

FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Meeting of September 11, 1996 (approved)

revised 10/3/95)

E-MAIL: ZBFACSEN@ACSU.BUFFALO.EDU

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 PM in Room 567 Capen Hall to consider the following agenda:

1. [Approval of Minutes of April 3 and August 28, 1996](#)
2. [Report of the Chair](#)
3. [Report of the Provost](#)
4. [Calendar Update](#)
5. [Undergraduate Admissions Policy / Report of the Admissions and Retention Committee](#)

ITEM 1: Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the FSEC meetings of April 3 and August 28, 1996 were approved.

ITEM 2: Report of the Chair

The Chair requested a moment of silence to remember two members of the university community who recently passed away: George Collins, M.D., former SUNY Trustee, and Carmelo Armenia, professor emeritus in the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences.

Professor Welch reported on his first monthly meeting (on September 24) with the senior administrators of the university, at which several items were discussed: the content of the

President's report at the annual meeting of the Voting Faculty, namely, the role of higher education during the next decade within the context of New York State; the shared perceptions of faculty concerns; the implementation of Faculty Senate resolutions; the agenda of issues to be discussed at FSEC and Faculty Senate meetings during the current academic year; and the timetable (at 3:00 PM) for discussion with the FSEC of one major policy, should the President or Provost be available.

Professor Welch announced that the President has decided that each year, a plan for the expenditure of the technology fee will be prepared and submitted for his approval; the Chair circulated for the FSEC's consideration the current plan prepared by Voldemar Innus. He also announced that a series of billboards around the city will soon display messages about UB's Sesquicentennial celebration.

The Chair reminded the FSEC members that they would be discussing the admissions policy at UB today, and urged them to re-examine prior Senate resolutions on this topic. He mentioned that UB had met its enrollment target and came close to meeting the target for transfer students, but that the attrition rate is significantly higher than it should be.

Other announcements and reminders included:

- the upcoming orientation for new senators on September 17, which would be open as well to all senators;
- the annual meeting of the Voting Faculty (September 24) and the University Convocation (October 2), which the Chair urged all FSEC members to attend;
- the upcoming meetings of the Task Force on Quality (9/16) and the Graduate School Executive Committee (9/12);
- the imminent report of the Provost's Task Force on Incentives and Resources;
- the Provost's efforts to involve the department chairs more fully in academic planning.

Since the Provost had not yet arrived, the Chair opened the floor for questions and comments. Professor Nickerson wondered if there had been any talk about a report on the academic enterprise; the Chair replied that that could be a theme for the University Convocation. Professor Nickerson mentioned that the former Provost had begun an annual report to the faculty, to which Vice-Provost Goodman added that it had been based on a Senate resolution, and that Provost Headrick had given such a report last year. Vice- Provost Goodman asked whether the Chair had received any charge for the Task Force on Quality. Professor Welch replied that he had only seen the composition, but no charge as yet.

Referring to a document on student satisfaction, which the Chair had distributed at the meeting, Professor Jameson said she found some of the figures on the second page rather implausible -- for example, the ratings on "availability of advisor" and "value of information provided by advisor" were much higher than one/she would have expected, based on the apparent level of student dissatisfaction she had heard over the past few years. Professor Welch himself was struck by the general decline in student satisfaction, but understood how it could in part be attributable to the present reduction in services. Professor Albini was also impressed over the last few years that the level of dissatisfaction has increased, and speculated that there must be something the faculty could do.

Professor Welch asked whether it would be appropriate to ask some of the standing Committees, such as Student Life, Computing Services, and Athletics and Recreation, for specific comments on this document. On a tangential topic, Professor Jameson mentioned that the Computing Services Committee should perhaps look into upgrading the computers in the public sites and improving the mesh between the availability and the tasks students are being asked to execute on these machines. Professor Danford, referring to the handout, observed that a ratings growth of .01 in one or two areas of student satisfaction is essentially insignificant; he speculated that, while the quality of services may have in fact improved, the students' expectations have risen so substantially that the perceived quality of services has sunk.

