Dean Richard McCarty called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m. in Wilson Hall 103. Approximately 60 faculty members were in attendance.

1. Approval of the Minutes of the Faculty Meeting of February 20, 2007.

There were no comments or questions, and the Minutes were approved.

2. Review of the Minutes of the Faculty Council meeting of February 27, 2007.

Professor Hylen requested that her course, Religious Studies 257, not be deleted. Professor Sloop, Chair of Faculty Council, asked for and received consent from the faculty to honor Professor Hylen’s request. There were no other comments or questions.

3. Preparation for the SACS review team visit.

Dean McCarty explained that the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) re-accreditation review team is scheduled to visit the Vanderbilt campus next Tuesday through Thursday, March 27-29. On the first day, they will conduct individual meetings with the Vanderbilt leadership and discuss compliance issues, including Vanderbilt’s academic assessment plans. Several departments and programs still have to submit their assessment plans, Dean McCarty noted, and he urged everybody to finish these as soon as possible. By the end of the first day, Dean McCarty surmised, the review committee will probably reach judgment on how well Vanderbilt stands in regards to the compliance standards. On the second day, the review team will concentrate on Vanderbilt’s QEP (Quality Enhancement Plan), which focuses primarily on the Vanderbilt Visions program and was written mostly by Dean of Commons Frank Wcislo. The QEP will be distributed by e-mail later this week to all A&S faculty members, and it is important for all faculty members to carefully read the QEP, Dean McCarty stated. The review team might randomly select individual faculty members or groups of faculty members for comment. On the last day, the review team will meet with Chancellor Gee and then conduct an exit conference, in which each visiting team member will present his or her position on how well Vanderbilt meets the SACS goals and expectations. Dean McCarty thanked everyone for working cooperatively and diligently on the re-accreditation project. The effort to complete the learning assessment plans, in particular, was impressive, he said.

4. Executive Motion Calendar.

From the Committee on Academic Standards and Procedures (CASP): **Proposed policy regarding undergraduate research for academic credit or for wage/salary.** Professor Tellinghuisen briefly recounted his concerns about possible conflicts of interest in situations where an undergraduate student is taking a course for academic credit from a faculty member and simultaneously working, with pay, for the same faculty member. A&S does not have any policies governing this situation, he said, and this has been confirmed by Associate Dean Fräncliffe Bergquist. Professor Tellinghuisen stated that he asked Faculty Council to consider
this issue last year, when he was a Council member, and Council directed the matter to CASP. CASP developed a proposal this year, which was then approved by Faculty Council.

Many faculty members spoke against the proposed policy. Professor Furbish argued that the proposed policy, as worded, appeared to preclude the possibility of an undergraduate student using data he or she collected as part of a summer internship or fieldwork in a subsequent academic course and of treating advanced undergraduates in a similar way as graduate students as far as funding academic research projects is concerned. Some NSF funding, for example, is explicitly geared towards undergraduate students. Not only that, Professor M. Miller added, but NSF takes it as a wise and democratic use of funds for undergraduates to be involved in research projects. Professor Knop argued that the proposed policy erects barriers against undergraduate students from conducting academic research as much as possible. He suggested that the policy should be reworded such that it outlines the conditions under which undergraduate students could receive academic credit for conducting research. Professor Tolk agreed that the proposed policy is too restrictive, and it might also have the unintended consequence of allowing only wealthy students to do research. Conflict of interest abuses, if and when they do occur, should be treated directly on an individual, case-by-case basis, not by a generalized policy statement. Professors Ellingham and Bisch agreed with these points. Professor Tellinghuisen conceded that the wording of the proposed policy might be too restrictive. The phrase “same research or project” is ambiguous in the context of the proposed policy.

Several other faculty members, including Professors Kovalcheck, Sevin, Tomarken, and Ellingham, continued the discussion on the disparity question, following Professor Tolk’s comment above. Some argued that receiving pay enables many students to perform internship and research work in the summer. This situation is not problematic; the students receive pay and valuable work experience related to their academic interests. Others pointed out that some students must be registered during the summer for insurance or other purposes and hence would be precluded from conducting summer research under the proposed policy.

Professor Gaca, Chair of CASP, explained that some of the concerns expressed in this discussion about internships are addressed in the last sentence of the proposed policy. Further, the phrase “same research or project” is less ambiguous than it has been made out to be. Undergraduate students should not be able to receive both academic credit and pay simultaneously for the same research or project. It is this simultaneity of both credit and pay that might lead to a conflict of interest and the possibility of concentrating too much power in the hands of the faculty member involved. CASP members, when discussing this issue, made a distinction between undergraduate and graduate students. Graduate students are training to be professionals, and thus should receive credit and pay for the same work, while undergraduate students are not pre-professionals, they are earning a liberal arts degree.

Attempting to gauge the sense of the faculty on this matter, Professor Sloop asked whether the proposed policy should be reworded to resolve some of the difficulties brought up in this discussion or whether the policy should be defeated. Many faculty members agreed with Professor Knop that the trend in the sciences is to increase undergraduate involvement in research activities and projects, and, consequently, the traditional distinction between graduate and undergraduate students is breaking down. The proposed policy, therefore, is a step in the wrong direction. Other faculty members, including Professors Tolk and Kovalcheck, reiterated
their point that the proposed policy, and any policy that would prohibit credit and pay for the same work, leads to significant issues of disparity.

Professor Knop called the question, and his motion was seconded and approved. Faculty voted overwhelmingly against the proposed policy governing undergraduate research.

5. Original Motion Calendar.

No issues were raised.

6. Good of the College.

Professor Tellinghuisen stated that some of the messages on Vanderbilt’s web pages, especially the captions to photographs, are too propagandistic, and he thought the web sites or the publicity campaign would be more effective if the language were more understated. Dean McCarty recommended that Professor Tellinghuisen express his concerns to Michael Schoenfeld, Vice Chancellor for Public Affairs.

7. Adjournment.

The meeting adjourned at 4:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joel Tellinghuisen, Secretary of the Faculty