

FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of December 13, 2006
(unapproved)

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee met at 2:00 PM on Wednesday, December 13, 2006, in 567 Capen Hall to discuss the following agenda:

1. Approval of the Minutes of November 15 and November 29, 2006
2. Report of the Chair
3. Report on the Methods of Inquiry Program
Dr. Kelly Ahuna, Director
4. Report on Campus Dining and Shops (FSA)
Mitch Green, Director
5. Executive Session
6. Adjournment

Item 1: Approval of the Minutes of November 15 and November 29, 2006

Professor Bradford requested a clarification of the time-line of events reported in Item 2 of the Minutes of November 29, 2006, and Professor Adams-Volpe expressed concern that the discussion of students in that Item seemed a bit one-sided. She also noted that these Minutes should note that the FSEC voted to formally receive the report of the Academic Planning Committee.

The Minutes of November 15 and November 29, 2006 were then approved.

Item 2: Report of the Chair

The Chair reported that there have been some questions about the construction of a final examination schedule for the Spring semester; in particular, there is interest in telling students at the beginning of the semester when the exams are scheduled. Another question is whether final exams should two or three hours in length. The Chair slated the topic for discussion this coming semester.

The Chair invited the President of the University Faculty Senate, Carl Wiezalis, to attend one of our Senate meetings; he also asked what other items should be scheduled for the FSEC this coming Spring semester. Suggestions included reports from the Budget Priorities Committee and from Central Scheduling on classroom availability.

The Computer Services Committee listened to discussion on course-casting and the current teaching models employed by the School of Management. It also heard from Peter Rittner, Assistant Dean for Educational Technology in the College of Arts & Sciences. As part of the IT Strategic Transformation, Dean Rittner is the team leader for workstation standardization.

Item 3: Report on the Methods of Inquiry Program

The Methods of Inquiry course was first developed in 1987 with the help of a federal education grant, and was designed to be a "universal" course available to all undergraduates. The course, combining cognitive psychology and philosophy, centers on critical thinking. It offers undergraduates concrete ways to approach their studies by helping them become actively involved in their own learning processes. This is especially important, in college --- as opposed to secondary school --- education is learner-centered, i.e., the students, rather than the instructors, are held accountable. In the class, students review and discuss the following topics:

- How to develop an appropriate mindset for learning;
- How to think critically within a discipline, and to overcome the "illusion of knowing" something they really do not understand;
- How to monitor comprehension and provide personal feed.

Feed for students must be ongoing throughout the semester; if students can monitor their understanding and mastery of material, they can complement their initial work with appropriate personal effort or the use of well-directed help where necessary. Students learn to set long-term and immediate goals and to analyze the tasks that must be completed to achieve those goals. This, in the end, allows them to take control of their academic lives.

Instructors of Methods of Inquiry (MOI) also teach techniques on effective reading, note-taking, and other indispensable practices. Students attend two lectures per week; the third credit hour comes from a one-on-one meeting every week with peer monitors, who help the students apply what they have learned to the other courses they are taking in their individual disciplines. The goal is self-assessment. Once the students have mastered the techniques of understanding material, the course shifts to discussion of various frameworks of thinking, and how to make judgments, evaluate data, and assess consequences.

About 600-700 students take the class every year. Changes in students' GPA from a prior semester to the end of a MOI semester typically show a rise of about half a grade point. Students taking MOI also show a higher graduation rate than others. Professor Durand surmised, and Dr. Ahuna agreed, that the course is often more beneficial to students who take it after they have already studied a semester or two at college and realized their limitations. To Professor Bradford's question about students' continued success, Dr. Ahuna replied that there is typically a dip in students' GPAs in the semester immediately following MOI --- since students "let their guard down" --- but that the scores rise again thereafter. Professor Brazeau asked whether various learning styles are addressed in the course; Dr. Ahuna said they are indeed, since it is important to take these into account and play to

students' strengths. Professor Wooldridge wondered whether the course should be made a requirement; Dr. Ahuna responded that this would entail considerable additional resources, and that many students may not need the course.

Item 4: Report on Campus Dining and Shops (FSA)

Campus Dining & Shops, still officially known as the Faculty / Student Association (FSA), is a not-for-profit corporation established for the purpose of providing educationally related services for the benefit of the UB community. In addition to dining services, the FSA provides services for campus ID cards, vending, storage, and surveillance cameras. Director Mitch Green updated the FSEC on the recent activities and developments of the FSA.