Professor Welch solicited suggestions for items which could be included in the Provost's annual report. Professor Nickerson mentioned that it would be useful to relate progress to what the Provost said would happen, but was not sure whether the Convocation would be the appropriate place for that, nor whether there would be enough time. Professor Albini thought the issues that Vice-Provost Triggles had raised at the previous FSEC meeting should be addressed. Professor Nickerson noted that, due to a change in organizational structure in the Senior Vice-President's office on informational technology, as well as to a number of common issues, the Senate Library and Computing Services committees will need to work together now and in the future. In light of this, the Bylaws Committee should examine whether we have the "correct mix" of committees. Nickerson also mentioned that the library was about to purchase its three millionth volume, a rare book, and the next purchase will be a CD-ROM which is being produced here --- all part of the Sesquicentennial celebration.

The Chair then suggested that the FSEC move into executive session to discuss committee appointments until the Provost arrived.

Item 3: Report of the Provost

Professor Nickerson repeated to the Provost what he thought should/might be included in the report given at the Convocation. Provost Headrick replied that the previous Provost would give his report "off the top of his head" [some members of the FSEC denied this, insisting that Bloch's reports were "laboriously prepared"]. He mentioned that he was working on a response to the planning proposal, which would probably suffice; it would not be so much a look to the past as a report on what we will be doing over the next few years.

Professor Welch asked the Provost if there would be a specific charge for the Task Force on Quality. Provost Headrick replied affirmatively, and that the charge included nothing surprising. The report of the Task Force on Incentives and Resource Allocation would

probably emerge in late September or early October. He then welcomed any questions or comments; there were none.

Item 4: Calendar Update

Vice-President Palmer, Chair of the University Calendar Commission, addressed two questions about the university calendar, the first concerning the comparability between total contact hours in the MWF and TTh formats, the second concerning the range of the calendar, i.e., how far ahead it has been developed.

Vice-President Palmer replied that, after having spent a great deal of time investigating the education law and requirements of New York State, the Committee concluded that there would indeed be 42 class sessions for the Fall and Spring semesters. The classes that meet after 6 PM on Rosh Hashanah posed a special problem in the number of hours; Palmer said there would be a footnote in the draft asking the instructors to make up this time in three consecutive classes. The resulting calendar, he claimed, is in compliance with State Education Law. The Chair then asked for suggestions for additional faculty members to join the Calendar Commission.

Professor Nickerson asked about the possibility of a five-year calendar; Vice- President Palmer replied they had considered a number of possibilities, but that due to complications, the Commission settled for a one-year calendar. However, he saw no reason not to have one extending three to five years ahead.

Professor Fournier asked for clarification on the number of class sessions and weeks: Since the State Education Law requires 15 weeks of classes, inclusive of final exam week, are final exams therefore required for accreditation? Vice-Provost Goodman stated that this was indeed problematic, in part because many faculty do not give final exams; in addition, there are scheduling difficulties, both with time and with classroom space, which further complicate the issue.

Professor Jameson argued that if faculty do not administer final examinations, then we are not meeting the requirements. She also wondered whether the calendar for the current academic year would be changed. Vice-President Palmer assured her there would be no changes, since this would cause too many problems. Professor Danford observed that the main problem with the calendar is its inconsistency; besides the discrepancy between the MWF and TTh schedules, there is the additional problem of teaching three one-credit courses, five weeks each -- given our fourteen-week format, one of the courses is short-changed. Provost Headrick asked what would be the problem with a fifteen-week semester. Professor Meacham wondered how Buffalo State College and SUNY at Stony Brook, which begin the Fall semester one week later than UB, manage their schedules. Vice-Provost Goodman responded that there is a difference in the way in which other institutions use their time -- some have class lengths other than 50 minutes, some have Saturday classes, and so on. Vice-President Palmer added that the calendar also accommodates certain expectations and priorities of the faculty. Professor Jameson wondered exactly what guidelines (if any) we follow. Vice-President Palmer replied that the guidelines are in the State Education Law, and that we are in compliance with those guidelines. Professor Jameson challenged again that if faculty do not administer final exams, they must be violating the Law. The Chair summed up that there are several complex questions involved, and wished the problem could be resolved within the next few years.

