possible. The A&S committees and the Council as a whole come up with recommendations, implement policies, and monitor what other stakeholders on
campus do that affects teaching, advising, research funding opportunities, and the like. Some of this language is freely paraphrased and expanded from the Council Bylaws, which at some point should definitely include working and clear definitions of service and governance. The Bylaws tell us how we organize ourselves and how we speak as a governing body. They also define the purview of what we have a say on as together we strive to enhance teaching, advising, and undergraduate student life generally -- and that’s service. That’s what we do through committee work, from the department level to the college level up to the university level. And that’s the topic of today’s conversation.

He reminded Council that when he was elected a year ago, he ran on a platform containing very specific points. Doing that was something exceptional; at least it hadn’t been done since he arrived at Duke nearly 10 years ago. In the first week of March 2018, he sent to all the faculty he knew or with whom he had already worked on a variety of committees and other collective efforts, an email message with the four points he would emphasize and seek to implement on becoming chair. He still thinks these priorities will define his term as chair and he hopes to convince faculty that they’re all important. In March 2018 he pledged to strive to make diverse faculty voices heard in Council-appointed committees and in college-wide discussions. Thus, he’s currently working with representatives from Duke Student Government (DSG) to reinstate student membership on the committees. He’s also working to provide a balance of professorial ranks as well as a balance of demographic groups on the A&S faculty committees, though that’s harder since those who belong to smaller demographic groups are already maxed out with their service commitments.

Second, he pledged to try to motivate larger cohorts of faculty to get involved in service to the College. This is why we’re having a focused conversation today wherein we may come up with ideas and suggestions on how to balance service with teaching and research.

Third, he pledged that until there were assessment outcomes of Dean Ashby’s first/second year experience, Council wouldn’t resume any sustained discussions on curricular reform. He stands by that, and thinks we’re using the time wisely better to prepare ourselves for one such discussion. This is why in the past few months we’ve hosted focused conversations on advising, vertical integration and collaborative learning, classroom space and infrastructure, Program II, and student pathways and diverging enrollments.

His last point in the platform circulated in March 2018 was that he would prioritize the robust consensus resulting from reflection, discussion and civil debate over the adverse effects of calling a vote on a potentially divisive proposal prematurely. Again, this year we’ve taken time to debate, deliberate, and share the history and current status of teaching and advising practices and policies in our respective units and across divisions. We’ve learned from one another and this may help us broaden our horizons in preparation for future deliberations and decisions.

Rodríguez García also spoke about the need to strengthen the way we perceive collaboration between the faculty and the administration. It’s important for both sides to come to the negotiating table with an open mind, but also to be ready to hold each other accountable. He and ECASC have been fortunate to develop an increasingly collaborative relationship with Deans Ashby and Petters, and that has taken almost a whole year. They’re now beginning to work also with Vice Provost Bennett, who’s vocally invested in strengthening advising across campus, a concern shared by most of the faculty, as became clear in our “First Council Conversation on Advising” last fall. Next year, we may host a “Second Council Conversation” on the topic, this time hosted, moderated, and defined by the Faculty/Student Interaction Committee (FSI). By that time, the members of this committee would have had time to meet with multiple stakeholders, so they’d be able to report on the main areas of concern shared across campus.
constituencies. They’ll advise us on what we could accomplish together to try to solve longstanding problems, confront new challenges, and generally improve the advising landscape. We know from this year’s conversations what much of the faculty expects to come out of the Provost’s new focus on advising at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. First, we expect that the University’s call on us to commit more time to interacting with our students outside the classroom not be used to continue advancing pre-professional undergraduate student pathways at Trinity to the detriment of a holistic liberal arts education, one which retains intellectual range and depth. Second, we expect that supporting students outside the classroom even more strategically than before be recognized and compensated in more substantial ways than any robust commitment advising is recognized today. And third, we expect that the faculty will have significant input on how the substantial new resources raised to overhaul the advising enterprise will be used.

In terms of the concrete initiatives Council has implemented this year, the first is reactivating the teaching committee (CUT) and the FSI committee, though he will continue calling it the Committee on Advising because the latter is a shorter moniker. The FSI committee may choose to rename itself and will come up with the language defining its purview. The second initiative, related to the first one, has been to lay the foundation for more robust interactions with Trinity’s executive leadership and with the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education while also communicating to the University’s most senior leaders – including the President and the Board of Trustees – that the faculty at Trinity is now more engaged in governance than before.

