

## FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of March 21, 2007

(unapproved)

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee met at 2:00 PM on Wednesday, March 21, 2007, in 567 Capen Hall to discuss the following agenda:

1. Approval of the Minutes of February 21 and 28, 2007
2. Report of the Chair
3. Report of the Provost
4. Report on Workstation Standardization  
Dr. Peter Rittner, Assistant Dean for Education Technology (CAS)
5. Report on Distinctive Aspects of Undergraduate Education  
Prof. Michael Ryan, Vice-Provost for Undergraduate Education
6. Adjournment

### **Item 1: Approval of the Minutes of February 21 and 28, 2007**

The Minutes of February 21 and 28, 2007, were approved.

### **Item 2: Report of the Chair**

The Chair reported that SUNY Provost Risa Palm has agreed to speak at the next meeting of the Faculty Senate (April 3, 2007); because she needs to fly from Buffalo to Albany at 3:00 PM, the Senate will need to convene one hour earlier than normal.

Vice-President Nostaja's committee on improving UB as a workplace met for the second time last week and formed two sub-committees on Best Practices and Communications; the Senate Chair-Elect has agreed to serve on both committees.

The **Affirmative Action Committee** met yesterday and is working on finalizing the Recruitment and Retention Handbook; it plans to meet on Monday with Vice-Provost Finley.

### **Item 3: Report of the Provost**

Provost Tripathi announced that the SUNY Board of Trustees awarded the SUNY Distinguished Professor rank to four faculty at UB (out of eleven overall): Professors Drury (Industrial & Systems Engineering), Lee (Civil, Structural, & Environmental Engineering), Mark (Geography), and Mutua (Law).

He also announced that a search for a dean for the School of Nursing has begun; the search committee, which met today, is chaired by Dr. Michael Cain (Medicine).

Professor Dayton asked whether the Provost had any further information on the abrupt resignation of Chancellor Ryan. The Provost said he had not, but noted that according to press reports Ryan had requested some sort of contract, but could not verify this.

### **Item 4: Report on Workstation Standardization**

Dr. Peter Rittner, Assistant Dean for Education Technology (College of Arts & Sciences), leads a team of fourteen to undertake workplace standardization as part of the *UB 2020* plan. Its charter is to take into account both the common and unique needs of the various constituencies, to improve service, to normalize the refresh cycle, to reduce the costs of support, and to remain consistent with the IT Guiding Principles and IT Bill of Rights. The deliverables that the team was asked to produce included (a) a process to develop appropriate hardware standards and software images; (b) standard refresh policy options; and (c) a plan for capturing economies of scale in hardware and software procurement. The team also set its own goals to improve service to faculty and staff by enabling additional support for instruction and research, and to fully conceptualize a new, better way to deliver workstation refreshment services by re-thinking current practices, rather than accommodating them. The team was told to assume first, that the distributed IT service organizations would be in place for implementation of its recommendations, and secondly, that University policies will delineate workstations covered by refreshment and define faculty and staff members whose workstations are eligible for refreshment.

Based on several surveys taken over the last few years, Dr. Rittner estimated that there are approximately 16,500 to 18,000 non-research supported computers, and added that if refreshment were based on the number of persons rather than computers, only half the supported computers would end up actually being refreshed, and would hinder the effort to free up time for IT staff to better serve faculty and staff. Annual costs, based on a median replacement cost of \$1,500 each for 4,000 computers, amount to roughly \$6 million.

Should the recommendations of the team be implemented, Dr. Rittner expects that Workstation Transformation would (1) refresh systematically and *equitably*, (2) ensure that faculty and staff have the IT desktop resources they need, (3) deploy pervasive common support interfaces, and (4) leverage buying power. The team's General Recommendations are to promote hardware and software systems actively, building a consensus founded on value, and to deliver ongoing support via the distributed IT service organizations. The Detailed Recommendations include instituting a four-year refreshment cycle, leveraging University buying power via several large annual purchases, and promoting de facto hardware and software standards. The team also recommends establishing a board to oversee the continuing development and adoption of workstation standards; the board would have both Software and Hardware Standards task groups. Implementation of the recommendations would provide the following benefits:

- Savings on hardware and software costs;
- Putting the right tools in the right hands;
- Increased use of ease and thus productivity;
- Freed IT support staff capacity.

Costs would include a program administrator, accounting services, hardware configuration, and image development

A full report is available at

[www.buffalo.edu/ub2020/itst/files/WorkstationStandardizationReport.doc](http://www.buffalo.edu/ub2020/itst/files/WorkstationStandardizationReport.doc)

This was first submitted in December 2006; was presented to IT Town Hall meetings on November 17, 2006, and January 5, 2007; presented to the Faculty Senate Computer Services Committee on December 13, 2006. The recommendations were endorsed by the Executive Technology Advisory Group (ETAG) on January 26, 2007. Presentations to the deans and vice-presidents have not yet been scheduled.

