

FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of September 12, 2001 (approved)

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The Faculty Senate Executive Committee met at 2:00 PM on September 12, 2001 in Capen 567 to consider the following agenda:

1. [Report of the Chair](#)
2. [Report of the President/Provost](#)
3. [Report of the Faculty Senate Research and Creative Activity Committee – Past Chair Joseph Mollendorf](#)
4. [Review of the Grading Committee’s Proposed Class Absence Policy and the Policy on Reasonable Academic Progress and Financial Aid Eligibility - Professor Baumer](#)
5. [Old/New business](#)

Item 1: Report of the Chair

The Chair expressed horror at the catastrophic terrorist attacks of yesterday. He asked for a moment of silence for the victims of those attacks.

The Chair announced that after Professor Baumer’s report the Executive Committee would go into executive session to discuss an item of new business, viz., a letter from a senior faculty from the School of Medicine & Biomedical Sciences asking for the Senate’s help. The Chair has spoken to President Greiner and Professor Nickerson about the issues raised by the letter, and it is important for the Executive Committee to explore the letter’s ramifications.

Old business will include discussions of specific charges to the various Faculty Senate Committees and of inviting faculty tenured within the last five years to serve on the Committees.

Item 2: Report of the President/Provost

The President noted that yesterday's events were this generation of students' Pearl Harbor. Some of our students were directly affected, having family and friends working in the World Trade Center and its vicinity. Those students not directly affected were concerned with supporting and comforting those who were. Faculty and staff also made themselves available to counsel and console students.

He stated that as a campus we must guard against and will not permit emotional reactions to the attacks based on race, religion or national origin. Islamic members of our international student community have already expressed concern that they may face recriminations. The President urged faculty and staff to be role models for the campus and for society at large in preventing expressions of hostility aimed at groups that may share the suspected religion or national origin of the terrorists. He also expressed his hope that the United States would not make it more difficult for international students to study here. The best hope for avoiding such tragedies in the future is to foster the opportunity for joint learning among all religions and nations.

President Greiner said that Governor's closing of SUNY campuses yesterday was an especially appropriate symbolic act in the face of an attack on the state's intellectual and financial center. He announced that for the remainder of the week there would be no athletic competition on campus, with the possible exception of the scheduled football game with West Point Academy. UB has asked to reschedule that game but will reconsider if the Department of Defense feels that playing the game signals resistance to terrorist pressure. The students feel strongly that Fall Fest, which is scheduled for this weekend, should also be cancelled. It is not clear, however, that they can contractually do so without forfeiting about \$200K.

There will be a memorial convocation on Thursday, September 13, to give the campus a chance to come together and reflect on yesterday's tragedy. The President urged people to attend.

There were comments from the floor:

- appreciate maintenance staff's quick removal of graffiti that appeared after the terrorists attack; also commend the University for very quickly making phones available to students to contact family and for providing them with emotional support (Professor Adams-Volpe)
- monitor for hate activity in the dorms (Professor Nickerson)
- Student Affairs moved very quickly to work with the students, especially in the dorms (President Greiner)
- remind faculty that students who are members of the Reserves or National Guard, if called to duty,

must by law suffer no academic or financial penalty because of their absence (Professor Malone)

- faculty should also be supportive of students who are absent because of loss of family in the attacks (Dr. Coles)

- University should explore chartering buses to help get students to the New York city area (Professor Farkas)

Item 3: Report of the Faculty Senate Research and Creative Activity Committee – Past Chair Joseph Mollendorf

There was no report of the Faculty Senate Research and Creative Activity Committee.

Item 4: Review of the Grading Committee’s Proposed Class Absence Policy and the Policy on Reasonable Academic Progress and Financial Aid Eligibility - Professor Baumer

Professor Baumer, Chair of the Grading Committee, recapped the status of the Committee’s proposed Class Absence Policy. The Policy had its second reading at the May 2001 meeting of the Faculty Senate and was vigorously discussed, but, for lack of a quorum, no action was taken. Discussion at the May meeting focused on making the policy shorter and simpler. Professor Baumer, speaking for the majority of the Grading Committee, remains convinced that there is no consensus on campus about what constitutes a reasonable absence, and therefore, specificity and detail in the Policy is required. Professor Adams-Volpe has suggested a shorter but still comprehensive set of criteria that may be more palatable to the Senate. Professor Baumer would like the Grading Committee to consider Professor Adams-Volpe’s revision before the Policy is returned to the Faculty Senate.

