

## FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

### Minutes of October 22, 2003

(unapproved)

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee met at 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 22, 2003, in 567 Capen Hall to consider the following agenda:

1. Approval of the minutes of September 24, 2003
2. Report of the Chair
3. Report of the President/Provost
4. Report of the Assoc. Vice President for Univ. Libraries - Barbara von Wahlde
5. Discussion of value-added assessment
6. Old/New business
7. Executive session (if needed)
8. Adjournment

Item 1: Approval of the minutes of September 24, 2003

The minutes were approved as distributed.

Item 2: Report of the Chair

Chair Nickerson acknowledged the recent announcement about the appointment of Dr. John Simpson as UB's next president. FSEC will probably have an opportunity to meet with Dr. Simpson within the next week or so.

The Graduate School executive committee met with Vice Provost Grant who discussed governance roles (meaning, purpose, and authority) of the graduate faculty. Another topic of discussion was the Schomburg Fellowship program, which was formerly funded by SUNY to encourage diversity in graduate programs. The Graduate School is currently paying tuition costs of Fellowship awardees but is not able to cover health insurance (unlike state-supported graduate students).

The Faculty Senate (FS) Teaching & Learning Committee met with Vice Provost Grant. They function in an advisory capacity to the director of the Center for Teaching & Learning Resources.

The FS Computer Services Committee met with Carole Ann Fabian, who was recently appointed director of the Educational Technology Center (ETC). The ETC is now administratively part of the University Libraries.

#### Item 3: Report of the President/Provost

President Greiner said he is pleased with the presidential search process and the outcome, because Dr. Simpson is a very good choice. He expects that Dr. Simpson will be a very accessible president and that FSEC will get to meet with him soon. Dr. Simpson will officially become UB's 14th president on January 1st, 2004.

#### Item 4: Report of the Associate Vice President for University Libraries - Barbara von Wahlde

Vice President von Wahlde said that she and Assistant Vice President Steve Roberts try to meet with all deans at least once a year to get updated about new programs and faculty interests. It's also an opportunity for them to discuss library resources and services. This exchange of information is important so the University Libraries can provide effective support to all academic areas.

A subject specialist librarian is assigned to each discipline to select materials for purchasing, offer library instruction sessions, and respond to specialized reference queries. Faculty are encouraged to contact their respective subject librarians about any library-related matters.

Assistant Vice President Roberts reported that the storage facility that's been talked about for the past dozen or so years is finally going to become a reality. A deal has been made with the Hart corporation to build a new facility, which will be called the Collections Conservation Center (CCC), near the Holiday Inn on Niagara Falls Boulevard. It will be approximately 15,000 square feet in size and specially constructed to house over 1.2 million volumes of low-use books and periodicals, i.e., around one-third of the Libraries' current

holdings. Construction should begin next spring, and the building will be ready for occupancy by December 2004. Filling its 30-ft. high system of storage bins will take several years; it will free up much needed space in our already-overcrowded book and periodical collections.

All materials will be searchable in the BISON catalog and will be retrievable within 24 hours of being requested. A reading room will be available on the premises, but books will be sent to faculty offices, and periodical articles will be scanned and sent as e-mail attachments.

The new building will also serve as an emergency, remote up facility for Computing & Information Technology (CIT).

Ms. von Wahle said that the Libraries budget is tight because our modest increase won't cover library materials' rate of inflation. We'll likely have to cut some subscriptions and buy fewer books. Making matters worse is the SUNY-brokered deal with Elsevier Scientific Publishers for online access to their 900 or so academic journals. It was a great bargain when it added access to 375 journals that we didn't subscribe to, but now Elsevier is asking for a substantial cost increase to renew the package subscription. Negotiations are currently underway for a lower one-year rate if we don't cut any Elsevier journals.

The University Libraries, along with the School of Informatics and the Office of the CIO, are co-sponsoring a conference on November 11th at the Center for Tomorrow. "Publishing the Future: Scholarly Communication in an Information Age" is open to the academic community, and faculty are encouraged to attend to hear nationally recognized leaders in scholarly communication discuss traditional and emerging issues that affect how scholarly research findings is made available. Additional information and online registration is on the Web at <http://libweb.lib.buffalo.edu/ScholCom/>

Item 5: Discussion of value-added assessment

Chair Nickerson explained that the Board of Trustees had met during the summer and passed a policy on value-added assessment. The purpose of the policy is to assess student attainment of learning outcomes in general education (gen ed) courses.

Professor Baumer said that it's important to realize that the policy will apply value-added assessment on a System-wide basis - across all 64 SUNY campuses. He suspects that it might have been politically motivated because a different value-added assessment proposal would have been forthcoming if this were not enacted when it was.

The issue is troublesome because the "Memorandum of Understanding...for Value-added Assessment" (MOU), which was distributed with the agenda, is written as if the University Senate is already in favor and ready to implement the policy. That is not the case at all. The University Senate actually has two questions to deal with: whether to approve System-wide value-added assessment in principle, and, if so, whether to approve the implementation guidelines that are outlined in the MOU.

