

My Fellow Faculty Members:

As we find ourselves well into the second part of the current session of the Faculty Senate, I am pleased to be able to report to my fellow faculty members on some of the most noteworthy achievements as well as remarks on the significant work that lies ahead.

I. First, perhaps the issue which is perceived with the most ambiguity and is triggering the most campus discussion, and debate in the Senate, is the issue of fringe benefits. As announced by the Chancellor, the Board of Trustees has adopted a new policy on fringe benefits. While this policy will relate only to incoming faculty at AUS, and leaves unchanged the fringe benefits for the existing faculty, the two-tiered benefit system is currently being evaluated. We will devote as much time as necessary in this assembly to thoroughly examine the issues at stake.

The report from the committee on fringe benefits has also been made available to all faculty. Contrary to interpretations that may be circulating around campus, the announced policy does not pertain to fringe benefits of existing faculty. Indeed, I have specifically asked the Chancellor about this issue yesterday, and have been assured that the Board of Trustees and the Chancellor have determined that they will not change the benefits of the current faculty. But of course, I urge that faculty today ask and hear for themselves from the Chancellor on this issue. We welcome faculty input on the recommendation placed by the fringe benefits committee with regard to the existing body of faculty. We will have as thorough debates as necessary on this matter.

Finally, on this issue, the Board of Trustees has purposefully left unanswered whether existing faculty who wish to do so, will be able, as an option, to change their benefits package to the formula offered to incoming faculty. I trust we will have extended debate today on the manifold aspects of this issue.

II. Some mutual accord has been reached between the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and the administration on airline tickets home. The most recent understanding is that faculty can purchase their own tickets with as many stops as they like and to whichever destination that they wish, provided they do not exceed the amount that they would have been allocated to their home destination had they purchased the ticket from SNTTA.

III. Another matter of particular import to faculty is health insurance. I had announced in September that AUS will be tendering for health care coverage during early 2004 and the AUS Faculty Senate will be an integral part of constructing policies in which the Office of Financial Affairs seeks appropriate contracts with health providers and insurers. The tendering process has now just begun, and the VCFA office has invited the Senate to take part in examining health insurance policy alternatives and deciding the best one. I am pleased to report that our colleagues Professors Sami Tabsh and John Chilton have agreed to represent us on the tendering committee along with professional staffers from the office of finance.

IV. I am happy to report that faculty contributions to the Senate students fund have amassed 6500 AED. The first award from the student fund will be made at commencement.

V. A number of policies have been adopted by the Faculty Senate. The relevant documents have been sent to you along with the agenda for the current meeting and they are as follows :

1. A new policy on FPCs membership that will hopefully mitigate possibilities of undue influence on the FPCs. In order to minimize reciprocities and the likelihood of inside influence, all committees will be formed in random draws from three pools of faculty members until the pools are successively depleted. This policy applies to all FPCs, including the UCRCP. In order to accommodate the need of promotion cases from associate to full professors, the procedure provides for a specific number of full professors on the School/College FPC and UCRCP.
2. In order to avail the university of the opportunity to attract and retain established faculty who have been awarded tenure at comparable institutions with standards similar to those of AUS, a tenured faculty may qualify for an early evaluation of his or her case for rolling contract. This, however, does not infer the automatic granting of a rolling contract, but only makes the evaluation possible earlier so that such faculty may not have to give up their existing tenure if the situation does not work out at AUS.
3. The Senate has also adopted criteria to translate years of experience in industry to units of academic experience. The policy to evaluate the credentials of faculty who come to AUS with experience in industry will not apply retroactively as *ex post facto* policy. You may view the full set of criteria in the package of documents that were sent to you along with the agenda.
4. We are also pleased to announce the passage of a revised Grievance Code. The new code streamlines the procedure and makes it less cumbersome. It also relaxes the timeline. Thus, the new code rids of the constraints that forced faculty colleagues inexperienced in the complexities of the code to render a rapid decision.
5. On the issue of faculty awards that are usually awarded to faculty for excellence in teaching, research, and service, the Senate has emphasized the need to encode candid criteria for selection. The Senate recommended that a University Committee be named by the Chancellor in consultation with the SEC to develop such criteria. But the awards would not be given until the criteria are developed and adopted by the Faculty Senate, and approved by the administration.

I shall not reiterate the items from the Board of Trustees meeting that the Chancellor has reported to the Senate, as he has already done so himself.

Three sabbatical leave semesters are available, which would amount to a year for one faculty and one semester for another, or three separate semesters, one to each of three faculty.

Three grievances are currently being heard at various stages with the confidentiality expected in due process.

Chancellor Thompson invited the SEC to examine the clauses of the Faculty Handbook related to faculty contract renewal, which he deems constrained. Revisions will be introduced to relax the timeline for the evaluation process as currently stated in the Faculty Handbook, so that faculty would have one entire year to search for a job in the case of non renewal.

I shall be happy to answer any questions when the floor is open for discussions.