- does the Grading Committee intend for the Policy to cover all possible contingencies? (Professor Cohen)

- Committee wants to cover situations that have been sources of difficulty in the past, e.g., exams scheduled outside of regular class time with no notice in the class syllabus to alert students to this obligation at the start of a semester; the Committee believes that requiring written syllabi is an essential part of the Policy (Professor Baumer)

- existing Senate policy already requires written syllabi; policy should be enforced; conflict between a class and an inter-collegiate athletic event is the example most often cited in discussions of class absence, but in fact is a very rare occurrence (Professor Malone)
- the Resolutions prepared by the Teaching and Learning Committee and passed by the Faculty Senate last academic year require written syllabi and specify many more items to be included than just absence policy; in presenting the Class Absence Policy, make the Senate aware of some of the horror stories and address concerns raised at the first and second readings (Professor Nickerson)
- have perhaps convinced a major opponent of the Class Absence Policy to change his position by pointing out the dilemma in the absence of specificity in the Policy presented to a department chair by a faculty member asserting the reasonableness of a policy which the chair believes in patently unreasonable (Professor Baumer)

There was a motion (seconded) to send the Policy to the Grading Committee for its review. The motion passed unanimously.

- in the Deans' discussion of the Teaching and Learning Committee's Resolutions, the professional schools argued that the syllabus requirements were overly prescriptive and did not reflect the nature of their teaching; Professor Gentile, Dean Olsen and Dean Shulman encapsulated the policy, hoping to allay the professional schools' concerns; the Deans, however, remain dissatisfied (Vice Provost Grant)
- Professor Baumer then reviewed the Policy on Reasonable Academic Progress and Financial Aid Eligibility which the Senate adopted in 2000. The Policy sets a sliding scale for what constitutes reasonable academic progress which scale is tied to the academic requirements for being eligible for financial aid. The Policy was partially implemented in the summer of 2000 but was not followed during this summer's review of students' academic progress because of questions about the fairness of two of its provisions.

First, a class in which a student receives an "R" grade is counted toward courses attempted but not successfully completed for purposes of determining whether a student is making reasonable academic progress. The Grading Committee is concerned about the fairness of applying this provision to courses taken prior to adoption of the Policy. Prior to its adoption, the only consequence of taking an "R" grade was to delay graduation; after its adoption taking an "R" grade could result in dismissal from the University. Adding to the problem, students may have been advised to take R grades as a strategy to remain in the University. The Committee will consider whether the provision concerning

"R" grades should be implemented only as to courses taken after the adoption of the Policy.

Second, the Policy also counts a course that results in an "I" grade toward courses attempted but not successfully completed. The Committee now believes that such courses should not be included in the review of reasonable academic progress because they were, in fact, not completed.

§ why are academic status and financial aid eligibility linked? (Professor Cohen)

§ to avoid the situation in which a student incurs debt to the University (registration, fees, housing) before being told he is no longer eligible for financial aid; also to provide parity of access to UB as between students depending on financial aid and those with financial resources (Professor Baumer)

· the link between financial aid eligibility and reasonable academic progress should be eliminated; the provision substitutes University decision making for the students' own; better to ensure that students are advised early about their financial aid eligibility (Vice-Provost Grant)

· have not heard this objection before; believe the link is appropriate, so need to discuss the Vice-Provost's concern with him (Professor Baumer)

· although the Senate adopted the Policy and the Policy was partially implemented for Fall 2000, President Greiner never promulgated it (Professor Nickerson)

· in the sciences the "R" grade is used as a powerful counseling option to avoid a burdening a freshman who is failing his science courses with a GPA he cannot overcome; an "R" grade should not be used in the calculation of reasonable academic progress (Professor Fourtner)

Professor Baumer added that the Grading Committee will also be looking at the question of grade changes, replacement or correction by someone other than the instructor of the course.

Item 5: Old/New business

After a letter from a senior member of the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences was discussed in executive session, the Executive Committee moved into public session.

There was a motion (seconded) that the Chair and the Past Chair recommend to the Executive Committee a slate of candidates to form an Ad Hoc Committee to examine the problems currently facing the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. The motion passed unanimously.

The Chair then asked that suggestions for specific charges for the various Faculty Senate Committees

to be sent to him.

There being no other old/new business, the meeting adjourned at 4:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn McMann Kramer
Secretary of Faculty Senate

Present: Chair: M. Cohen

Secretary: M. Kramer

Parliamentarian: D. Malone

Arts & Sciences: W. Baumer, J. Bono, C. Fourtner

Dental Medicine: J. Zambon

Graduate School of Education: L. Malave

Health Related Professions: G. Farkas

Management: J. Boot

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: B. Noble, A., El Solh

Nursing: E. Perese

SUNY Senators: J. Adams-Volpe, J. Boot, H. Durand, P. Nickerson

University Libraries: J. Hopkins

University Officers:

W. Greiner, President

Guests: E. Courtney, Academic Clubs Coordinator, Undergraduate Student
Association

W. Coles, Chair, Professional Staff Senate

S. Wuetcher, Reporter

Excused: Architecture: R. Shibley

Engineering & Applied Sciences: R. Sridhar

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: S. Spurgeon

Absent: Arts & Sciences: M. Jardine

School of Informatics: J. Ellison

Law: I. Marcus

Pharmacy: R. Madejski