

FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of April 22, 1998 (approved)

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The Faculty Senate Executive Committee met at 2:00 PM on April 22, 1998 in 567 Capen Hall to consider the following agenda:

1. [Report of the Acting Chair](#)
2. [Report of the Faculty Senate Committee on Admissions and Retention](#)
3. [Approval of the Minutes of May 7 and May 14, 1997, and of March 18, 1998](#)
4. [Report on Classroom Utilization and Quality](#)
5. [Periodic Review Report \(Executive Session\)](#)

Item 1: Report of the Acting Chair

Professor Hoeing, Secretary of the Faculty Senate, presided as Acting Chair in the absence of Professor Nickerson, who was attending a scientific meeting in San Francisco. The Chair had attended the awards ceremony honoring four faculty who received the Milton Plesur award for excellence in teaching: Alex Ampadu (Management), Debra Burhans (Computer Science), Gary Burgess (Music), and James Twombly (Political Science).

In reaction to the lack of a quorum at the past two Faculty Senate meetings, Professor Malone proposed that the Secretary compile a summary attendance list of senators, both by number and by percentage, so that the Senate could estimate the number of senators which can be reasonably expected to attend; this number would then constitute a quorum. Although this would require a vote of the Voting Faculty to amend the *Charter of the Faculty Senate*, it would enable the Senate in the meantime to overcome its paralysis and take action on important issues. The FSEC agreed to refer the matter to the Faculty Senate Bylaws Committee.

The Acting Chair announced also that Dr. Bill Coles has been elected Chair of the Professional Staff Senate. On behalf of the faculty, both Professors Nickerson and Hoeing extended their congratulations and the desire to work closely with him and the PSS.

On behalf of Associate Vice-President Rice, Professor Hoeing displayed the new poster and T-shirt design for "Celebrating Tolerance and Diversity"; copies of the posters and shirts are available in Associate Vice-President Rice's office.

The Academic Planning Committee met on Monday to discuss further the new Department of Computer Science and Engineering, as well as the SUNY Central Mission Review and UB's response. The Affirmative Action Committee also met and is working on its annual report; it is scheduled to meet with the FSEC next week.

Item 2: Report of the Faculty Senate Committee on Admissions and Retention

Professor Fournier, Chair of the Faculty Senate Committee on Admissions and Retention (FSCAR), reported that one of the central issues the FSCAR discussed is the role of the faculty in admissions and retention. Most faculty, he pointed out, do not know the admissions requirements at UB; nevertheless, they are responsible for establishing admissions requirements and standards. All too often, it seems, students who do not meet the stated requirements are admitted anyway, usually to keep overall enrollment numbers steady --- leading to a sacrifice of quality for the sake of quantity. For this he blamed not the administration, but the faculty, since they must determine what kind of students to admit into, and what caliber of students they expect to graduate from this institution. In addition, the faculty have shown little interest in the students once they are admitted, and hardly participate in recruitment efforts. Professor Fournier said he was at a loss for any solution, until the faculty decide on standards, and then hold to them. Furthermore, he has seen no tangible results or improvements from the University's consultations with Noel Levitz.

Vice-Provost Goodman explained that admissions criteria to UB comprised three quantitative measures --- high school grades, rank in class, and SAT/ACT scores. These have not been re-evaluated in nearly

twenty years, he said, and thus it seems entirely appropriate for the faculty to re-examine admissions standards. At the same time, he wanted to resist the idea of establishing a "floor", such as a minimum SAT score; no large university, he argued, can afford to do this nowadays. Enrollment figures must be determined in part by real-world budgetary considerations. In his judgment, the role of Admissions is "to find the best students, by the criteria that the faculty have established, that we *can*, up to the numbers that we've decided upon, essentially for budgetary considerations".

Although enrollment "efforts" in the past have been somewhat passive, the present educational environment necessitates a much more active recruitment campaign. The Noel Levitz project, he argued, is a "considerable success" in that it has given UB "the tools and the attitudes that were required in order to take a more active approach to recruiting freshmen". His office has put into place a recruitment approach that is more modern in the sense that it involves continuous, individualized communication with prospective students, via telephone, mail, and computerized tracking systems. In addition, one computer program can calculate the probability that a certain type of student will enroll in UB; communications with these students can then be intensified to further guarantee their enrollment. Initial results already indicate a higher yield.