While the A&S Council oversees eleven different committees, only six of those were active when he became chair. Since then, Rodriguez Garcia has activated two of the inactive committees, but he doesn’t envision activating the three remaining ones (Assessment, Budget and Technology) in the near future. The assessment process has gotten very technical and now falls under the purview of both Dean Petters and Vice Provost Bennett. He’s not sure it would be possible to have a fully functional committee with unrestricted access to the increasingly more complex and individualized data pertaining to assessment policies and practices. He’s not interested challenging the sensitive data because experience has taught him that you get nowhere trying that – he did try last summer. Nonetheless, he’s asked CUT to consider adding a few sentences about assessment to the new charter they’ll bring up to the consideration of the Council sometime next year. The College’s budget process is also technical and it doesn’t seem likely either that faculty would have enough information about University finances to be of assistance to the Dean’s office. The Deans haven’t requested any input on this. Last fall, Rodriguez Garcia talked to past members of the University Priorities Committee and asked them if they received from senior executive leadership any valuable information on finances that would make their work meaningful and they told him no. Finally, regarding the Technology committee, ECASC talked twice with Senior Associate Dean Ed Gomes about it. They’re convinced that so many different places outside the purview of Arts & Sciences provide technical support for Trinity faculty and students, that it wouldn’t make sense to try to centralize or coordinate that important component of our teaching and research projects. So we trust that we have adequate support in general and that there’s enough exchange of information regarding new technology services and opportunities as conversations unfold and decisions are made within other groups.

Rodriguez Garcia then shared another example of positive collaboration with Trinity’s administration. Council was given the opportunity to appoint a faculty representative to some of the Deans’ advisory groups, including the one working on the first- and second-year experiences. The Chemistry representative to Council, Dick MacPhail, will be the Council’s liaison to this group, attending their meetings and reporting back to Council and specifically to the teaching committee (CUT). He will also
serve as an ad hoc member of CUT. The idea is to have reciprocity between faculty and administration, so if the Deans would like to have appointed ex officio, ECASC will at least consider the possibility. We’re building trust and good will. We’d like to create a more fluid flow of information on issues that are of common interest we’re we may be especially predisposed to work together while remaining mindful of the fact that some information is indeed sensitive and may not always be shared without first letting the administration or the faculty clarify its context.

This leads us to another issue. If not next fall, at least the next spring, Council may consider kicking off a substantial, semester-long conversation on bylaws and best practices. The A&S Council Bylaws are a mess, especially compared to those of the Academic Council. They’ve been revised many times through the years, but always in piece meal fashion and therefore remain full of contractions since not all wording related to an existing policy was updated with every revision. We also need best practices on Council and ECASC attendance. Currently, the Bylaws include language that hypothetically would allow the Chair to ask a Council member to step down due to absenteeism, but we aren’t enforcing that interpretation of the Bylaws. We prefer having in place best practices that Council members should read carefully and return with their signed letter of appointment, and using them to sponsor constructively and collegially a culture of attendance and service rather than creating a culture of enforcement.

To summarize, he reiterated that there’re now two newly activated A&S faculty committees working collegially with the Trinity administration. The administration may request that liaisons be appointed to these faculty groups where the existing ex officio members may not be enough. The Council should oblige whenever those additions may help the exchange of information and keep the lines of communication open as together we work through issues together of mutual interest to faculty and administration from the earliest stages of discussion and deliberation. Rodríguez García then invited question from the Council.

Catherine Admay (Sanford) said she’s glad that students will once again serve on all A&S committees where the Bylaws give them seats. She asked how students will be selected to serve.

Rodríguez García said he’s been meeting with various senators and the DGS president and has asked them to provide a slate of two nominees per committee to ECASC. He asked that the students provide a written statement regarding their interest in serving on a particular committee. He also explained that the ways students will contribute will vary according to the committee. The Courses Committee, for example, might not be able to find a student with enough free time to meet regularly with fellow members. For some committees, like the teaching and advising committees, he told the DGS president that it would be best to appoint a student who could serve longer than one year. Why? Because these committees will be working on medium- and long-term initiatives. He also envisions members of ECASC meeting with interested students to inform them of how faculty governance works and answer any questions.

Catherine McMillan (First-Year Trinity Student) said the process used this year has been chaotic with such a short turn-around for nominations. The process has felt like whip-lash and arbitrary, with students not knowing what they are getting themselves into. Is there a way to step back so students know what they are getting into and what their responsibilities are?

