

FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of June 20, 2007

(unapproved)

The Chair-Elect convened a special meeting of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee on Wednesday, June 20, 2007, in 141 Park Hall, to discuss the proposal to change the University Honors Program to an "Honors College".

On May 3, 2007, Michael Ryan, Vice-Provost for Undergraduate Education, had sent to the Faculty Senate Educational Programs and Policy Committee (EPPC) a copy of the Honors College Proposal for consideration and comments. Members of the EPPC responded via e-mail. Professor Takeuchi, Chair of the EPPC, compiled their comments and sent them to Vice-Provost Ryan. He added his replies to the comments, and requested the FSEC to consider the Proposal for approval. Several concerns and questions could not be adequately addressed electronically, so the Chair-Elect convened this meeting to resolve any outstanding issues.

Professor Brazeau asked for clarification of the Committee's main concern, namely, what kinds of resources would be needed for the change, now or in the future, in switching to an Honors College. Professor Herreid and Dr. Capuana first explained that an increasing number of institutions now use the designation of an Honors "College" instead of "Program", primarily because it facilitates recruitment as well as fund-raising development. The UB Honors Program, one of the largest in the country, had matured and developed from a two-year to a four-year program; the proposed change entails no additional resources or immediate alterations to the program --- simply change the name and nothing else. Professor Brazeau pointed out that with every honors college, there come associated costs. Dr. Capuana explained that there is no one type of honors college in terms of costs and funding; the program at UB started with 20 students 25 years ago and has been evolving since that time. The really successful honors programs, she continued, are similar to ours: they have an academic and administrative director, a staff, advisement, and operating budgets that range from UB's to double or triple that amount. Professor Herreid added that many have special houses or buildings as well, which increase the costs; the UB program doesn't see any change in costs at all. Vice-Provost Ryan noted that the Program certainly will continue looking for additional resources to fund research projects and

other aspects of the Program, but the proposal does not request any. A special building for the College would of course be desirable; but this would most likely come about through a philanthropic donation, which would, in turn, be more likely if we had a College instead of a Program.

Professor Rittner asked what prospective students could expect if they accepted admission into the Honors College; none of this was specified in the proposal. Professor Herreid answered that the original proposal was drafted on the assumption that all faculty were already familiar with the Program, and apologized for leaving that information out. Dr. Capuana then explained the Program's financial, academic, and social offerings and advantages in detail.

Professor Brazeau asked why, if the change had been under consideration for the past two years, is it suddenly a matter of urgency that the FSEC has to meet and vote on it during the summer break; the Committee would have liked to have been apprised of the proposal earlier and to have had more time to analyze and discuss it. Vice-Provost Ryan said the timing was in part due to the recruitment cycle, and in part to the time spent on various iterations of the proposal. He expressed regret that it did not come before the Faculty Senate sooner, and thanked the Committee for reviewing it at this time.

Professor Baumer reminded the FSEC that UB already has a College that does not burn or require a lot of resources [the Cora P. Maloney College]; thus nothing new is being proposed. He agreed that the name change is important, and supported the proposal.

Professor Adams-Volpe wondered if the importance of the name change was the reason for the urgency, and --- using the example of proposals for library space repurposing --- asked what other resources besides space will most likely be needed for the Honors College. Professor Herreid repeated that the Program had merely sought a name change, adding that "the resource issue has always been there, even when we were a program"; as it expanded, it gradually requested --- as any expanding program --- more space and resources. It would continue in this manner, not in an explosive measure feared by some. He added that the Honors Program has housed many of its students in Roosevelt Hall in the Governors complex, but rejected any attempt to designate it as an exclusively Honors students residence.

Dr. Capuana, addressing SUNY-Geneseo's (aborted) attempt to designate itself as "the" Honors College in New York State, suspected it wanted to follow the example set by St. Mary's College in Maryland --- this institution was designated *the* Honors College for the state, and as a result was able to gather huge amounts of money and buy itself out of the system. She expressed more concern about SUNY - Stony Brook, which may well offer stiffer competition in the near future. The current proposal, Ryan added, had nothing to do with the Geneseo effort.

Associate Vice-Provost Toomey said the Program had been encouraged to be less reliant on the dollar incentive and more on the program itself; students have relied heavily on merit scholarship dollars, which has proven costly to the University. Thus any advantage we can gain for the program, including the name change, is very important.

