Faculty Senate Speaker Susan McIntosh served as moderator for the Faculty Forum on Bioscience and Human Health (BSHH). Approximately forty faculty members attended the meeting, which was held in Sewall Hall, room 309.

McIntosh welcomed the group and explained the role of the Faculty Senate in the Rice Initiatives. She said that after the original task forces selected by the provost finished their work, the Senate’s Working Group on the Rice Initiatives initiated peer review of the white papers. McIntosh thanked Deputy Speaker Tom Killian for chairing the working group, and she named the other members of this group: Matthias Henze, Matteo Pasquali, Dale Sawyer, Robin Sickles, and Moshe Vardi. McIntosh also thanked the task force members for producing the white papers, and she thanked the faculty members who reviewed and submitted comments.

McIntosh stated that one concern raised by reviewers was regarding the level of investment or additional research faculty that will be required for success; there is no quick path to pre-eminence. She also stated that funding for the Initiatives was a recurring question. McIntosh said that the $100 million dollar figure stated by Provost George McLendon as needed for the Rice Initiatives will not be funded by his office; fund-raising thus lies ahead for those who wish to be involved. She said that the next steps in the process are to refine, enhance, and/or recast the proposals so that they include the best ideas and all faculty members who are interested in participating in the Rice Initiatives.

As a starting point for discussion, McIntosh provided some comments that faculty members submitted after reading the BSHH white paper. Provost George McLendon addressed the group, saying that although the Energy and Environment Initiative will convene a workshop as its next step, he was unsure of the next steps for the BSHH Initiative due to the breadth of the sub-topics. He said that a critical step is to identify ways to support faculty leaders; those individuals who are prepared to devote a substantial portion of their careers and lives to the Initiative.

Yousif Shamoo, a leader of the BSHH task force, said that the task force faced strong set of challenges due to the varied expertise of the committee members. As a committee, the task force wrestled with the relationship of the Natural Science and Engineering schools with the Humanities and Social Sciences schools. He said that the groups cannot be falsely merged, which is what lead to the six proposals.

The assembled faculty members offered the following comments, which are summarized below:
• One area to strengthen is Medical Humanities. For example, an incredible archive of medical
history exists across the street from Rice, yet Rice does not have a medical historian. This
program would fit within the Society of Culture and Medicine proposal.
• According to the National Institute of Standards and Technology, some areas of research have
stalled. Rice has expertise in measurement sciences, pattern recognition, informatics, and health
economics. Bio-informatics and measurement sciences are interconnected.
• Regarding Health Economics, Vivian Ho of the Baker Institute is an expert sought by many
entities. We also have the opportunity to use the BioScience Research Center (BRC).
• Jim Coleman: the task force hoped to do rigorous evaluation, but that was not possible. One
reason was the short time frame, and another was that the proposals are not simple. We
decided it was better to send all of the ideas to the faculty than to throw any away.
• Carol Quillen: the task force/provost’s office will need help from the faculty in understanding
how these complex issues are interconnected or can be combined.
• A possible catch phrase could be the “personalization of medicine.”
  o Moshe Vardi: The task force purposely avoided such a phrase because Rice’s expertise
    is not in medicine. We need to find a balance; perhaps efficient delivery of health care.
• Where will Rice be in ten years if the Initiatives are successful? Please define pre-eminence.
  o Yousif Shamoo: If Rice were considered to be one of the top ten places where one could
    study some of these issues, they we have achieved pre-eminence.
• Provost McLendon: Physical Biology is a new generational approach to Life Sciences. We have
strong people at Rice, but the best places as defined by the National Science Foundation (NSF)
are Princeton, Harvard, a university in California, and one in Illinois. The NSF supports these four
institutions. We did not think we could replace them, so we are trying to hire four individuals
from the California institution. We think three of the four will accept and will bring graduate
support. It would be hard for Rice to succeed in this area otherwise.
• When we are thinking about our next investment, it should not be in terms of (small)
departments, but in synergistic, inter-disciplinary fields.
• Given the number of pre-med students at Rice, there is interest in programs that include ethical
and social implications.
• Regarding the Brain and Mind proposal; not many systems in synthetic biology exist. This will be
an opportunity to bring some very bright students to Rice.
• Provost McLendon: we do not want to invent a lot of curricular opportunities that do not
interest the students. We also want to learn from students how their friends make a decision to
come to Rice. It would be helpful for them to speak to one another.
• Six workshops sound like too many. Also, the graduate component needs to be addressed.
• What form should the next step in the process be? Is six workshops too many, and what about
the Regenerative and Restorative proposal?
  o Shamoo: It is one of our strongest initiatives; it is one of the broadest areas where new
    hires could happen.
• A single workshop could lend itself to sub-groups; perhaps multiple stations.
• The BSHH white paper is a long report with many appendices. It is important for people to read the appendices. The task forces will bring copies of the report to the workshop.

• The task force did a study for three months, what do we expect to come now from the workshops?
  o Perhaps the proposals will go from six to two or three.
  o Shamoo: I disagree, I support all six.

• We had white papers written by people appointed by the provost; perhaps not the best method. More people should now speak up and get involved.

• What is the time frame? When the workshops scheduled?
  o McLendon: In an ideal world, we would like to do these in late April. We are going to have to offer several different dates. Childcare will be provided.

Speaker McIntosh thanked everyone for attending and said they should expect a “blast” email from the provost’s office as to the workshop schedules.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.