

FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of October 16, 1996 (approved)

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The Chair convened the meeting at 2:00 PM to consider the following agenda:

1. [Report of the Chair](#)
2. [Approval of the Minutes from April 24, 1996](#)
3. [Conference on General Education](#)
4. [Report of the Provost](#)
5. [Committee on Research and Creative Activity](#)
6. [Faculty/Staff Handbook](#)
7. [Executive Session](#)

Item 1: Report of the Chair

Professor Welch reminded the Committee of the first Senate meeting of the academic year this coming Tuesday, October 22, in the Student Union Theatre. He then introduced a new member of the FSEC, Professor George D'Elia from the School of Information and Library Studies. The Chair announced that the Calendar Commission will meet some time next week to discuss the problems raised by the FSEC at its meeting of October 9. One member of the Commission had made a suggestion to reduce the number of days for grading; whereas a previous 1987 Senate resolution stipulates four days, in reality about two and a half weeks were allowed for grading under previous calendars.

The Vice-President of Student Affairs had asked the Chair to nominate one faculty member to serve on the search committee for the new Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions; the Chair protested that this was insufficient, and secured the nomination of three faculty members to that committee. Other members will include one student, one

professional staff member, one Admissions staff member, and one representative from the Provost's office.

Professor Welch also alerted the FSEC to the following items:

- the Provost's office has made its recommendations for the four slots to be filled on the PRB, and the matter is now awaiting the President's decision;
- a subcommittee of the EPPC will submit a report on laboratory animal dissection choice to be considered by the FSEC in two weeks;
- also in two weeks, the Bylaws Committee will present the revised Standing Orders as well as some proposed amendments to the Charter of the Faculty Senate;
- the Bookstore Advisory Committee, chaired by Vice-President Palmer, needs a few more members;
- the Committee on Information and Library Resources met recently to discuss how the libraries have adapted to the electronic revolution, and also how classrooms are being equipped for use of electronic equipment;
- the Budget Priorities Committee will discuss a series of policy issues that the senior administration has proposed sending to the Board of Trustees;
- enrollment data over the last 35 years at UB indicate (among other things) that current UB enrollment is about the same as in 1972, that the percentage of women enrolled has increased about 4%, and that the percentage of minority students has risen since 1980 from 10% to 20%;
- there has as yet been no update on the dismissal of Chairs at ECMC -- the matter is under discussion by the Medical School's Faculty Council Steering Committee.

The Chair reported on the latest proceedings in the University Faculty Senate. These included:

- meeting with the Interim Chancellor;

- viewing a first version of a video on effective grant writing;
- hearing reports from the five standing committees, which had passed resolutions urging the administration to appoint a Provost and Vice-Chancellor for Student Affairs as soon as possible;
- mention of a new Academic Standards Committee;
- discussion on faculty productivity involving the university faculty senates and faculty unions of SUNY and California State University.

Professor Nickerson commented on three items in the discussions of the University Faculty Senate which he found disturbing. First, central administration is conducting a mission review of units, asking each what its mission is, and whether it should be pursuing that mission. Secondly, certain "performance indicators" would be implemented in assessing each campus' performance. Thirdly, more precise admissions standards for the different centers would be used. Professor Malone noted also that particular individuals support the idea that community colleges should constitute the first two years of SUNY. He also asked if the Admissions Committee at UB considered the issue of dropping rank in class as one of the admissions criteria; Professor Welch replied he did not know that yet.

Item 2: Approval of the Minutes from April 24, 1996

The Minutes of the FSEC meeting of April 24, 1996, were approved as circulated.

Item 3: General Education Conference in Albany

Vice-Provost Nicolas Goodman reported that the meeting was organized by the Chair of SUNY Senate and the Chair of the Faculty Council of the Community Colleges. The attendance of about 350 included mainly faculty, as well as Trustee Candace de Russy, Chair of the Trustees' Academic Standards Committee, and various

administrators from other university systems. He observed primarily a strong emphasis on improved articulation; in fact, much of the impetus for the conference seems to have come from the perception that the four university centers do not really care about the general education which their students receive. If there were a SUNY-wide general education curriculum, and some guarantee that it was being taught rather uniformly, then it should facilitate articulation, i.e. "movement of students through the system". However, Vice-Provost Goodman doubted that any of these issues could be resolved unless SUNY decides whether it is tiered/hierarchical, or whether all campuses are equal. He knew of no consistent policy in SUNY about this issue. Although several members at the meeting think UB looks good in terms of articulation, and that we are doing better than most in providing access to our programs, Vice-Provost Goodman warned that this could also be perceived as a criticism, in the sense that UB is perhaps not upholding standards.

The other main emphasis Vice-Provost Goodman observed was a strong thrust "from the right" to have a traditional general education curriculum, rather than a more multi-culturally oriented, interdisciplinary curriculum. The highlight of the meeting was a report on the possibility of a SUNY core curriculum and its failure to set consistent and high academic standards. Vice-Provost Goodman added that UB's general education curriculum was well-received; many thought it more structured and more along the lines of what they would like to see than those of other institutions. He noted a general opposition to having a uniform curriculum imposed centrally; in addition, there seemed to be no will to provide the resources necessary for a new curriculum. The focus was much more on articulation problems rather than content. At any rate, a task force would be established to examine these issues.

