

## **FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

### **Minutes of October 22, 1997 (unapproved)**

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Note: Due to the absence of any written notes and to the poor quality of the tape, several comments are unfortunately not included in these Minutes. --- RGH

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee met in 567 Capen Hall at 2:00 PM on October 22, 1997 to consider the following agenda:

1. [Approval of the Minutes of September 17 and October 1, 1997](#)
2. [Report of the Chair](#)
3. [Charging the Committee on Faculty Tenure and Privileges](#)
4. [Charging the Committee on Research and Creative Activity](#)
5. [Committee Appointments \(Executive Session\)](#)

#### **Item 1: Approval of the Minutes**

Because the Secretary was not present due to illness, the FSEC postponed approval of the Minutes of September 17 and October 1, 1997, until the next meeting.

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

The Chair reported the following items:

He had attended the deans' meeting with the Provost this week, with the principal item of discussion being Distance Learning. Professor Nickerson felt the Senate had been left somewhat behind on this issue, and needed to deal with several points relating to the academic dimension of this type of learning and instruction.

The Chair of the Professional Staff Senate, Michael Stokes, gave a presentation on professional/staff development.

Professor Nickerson also attended a meeting of the Graduate School Executive Committee, and reported that Dean Triggles' office had developed a database of fellowship opportunities. Although it is not yet on the World Wide Web, students can access it through the Graduate School.

The Graduate Faculty met and discussed the issue of outside readers for doctoral dissertations, and is currently deliberating possible changes to this practice.

There was a forum yesterday to discuss the organization of the Biological Sciences. A report from an ad hoc committee proposed a centralized program with all the resources located centrally, within the office of the Dean of the Graduate School.

The University-wide Senate is meeting this weekend at Buffalo State College; a report on this meeting is scheduled for the November 5 session of the FSEC.

The Chair circulated a request for nominations of people to serve on the committee for the Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Librarianship, as well as information on the upcoming Woodburn Presidential Fellowships.

He also attended the dedication of the UB Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth, and commented on the fine renovation of Beck Hall on the South Campus.

The President of the University Faculty Senate Vincent Aceto sent a response to the Faculty Senate's resolution on the University Press, in which he stated his shared concerns about the flawed search process used to appoint a new director for the Press. The resolutions from the various campuses "have had a significant impact on the Chancellor's sensitivity to the SUNY Press issues".

The Chair then asked Professor Welch to report on the meeting of the Academic Planning Committee. Professor Welch said the APC had discussed three items: (1) the issue of Music Education, on which he will report more fully at the November 5 meeting; (2)

entrepreneurship in higher education, discussed the previous day at the meeting of the Founders' Committee; (3) the Committee's involvement in the development of an Academic Information System.

### **Item 3: Charging the Committee on Faculty Tenure and Privileges**

Professor Acara briefly reviewed the Committee's recommendations to the Provost regarding the role of teaching in the tenure review process. At a Faculty Senate meeting last spring, it proposed:

- (1) That teaching be given more weight in the evaluation process for promotion to Full Professor;
- (2) That the Provost instruct the President's Review Board, deans, and department chairs to include careful documentation of the candidate's teaching in the dossier;
- (3) That school-specific criteria for evaluation of teaching be developed;
- (4) That candidates provide a personal statement on how their teaching, research, and service fit into the goals of the University;
- (5) That internal and, where appropriate, external letters of teaching evaluation be sought;
- (6) That the University designate a modest but consistent amount of funds to reward excellence in teaching;
- (7) That the University provide funds for assisting faculty in the improvement of teaching, including videotaping conferences, provision of training in new teaching technology, and faculty orientation in institutional teaching resources.

In addition, the Committee also considered the possibility of developing criteria for promotion which would take into account a candidate's contributions within institutes as well as departments.

Over the summer, Vice-Provosts Levy and Fischer developed an addition to the promotion

dossier that provides for descriptions of teaching contributions and evaluations (distributed at the start of the meeting).