Chair Nickerson said that Chancellor King is in favor of the policy because he has to deal with the state legislature, and implementing value-added assessment would provide evidence that SUNY is providing effective public education.

Professor Volpe-Adams explained that the process outlined in the MOU would use a still-to-be-determined standardized test to evaluate student learning in all SUNY gen ed courses: "Mathematics, Basic Communication, Critical Thinking (Reasoning), Information Management, and the understanding of the methods scientists and social scientists use to explore phenomena." (MOU, p. 1) This could actually have an adverse effect on teaching and learning, because it would force instructors to "teach to the test."

Professor Cohen said that the value-added assessment issue would be a good topic for Dr. Simpson to weigh in on when he becomes president of UB. Dr. Simpson was told during his interview that UB and the other university centers were regarded as independent research institutions.

Professor Schack said that we shouldn't tolerate stupidity, and that we should urge our SUNY delegates to go on record saying that this policy is totally inappropriate, and we will not participate. All other SUNY campuses should be encouraged to take the same stand. Professor Adams-Volpe said that some of them have already done so.

Professor Schack also said that we should make it clear to SUNY that course grading is already a form of assessment that faculty take very seriously. For the Trustees to suggest that we need an additional achievement test to measure learning is an insult to our current academic efforts.

Professor Baumer said that it's his understanding that the proposed learning outcome test won't have any bearing on graduation. In that case, students won't be inclined to take it seriously, and many are likely to provide random answers because they resent spending time on a test that doesn't affect their grades.

Vice Provost Grant expressed concern that, although the policy says that assessments won't be used to compare programs or grades among campuses, past experience has been that there's a lot of interest in seeing how campuses compare with each other and non-SUNY institutions.

Professor Jensen said we shouldn't forget about the public relations benefits that can result from the policy. Although he's not in favor of it, he's concerned that opposing it will look like UB faculty are afraid of being evaluated. The public like to know that their tax dollars to being put to good use. If we go on record opposing value-added assessment, we should have strong reasons for our positions or there might be public lash.

Professor Wooldridge reminded that the value-added assessment policy isn't aimed at all UB courses - just the gen ed courses. One possible approach is to insist that any testing must be methodologically sound, based on scientific criteria. This would require a level of complexity that the Trustee's probably haven't considered.

Professor Schack said he prefers a more straightforward approach: saying that the policy is stupid and that instructors' grading of their own students provides a much more reliable assessment than any standardized test can. He doesn't think that the general public is very supportive of standardized testing nowadays.

Chair Nickerson said there's a national movement to impose assessment requirements on the education process. Some other states have already dealt with much harsher proposals than the SUNY MOU.

Professor Meacham said that assessment shouldn't be viewed as an enemy to higher education. Many of the concerns that were expressed today can be dealt with reasonably. Value-added assessment is a national movement that probably can't be stopped anyway, so the important thing is to make sure that faculty are involved in how it gets implemented.

Professor Adams-Volpe said that we are not fighting assessment per se. Many UB faculty have invested a lot of time in developing a plan for assessing UB's gen ed courses. UB's plan hasn't been implemented yet, but it's underway. What we are opposing now is SUNY's policy for System-wide assessment.

Professor Donley asked whether our recent accreditation counted as a form of campus assessment? If it does, will the SUNY policy have any bearing on the accreditation process? Vice Provost Grant said that the Middle States organization does consider campus assessment efforts along with many other factors.

Professor Bruckenstein wondered what the Board of Regents is going to do with the data it wants to collect with the value-added assessment policy. If we knew how the data would be used, we'd be better able to respond to SUNY.

Item 7: Old/New business

None

Item 8: Executive session (if needed)

FSEC met in executive session

Item 9: Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Will Hepfer

Secretary of the Faculty Senate

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

Chair: P. Nickerson (P)

Secretary: W. Hepfer (P)

Architecture & Planning: S. Danford (A)

Arts & Sciences: S. Bruckenstein (P), M. Churchill (P), R. Hoeing (P), S. Schack (P), K. Takeuchi (P)

Dental Medicine: M. Donley (P)

Education: L. Malave (P)

Engineering & Applied Sciences: J. Jensen (P), R. Mayne (P)

Informatics: F. Tutzauer (P)

Institutional/General: O. Mixon (A)

Law: L. Swartz (P)

Management: C. Pegels (P)

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: C. Granger (A), J. Hassett (A), G. Logue (A), B. Murray (A), J. Sellick (E)

Nursing: P. Wooldridge (P)

Pharmacy: G. Brazeau (P)

Public Health & Health Professions: C. Crespo (E)

Social Work: B. Rittner (P)

SUNY Senators: J. Adams-Volpe (P), W. Baumer (P), M. Kramer (P), P. Nickerson (P)

University Libraries: CA Fabian (E)

University officers: President Greiner

Guests: D. Budniewski (Reporter), M. Cohen (past-chair), P. Gold (CAS), K. Grant  
(Academic Affairs), L. Labinski (Prof. Staff Sen.), J. Meacham (CAS), S. Roberts (Univ.

Libraries), BJ Simpson (GSA), L. Stewart (EDAAA), B. von Wahlde (Univ. Libraries), J. Xiang  
(SA Student Affairs)