Synopsis: the Faculty Assembly embraces the external reviewers’ emphasis in their report on “transparency” and “improved communication” between the central administration and the Office of the Dean of CLAS on the one hand and the faculty of CLAS on the other. The Faculty Assembly particularly endorses the external reviewers’ observations that the FA perceived an “inability to provide meaningful feedback to the Dean’s office” and felt unable to provide “meaningful input into the College’s decision-making process” (ER 6). To alter this situation, the FA has six observations and specific recommendations for change.

1) Data-Based Review of Collegiate Functions. The college should be proud to accept the recent invitation to provide fiscal transparency, and should respectfully request the same from the Office of the Provost. The FA believes that there is much misunderstanding about many subjects of concern to the college—from the budget to faculty lines to the use of lecturers to the implementation of cluster hires—and that the FA cannot adequately fulfill its role as advocate for the CLAS faculty unless it has access to specific data, including budget data from the College and the Office of the Provost.

The FA expects respectfully to engage with the Office of the Dean and Office of the Provost on the subject of their respective budgets; we propose, for example, collegiate and provost budget websites accessible to members of CLAS. In addition, we welcome further discussion of methods by which smaller groups of the FA may engage in dialogue with representatives of the Office of the Dean and Office of the Provost with the understanding that such dialogues are inherently part of a larger, ongoing discussion within the FA.
2) Initiatives from the FA to the Executive Committee and Office of the Dean. The FA envisions assuming a greater role in the College’s decision-making process in the future. First, we wish to provide more channels for faculty members (in particular, assistant professors) to express concerns outside of a hierarchical structure, that is, in a manner that does not involve going to one’s superior. Second, we believe we need to engage the Executive Committee of the College more successfully, with initiatives coming more frequently from the FA—with relevant budgetary data from the College and Office of the Provost—to the Executive Committee.

Because Article 4 of the Manual of Procedure advises that “The Faculty Assembly will identify topics for the Dean, the Executive Committee, or the Educational Policy Committee to consider, with the expectation that these groups will report back to the Faculty assembly with information or recommendations,” we wish to extend this mandate to include a more pro-active approach. Examples of FA initiatives may include, but are in no way limited to, allocations of monetary resources; the hiring of lecturers versus tenure-track faculty; cluster hires; and diversity recruitment and retention. In line with the external review committee’s recommendation to move to “a divisional associate dean structure,” we also look forward to a dialogue with the Office of the Dean on divisional assistant deans for the Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Physical Sciences as recommended in the external review report. Their charge would be specifically to advocate the concerns of their respective sections to the Executive Committee and the Office of the Dean and to coordinate, wherever possible, with other sections on behalf of the good of the entire College.

3) Lecturers. The FA discussed the External Review’s observation, “Compared to peer institutions, the College relies disproportionately on tenure-track faculty to cover instructional responsibilities” (ER 7). Senior members of the FA have observed that the previous dean greatly emphasized the hiring of tenure-track faculty over lecturers whenever possible. However, these senior members have also observed what the Fall 2013 Self-Study indicates—the wide disparity between student credit hours across departments in the College, especially with regard to tenured or tenure-track faculty and lecturers. The FA refers its members to the tables on pp. 55-57 of the Self-Study.
The FA appreciates the argument advanced in the external review that these numbers may be fiscally unsustainable, although the FA would also observe that we cannot actually affirm this unsustainability without access to the College’s numerical data. For the moment, the FA is willing to consider the hypothesis that certain specific departments may well need to move—as its peer institutions have done—toward an increase in lecturers to offset the pressures on tenured and tenure-track faculty and to restrict the expansive costs of tenure-track lines. However, the FA does express concerns that replacing tenure-track positions with lecturerships would not provide more funding for new initiatives, but simply reduce the overall size of the CLAS budget.

The FA has great concerns about lecturers in CLAS with regard to two other issues in particular: 1) the need to respect each department’s decision to recruit or not recruit lecturers. This is especially important given some departments’ need for a very high percentage of tenure-track faculty among teaching personnel in order to maintain competitive graduate programs; 2) the need to clarify lecturers’ representation within their respective departments’ governmental bodies and within the FA. To that end, the FA wishes to initiate a much more precise exploration of where and how lecturers are at present most useful within CLAS, and where and how their future use may be assessed. The FA also wishes to further its discussion regarding its responsibility to represent lecturers in the FA.

The Subcommittee on the External Review proposes that, at its March 26, 2014 meeting, a Subcommittee on the Use and Status of Lecturers should be formed. This subcommittee would report its findings to the FA in fall 2014. Some members of the FA Subcommittee on the External Review expressed a strong wish to include one or more current lecturers on this committee in some capacity. In addition, this subcommittee is charged with developing guidelines for representing lecturers’ interests both within their respective departments and within the FA. The conclusions of the FA after a study of this report from the subcommittee will lead to an initiative to the EC and the Office of the Dean regarding the use and collegiate representation of lecturers within CLAS.

4) Cluster Hires. The FA feels that the external reviewers support the principle of cluster hires, both across the university and within CLAS, but the FA views with caution the idea that cluster hires are in principle a good thing, es-
especially when they originate only within the CLAS as “new interdisciplinary research initiatives” (ER 7). The FA appreciates the current willingness of Provost Butler to pause in cluster hiring to see how well the first round of these hires moves through our system of promotion and tenure. At the same time, we wish to be clear that what we have seen thus far appears to devalue disciplinary lines for the sake of “interdisciplines” whose goals and outcomes are unclear. This is not simply an abstract concern; it may place in unknown jeopardy the careers of those hires whose main appointments are in specific disciplines whose requirements for promotion and tenure differ from whatever the cluster as a whole may prescribe. The FA wishes to open a dialogue with the Office of the Dean about the value and implementation of cluster hires within the college.

5) Retention of Faculty Lines after Retirement or Resignation. The External Review suggests that current CLAS policy tends to follow legacy commitments to tenure-track lines, and that “By following legacy commitments to faculty lines, research opportunities may be lost.”(7). The members of the subcommittee agreed that this statement does not in fact reflect current practices of allocating lines, which do not tend to respect legacy commitments. Although the External Review advocates developing more cluster hires, members of the FA believe that there should be stronger advocacy for maintaining lines with a long-standing tradition within departments, even if they do not fit into interdisciplinary initiatives.

6) Conclusion: Modes of Discussion across the College

Because so little fiscal and practical strategic information has been made available over the years to the FA, the FA feels that it is been difficult to formulate intelligent responses to the legacy of refusals that come much of the time when FA members and departments recommend innovative programs. The external reviewers reinforce this observation. The FA responds to this situation by inviting the central administration and the Office of the Dean to sit down with us and to speak frankly about what kinds of innovative programs we might put in place, assuming for the moment little or no increase in Collegiate funding. We invite specific dialogues about the possibility of specific limits on certain kinds of hiring in exchange for other kinds of hiring
and other kinds of programmatic developments. And we assert our own willingness to bring these innovations as initiatives to the College and the Office of the Provost as a continuing dialogue within the known realities and constraints that affect us all.