

Faculty Meeting Minutes August 15, 2001

President Pierce called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m. Sixty-eight voting members of the faculty were present by 4:13 p.m.

John Finney was elected secretary for the 2001-2002 year.

Minutes of the May 7, 2001 faculty meeting were approved as distributed.

President Pierce said that some OT and PT faculty had raised questions about the process the trustees had used for dealing with the OTPT enrollment issue. She explained the outcome of the August 3, 2001 trustees executive committee meeting in which the executive committee acted on behalf of the Board to consider benchmarks. The trustees first met with Kathie Hummel-Berry representing PT and Kathy Stewart representing OT (for George Tomlin, who was in Europe) to discuss their concerns. Hans Ostrom, an ex officio member of the executive committee, was also present for that discussion. Based on their conversation with Hummel-Berry and Stewart and on President Pierce's recommendation, the trustees refined and clarified their May 2001 letter to the President requesting the development of benchmarks. They also approved the benchmarks. In a letter subsequent to the meeting, Board Chair Bill Weyerhaeuser on behalf of the Board made the following points:

[1] that benchmarks are meant to be important ingredients in the on-going review of progress in meeting enrollment goals but actual numbers short of any benchmark figures will not automatically lead to a decision to discontinue a program.

[2] that benchmarks for (1) the numbers of OT and PT applications received by January 15; (2) the number of qualified students the University is prepared to admit in early March; and (3) the number of actual enrollments each fall are to be part of a larger review of progress that also takes into account financial indicators, the effectiveness of various strategies to increase enrollments and, to the extent possible, general market trends (e.g., employment trends, enrollments in other OT and PT programs, healthy-care related legislation or other factors that might influence future enrollments).

[3] Other than analysis and reports, the only specific action that the board is mandating is that if either OT or PT in early March do not have a sufficient number of qualified students to achieve the benchmark for admitted students, the university delay admitting a new class of students into the program not meeting the benchmark until President Pierce, based on analysis and appropriate consultation, makes a recommendation to the trustees whether or not to admit a new class of students for that program.

[4] that each program continue to adhere to at least their current minimum standards for admission.

[5] that each program continue to require the GRE for admission even if GRE scores are not a factor in the admission decision.

[6] that each program continue to track certain measures of quality.

In addition, the trustees approved the benchmarks that Terry Cooney, Karen Goldstein, Kathie Hummel-Berry, and George Tomlin worked on over the summer, clarified that they view each program as a separate entity, and indicated that they would be pleased to consider a faculty recommendation on the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree if one should be forthcoming.

President Pierce then read the following from Bill Weyerhaeuser's letter: "We continue to believe that regular monitoring of progress in meeting the benchmarks and in reversing declining applications and enrollments is essential. We are agreed that the University needs to see improvements in enrollments not only because of the budgetary implications of an enrollment shortfall but also because a certain critical mass of students is necessary to sustain occupational therapy and physical therapy as academically viable programs. We want to assure the two programs and the campus that any decisions about the

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future of each of these programs will both be data-driven and based on informed judgments and all appropriate consultation. Finally, by establishing a three-year period in which the anticipated enrollment increases are minimal in each of the first two years, we hope to give the two programs additional time to address this situation in which actual enrollments are falling significantly below both our planning and budgetary goals. At the same time, we believe that our responsibilities to the institution as a whole and the fact that the decline in enrollments is a national rather than a local problem require us to be clear about our expectations.”

In response to the point about the use of GRE scores Juli McGruder said that the OT faculty have always used GRE scores and would continue to do so. Kathie Hummel-Berry explained that she had told the trustees that PT had been considering not using GRE scores but would now continue to use them.

President Pierce then asked Dean Cooney to explain the benchmarks. Dean Cooney showed graphs tracking OT and PT applications, percent of applicants admitted, and percent of admitted applicants who enrolled throughout the 1990's to the present time. The graphs showed that during the past decade the number of applications grew significantly and then declined significantly, that the percent of applicants admitted increased dramatically, and that the percent of admitted applicants who enrolled declined dramatically.

Dean Cooney said that the benchmarks need to show improvement over the next three years at the end of which the two programs need to be breaking even financially. Dean Cooney explained some of the factors that went into computing the financial data and then showed financial charts of projected costs and revenues for both PT and OT. The charts showed positive net revenues each year for PT and declining negative revenues each year after 2002-2003 for OT. Dean Cooney said that the trustees accept that if PT revenues are positive enough to offset the negative revenues in OT, that would be okay assuming that OT has a critical mass of students. But he added that the two programs could have very different experiences and that the trustees will consider each program separately.

McGruder said that the OT program is more expensive because it has three senior faculty, whereas PT is composed of junior faculty.