Item 5: Undergraduate Admissions Policy / Report of the Admissions and Retention Committee

Professor Welch directed the FSEC's attention to the Senate's powers and responsibilities concerning student admissions and retention, as shown in certain resolutions (distributed earlier). Of the three criteria used (since 1985) to determine freshman admission, one -- rank in class -- is not available from all schools, thus the Senate might consider eliminating this one. The Individualized Admissions Program, active since 1988, considered other factors (such as leadership ability, special family circumstances, athletic ability or a particular artistic talent) for

students who wished to study at UB but did not quite reach the minimum test score.

Vice-President Palmer introduced Kevin Durkin, Director of Admissions and of the Individualized Admissions Program (IAP), who would give an overview of the applications process, its trends and policies, as well as talk about the IAP itself. He told the FSEC that they could not yet talk about the overall enrollment figures.

Mr. Durkin apologized for not having any detailed or definite figures, adding that newer developments, such as the BIRD process, alter the way the number of admissions are counted. He stated that Admissions began with an aggregate target of 2500 freshman matriculations and with an aggregate transfer target of 1650, bringing the total aggregate target to 4150. In pursuing those objectives, Admissions processed nearly 20,000 completed applications. In the aggregate, 14,469 offers (72%) of admission were made; preliminary indications suggest that 4727 of these students enrolled (32.6% in the aggregate yield). State-wide patterns show a decline in the number of applicants and actual applications, in every possible category.

Mr. Durkin reported two positive developments for UB: an increase in the number of local Western New York applicants, and an increase in first-choice as well as single applications within the state. At the moment, it appears that UB may slightly overshoot the freshman target, but that we may slightly undershoot the transfer target. He cautioned once again that these numbers were not definite, due to a variety of factors, such as the late passage of the State budget. He reported a mean high school average of about 90, an average percentile class rank of 77-80%, and an average re-centered SAT score of 1143.

Professor Welch reiterated the FSEC's concern for quality, and mentioned that we could feel pleased with the admissions figures in this respect. On the other hand, he expressed concern over the high rate of acceptance and the increasingly local nature of our students, hoping that we could more actively recruit out-of-state students. Professor Fournier asked how the GPAs of last year's regularly admitted freshman students compared to those of students accepted through the IAP. Mr. Durkin reported a two-semester average of IAP

admits of 2.43. Professor Fournier suggested that Mr. Durkin clarify that the range of SAT scores of 910-1050 is indeed the range for IAP admits, and not the athletic range, since he suspected that some athletes enter with a score below 910. Professor Fournier also asked how the new mean SAT score of 1130 compares with the older mean of 1075/1080. Mr. Durkin explained that there was not really much difference when all factors are considered, but affirmed Professor Fournier's suspicion that the scores had in general slipped somewhat over the past few years. Professor Fournier asked finally whether, of the combined yield of freshman and transfer students, the transfer yield was actually the higher of the two. Mr. Durkin affirmed this.

Professor Jameson also asked whether the IAP students' GPA of 2.43 reflected only their work at the freshman level or beyond as well. Mr. Durkin replied that the mean GPA score reflected the performance of only the first two semesters of work for each group of IAP admits. Professor Jameson then asked about the comparability of attrition rates, and if there were no significant difference in attrition rates, why do we have admission standards? Mr. Durkin responded that the retention rate is probably stronger among IAP students. Professor Fournier supported that conclusion with data from a study of 20 IAP students he conducted last year; he reported that 14 were still here, and of the remaining 6, three had taken only a temporary leave of absence.

David Toscana-Cantaffa wondered if any thought had been given to abandoning SAT scores as a standard or criterion for admission. Mr. Durkin replied that although he was not a champion of standard testing, the changes which had been incorporated into the test and testing procedure warranted retaining the SAT score as one admission criterion.