Rodríguez García said there’s little we can do this year, and we also don’t have jurisdiction over what has been decided by DSG. But he’s been asked by the DSG president to provide guidelines for next year. ECASC will come up with a set of guidelines and workload expectations for student committee members, as well as a suggested timeline for selection to the committees. This year is a transitional year, with Council moving from next to no student representation on committees to try to have representatives on
every committee as written in the Bylaws. He agreed it’s happening quickly and it could have been done differently, but we’ll work on that for next year.

**Ruth Day (Psychology and Neuroscience)** said when she was chair, she wrote a statement about the committees and how much work each involved and would send that to DSG. She’d be happy to try and dig out a copy of what she wrote and share with Rodríguez García, who thanked her for that.

**Chris Walter (Physics)** said that it would be nice to have some representatives from DSG attend a meeting and talk about what they do.

**Rodríguez García** thanked Walter for his suggestion and said that visit is already in the works. DSG expects to contact ECASC next year with a proposal regarding course evaluations. That may create the opportunity for some DGS Senators to visit with the Council, but that’s still undecided.

**Christopher Shreve (Biology)** asked if, when considering revising the Bylaws, Council could consider expanding to include NRR unionized faculty who have no direct representation on Council even though they make up a sizable chunk of A&S.

Rodríguez García said that might be more of a best practices issue, not necessarily Bylaws as we currently don’t have percentages in Council representation allocated to say, tenure-line vis-a-vis non-tenure line. By best practices, he said, he implies that we should acknowledge the responsibility to integrate faculty of all ranks whenever and wherever possible for as long as there’s a consensus on this need. The topic couldn’t be more timely because of today’s conversation. He and ECASC will continue thinking hard about this equity issue. His priority so far has been to attract more tenure-line faculty to the active committees because they still constitute the largest group in Trinity and yet were in the minority in A&S faculty committees when he took on the job of Council Chair. The POP rank has historically been overrepresented because the majority of POPs enjoy service at the College level, tend to be extremely knowledgeable about undergraduate education policies, are have been very efficient contributors to governance. Right now, however, governance leadership needs to engage more tenured faculty. This particular imbalance is slowly beginning to change and will at some point allow us to discuss more freely how to tap into other faculty constituencies when we appoint A&S committees.

**Ara Wilson (GSF Studies)** said that the subject has already come up because of committee membership, and surely ECASC can discuss this.

Rodríguez García said yes. He clarified that, unlike the Academic Council, we don’t have the obligation to appoint a certain number of faculty according to rank. Once again, it’s one of those dimensions of governance on which the Bylaws are silent, so this conversation will begin with the new ECASC looking at the issue of equity of faculty representation sometime next year.

**Faculty Conversation on Governance and Service**

Rodríguez García then moved to the main item on the agenda, the faculty conversation on governance and service. He’s invited four outstanding campus citizens, three of whom are Trinity faculty plus the chair of Academic Council, Don Taylor, to speak. He welcomed the first presenter, English professor Priscilla Wald, also Director of Gender, Sexuality and Feminist (GSF) Studies.
Priscilla Wald (GSF Studies) said she wanted to focus on some problems she’s seen through the years that the Council might be able to address. First of all, she said, it’s important to think of service as not one-size-fits-all. There’re people who see service as a way of participating, being included, having their voices heard, being part of something. There’re people who feel that service is only a burden. There are people in between who see service as a necessary obligation, a way of being part of something but not necessarily something they take on eagerly and where they feel included or acknowledged in the way they’d like. This is important because there’s an increasing number of vulnerable faculty who don’t know how to say no to service requests. Chairs need to be advised to recognize specifically that in most cases they may not tell faculty that service is required of them. This is especially important when asking junior faculty, POPs, and non-tenure track faculty. At times when chairs have the need to insist on service, there’re ways of presenting this request more as an opportunity for the faculty involved and finding ways to circumscribe it and provide some form of compensation.

One thing she hasn’t noticed is people trying to match particular talents and expertise to service. So chairs can and should be trained to recognize more broadly faculty members’ expertise and talents and preferences. Why can’t chairs ask their faculty what type of service interests them? She’s surprised at how often that doesn’t happen.

Wald also recommended training and mentorship for service. Ideally there should be a staff member who really knows the job that can help train faculty, but that’s not always the case and it also shouldn’t fall on staff alone. But finding ways of training and mentoring people so they can be successful in a job and move easily into a job is important.