Professor Batalama asked whether it was wise to expect everyone to agree to a certain product based on a discount price. Dr. Rittner replied that the intent was rather to offer 80% of the faculty a product so attractive and well-priced that they would “go for it”. The Provost added that negotiating with the vendor to purchase a certain amount of units would eliminate bundling, since the vendor would know that further purchases would continue. Ms. Cochrane inquired into the fate of discarded computers; Dr. Rittner answered that some are refurbished and passed on to other faculty, staff, or graduate students; some are surplus and the State gets rid of them in some fashion. He added that the State is not allowed to donate old computers. New State regulations require that campus computers must first be cleansed of all data before they can be trashed, disassembled, or sold for parts. Leasing computers from vendors is at the moment impracticable, because the State’s annual budgeting process makes it impossible to negotiate a leasing contract that is more than a year in duration.

## **Item 5: Report on Distinctive Aspects of Undergraduate Education**

Michael Ryan, Vice-Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education, reported on the progress of two initiatives in undergraduate education at UB: the Discovery Seminars and the Undergraduate Academies.

The Discovery Seminar Program offers a small class experience for first- and second-year students, providing them with the opportunity to engage with a faculty member around a thought-provoking and challenging topic. The goals of the Program are to help lower-division students

- Explore a topic in depth in a comfortable, small group setting;
- Get to know a faculty member who loves teaching undergraduates;
- Engage in an unfamiliar subject in an environment conducive to exploration and discovery;
- Understand the academic challenges and rewards of attending a research university; and
- Improve skills in critical thinking, as well as in oral and written expression.

The Seminars are conducted in small groups limited to 15 students, in which active participation is encouraged and regular attendance is required. They meet throughout the semester once a week for 50 minutes and carry one credit hour, and evaluation of student performance uses standard letter grading. Faculty benefit from the Seminars as well. In addition to having the opportunity to engage more closely with undergraduate students and sharing their passion for their particular scholarly interests and activities, they help lower-division students become more active members of the University community. Because the Discovery Seminars are taught as course overload, faculty receive a \$500 award for developing the seminar; this money can be used for any academic purpose including travel, research, and supplies.

Coordinator for the Seminars is Dr. Kara Saunders, Assistant Vice-Provost of Undergraduate Education. There were 4 seminars in Fall 2006, are currently 18 (Spring 2007), and 27 are planned for Fall 2007; the goal is to offer about 50 per semester. More information can be found at

<http://discoveryseminars.buffalo.edu>

The Undergraduate Academies are scholarly communities composed of faculty, students, and staff with shared goals and interests, and provide an organized way to focus on some of our institutional strengths in order to enrich the undergraduate educational experience. They provide not only a framework for undergraduates to be motivated participants, but also an inventory and coordination of programs and support services (both curricular and extracurricular).

The Academies will be directed by a Steering Committee whose members are: Dennis Black, Vice-President for Student Affairs; Barbara Ricotta, Dean of Students and Associate Vice-President for Student Affairs; Michael Ryan, Vice-Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education; and Regina Toomey, Senior Associate Vice-Provost. Dr. Toomey will serve as Project Coordinator, and Jacob Sneva as Administrative Director.

There are several components of the academies:

- Missions and Goals for each Academy;
- Defined Learning Outcomes;
- Faculty Leadership, consisting of a Master Scholar and a Board of Fellows. The Master Scholar provides the academic/intellectual leadership in designing the academy, and will be assisted by a two- or three-member Board of Faculty Fellows;
- Curricular components (courses, seminars);
- Extracurricular experiences (projects, workshops, etc.);
- Advisement services --- in particular, how students can integrate these experiences into their chosen fields;
- Physical space (conference and meeting rooms);
- Living & Learning communities;
- Virtual communities (via IT tools that enable communication);
- Project grants for research, study abroad, community service and the like.

Four Undergraduate Academies have been developed so far. Civic Engagement (Fall 2007), Research Exploration (Fall 2007), Creative Expression (Fall 2008), and Global and International Issues (Spring 2008). The mission for the Civic Engagement Academy is to promote and encourage students to become active, reflective, and critically thinking citizens of their communities. Professor Peter Sobota (Social Work) will serve as Master Scholar; the advisory Faculty Fellows will include Professor Robert Granfield and another faculty member, with Amy Wilson (Leadership Development Center) as the Assistant Director providing administrative support. The mission for the Academy for Research Exploration is "to promote and encourage students to embrace critical and constructive thinking and help

prepare students for post-baccalaureate endeavors". It will be headed by Professor Tracy Gregg (Geology) as Master Scholar; Professors Peter Nickerson (Biomedical Science) and Albert Titus (Engineering) as Faculty Fellows; and Timothy Tryjanowski (Center for Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities) as Assistant Director.