Assuming that admissions criteria are appropriate, he continued, if we can increase the number of applications and the yield, then we can raise the cut-offs and end up with a higher overall student profile. (He pointed out that the overall profile has not receded significantly over the last few years anyway.) That the faculty perceive a lower quality in our students he attributed to a narrower range of the students we attract, resulting in fewer really excellent students. With the help of the Noel Levitz tools, he hoped to be able to address this problem more effectively.

His office has also begun a program of "financial aid leveraging", by which merit-based scholarships are being offered to large numbers of students UB would not normally be able to attract. Professor Goodman explained that if the scholarship is less than the income UB expects to receive from them --- thus if the marginal cost to the institution of having those students on campus is small enough --- "[we] make a profit". So far, this program is proving successful; Professor Goodman was optimistic that this would also lead to an improvement in the quality of the student body; this, in turn, would be

followed by a more favorable impression (on parents and prospective students) of UB, its students, and its programs.

Transfer students, however, pose different problems, and in this respect the Noel Levitz program has not been very helpful. Since most of these are interested not in the University as such but in a particular program, Professor Goodman felt the faculty would have to increase its efforts in marketing their programs to these students.

Professor Malone agreed that a better student profile is necessary to attract better students. He added that, although the faculty are "bewildered" by the contradictory statements about the enrollment problem, are on the whole very eager and willing to assist in recruiting top-quality students; faculty simply need concrete advice on what they are expected to do in this matter. Furthermore, the criteria we have used in the past as predictive indicators of student success may have changed; in fact, one major obstacle seems to be that many students do not know how to manage or utilize their study-time, and may well lack the maturity to do the homework assigned. These factors, he argued, have a much greater influence than numbers posted in high school or on an entrance exam, and constitute more a retention rather than enrollment problem.

Vice-Provost Goodman pointed out that attracting quality students to the University is the responsibility of the faculty, and no one else. Responding to Professor Malone's observation, he suggested that the lack of student motivation (or seeming lack of maturity) may be due to other factors as well: first, it may be that faculty are out of touch with students, and do not know how to engage them effectively; secondly, today's student population is more media-oriented, and have an "intellectual style" quite different from the one(s) to which most faculty are accustomed. "If we can begin to present what we have to offer in ways that these students will find compelling, then they will in fact do their work because they'll really want to do the work".

Professor Fournier did not see why UB could not have the same "remarkable" admissions standards found at other institutions; he felt that UB should make itself, as much as possible, "at least one of the premier institutions of the State University of New York, because of our research ground [...] We operate well with those students at the top end; we do not operate well with those at the bottom end". He also countered that UB lowered the center of admissible SAT scores a few years ago, with

the result that more students at the lower end were admitted, and with no increase on those at the higher end.

Dr. Batt suggested identifying faculty by township in New York State in order to plant the idea of choosing UB for higher education; after three or four years, we reap the harvest. Professor Sridhar agreed that only through having high-quality students can we attract more high-quality students, and suggested we look to the successful Honors Program for guidance in this. Professor Meacham proposed a two- to three-day retreat to give this issue sufficient deliberation. As a starting point for a "quick-fix", in the meantime, he suggested we revise the admissions policy statement to the effect that UB recruits high-quality students. UB could also follow the example of other institutions by buying faculty time away from departments, and engaging faculty less in actual instruction and more in recruitment and retention efforts.

Item 3: Approval of the Minutes of May 7 and May 14, 1997, and of March 18, 1998

The Minutes of May 7 and May 14, 1997, and of March 18, 1998 were approved.

Item 4: Report on Classroom Utilization and Quality

Professor Foster reported that the Committee on Classroom Quality and Utilization is currently attempting to develop a more rational, less random, and consistent process for scheduling classrooms. The first group under consideration comprises the large classes, since these are most problematic when, for example, scheduling conflicts occur; the solution is to assign each of these a set time slot for a set room, and keep it that way from one semester/year to the next. The second group comprises those classes that are interrelated within individual programs and which serve a lot of students; to alleviate the problem of disjunct times and class sites, the Committee is planning to coordinate these classes more, possible through block registration.

