

## Minutes of ARFAC Meeting

October 29, 1997

**Present:** Kathy Chadwick (chair), Wendy Allen, Gail Carlson, Bob Entenmann, Mark Gelle, Michelle Gierke, Barb Lundberg, and Anna Trefz.

**Guest:** Gordeen Gorder, International Student Advisor

1. The minutes of the October 8 meeting were approved as distributed.

2. Agenda:

- review of English language requirement for international students;
- diversity;
- report on Fall Open House;
- report on search for Director of Financial Aid;
- discussion of financial aid mission of the College.

3. Kathy reported that the Committee is still without a representative from the Fine Arts Faculty, since John Saurer (who was to replace Judith Yourman) is unable to attend a Wednesday afternoon meeting. Committee members expressed concern about the absence of a representative from Fine Arts, especially as we move into the Buntrock scholarship competition. Kathy will contact Associate Dean Caroline Jennings and encourage her to find a replacement for Judith in the most timely manner possible.

#### 4. REVIEW OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS.

Gordeen Gorder, International Student Advisor, attended the meeting to inform committee members of St. Olaf's current practice regarding the level of English-language proficiency required of entering international students and to seek ARFAC support in making current practice "official policy." Current practice, which is the same for degree and non-degree candidates, includes two provisions: (i) all international student applicants are required to take the TOEFL (Test of English as a foreign language) and submit scores to St. Olaf as part of the formal application process; (ii) students must score a minimum of 550 (intermediate level proficiency) in order to be eligible for admission. This past fall is the first time the College has officially enforced the above policy, which is very similar to that of a number of our sister institutions (Coe, Gustavus, Luther, St. Thomas; Macalester requires a minimum TOEFL score of 573). The rationale for requiring for admission a minimum TOEFL score—and the required minimum of 550 is considered to be just that, a minimum—is that limited English language proficiency on the part of international students hinders their academic performance as well as their participation in the life of the community. Already, this fall, implementation of the new policy has resulted in a decrease in the number of international students requiring tutoring. ARFAC members expressed support for the new policy. A motion was moved, seconded, and passed that we submit to Vice-President and Dean Jim Pence a formal

request, following discussion and consultation with relevant department and program heads, for the formulation and establishment of an official College policy in this regard. The communication to Dean Pence should include a rationale explaining the need for such a policy; the two provisions of the policy; a request for additional discussion/consultation with relevant department and program heads; consideration of the individual or office with responsibility for informing foreign institutions of the adoption of a new policy. Wendy Allen will bring to the next ARFAC meeting a draft letter to the Dean for discussion and editing. Discussion of this issue ended with a word of warning: the existence of an official policy in this regard will not solve all the problems related to English-language proficiency of international students—it does, however, represent a start.

## 5. DIVERSITY.

- Committee members received copies of a letter sent to Jim May, Associate Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, by Mike Fitzgerald, member of the History Department and former ARFAC chair, who expressed concern about the "new" composition of ARFAC—in particular, the removal from this year's committee of the Director of Multicultural Student Services—and the possible negative effect this might have on the Committee's ability to address effectively issues of diversity.
- Barb Lundberg explained the rationale that had guided SALT's thinking last summer as it restructured major standing committees: SALT wanted to keep the committees small enough to be efficient and wanted them to have a balanced membership (faculty, administrators, students). In the case of ARFAC, the decision was made to include only two administrators (the Vice President for Enrollment and the Director of Financial Aid), with staff from the Dean of Students' Office (the staff member responsible for advising, for retention, for multicultural student affairs, etc.), the Registrar's Office and other administrative offices serving as resource persons who might be invited by committee to attend particular meetings, but who would not be permanent members.
- One ARFAC member pointed out that announcement of the recomposition of standing committees of the faculty had been poorly handled, with some administrative staff members who were formerly members of committees not being informed of the change in composition until after the first meeting of the new year. Another ARFAC member suggested that concerns related to the composition of ARFAC are part of a larger institutional issue having to do with diversity: What are we doing to increase diversity? Who is responsible for overseeing efforts in this area?
- Barb Lundberg indicated that diversity is one of the areas for which she has responsibility. She will talk with President Edwards about informing the campus community of his plans for addressing the issue of diversity at an institutional level and of her new responsibilities in this area.
- Michelle reported that diversity is an important issue in the eyes of current as well as prospective students. Students feel there has been a lot of talk, but not much action. The Student Senate, working with the Multicultural Affairs Committee, has organized a workshop on diversity for campus leaders.
- ARFAC members recognized a need to educate the campus community in the area of diversity—to make known what we have done and what progress we have made, to see