Dean Cooney indicated that the two or three units OT was anticipated to contribute each year to the undergraduate program were not charged to financial calculations for the graduate program. He then showed an overhead summarizing the benchmark numbers, anticipating a more rapid increase in PT new enrollments (21, 24, and 25 each year respectively, assuming the DPT degree is approved) than was the case for OT new enrollments (15, 18, and 26), leading in each program to a financially sound situation after three years.

Bob Matthews asked how the benchmarks were arrived at. Dean Cooney said they were arrived at by working backwards from a break-even financial point. Hummel-Berry pointed out that the numbers each year for PT were actually higher than break-even and Dean Cooney agreed this was correct within the framework of analysis used.

David Droge asked whether in addition to changes in federal laws that had affected the two programs there had also been an increase in the number of OT and PT programs across the country. Hummel-Berry said there was an increase in the number of PT programs in the 1990's, but that the APTA has stopped accrediting new programs. McGruder said that the AOTA has likewise stopped accrediting new OT programs. President Pierce added that new programs that were opened in our area were at public institutions with lower tuition. Ron Stone reported there were 72 OT programs in 1990 and 146 this year.

Curt Mehlhaff asked if there had been an independent assessment of what the critical student masses were for the programs and whether they were higher or lower than the break-even numbers. Dean Cooney said the issue is also one of a critical mass of faculty. He said this has been discussed, but that there is not common agreement on a specific number. He said that he and George Tomlin had agreed previously that a program with new students each year in the mid-20's was probably as low as you could go over time. He added that the benchmark numbers in year three are not below the critical mass.

Martin Jackson asked if the nine per cent graduate discount rate in the OT financial chart was the best rate to use. McGruder said we lose many good OT students to other institutions because of insufficient financial aid. Dean Cooney said the discount rate has gone up over time but that as financial aid increases so do programs costs and there is a risk that continuing to increase the discount rate may not be effective in yielding higher enrollments.

George Mills said he was concerned about the discounting of graduate tuition becoming "an arms race." Hummel-Berry said financial aid seems not to have been a factor for us in PT this recruiting year because it was overshadowed by our not offering the DPT degree. She said that's why we lost students this year and that if the DPT degree is approved we can better assess whether financial aid levels are a factor.

Roberta Wilson asked if there was "anything in the works externally" that might cause a natural upswing in OT or PT enrollments. Hummel-Berry said that the dot-com bust may be motivating some people to return to the health professions. McGruder suggested there may be a person-power shortage looming that will help us out. President Pierce added that the university had asked various experts to help give us a handle on that question but that they could not do that.

Heidi Orloff asked the PT and OT faculty if they felt the benchmark numbers presented in the charts were realistic, and Hummel-Berry and McGruder both said that they did.

At this point President Pierce asked that we move forward with a discussion of the proposed DPT. Hummel-Berry M/S/vote reported later "that we approve the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree." Orloff argued that we have in fact been offering the DPT equivalent for years anyway and that no change would be involved. Suzanne Barnett asked Orloff if she meant that we have been offering a higher quality MPT degree than is offered elsewhere and Orloff said yes. The view of several faculty was that even when every other program also offers the DPT degree we still will be distinctive by virtue of being a small program giving better service.

Barnett if we could talk about the role of a doctoral program in a primarily undergraduate institution. What does it do, she asked, to our standing as an undergraduate liberal arts college? President Pierce responded that she didn't think it was a factor in the long term and went on to explain that many highly regarded national liberal arts colleges have master's and doctoral programs. She said that the Carnegie Corporation plans in 2005 to implement new classification criteria that will be met with resistance by many schools. She said she is working with Annapolis Group presidents to try to influence what Carnegie does. She said that the DPT is not a factor for us because if Carnegie pursues its new scheme we will lose the liberal arts classification anyway because we offer master's degrees. She added that efforts are under way to encourage the U.S. Department of Education to classify the DPT as a "first professional degree" rather than as a doctorate, in which case having the DPT would not affect our Carnegie classification at all.

Barnett asked how it is that graduate students experience our liberal arts mission as they move through their programs. Hummel-Berry said that the writing across the curriculum component is prominent throughout the PT program and that they are preparing more informative brochures to describe the benefits to graduate students of being in a liberal arts institution.

Fred Slee M/S/P to close debate. The motion to close debate passed on a voice vote. The Hummel-Berry motion then passed on a voice vote. President Pierce said that the recommendation of the faculty to create the DPT degree would be considered by the trustees at their special August 17 meeting.

Before adjourning President Pierce announced that we have a new air-handling system and a new exterior paint scheme for the OTPT building. The building's new color is beige, but the OTPT faculty apparently favor calling the color "ecru" or "bone." She said that new web pages are being worked on for OTPT by the Office of Information Services and others. She concluded by reporting that Hummel-Berry and Kathy Stewart recently attended a conference on graduate school recruiting.

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We adjourned at 5:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John M. Finney
Secretary of the Faculty