In its attempts to allocate rooms "in a way that balances the limited amount of space that we have with the legitimate curricular and personal needs [of the instructors]", the Committee is promoting more intensive use of times that are heavily underutilized, thereby relieving the demand on the most popular --- and overcrowded --- time slots. Within this more general objective, the Committee is looking first at non-central, departmental space to see how it is used; the guiding principle in its investigation is that, although it is alright to have departmental space, it is *not* alright to have that space empty. Departments will thus be expected to demonstrate "reasonably intensive use of the space" and/or possibly make that space available to others for at least a portion of a day or week for central scheduling.

The rules for time and room assignment, he continued, are too rigid as they now stand, and need to be changed to allow for more flexibility. But by far the most difficult task the Committee has yet to face is to determine who will have the main authority for scheduling.

The Committee is trying to determine the needs of South Campus scheduling, and to ensure that any investments on that campus are consonant with these needs. Last, but not least, it will investigate what and how much technology should be included in the classrooms.

Dr. Gold, Associate Dean of the Undergraduate College, reported that his Committee on Classroom Quality had conducted a survey among the faculty, the results of which helped indicate both the best and worst classrooms on campus as well as how certain problems (e.g., slamming doors) could be solved. A second survey on technology use yielded more complex data, making it difficult for the Committee to determine how much technology is used or needed. With the help of increased faculty participation, the Committee is making progress toward fulfilling its dual charge of developing (a) standards of quality for all classrooms, and (b) a long-term budget for bringing the rooms up to, and maintaining, these standards.

Some problems are being addressed this summer. The Committee has clearance to use \$100,000 to replace 25-year-old carpeting this summer, particularly in Knox 20. Technology, which proves to be a "sinkhole" because "there isn't ever nearly enough money" for upgrades and servicing; not only a budget, but also reasonable expectations, must first be developed. One example: The projectors in Natural Sciences & Mathematics are insufficient, cost about \$50,000 per classroom to replace, and yet

are only four years old --- "This is hardly what I think of as a capital expense; it's more like a weekly allowance that we're being asked to budget". The worst rooms on campus, he continued, are in such bad condition that piece-meal repairs are no longer feasible; they must be totally refurbished and brought up to code.

Professor Meacham wondered whether, given the scope of the problems, there should be an administrative office in charge of classroom quality, in addition to Facilities & Planning. Professor Foster admitted that the lack of a classroom advocate has been frustrating, but said that the Provost hoped that increased faculty response and participation would compensate. Professor Schroeder asked whether many of the blackboards were being replaced by whiteboards, which he found to be far superior --- "unless", Dr. Gold warned, "someone takes a permanent marker and chooses to write something really juicy on that board --- it will be on that board forever".

After an executive session to discuss the Periodic Review Report, the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert G. Hoeing

Secretary of the Faculty Senate

Present:

Secretary: Robert G. Hoeing

Engineering & Applied Sciences: Ramalingam Sridhar

Graduate School of Education: Thomas Schroeder

Health-Related Professions: Judith Tamburlin

Information & Library Studies: George D'Elia

Management: Ramaswamy Ramesh

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: Ronald Batt, Cedric Smith

Natural Sciences & Mathematics: James Faran

Social Sciences: Jack Meacham, Simon Singer

SUNY Senators: John Fisher, Dennis Malone

University Libraries: Marilyn Kramer

University Officers: Thomas Headrick, Nicolas Goodman

Guests:

Charles Fournier (*Chair, Faculty Senate Committee on Admissions and Retention*)

Howard Foster (*Chair, University Committee on Classroom Capacity and Utilization*)

Peter Gold (*Undergraduate College; Chair, University Committee on Classroom Quality*)

Sue Wuetcher (*The Reporter*)

Excused:

Chair: Peter A. Nickerson

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: Boris Albini

SUNY Senators: Claude Welch

Absent:

Architecture & Planning: Sherri Wallace

Arts & Letters: Martha Hyde

Dental Medicine: Robert Baier

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: Herbert Schuel

Natural Sciences & Mathematics: Melvyn Churchill

Nursing: Powhattan Wooldridge

Pharmacy: Nathan

SUNY Senators: Maureen Jameson