Franklin College Faculty Senate

Minutes of the special meeting on Apr. 3, 2018

The meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m. in room 213 of the Miller Learning Center, Mary Bedell presiding.

Members Present: John Achee, Mary Bedell, Thomas Biggs, Brian Binder, Tom Cerbu, Katie Chapman, Elizabeth Davis, , Chad Howe, , Betina Kaplan, , Gary Lautenschlager, Megan Lutz, Silvia Moreno, Dan Nakano, Rielle Navitski, Chris Pizzino, Jennifer Rice, Leslie Gordon Simons, Jiyeon So, Steve Soper, Nanette Spina.

Proxies: Elizabeth Brient (for Rohan Sikri), Peter Brosius (for Don Nelson), Diana Downs (for Jorge Escalante), Hong Qiu (Lianchun Wang), Dan Rood (for Kevin Jones), Saral Surakul (for Jain Kwon).

Members not present: Maor Bar-Peled, Josh Bynum, Brian Condie, Suzanne Ellenberger, Lisa Fusillo, Richard Hubbard, Maria Hybinette, Takahiro Ito, Kristin Kundert, Ming-Jun Lai, Reid Messich, Lakshmish Ramaswamy, Mike Roden, Phillip Stancil, Sunkoo Yuh, Qun Zhao.

Guests: Prof. Jennifer Birch (Anthropology), Michelle Cook (Office of the Provost), Prof. Janet Frick (Psychology), Prof. John Knox (Geography), David Lee (Office of the Vice-President for Research), Prof. Barbara McCaskill (English), Prof. Scott Pegan (Pharmacy), Lee Shearer (*Athens Banner-Herald*), Prof. Janet Westpheling (Genetics).

President Mary Bedell's Remarks

For those Senators and guests who might not be aware, President Bedell explained that the issue of the Baldwin Hall expansion and cemetery remains has already been the subject of discussion at two meetings of the Faculty Senate, on February 20 and March 20 of this year; and that, following the second of these meetings, she received a number of questions and comments from Faculty Senators, in particular regarding the media coverage of the second meeting. The media coverage in question consists of an article appearing in the March 21, 2018 online issue of the *Athens Banner Herald*; and a response to that article by Greg Trevor, UGA's Executive Director of Media Communications, which appeared a day later in the online edition of the same newspaper.

President Bedell then explained that today's meeting has three items of business: 1) Discussion of the media coverage and University response to the Baldwin Hall issue as discussed at the March 20 Faculty Senate meeting; 2) Discussion of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Baldwin Hall issue and its charge; and 3) Discussion of possible clarifications regarding media coverage, the University response, and the Ad Hoc Committee, and a vote on a statement from the Faculty Senate. She emphasized that the focus of today's discussion is not on the Baldwin Hall expansion issue as a whole, but rather, much more specifically, on the media coverage of the March 20, 2018 Faculty Senate meeting. President Bedell also explained that, as she moderates today's discussions, she will give priority to Senators over guests; and she encouraged Senators

who feel they are unable to get their comments across within the time frame of today's meeting to send written statements (no later than Friday, April 13) to Prof. Jennifer Rice, the chair of the Faculty Senate's Executive Council.

President Bedell then reviewed the agendas of the February 20 and March 20 meetings, noting the three documents posted to the March 20 meeting agenda – available for consultation at the Faculty Senate website – and the decision taken at the March 20 meeting to create an informal ad hoc committee of Faculty Senators to discuss the Baldwin Hall expansion and cemetery remains issue. Regarding Greg Trevor's publication in the *Athens Banner Herald*, President Bedell highlighted two excerpts: the first one refers to the "effort by some in the Franklin College of Arts & Sciences to label the University's decisions as unilateral, irresponsible, and unethical"; the second one singles out for criticism the actions of Prof. Laurie Reitsema from the Anthropology Department. President Bedell added that it was the latter, in particular, that inspired many members of the UGA faculty to write to her after Mr. Trevor's statement was published. At issue, President Bedell noted, was something arguably larger than the Baldwin Hall issue, namely the freedom of speech of the UGA faculty.

Discussion of agenda item #1: media coverage & University response

A Faculty Senator asked President Bedell whether UGA President Jere Morehead, to whom Greg Trevor presumably reports, has contacted her regarding the press coverage of the Faculty Senate's discussion of the Baldwin Hall issue. President Bedell answered that she has not heard from President Morehead. A guest added that she emailed President Morehead but has not received a response.