Professor Schuel commented that the inclusion of student evaluations is nothing unique.

Vice-Provost Levy responded that many dossiers coming out of the School of Medicine (and other departments) have no quantitative teaching evaluations, and that the new criteria would ensure greater uniformity in the presentation of teaching evaluation in the dossiers.

Professor Welch supported the criteria, but argued that quantitative data on a candidate's teaching should not be placed in the "Confidential" part of the dossier. Also, it is hard to prescribe what should go into a teaching portfolio; nevertheless, it should include more than a unidimensional report of student reactions --- such as materials that "show how well a candidate keeps up with the field" and updated quality syllabi which reflect this.

Although generally in agreement with the proposal, Professor Churchill expressed concern over the subsequent growth of the size and manageability of each dossier. He also pointed out that, in many cases, the teaching evaluations were representative of but a small number of students in a course with large enrollment.

Professor Malone agreed, adding that most of the faculty in Engineering are unhappy with the form of evaluation being used; an overall numerical score on one's teaching is meaningless if not compared to something or someone else. For this reason, he advised extreme caution in developing appropriate evaluations. In addition, the dossier should include information about (1) whether all students received syllabi, and (2) the grading policy for each course. He also asked what became of the mandatory review, or the consultation between the department chair and the candidate; Professor Welch answered that the Review Panel found it neither useful nor necessary, given the University-wide required annual consultations between chairs and faculty. Professor Welch also reminded Professor Malone of the University's policy on the content of syllabi, printed in the Faculty/Professional Staff Handbook.

Professor Faran noted that, in cases of departmentally-designed syllabi, it is difficult for anyone --- and particularly for anyone outside the department --- to judge the appropriateness of assignments and examinations; in such cases it is also sometimes irrelevant, since the syllabi seldom change. He also questioned the extent to which

candidates are now being asked to "sell themselves", through the presentation of additional materials in their portfolio, in order to convince reviews that they are worthy of tenure. Vice-Provost Fischer said that the function of the additional items is not to enable the candidates to "sell", but rather to explain themselves and their achievements to the reviewers; in this sense, the additional items are beneficial to both. Professor Acara, addressing the first issue, added that the Committee would suggest as part of the review process certain school-specific criteria.

Professor Nickerson asked the Committee to consider also the issue of promotion and tenure within the interdisciplinary institutes and centers. Professor Malone requested the inclusion of grade distributions within the candidates' teaching portfolios, since it is a requirement for Distinguished Teaching awards; he pointed out that some instructors with high scores on evaluations gave out an unusually high percentage of As.

#### **Item 4: Charging the Committee on Research and Creative Activity**

Professor Baier observed that research at this University is presently "in a downturn", certainly economically, but perhaps also (as some would argue) philosophically, given the new emphasis on public service at this institution. The Committee feels it should investigate whether this development is to the benefit or detriment of both faculty and student life, and how best to re-energize our research enterprise.

Professor Malone pointed out that one reason for the drop in research funding is due to the funding policies of the agencies responsible; for example, several offer now only short-term funding for specific projects, rather than funds for long-term research. He also suspected that fewer faculty actively seek outside funding than in the past. A second reason is the tendency to shift research support to individual consulting done outside the University. Vice-President Landi confirmed the "sharp drop-off" in the number of research proposals generated at UB, as well as the decline, over the past three years, in total volume of research expenditures, the dollar value of research awards granted, and the number of awards. In addition to the reasons mentioned above, he included "an unusual number of losses of faculty project directors from UB" in the 1991-1996 fiscal period: seventy-eight funded faculty members left the University, taking with them \$8.7 million in grants. Of

these, several were junior-level faculty; most were in mid-career, "the kind of people you would want to stay, because they represent an important dimension of the future of the University". Thus the primary goal of the Committee would be to determine why this is happening, as well as how to prevent further bleeding of this nature.