Furthermore, each component of the admissions criteria enhanced the ability to predict a student's performance; consequently, he considered it foolish to abandon any one of them. Professor Fournier observed that the strongest predictor, namely high school rank in class, is the one being eliminated; it was the one predictor that dealt directly with a student's motivation. Professor Adams addressed a previous question regarding admission standards. She explained that students entering through the IAP, despite having scores which fall short, do relate to our standards; the Individual Admissions Committee looks for special

talents which would give IAP students an edge in compensating for their somewhat lower scores. By no means, however, would this justify doing away with the admission standards currently in use.

Professor Meacham asked about the mix of majority and minority students. Mr. Durkin replied that certain court decisions have had no effect as of yet in New York, but that Admissions is pursuing the matter aggressively. Professor Meacham wondered whether we could more aggressively pursue recruiting out-of-state students with any measurable success. Mr. Durkin said we have every reason to mount such a recruitment program, especially when one considers that New York State is a major exporter of college-bound students. Professor Meacham then asked whether it was already too late to start such a campaign for the Fall 1997 semester. Mr. Durkin replied that Admissions had already begun: for example, the Office has a list of over 40,000 out-of-state high school students with whom it will aggressively correspond; in addition, Admissions people attend college and career fairs in several neighboring areas. Vice-President Palmer re-affirmed this, saying that a couple of aggressive recruitment plans were already underway.

Professor Harwitz began his report with a question. He noted that entering high school classes are growing in other places in the country -- but is this reflected in the population which we draw on? Mr. Durkin replied that, projecting over the next 2-4 years and drawing on the best information available to him, New York State is indeed poised for an upturn in high school graduation numbers; at the same time, he warned that graduation rates were actually lower than expected as recently as last December, consequently the picture is not as optimistic as one would hope. He added that the student body emerging from the high schools will be different from the one that entered -- more urban, more diverse. Professor Harwitz reported that the Committee on Admissions and Retention is attempting to set up an experiment to determine "that variable of the greatest immediate concern", namely, items that improve the retention of students. If the number of students staying on would go up five to ten percent, that would mean another 150-200 students would stay at UB and would not have to be replaced by succeeding freshman classes. This and research into literature on the issue led the committee to conclude that "aggressive advisement" -- i.e. a

system in which freshmen would regularly consult advisors before any trouble could set in -- would significantly improve the retention rate in any given program and thus might be a good experiment to try. The committee planned to test one group of freshmen who receive that treatment against a group who do not, and then examine the results. He added that there is ancillary evidence that programs with more advisement have higher retention rates, such as EOP and the Honors Program.

On a different topic, Professor Harwitz expounded on admissions criteria. He suggested a different way of viewing these by assuming that the University accepts all applications, but issues a warning to each student -- based on the best information available (including test scores, GPA, etc.) -- about the risk that that student may be in trouble; in such a system, admissions criteria are essentially as a way to issue a warning. This explains why special admits have performance levels which are comparable to regular admits. He foresees the ultimate report of the Admissions Committee as consisting of two parts, the first describing the admissions criteria, the second discussing the particular application of these criteria as used presently.

Professor Welch expressed concern about some of the details, particularly about the 25% rate of matriculation. Professor Fournier was surprised at this, because he thought the matriculation rate was around 45%. Kevin Durkin qualified this by explaining that students actually apply to SUNY, and not particularly to UB, and thus have a choice not indicated in "comparable" matriculation rate indicators; if there were a one-to-one relationship of applicant-to-university, the figure would dramatically improve. Professor Ludwig pointed out that the rate has been 25% for a long time, and so this should not come as any surprise. Professor Fournier felt that every student applying to UB, and not merely those who enter through the IAP, should have a second form to fill out, so that we could have a better sense of which students were truly serious about studying at UB.

Provost Headrick remarked that the University is developing a plan to develop its own application process for out-of-state students. Previously, one of the problems has been the fact that applications to UB have been sent to Albany, thus confusing the UB campus with

SUNY as a whole. This revision of the application process will then be applied to all applications. Professor questioned the efficacy of the campaign to recruit out-of-state students, since it was his understanding that there is a mandate to give preference to in-state applicants. Provost Headrick replied that in the high-demand Health Science professions, there seems to be an informal set of expectations to give preference to in-state applicants; but for the rest of the university, the situation is changing, there is a sense that we ought to be recruiting people from out-of-state, in order to grow by attracting talent from other places. Professor then wondered whether there might be a lash should we recruit out-of-state students for a limited number of admissions in a given area. Provost Headrick replied that this is certainly a possibility, and that we must be careful about this. Professor Durand supported the case for the EOP, stating that it has a retention rate of 40-70% (depending on how you look at it). He added that we must look at the numbers for retention in the context of what we provide for our students.