More than one Senator noted that Trevor's statement responded to the *Athens Banner Herald* article as opposed to what actually happened at the March 20 Faculty Senate meeting; in other words, that there was a disconnect between the *Athens Banner Herald* article and the PowerPoint presentation at the March 20 by Prof. Reitsema. Another Senator stated that Greg Trevor's statement appeared to be an attack on the Faculty Senate and a faculty member. Conversation continued on the questionable correspondence between the *Athens Banner Herald* article and Trevor's response to it, on the one hand, and the proceedings of the March 20 Faculty Senate meeting. A guest expressed dismay at the scathing nature of the *Athens Banner Her*ald article, and asked the Senators whether the article was accurate or not, which prompted one Senator to reply that the Faculty Senate cannot and should not have to answer such a question. Another Senator highlighted the importance of freedom of the press, and a guest added that what was particularly troubling about the press exchange was Mr. Trevor's decision to single out a junior faculty member for criticism. One Senator asked where Mr. Trevor derived his statement about the Faculty Senate's characterization of the University's response to the Baldwin Hall issue as "unilateral, irresponsible, and unethical." It was pointed out that this phrase appeared somewhere in the presentation on the issue prepared for the March 20 meeting. A Senator added that the key issue is that the UGA President's spokesperson chose to view the *Athens Banner Herald* article as accurate, without contacting the Faculty Senate. Vice-President for Research David Lee suggested that Senators may be parsing details from the press exchange to fit their view of what transpired at the two Faculty Senate meetings on the Baldwin Hall issue. A Senator praised Dr. Lee for his straightforward comments, but noted that the same could not be said for Mr. Trevor's letter to the *Athens Banner Herald*. Other Senators agreed that a distinction should be made between what happens in this room and what is reported in the press.

Discussion of agenda item #2: Ad Hoc Committee

President Bedell gave the chair of the informal Ad Hoc Committee, Prof. Chris Pizzino, an opportunity to review the work of the committee; Prof. Pizzino proposed that discussion begin without a potentially time-consuming summary of what the committee has done to this point. A guest expressed a strong belief in the need for an Ad Hoc Committee on the Baldwin Hall issue, stating that the issue is not going to go away, in part because Baldwin Hall and its surrounding parking lot is still sitting on top of human remains, in part because across the country universities are grappling with the issue of confronting their past; the guest recommended that UGA get ahead of the issue, noting that a lot of helpful information is available on how other institutions are facing this challenge, and concluding that a Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Committee could play a helpful part in this process. A Senator asked how clearly the guidelines of the Ad Hoc Committee will be specified; President Bedell replied that the Executive Committee will review and clarify the functions of the Ad Hoc Committee. Associate Dean Kecia Thomas directed attention to the Faculty Senate by-laws that authorize a discussion of issues "that concern one or more departments or the College as a whole." A guest affirmed the importance of the Faculty Senate's voice, and expressed concern that the Baldwin Hall issue is sometimes presented, too narrowly, as something of primary interest to only the African-American community, when in fact it affects the entire university, including faculty and students. The same guest stated that the Baldwin Hall issue is an opportunity for all of us to address and study the legacy of slavery at universities; to do our part to heal some of the deep political divisions in our country; to recognize that everyone, regardless of color, is affected by the legacy of slavery; to find ways to talk about race, and to move our university forward. Another guest supported the previous speaker's statements, but noted that we need to discuss this and other issues in a professional manner, by eliminating the rhetoric of calling others "unethical," etc. A Senator made a motion to vote on the proposal to draw up plans for the creation of a formal Ad Hoc Committee to address the Baldwin Hall issue. The motion was seconded, and the Senators voted in favor of the proposal, 27 to 0.

Discussion of agenda item #3: Further clarifications, and a vote on a statement

President Bedell drew attention to the components of the proposed statement from the Senate regarding media coverage of the Senate's March 20 meeting and the University's response to that coverage. A Senator proposed a friendly amendment to the statement, to reflect the fact that only two of the statement's three components constitute "clarifications" of articles appearing in the local press (the third component being a statement in defense of UGA faculty's freedom of opinion). Another Senator proposed a friendly amendment to the second item in the statement, to reflect the fact that the informal Ad Hoc Committee has already convened. Another Senator suggested that the statement be changed to incorporate some of the ideas expressed by one of the guests, regarding the importance of this issue to everyone at UGA; another Senator replied by recommending that the statement up for a vote today remain limited, that is, that it offer no established opinions on the Baldwin Hall issue and that it refrain from commenting on the specific charge of a future Ad Hoc Committee. A proxy for a Senator requested that the terms slave or slavery be incorporated into the statement, prompting several Senators and guests to determine whether some or all of the remains found during the Baldwin Hall expansion were of individuals with African ancestry. A Senator offered the opinion that the third item in the statement was not strongly worded enough, prompting several guests to offer various opinions, including support of the existing tone of the statement, a wish for a stronger

criticism of the University's attempt to discredit a junior faculty member, and a defense of the UGA administration's right to respond to criticism. Vice-President for Research David Lee expressed his wish that the final statement invite both sides in the debate, moving forward, to show respect for one another. A Senator noted that the principle of academic freedom does not require faculty to say only nice things about the administration. A motion was called and seconded to vote on whether to approve the statement as amended. The amended statement was approved by a vote of 25 to 0.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Steven Soper
Franklin College Senate Secretary and Senator for History