Wald then addressed the notion of a reward system, and said she would like to see the idea of course relief come back. She thinks teaching is the most important thing faculty do, but when they get overburdened, the first thing that goes is their teaching. She emphasized that the need for compensation isn’t about getting out of teaching but more about maintaining high standards of teaching. However, chairs should ask the person what type of compensation would be most useful to them.

She then turned to the issue of when higher administration should get involved in work distribution and committee service. Sometimes a chair, without realizing they’re doing it, continues to ask the same people to do particular kinds of service. Sometimes there’s a blind spot in this area with the same people doing the work. Expanding whom they ask to participate in service can help a department become more inclusive or representative. The question is when should that happen and how should that happen? Should faculty members bring up the issue?

University service should also draw on a range of faculty talents for committee selection. The issue is how can higher administrators know this? It’s impossible for them to know all the faculty and their talents, expertise, and interests. Should faculty self-nominate for the committees they’re excited about? Is there a way to collect that interest from faculty to share with higher administration? Perhaps adding this information to the end-of-year report that faculty have to submit?

With university service, a clarity of charge is really important as is evidence of administrative commitment. She has seen people work hard over the years on reports of gender, inequity, race, etc., then the report goes nowhere or into a void that doesn’t translate clearly into change. So if the administration is really committed, it’s important to define the work, give course relief, and identify what they want to produce and what they will do with the information they discover. (Loud applause from the floor.)

Rodríguez García thanked Wald and welcomed Council member Christina Williams.
Christina Williams (Psychology & Neuroscience) said she agreed with pretty much everything that Wald said and will reiterate some things in several different ways. She’s served as chair of several differently named departments, as well as DUS for the neuroscience major when it was first instituted at Duke. She’s also served on very many committees across Duke. Service is something she’s very old school about, and she’d love to hear more from younger faculty about their views of service since she fears her views are antiquated. She actually thought service was an implicit part of the job description, but she doesn’t think her younger colleagues feel that way. She doesn’t think that service and governance is something young faculty think about here at Duke, and she’s not sure how to get that concern back into the conversation, if it indeed should be there. The emphasis has certainly shifted through the years from a sense that faculty jobs involve research, funding, teaching, mentoring, advising, and also helping the community be better, which is what she sees service as doing. Service makes all aspects of the job better and makes the community better. She’s always seen service as part of why she wanted to be a professor, as part of who she’s and what she thought the job was. She doesn’t think that younger faculty members would describe service as part of their job, especially in the sciences. She thinks it’s because of the very strategic emphasis on research.

Williams then referred to her slide title, which is “Getting everyone involved in research?” She added a question mark since she’s not sure it’s the goal to get everyone involved. She thought the problem is that service, compared to teaching and research, is relatively undefined, devalued, mostly unpaid and invisible, and takes faculty away from rewarded activities such as research, travel to lecture, and grant getting.

What to do to get back to increasing involvement in service? One strategy would be to find better ways to recognize and compensate service. There’re some jobs, such as department chair and DUS, that have some compensation involved. But there’re many large service activities that have no compensation at all. By compensation, she doesn’t necessarily mean money, there’re other forms and/or recognition that could be involved.

One reason service isn’t as valued as teaching and research is that there’s not a sense that people should really evaluate service. People list service on their CVs, but the question is were they active in meetings and on committees? Those who are the active, eager creators on committees should be rewarded somehow over those who just show up. So some way of evaluating service would be useful. Perhaps have the committee chair evaluate members and then the committee members evaluate the chair? Record those comments so that service isn’t just a line item on a person’s CV. An evaluation could cover participation, contribution, benefits to faculty or students or community, also size of department/program. She thought the lack of an evaluation makes people, especially younger faculty, skeptical about doing service since there’s no difference between participating and not participating.

Williams thought some clear expectation of service should be part of job offers. She also appreciates Wald’s comments on matching interests to expertise as she herself has been put on committees that were not a match to her expertise and therefore she was not as helpful as she had wanted to be. She also feels strongly about expanding the definition of service to include advising, mentoring, chairing promotion and hiring committees, leading independent studies, participating in Data+ and Bass Connections type projects. These are service to the broader community and these are programs that Duke wants you to get involved in.