Professor Churchill mentioned as one reason the "crummy salaries" of the faculty, who had little hope of an increase except by looking elsewhere. Professor Schuel added the lack of effort in keeping good faculty members from leaving, once they receive offers from other institutions. Vice-President Landi acknowledged the gravity of this problem, agreeing with Professor Ramesh that retention is much less expensive than high turnover. He commented that, although some faculty come to UB viewing it as a temporary arrangement, this does not characterize the bulk of the faculty who left. In addition, the bad press SUNY has received over the past few years may have led other institutions to view it as a recruiting ground.

Professor Smith objected to the narrow scope of the discussion, as it centered on funded research and ignored the vast amount of non-funded scholarly activity at UB. Vice-President Landi agreed, and admitted that there is an unfortunate and erroneous tendency "to use the aggregate dollar measures as a symbol for the totality of the scholarly activity that goes on ---- which of course is not accurate". He added that the funding agencies have become more conservative, and increasingly put their money "on the sure bets"; as a result, there is stiffer competition, as well as pressure on an applicant to have already demonstrated the probability of success of the project proposed. This preliminary, or pilot, research, however, "must be funded from somewhere". Explorations into new areas of research require more and more "seed money", although less and less is available.

To help determine the reasons for departure, Professor Malone suggested exit interviews; Vice-President Landi had already suggested this to the Provost, and welcomed any reinforcement on this matter.

Professor Baier commented that the division of the responsibilities of monitoring funded and non-funded scholarly activity has served us poorly. Funding has been used as a yardstick simply because it has been the only measurable quantity made available so far; because the responsibility for non-funded scholarly activity has jumped around repeatedly, we have not

developed any means of assessing it.

Vice-President Landi emphasized the importance of research within the core disciplines as "clearly the mainstay of our future as an institution. It's the well-spring from which success in multi-disciplinary research springs". The reason there has been so much emphasis on multidisciplinary research, he continued, is that there were so many barriers to it in the past. Speaking for Dean Triggles, he added that our inability to establish interdisciplinary degree programs --- which are common elsewhere --- hurts several of our overall research efforts, because many areas of our research stretch across the traditional boundaries. It hampers an optimal utilization of our resources, since several courses are duplicated by separate units, as well as our recruitment efforts, because we cannot offer interdisciplinary degree programs with the flexibility and the breadth which students are seeking now. Professor Churchill noted that retention of graduate students is difficult in Chemistry, for example, because the stipends are simply not competitive with other institutions. Vice-President Landi agreed, and said that efforts are being made to rectify this problem.

#### **Item 5: Committee Appointments (Executive Session)**

There being no further business, old or new, the meeting was adjourned at 4:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert G. Hoeing

Secretary of the Faculty Senate

Present: Chair: Peter A. Nickerson

Architecture & Planning: Sherri Wallace

Arts & Letters: Martha Hyde

Dental Medicine: Robert Baier

Engineering & Applied Sciences: Michael Ryan

Graduate School of Education: Thomas Schroeder

Health-Related Professions: Judith Tamburlin

Information & Library Studies: George D'Elia

Law: Isabel Marcus

Management: Ramaswamy Ramesh

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: Boris Albin, Ronald Batt, Herbert Schuel, Cedric Smith

Natural Sciences & Mathematics: Melvyn Churchill, James Faran

Nursing: Powhatan Wooldridge

Pharmacy: Nathan

Social Sciences: Jack Meacham

SUNY Senators: John Fisher, Maureen Jameson, Dennis Malone, Claude Welch

University Libraries: Marilyn Kramer

Guests: Kenneth Levy, Senior Vice-Provost

William Fischer, Vice-Provost for Faculty Development

Margaret Acara, Chair, Committee on Faculty Tenure and Privileges

Dale M. Landi, Vice-President for Research

Robert Baier, Chair, Committee on Research and Creative Activity

Sue Wuetcher (The Reporter)

Excused: Secretary: Robert G. Hoeing