

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: The Faculty Senate
The Committee on Committees

FROM: The Faculty Affairs Committee

DATE: April 13, 1984

The Faculty Affairs Committee deeply regrets but feels it must register its strong exception to the March 27, 1984, decision of the Faculty Senate to refer to an ad hoc task force the issue of fixed-term faculty appointments. The FAC is perturbed by the Senate's decision, for it believes that the Senate's action was unwarranted and unwise. Furthermore, the FAC believes that the Senate's decision constitutes an error of inestimable consequence and, therefore, wishes to request that the Senate reconsider its decision.

By its decision, the Senate disfranchised one of its own appointed committees and usurped that committee's clearly defined charge. Unfortunately, this was not a singular incident. The FAC is deeply concerned by what it perceives as a disturbing trend on the part of the Senate to overlook the advice of its own committees and, also, to become a committee-of-the-whole which attempts to redo work already done by committees. The impact of this action has lowered and will continue to lower committee morale and increase the reluctance of faculty to serve on committees.

Also, by its decision, the Senate chose to disregard a full year of careful and exhaustive committee deliberation on the matter and to begin all over again. The FAC is well aware of the importance and the complexities of this issue; the sheer bulk of the report submitted by the Committee to justify its conclusions and recommendations supports this awareness. The FAC believes that it conducted itself in a reasonable manner. The committee gathered

evidence, deliberated upon the evidence, and drew conclusions which it considered to be valid and appropriate.

Few, if any, issues of greater importance have been brought before the Senate. The FAC is convinced that there is no higher cause in the protection of a university than the protection of the right of all faculty to work within a climate of academic freedom protected by academic tenure. The recommendation of the FAC to the Senate did not ask, contrary to an apparent misconception on the part of some, for the implementation of a new policy or understanding at East Carolina University. On the contrary, the recommendation was a request that the Senate reaffirm pre-existing policy and the Senate's commitment to the traditions of tenure and academic freedom by clearly stating its position on the impropriety of appointing full-time faculty to non-tenurable, non-probationary positions which are expected to be needed beyond six years.

Had the Senate approved the recommendation of the FAC, that recommendation would have become the advice of the faculty to the Administration. Advice is not to be confused with compulsion. If there is sufficient reason, from an administrative viewpoint, the administration is free to exercise its due responsibilities and to make exceptions to the advice of the faculty. In the FAC opinion, it is, then, unreasonable for the Senate to expect that any committee can come to it with the guarantee that its recommendations are for all times and seasons in perpetuity or that a general and overarching policy can anticipate each and every detail. If exceptions must be made, the responsibility for those special exceptions should lie with the administration. The faculty's voice on the matters of academic freedom and tenure should be unequivocal and clear.

The FAC believes that the recommendation to the Senate was specific and unmistakable in its intent. It is the unqualified opinion of the FAC that the Senate, by referring the issue of fixed-term appointments to an ad hoc task force for renewed study, (1) refused to take a position on one of the most important issues that the Senate has ever faced, thereby losing an opportunity to reaffirm the values of academic freedom and tenure, and (2) undermined its own committee system.

The FAC feels that the Senate erred in its decision of March 27, 1984. The very least the Senate could have done was to re-refer the issue to the FAC. At its very best, the Senate could have supported the original FAC recommendation and gone on record reaffirming the tenets of academic freedom and tenure. The FAC, therefore, respectfully requests that the Senate reconsider its decision of March 27.