Rodríguez García thanked Williams and said she’s given him the great idea of assessing service on Council and in the A&S faculty committees. He’d like to add this to the best practices for the future. He then welcomed Mark Olson from Art, Art History & Visual Studies (AAHVS).
Mark Olson (AAHVS) said he was glad to hear some of the highlighted issues which are things he indicated as service. His first slide features many of his titles as well as the “invisible service” which is part of the routine work of maintaining a university, such as search committees, mentoring, departmental representation at admissions and recruiting events, and interdepartmental consulting. He studies science and technology studies and in the past few years, the field has been really focused on how sociotechnical systems that are all about innovation and growth have denied that what goes into them is maintenance work. There’s a whole lot of labor that goes into driving and maintaining excellence, and he sees a lot of parallels with what’s going on at the university, particularly when we define a three-pillar system with research excellence at top, and immediately we begin to denigrate other types of activities that are necessary for maintaining excellence. He underscored what the other panelists have already said: this kind of labor also tends to fall on people who are precariously employed at university or on those whose contributions have historically been undervalued, such as women and people of color.

Olson would love to see a conversation about what’s sustainable at Duke in terms of how we value service. He also echoed that there’s a blurring of teaching, research, and service in programs such as Digital Humanities and Bass Connections. One can’t put work on these projects in one bucket.

Olson said he enjoys service and finds it important, but thinks the necessity for mentorship is absolutely crucial, especially in having senior faculty mentor other ranks on how to say no. He also encouraged the formation of a service apprenticeship so people can learn what to do and to become better at what they do.

He reiterated that there’re frictions between what’s defined as the ideal scholar, the ideal teacher, and the ideal university citizen. He would love to talk about what rewarding service means. People have gestured about more money or course relief. Where does that come down in terms of promotion and tenure decisions? Having these issues codified is especially important for non-tenure track faculty.

Rodríguez García thanked Olson and then welcomed Academic Council Chair Don Taylor to the podium.

Don Taylor (Sanford & AC Chair) said his idea of service for junior faculty is to expose them without burdening them. It might be easier for a junior faculty member to participate on Academic Council since there are 10 representatives per division, while A&S Council has only one member and one alternate. He noted a situation in his school where junior faculty were being exposed to certain situations that did not exist years ago, and as such his school needed to re-evaluate their expectations of junior faculty.

He also wanted to address the issue of non-regular rank faculty being ineligible for faculty governance. He said that the Executive Committee of the Academic Council will begin a discussion of this issue next fall, but there’re institutional systems in place, such as payroll, that must also be addressed.

Rodríguez García thanked Taylor for attending today’s meeting. Moving forward, he said, there are opportunities for collaboration with the Academic Council beginning next year. He’s already talked with Taylor about a possible joint conversation on service and governance next year since we can learn from each other about governance practices and everyday oversight of committees.

Chris Walter (Physics) referred to Williams’ comments on service. He was surprised that assistant professors don’t know they have to do service. In Physics, it’s very clear that they have to do all three things. They try to protect junior faculty from too much service, but once they become associates, they are expected to do more, especially at the university level. Service is also discussed in promotion committees.
Williams said she’s sure that departments handle this differently, but the policy of protecting assistant professors in her department so that they may excel as researchers means that junior faculty aren’t expected to do much of any service. Perhaps they help organize a lunch brown bag series. It’s quite minimal and they’re told to keep their heads down and not do anything. She’s also never seen a serious discussion in her department about service except for counting up line items for promotion. Or alternatively, for faculty who want to come up early for full and who haven’t done any service, they get assigned a job for a few years so they can get promoted. But there’s no evaluation system of how well they’re doing. There’s such a focus on big grants, important talks, papers and H factors and making sure your work is out there so that you get good recommendations from people who’re arm’s length in distance. The focus has been on evaluating faculty in terms of quality of their research and breadth of impact of that research, and a little bit on their teaching, but only as long as that teaching is above some bar of being competent. She doesn’t think service plays into the picture, really. It can probably help someone who’s a little weaker in research, but she doesn’t think that abstaining from service prevents anyone from being promoted.

Wald said she’s realized, from listening to people today and having thought about her comments for the presentation, that the message in all the departments in which she’s involved has been that service is necessary and that all junior faculty have done some when coming up for tenure. But the key point is balance. She thinks people are willing to do service, but are afraid of how to balance everything. Junior faculty in her home department have talked recently about how unprepared for a massive amount of work they have and how scared they’re about getting their writing done. It seems to her that all of this should be about joy, not just about what’s needed for promotion and tenure. Why haven’t we talked more about life balance so people can continue to do their best job and still enjoy it? Why isn’t this part of the discussion?