Professor Bradford, whose son has enjoyed the benefits of the Honors Program, strongly supported the proposal; the Honors College would undoubtedly more money down the road, but it is also "one of the best places where we could put our money." He then inquired into the composition of the Honors Council, since some units were not represented. Professor Herreid explained that the Program originally simply picked some people who would be interested in the duties involved; the need for diverse and constant advisement drove the Directors to assemble a board of advisors chosen from various disciplines. Vice-Provost Goodman at the time requested that this informal group draft a set of bylaws, because he was under the impression that the Directors were running the entire show. The bylaws had inclusions as well as omissions; Herreid thinks the document needs to be revisited and the membership made more inclusive. Dr. Capuana added that very few members take themselves off the Council, because it is enjoyable and the Program is so important; the result is that there has been very low turnover over the years.

In light of the Program's success, Professor Horvath inquired into the need for the change; he did not detect this in the documentation. He also had misgivings about the timing for bringing it up for approval --- it would benefit more from extensive discussion and make a greater portion of the University aware of the Program and its significance. Would the Program suffer if approval of the proposal waited another year? Dr. Toomey answered that there is a recruitment imperative here to

constantly improve the quality of the students entering the Program; the name change would be an important tool to that end. The Program has grown, but so has the competition.

Coming from a different perspective, Professor Churchill asked what the size limitations of the Program/College would be. Herreid answered that the upper limit could be set "any way we want"; nationwide, there is no set correlation between the size of honors programs and the universities of which they are part. Institutions such as Harvard, Yale, or Duke have no honors programs, because in effect all of their admitted students meet honors standards. Others, such as UB, set a size limit they deem as an appropriate percentage of honors students to the general student body. The present size of the UB program, Capuana added, has stabilized for the time being. Part of the reason is that the Program relies on faculty to deliver Honors seminars on a voluntary basis --- that, Herreid pointed out, "only goes so far". There are various budgetary models for other honors programs as an alternative solution --- e.g., compensating departments for the faculty to teach honors courses; but "when the dollars fail, the program fails".

Professor Brazeau wanted some evidence that the name change would help the program; she asked why several students opted for other institutions, if our Program was already good. Professor Herreid replied that many students simply choose by name of the university, rather than by examining inherent quality of the program. The fact that UB has undergone a series of name identification changes has not helped the institution. The evidence is more anecdotal than documented, but it is strong.

Dr. DelGenio mentioned that, during the course of discussion of the proposal, the Provost saw an opportunity not only for a name change, "but to think in more expansive terms". Not only could UB enhance student selectivity as well as its own image; the change also offers the chance to align and share our resources more effectively. An increased focus on philanthropic giving could only be helped by a name change which signals more prestige and permanence.

Addressing a few final questions from Professor Horvath, Professor Herreid assumed the Honors College would continue to be housed in the Provost's office, supervised most immediately by the Vice-Provost for Undergraduate Education; Dr. DelGenio affirmed this, underscoring that there is no structural change intended. The Honors bylaws, originally drafted on demand and then ignored for

several years, now need revision to reflect the reality of the program and to clarify the program for the University community.

The members in attendance then voted, by secret ballot, overwhelmingly in favor of the proposal.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Hoeing,

Secretary of the Faculty Senate

In attendance were:

Peter Nickerson Chair

Robert Hoeing, Secretary & Chair-Elect

Judith Adams-Volpe, University Libraries

Stella Batalama, Engineering & Applied Sciences

William H. Baumer, SUNY Senator / Parliamentarian

Peter Bradford, SUNY Senator

Gayle Brazeau, School of Pharmacy

Melvyn Churchill, College of Arts & Sciences

H. William Coles III, SUNY Senator

Henry Durand, SUNY Senator

Peter Horvath, School of Public Health & Health-Related Professions

Marilyn Kramer, SUNY Senator-Elect

Barbara Rittner, School of Social Work

James Springate, School of Medicine & Biomedical Sciences

Debra Street, College of Arts & Sciences

Dorothy Tao, University Libraries

Kenneth Takeuchi, College of Arts & Sciences

Powhatan Wooldridge, School of Nursing

Josephine Capuana, Administrative Director, University Honors Program

Beth DelGenio, Chief of Staff, Office of the Provost

Clyde Herreid, Academic Director, University Honors Program

Michael Ryan, Vice-Provost for Undergraduate Education

Regina Toomey, Senior Associate Vice-Provost / Articulation & Advising Services