MEMORANDUM

To: University of Mary Washington Faculty

From: University Faculty Council

Date: October 19, 2010

RE: University Faculty Governance Structure Proposal

During recent months, the most pressing task facing the University Faculty Council (UFC) has been to develop, in consultation with the colleges, university committees to handle oversight of promotion and tenure and the curriculum. This task is now underway, and revisions to our initial proposals are being implemented in response to feedback forwarded by each college’s governing body. To place these committees into context and to begin defining operationally how all university governance units will function and interact, the UFC presents this proposed schematic for a new university faculty governance structure. The council’s overall objective is to create a structure which ensures input from all three colleges on matters relating to core university function, while providing colleges the autonomy to develop as they see fit.

According to this proposal, eight university-level committees would handle matters of central import to the university’s academic mission and to general faculty and student welfare. These committees would include faculty from each college to represent their interests when issues of potentially university-wide consequence are considered. They would either submit formal motions or forward their reports to the UFC, depending on the nature of their business. For example, in keeping with current practice, the University Curriculum Committee might submit its reports to the UFC for acceptance, but the University Academic Affairs Committee might present motions upon which the UFC votes. Any UFC action would be subject to a full faculty vote if challenged.

The University Student Affairs Advisory Committee would be a new committee for UMW, but one with counterparts at other institutions. A Student Affairs committee would allow faculty to be more explicitly involved in how student welfare policy and related allocation of resources are shaped. Currently, the faculty have limited formal means to provide input on student welfare matters, and our institution might be healthier if we had more extensive interaction with administrative units such as the Offices of Student and Residence Life and the Division of Student Affairs. The faculty experience the academic side of students, but students’ academic performance may be affected by health (both physical and mental), living conditions, and involvement in activities. Faculty would also be more involved with facilitating student engagement in the broader campus community beyond the classroom. Finally, our ability to
recruit and retain high caliber students is affected by the quality of life that our institution offers. Therefore, the faculty also have a distinct stake in maintaining resources necessary to ensure student welfare and to keep our campus community attractive to students.

Other university-level advisory committees would either be maintained or newly constituted to preserve faculty participation in shaping particular facets of the curriculum and input on other aspects of university operation. For example, writing intensive (WI), speaking intensive (SI), and first year seminar courses (FSEM) are components of the general education curriculum, and committees currently exist to review new WI, SI, and FSEM course proposals and consider appeals by students for exceptions/substitutions for these requirements. Since undergraduate students enrolled in all three colleges need to complete the general education curriculum, faculty from all three colleges should have the opportunity to be involved in the oversight of these courses. Therefore, the UFC proposes that these committees function at the university level. All of these advisory committees would be open to any interested faculty member and would report directly to the UFC. However, they would additionally advise the College Governing Bodies of their actions, giving each college opportunities to consider their impacts on college-level function and appeal them to the UFC if warranted.

The UFC has thus far identified three areas of business that are appropriately handled at the college level: curriculum, promotion and tenure, and readmissions for students who have been suspended. Therefore, we propose that three corresponding college-level committees be created and their charges specified in the Faculty Handbook. The college-level curriculum committees would consider such items as changes to or additions/deletions of major and minor programs, course offerings, and prerequisite structures. They would send their reports to their respective College Governing Bodies, which, upon approval, would then forward them to the University Curriculum Committee. This additional approval layer is needed to ensure that curricular conflicts do not arise for students who are enrolled in a given college, but who must take courses offered by another. College-level Promotion and Tenure Committees would be charged solely with evaluating candidates for promotion and tenure. The University Faculty Affairs Committee would oversee Promotion and Tenure policy across the university and monitor its implementation. Finally, the college-level readmissions committees would replace the existing Committee on Academic Standing that currently considers student appeals for readmission to the university. Aside from these three committees, colleges would have the latitude to either create additional committees or dissolve existing ones at their discretion. Any additional committees need not be spelled out in the Faculty Handbook.

In summary, the UFC has been charged with proposing a vision for the university’s faculty committee structure in accordance with the overall governance model approved by the faculty in the spring of 2010. This proposal preserves the essential features of this model, while guaranteeing representation from all three colleges at multiple levels and minimizing duplication of effort by leaving college-level committee structure largely up to each college.
Thank you for your consideration and feedback.

Attachment: University Faculty Governance Schematic