Among these are:

- **On-Campus Catering** --- Beginning in January 2007, the FSA will offer on-campus, one-stop, easy pick-up catering service at lower prices and with more convenience than off-campus ordering and shopping. With one day's notice, Campus Dining & Shops can prepare, for example, plates of sandwiches (including plates and utensils) for departmental events.
- **Choice in Level of Catering** --- In response to complaints of cost, the FSA plans to offer customers choices in the degree of catering service, i.e., whether waiters, clean-up service, china instead of paper plates, etc. should be included. Such tiered service and pricing should appeal more adequately to the various requests of clients.
- **Environmental Efforts** --- Working with the Environmental Task Force, the FSA has begun composting on the South Campus, and is developing a "Refillable Mug" program to reduce container waste.

Addressing the issue of alcohol on campus, Director Green pointed out that all campus events that include alcoholic beverages must be approved by UB's Alcohol Review Board --- with the exception of events handled by Campus Dining & Shops. The FSA holds a liquor license for the Center for Tomorrow, the only place on campus with this privilege; if alcohol is requested for events at other sites on campus, the FSA is required by State Law to obtain a temporary license --- a process which takes a minimum of 15 business days. The FSA is currently considering a second place on campus --- probably the Tiffin Room --- for which to obtain a license for beer and wine only.

Director Green reported also the important activities of the FSA during the Fall 2006 semester. First, it was "heavily involved" in the Dalai Lama's three-day visit, maintaining most of its services during that time, feeding students in the residence halls and providing concession services at the stadium (for 30,00 people), serving a formal lunch for the Dalai Lama and 450 invited guests, and servicing several receptions around campus during that event.

The FSA also printed most of the posters, brochures, parking permits, T-shirts, and other materials associated with the visit.

During the mid-October snowstorm, when the campus was forced to shut down for a few days, Campus Dining & Shops continued to operate, serving over 18,000 meals to students on campus during those four days. The FSA also transported students from the South Campus, where there was no power, to residence halls on the North Campus, and fed many students off-campus in the University District because they also lacked power.

Professor Brazeau asked whether the FSA could provide a higher level of dining between semesters, after students have left; currently, the choices for faculty and staff working on campus during that time are "fairly dismal". Director Green sympathized but pointed out that he is accountable for the level of revenue generated by dining services (typically about \$2.2 million per year for the University); opening up multiple operations during slow periods would make it difficult to meet current revenue benchmarks. However, he agreed that the selection and quality of food can be improved during those periods. Professor Brazeau also inquired about future plans for the South Campus to accommodate larger numbers of students; Director Green replied that there will be a grab-and-go facility in Acheson, but that possibilities are very constrained by the availability of serviceable space on that campus.

Asked by Professor Adams-Volpe about services available to international students during down-times, Director Green responded that Putnam's (North) and Harriman (South) are open during break periods; when residence halls are closed, most international students find other options and fend for themselves.

Professor Wetherhold asked if anything could be done to reduce the tremendous amount of waste in the form of plastic water bottles; Director Green said the State is trying to make these returnable for deposit, despite a huge lobbying effort by the beverage companies against this. Until this occurs, these bottles will remain a problem.

Professor Nickerson praised Director Green for the job he has done, pointing out that he has no State resources to assist him.

Item 5: Executive Session Item 6: Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Hoeing,

Secretary of the Faculty Senate

Attendance

Present:

Chair: Peter Nickerson

Secretary: Robert Hoeing

Arts & Sciences: James Faran

Debra Street

Engineering & Applied Sciences: Robert Wetherhold

Public Health & Health Professions: Gaspar Farkas

Informatics: Joseph Woelfel

Management: Winston Lin

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: James Springate

Nursing: Powhatan Wooldridge

Pharmacy: Gayle Brazeau

Social Work: Barbara Rittner

SUNY Senators: William H. Baumer

Peter Bradford

H. William Coles III

Henry J. Durand

University Libraries: Judy Adams-Volpe

Guests:EDAAA: Sharon Nolan-Weiss

Professional Staff Senate: Larry Labinski

The Reporter: Mary Cochrane

Excused:Arts Sciences: Kenneth Takeuchi

Absent: Architecture & Planning: G. Scott Danford

Arts Sciences: Melvyn Churchill

Dental Medicine: Richard Hall

Engineering & Applied Sciences: Stella Batalama

Graduate School of Education: Jaekyung Lee

Law: James Milles

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: Merrill Dayton

William Fiden

James Hasset