Of the 145 returned Orientation data forms, 31 new students so far have indicated an interest in the Academies; if this ratio continues for the rest of the new student population, there will be about 650-700 entering freshmen interested in the Academies. This strongly positive response should help increase enrollment and yield of best undergraduate applicants. Vice-Provost Ryan also expressed strong hope that it will help us increase out-of-state and international enrollment, enrich our opportunities for undergraduate education, provide a focus and motivation for the undergraduate experience, and improve our retention and graduation rate. In concluding, he invited the UB faculty to volunteer to offer Discovery Seminars and to serve as Faculty Fellows for the Academies.

Professor Hoeing asked whether there would be any documented recognition for students' participation in the Seminars and Academies. Vice-Provost Ryan affirmed that there would indeed be, and there would be several means of doing so, including possibly Celebrations of Excellence where students may present a poster on a research project, and/or, if a student fulfills a certain set of experiences, there would be an appropriate notation on the transcript --- e.g., "Research Exploration Scholar" --- to distinguish her/him. Ryan reminded the FSEC that the purpose of the Academies is not to impose extra burdens on students in pursuit of their majors, but to provide them with opportunities to combine Academy experiences with their fields of study. To Dr. Coles' question, Ryan responded that at Summer Orientation, those students expressing interest in the Academies will have a number of events and opportunities at their disposal, such as meeting with the Master Scholar, follow-up meetings with advisors, and so on. He added that, although the Academies are being "rolled out" for entering freshmen, students already at UB can take advantage of these also. Professor Rittner asked what requirements a student would need to fulfill to qualify as an Academy Scholar. Vice-Provost Ryan answered that there will be a flexible variety of means (independent studies, regular courses, research projects, workshops) to meet certain

standards for achieving this distinction. To another of her questions, he replied that many of the Seminars are indeed linked to the curricula of the Academies; they are separate entities, but will in many cases be connected. Professor Springate asked whether the Seminars were restricted to lower-division students; the answer is that they are not, but upper-division students are informed ahead of time that the Seminars are designed primarily for freshmen and sophomore and may not be as advanced as they would expect. Professor Batalama asked who decides the criteria and coursework for the Academies; Ryan answered that this is primarily the job of the Master Scholar, who will also design a specific seminar for each Academy. When asked by Professor Nickerson how well the Seminars were received by the students, Ryan responded that solid information was not yet available, but expected rather positive results.

Professor Rittner asked whether teaching a Discovery Seminar would not be valued as highly as being involved in one of the Academies; Ryan responded that the Administration values both highly, but serving as an Academy Master Scholar or Fellow requires significantly more time and energy investment, and in this sense would carry more weight than designing and teaching a one-credit course. Asked by Professor Batalama how students become members of an Academy, Vice-Provost Ryan said there are no membership criteria (other than interest), but for certain courses or projects within the Academy, there may well be prerequisites or specified GPA requirements.

## **Item 6: Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Hoeing,  
Secretary of the Faculty Senate

Attendance (P = present; E = excused; A = absent)

**Chair:** P. Nickerson (P)

**Secretary:** R. Hoeing (P)

**Architecture & Planning:** GS. Danford (P)

**Arts & Sciences:** M. Churchill (A), J. Woelfel (A), K. Tekeuchi (P),  
D. Street (E)

**Dental Medicine:** R. Hall (A)

**Education:** T. Schroeder (P)

**Engineering & Applied Sciences:** S. Batalma (P), S. Dargush (P)

**Public Health & Health Professions:** P. Horvath (A)

**Law:** J. Milles (A)

**Management:** W. Lin (P)

**Medicine & Biomedical Sciences:** William Fiden (E), M. Dayton  
(P), James Springate (P), J. Hasset (A)

**Nursing:** P. Wooldridge (A)

**Pharmacy:** G. Brazeau (A)

**Social Work:** B. Rittner (P)

**SUNY Senators:** W. Baumer (P), H. Durand (P), H. William Coles  
III (P), P. Bradford (P)

**University Libraries:** JA. Volpe (E)

**Guests:** Satish Tripathi (Provost), M. Ryan (Vice-Provost,  
Undergraduate Education), P. Rittner (Asst. Dean for Educational  
Technology), D. Bray (EDAAA), N. Jowsey (Graduate Student  
Association), S. Modzelewski (*The Spectrum*), M. Cochrane (*The  
Reporter*)