how we compare to our sister institutions in this regard. Five Lutheran institutions (including St Olaf) are currently at work on a grant application, which, if funded, would allow us to assess the climate on our respective campuses, develop plans for increasing diversity, determine how to define diversity, identify goals that are possible and appropriate for us in this area and strategies to help us achieve them.

- ARFAC members ended discussion of this topic by reiterating a point made by the members of last year's Student Action Team; namely, that diversity is not (just) an admissions issue; it is a campus-wide issue that must be addressed on a comprehensive, institute-wide basis.
- Kathy C. will contact Mike Fitzgerald, thanking him for his letter and sharing with him ARFAC's plans for addressing his concerns.

#### 6. REPORT ON FALL OPEN HOUSE.

Barb L. reported that all evaluations received to date, both formal and informal, indicated that the Fall Open House had been very successful. 492 students attended—just why of last year's record-setting 510. One individual expressed dissatisfaction with the "role" assigned to faculty, in particular the noon luncheon at the Field House, and Barb sought to determine whether or not this view was shared by ARFAC members. It was not; in fact, ARFAC members' reports were extremely positive. However, both the Admissions Office and ARFAC are concerned about the issue of faculty involvement in events such as this. We want to involve faculty in admissions efforts in ways faculty deem worthwhile and meaningful. We would also like to obtain a broader sample of faculty opinion concerning the Open House. To this end, ARFAC members will undertake some informal polling of colleagues.

#### 7. REPORT ON SEARCH FOR DIRECTOR OF FINANCIAL AID.

A seven-member search committee has been appointed: Kathy Chadwick (ARFAC), Anne Dahlen (Asst. Dir. of Financial Aid) Kathie Fishbeck (Buntrock), Mark Gelle (Dir. of Student Financial Services), Michelle Gierke (student), Barb Lundberg, Jeff McLaughlin (Admissions). Barb L. and Mark G. will do a preliminary screening of applicants—Mark focusing on technical qualifications and Barb on broader issues—with the full committee reading the applications of semi-finalists. All ARFAC members will be involved in the on-campus interviews. Barb provided details of the time line for the search. The application deadline is November 15; plans call for interviewing candidates Thanksgiving week and the week after. The intent is to be ready to extend an offer to the first-ranked candidate in early December, in the hope that he or she might begin in January.

#### 8. DISCUSSION OF FINANCIAL AID MISSION OF THE COLLEGE.

In order to assist ARFAC members in developing a sense of what the position of Director of Financial Aid involves, Barb asked Mark Gelle to make a brief presentation concerning the financial aid mission of the College. Mark's presentation included the following points (expressed more eloquently than in the following summary): The Financial Aid Office's primary mission is to support the College's admissions effort. It does this in three ways:

1. by attaining the size of class necessary;
2. by attaining the quality of class desired (quality is defined in academic terms and in terms of extracurricular interests and competencies);
3. to generate a sufficient amount of net tuition revenue to make the budget work.  
Other elements of the College's financial aid mission include:
4. making sure that students who are enrolled here are able to remain here; and
5. monitoring financial aid awards on entry and after, and maintaining commitments to students.

The Vision campaign provided considerable monies for endowed scholarships—there are more than 550 different accounts. A large part of the director's job is matching students to endowed scholarship monies and working with donors. The director must also have an understanding of how a private college operates and of the role of financial aid in light of the institution's mission. Finally, the Director oversees the student work program and prepares some 15-20 annual reports

9. The meeting adjourned at 5:04 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for November 5. Agenda items include: an update on diversity (Barb); discussion of the draft letter to Jim Pence concerning establishment of a policy regarding English-language proficiency of international students (Wendy).

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy W. Allen, secretary