Rodríguez García said he loved what Wald just said because if we were undergraduates at Duke, we’d hear this type of talk about life balance every five minutes. This is what our trustees and senior executive leaders discuss all the time. The Committee on Advising (FSI) is being asked to take this on as well because there’s widespread and mounting concern on how to help students find a balance between academic success, personal happiness, and wellness. While balancing one’s pursuits is already important to us when we look at our undergraduate population, it’s less so when we consider our graduate students and colleagues. Yet, today’s conversation suggests that the challenge is for us to find and implement strategies that may serve both students and faculty while ideally reaching also into how we treat and socialize the nonteaching staff in our communities. He said Council will likely take up this issue again.

Randy Matory (Cultural Anthropology) said there’s an additional pressure on faculty to prove themselves as excellent not only in the department but also within the wider disciplines. We’re preoccupied by our department’s ranking within that discipline and there’s an enormous amount of pressure from the university to have its departments ranked highly.

Rodríguez García agreed and said that other portions of that conversation have begun to happen in different quarters. He recalled working with Taylor on the diversity task force a few years ago. One of the most interesting conversations in which he took part revolved around challenging Duke senior leaders to attenuate the pursuit of excellence in absolute terms. The question was: should we encourage Duke’s top brass to nurture communities where mutual support in everything we do together is the norm and to hire new faculty who exemplify the more balanced commitment to research, teaching, and service highlighted in today’s conversation? Why is this goal not a form of excellence in itself? There shouldn’t be as much pressure on junior faculty to overachieve as researchers and grant seekers, to develop into the best young researcher in their field nationwide to the detriment of their wellness and their service to their
communities of learning. Perhaps the hypertrophied cultures of academic excellence, originality of research, innovation, entrepreneurship – all these things push faculty to work at an accelerated pace on a somewhat narrow agenda and often lead them also to neglect other areas of university life. They’re not always conducive to forms of service and governance, at least in some units or for some of us.

Williams said people are often discouraged from certain kinds of participation, particularly ad hoc committees who’re tasked with something over a period of time, then produce a report, and then the report disappears. Perhaps the administration could report back to the committee about the impact of its work? This doesn’t have to be long feedback but just something about how your hard work is being considered and whether process will be changed in any way. She referenced an advising task force to which she was appointed in December 2012. It would be great to learn that the report still exists and is actually being used.

Rodríguez García said he’s familiar with that particular case. The report produced in March 2014 by the Task Force on Advising charged by Dean Laurie Patton and Dean Lee Baker was regrettably never presented for the consideration of the A&S Council. Nonetheless, the newly reconstituted advising committee (FSI) will use this Task Force’s summary of recommendations as a starting point for its work. He concurs that the general sentiment of frustration about reports that are either withheld from the faculty-at-large or filed quickly is justified and discourages faculty involvement. Council does have a voice in its Bylaws to demand or expect feedback from senior leaders upon the submission of any report. In the Council Bylaws, language that is frequently used says we advise the deans and monitor their initiatives. There’s also language to the effect that Council has some legislative prerogatives. We haven’t used this power yet, but any committee and task force charged by us may produce a set of recommendations or of best practices for the consideration and approval of Council before that document is forwarded to Trinity’s senior eldership. A recent example of good collaboration with our executive administrators was the ad hoc Committee on Classroom Space and Infrastructure last fall, whose report was favorably received by the Deans and is in the process of implementation within Trinity’s budgetary constraints.

Day said underlying the discussion today is the idea of continuity. No one is intending for things to get gobbled up by the void, but what happens is new chairs of Council come in, new deans come in and there isn’t any systematic repository for important reports. So some thought about repositories for these kinds of things would be useful.

Rodríguez García said one of this year’s goals was to build an archive of conversations that would make us all better acquainted with policies and practices in place in individual units. He’d like to build a repository of committee work because it can ensure the kind continuity that Day is referring to and will provide information for Council once it begins debating about issues on which it will be more challenging to arrive at a consensus.

Walter said that some faculty have enormous service to their profession and that type of service often gets left out of the conversation.

Rodríguez García agreed, saying when he was preparing for today’s meeting and looking up CVs of colleagues known for their longstanding engagement with service and governance, he was also amazed at the amount of service some of them have done for professional organizations, academic presses, and research centers at the national and international levels. That work increases the visibility of Duke’s global footprint and is also a mark of our collective resolve to support important networks collaboration that were started outside of Duke. As time had run out, the meeting was adjourned.