Professor Meacham suggested that our retention/graduation rates reflect badly on the faculty, which in turn reflects badly on the school; hence it is no surprise that fewer students apply. Professor Danford wondered to what extent retention was adversely affected by departments that have "built-in" attrition rates, such as the School of Architecture. Provost Headrick said this was counter-productive, and asked why the School of Architecture did this. Professor Danford replied that this was in order to maintain reasonable faculty-to-student ratios by the third or fourth years. Kevin Durkin affirmed that this has a "profoundly influential in a negative sense" impact on recruitment, that it damages the image of UB in its efforts to recruit. Professor Wetherhold pointed out that some programs have rigid limitations on faculty-to-student ratios in terms of space and time, but that most programs are malleable enough to accommodate additional students if only they are willing to do so. Professor Meidinger asked whether there was any reason for the "built-in attrition" in the School of Architecture. Professor Danford replied that the faculty-to-student ratio in the studios is directly related to the quality of instruction. Professor Fournier replied that a similar phenomenon occurred in Biology, due to how well the students performed in their lower-level courses. He also had heard that Kevin Durkin had submitted his intention for retiring, and took the opportunity to express his appreciation

for everything he has done for the University during his tenure as Director for Admissions. Professor Fournier also assumed a search was being conducted for a replacement. Vice-President Palmer affirmed that a search process had already been started. Mr. Durkin expressed his gratitude for the appreciation and support he received, as well as his enjoyment and pride in working for UB, and that he was retiring not for any negative reason whatsoever, but simply because he was weary.

Professor Miller doubted whether the attrition rate in the School of Architecture and other programs with similar rates really had any significant effect on the overall attrition rate; he also pointed out that this kind of attrition is expected and accepted at many institutions throughout the world. Furthermore, if the students are aware, or made aware of this, there is a great difference in the attitude the institution is taking, and that this is something we should recognize. Professor Frisch noted that there is a huge difference between telling a student that he/she has a small chance of successfully completing the program because of space/time limitations, and informing the student of the same small chance because of our high standards; the second one would be the easier for students to understand and accept. Professor Harwitz said that this is something that must be carefully considered in terms of the costs on the student, as well as on the institution.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert G. Hoeing
Secretary of the Faculty Senate

THOSE PRESENT:

University Officers: T. Headrick, R. Palmer, K. Durkin

Chair: Claude Welch

Secretary: Robert G. Hoeing

Architecture & Planning: G. Scott Danford

Arts & Letters: Michael Frisch, Jeannette Ludwig

Dental Medicine: William Miller

Engineering & Applied Sciences: Robert Wetherhold

Graduate School of Education: James Hoot

Health-Related Professions: Atif Awad

Law: Errol Meidinger

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: Boris Albin

Natural Sciences & Mathematics: James Faran, Chuck Fournier

Pharmacy: Nathan

Social Sciences: Jack Meacham

SUNY Senators: Maureen Jameson, Peter Nickerson, Claude Welch

University Libraries: Marilyn Kramer

Ex officio: Carol Ann Sellers

Guests:

Graduate Student Association: David Toscana-Cantaffa

REPORTER: Sue Wuetcher

Other Guest(s):

Center for Academic Development, EOP: Henry J. Durand

Admissions and Retention Committee:

Mitchell Harwitz, Chair

Excused:

Medicine and Biomedical Sciences: Margaret Acara

SUNY Senator: Dennis Malone

Absent:

Arts and Letters: Nathan Grant

Educational Opportunity Center: Areta Buchner

Management: Ramaswamy Ramesh

Medicine and Biomedical Sciences: Herbert Schuel

Nursing: Mattie Rhodes

Social Sciences: Donald Henderson

