Dean Lauren Benton called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m. in Wilson Hall 103. Approximately 50 faculty members were in attendance.

1. Approval of the Minutes of the Faculty Meeting of September 27, 2016.

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

2. Update on Technology Transfer.

Alan Bentley, assistant vice chancellor, presented an update from Vanderbilt’s Center for Technology Transfer and Commercialization (CTTC). He explained that his office works with Vanderbilt researchers to protect their ideas with patents and copyrights and to market their inventions to companies through licensing agreements. In return, Vanderbilt receives royalties from the sale of products, and sometimes equity if a start-up company is involved. The royalties that Vanderbilt receives are split 50/50 between the inventor and the inventor’s department, school, and Vanderbilt; the latter share is then used to further support research activity. Mr. Bentley emphasized that there is more than one way for faculty research to have an impact; in addition to publishing the results of research activity in an academic journal or book, a faculty researcher could develop an innovation—a unique, scalable product or service that is applicable to society—that industry could then use to create new jobs, new products, and/or new services. The CTTC would help bring the innovation to practical application by finding companies with which to work to develop the innovation, through licensing agreements, helping to launch start-up companies, and/or helping to find business development funding. His office also helps researchers comply with government regulations, offers education and training sessions, and provides research contract support. He stated that, on average, more than twenty marketable inventions are made each year by A&S researchers. Mr. Bentley also noted that, overall in the United States in 2014, almost 5500 licenses were executed between university researchers and companies, more than 900 start-up companies were created to develop innovations from university research, and $28 billion in net sales were made from university-derived products and services. The faculty thanked Mr. Bentley for his presentation.

In response to questions, Mr. Bentley stated that the CTTC has worked with the National Science Foundation’s I-Corps Teams (Innovation Corps Teams) program, especially to identify customers for Vanderbilt research innovations. He also explained that a Faculty Senate subcommittee is updating Vanderbilt’s policy regarding intellectual property in order to reflect current laws and to clarify several issues, including the role of students.

Professor David Weintraub, chair of Faculty Council, asked if there were any comments or questions about the draft Minutes of the September Council meeting or the Council-approved new and revised course descriptions; there were none.

4. Executive Motion Calendar: Second Reading—Proposed Revision of the A&S Constitution.

Professor Weintraub explained that at present six Faculty Council members are elected by academic division (two each from the Humanities, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences) and six Council members are elected at large. Under the proposed revision of the A&S Constitution, nine Council members would be elected by academic division and three would be elected at large. If the A&S faculty approves the amendment, the revised procedure would take effect for the 2017-18 Faculty Council elections. There were no comments or questions about the proposed revision, and the faculty approved a motion to forward the proposed revision of the A&S Constitution to a full vote of the tenured and tenure-track A&S faculty by electronic ballot. Professor Weintraub urged faculty members to vote on the referendum and urged faculty members to encourage their colleagues to vote on the referendum. In order to be approved, 50% + 1 of A&S tenured and tenure-track faculty members must vote in favor of the revision.

5. Memorial Resolution in honor of Bjarni Jónsson, Distinguished Professor of Mathematics, Emeritus.

Marian Neamtu, professor and chair of mathematics, presented a Memorial Resolution in honor of Bjarni Jónsson, Distinguished Professor of Mathematics, Emeritus. Faculty members paid their respects and signified their assent to the resolution by a moment of silence. The Memorial Resolution is appended to these Minutes.

6. Original Motion Calendar.

No issues were raised.

7. Good of the College.

No issues were raised.

8. Adjournment.

The meeting adjourned at 4:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert A. Driskill
A&S Secretary of the Faculty
Memorial Resolution for Distinguished Professor Emeritus Bjarni Jónsson

Bjarni Jónsson, Vanderbilt’s first distinguished professor of mathematics, passed away on September 30, 2016, at the age of 96. He is survived by three children: Eric Jónsson, Maryl Rose, and Kris Porotsky, and seven grandchildren.

Professor Jónsson was born on February 15, 1920, in Draghals, Iceland. He received his bachelor’s degree from the University of California at Berkeley in 1943. He earned his Ph.D. from the same institution just three years later in 1946, under the supervision of the famous mathematician and logician Alfred Tarski. Professor Jónsson then taught at Brown University from 1946 to 1956 and at the University of Minnesota from 1956 to 1966. He was hired by Vanderbilt University in 1966 as the Department of Mathematics’ first distinguished professor and taught here until his retirement in 1993.

Bjarni Jónsson is internationally recognized for his contributions to the fields of lattice theory and universal algebra. His first publication, a monograph co-authored with Tarski, dealt with direct decompositions of algebraic systems, a topic to which he returned in several subsequent publications. His work in universal algebra also included major discoveries in the theory of varieties, among them a fundamental characterization of congruence distributivity and a frequently cited result known as Jónsson’s Lemma. His research in lattice theory dealt extensively with modular and Arguesian lattices, sublattices of a free lattice, and varieties of lattices. His later efforts focused on the theory of relational algebras.

The importance of his work is reflected by the fact that a number of mathematical objects and concepts are named for him, including Jónsson and Jónsson-Tarski algebras, Jónsson cardinals, Jónsson terms, the Jónsson-Tarski duality, and $\omega$-Jónsson functions.

During his career, Professor Jónsson authored 89 research papers and served on the editorial board of several mathematics journals. He was the honorary editor in chief of Algebra Universalis. He presented numerous invited talks at mathematics conferences around the world. In 1974, he was an invited speaker at the International Congress of Mathematicians, one of the most significant recognitions of a mathematician’s achievements. In 2012 he was elected an inaugural fellow of the American Mathematical Society. He was the recipient of Vanderbilt’s Harvie Branscomb Distinguished Professor Award in 1974, and the Earl Sutherland Prize for Achievement in Research in 1982. He also received an honorary degree from the University of Iceland.

When Professor Jónsson came to Vanderbilt in 1966, the Department of Mathematics was primarily an undergraduate instructional department. Professor Jónsson was instrumental in establishing the department’s graduate program, which presently ranks among the top departments in the nation according to the latest evaluation by the National Research Council. In 1995, the department established The Bjarni Jónsson Prize for Research in recognition of his contributions. The prize is awarded each year to a graduate teaching assistant for exceptional research accomplishments and outstanding research potential.
Professor Jónsson also established and developed an algebra research group at Vanderbilt that continues to attract mathematicians from this country and abroad. Through his research and his influence on the research of colleagues and graduate students, he contributed greatly to the high research profile the department currently enjoys.

Professor Jónsson is remembered not only as a brilliant and original mathematician but also as a supportive teacher and mentor. He supervised 14 graduate students, 8 of them at Vanderbilt. His former graduate students describe him as inspiring and encouraging, approachable and patient, and generous with his time and ideas. They remember comments Bjarni Jónsson made to them that reveal his philosophical nature. Steven Monk, who earned his Ph.D. under Bjarni Jónsson in 1966 at the University of Minnesota, recalls this comment Professor Jónsson made to him about teaching: “Adventure is not in the guidebook and beauty is not on the map. The best one can hope for is to be able to persuade some people to do some traveling on their own.”

Bjarni Jónsson continues to inspire a great deal of traveling along the intricate paths of mathematics. His work will have a lasting legacy.

Madame Dean, I ask that a copy of this Memorial Resolution be entered into the minutes of this meeting and that copies be sent to members of Professor Jónsson’s family.

Respectfully,

Mike Neamtu
Professor and Chair, Department of Mathematics
Nashville, October 25, 2016