As a final point, he reported that certain officials from the State Education Department and Board of Regents were very serious about raising standards in K-12 education -- higher standards with no exceptions and no excuses. They spoke out against further reductions, but wanted to see a definite commitment on the part of SUNY to demonstrate quality in its undergraduate programs, to become much more accountable for the quality of education

provided. In general, the emphasis was not so much on general education, but rather on the need to provide a much more visibly excellent undergraduate program.

Professor Malone, after noting that Vice-Provost Goodman presented the only readable overhead projections at the meeting, said that he considered Dr. Hirsch (the main speaker at the conference) an absolutely superb speaker, but one whose bias showed. Whereas Dr. Hirsch interpreted "general education" as a "liberal arts education", Professor Malone offered a differing opinion. He also clarified what the conference speakers meant by "articulation" -- i.e., not only that a graduate of one of the NYS community colleges would be assured of acceptance somewhere in SUNY, but would be as readily accepted to any program at any particular institution.

Professor Malone also affirmed Trustee Candace de Russy's firm conviction of what she would like to see taught at SUNY institutions. Vice-Provost Goodman observed that most people at the conference, including Trustee de Russy, do not appreciate the wide variety of degree programs offered at UB. In their deliberations at such conferences, they are thinking of the B.A. degree, and certainly not of students in Nursing, Engineering, and other schools. Vice-Provost Goodman said we need to be cautious in dealing with SUNY Central, that we need to keep reminding them of our program variety.

Professor Wetherhold asked for clarification of what was meant by "improved articulation". Vice-Provost Goodman replied that a student who attends a community college for two years would not suffer any disadvantage, but rather would be in the same position as if he had attended UB for those two years. Obstacles to this articulation included differing general education requirements as well as differing degrees of adequacy of certain preparatory courses.

Professor Frisch, commenting on the "unhealthful either/or atmosphere" one often finds at such meetings -- in this case, the dichotomy between a more modern, multi-cultural curriculum and a rather traditional one -- asked about the general response to the program at UB, and whether it was successful. Vice-Provost Goodman responded affirmatively. Using the specific example of the American Pluralism course, he argued that it is neither very

difficult to allay the widespread fear that this course amounts to political indoctrination, nor to articulate the way in which such a course fits into a liberal education. He had discussed this with Trustee de Russy, who agreed that this course at UB was acceptable. He observed a "difficult polarization" between those afraid of political indoctrination and those afraid of programs hostile to minorities; he added he was not sure how to reconcile the problem in general, but did have a good deal of success when discussing the issue with individuals.

Professor Grant wondered whether there was any discussion about involving students with Ethnic Studies and/or Women's Studies. Vice-Provost Goodman replied that there was not, that the discussions focussed on articulation problems. Professor Malone commented that there were also some at the meeting who thought UB had too many such programs. Professor Albini expressed concern over the rationale underlying decisions to offer or not to offer certain courses; he found it troubling to offer/require only those courses which would enable students to earn more after graduation, and warned that this should not be the only criterion.

Vice-Provost Goodman replied that this issue was visible at the meeting; there is indeed a notable tension between a liberal education and a vocational one. What caught his attention even more, however, was the difference in interpretation of "general education" whether it meant "fundamental knowledge" or the accumulation of "skills", such as composition and basic mathematics. He noted that many community colleges talk about skills when discussing general education, and added that we cannot continue to graduate students who lack those skills.

Professor Jameson asked whether anyone resists the imposition of a general education curriculum on undergraduates. Vice-Provost Goodman detected a broad consensus that students at a particular institution should have a common educational experience within that institution; it was his sense, however, that most members at the conference did not consider a SUNY-wide curriculum a good idea, but that the general education curriculum should be tailored to the particular strengths and weaknesses of each institution. Professor Frisch noted that the lack of clearly-defined minimal standards in general education is

precisely what impels our reservations toward education at the community colleges. Vice-Provost Goodman reiterated the problem that SUNY seemingly could not decide whether it is a tiered system or not; he added that one group at the meeting thought the community colleges should decide on and dictate for the rest of SUNY exactly what constituted general education.

Provost Headrick observed that it was hard enough to get agreement on the local level, and much more so on a state-wide level; for this reason, he doubted that there will be a centrally imposed state-wide general education curriculum. He added that the community colleges have set themselves up as THE providers of lower-division education, and that there are many who believe this should be reserved for them. The issue will return, since they will try to demonstrate on economic grounds, for example, that this idea is more efficient, that they are the experts in general education, and so on.

Item 4: Report of the Provost

The Provost had nothing in particular to report, and welcomed questions from the Committee. Professor Jameson asked to what extent computing would be funded in a decentralized way, and to what extent through CIT. Provost Headrick responded that resources were being moved out of the Provost's office to departments and groups of departments for computing, allocation coming out of the technology fee. He said that Voldemar Innus, in charge of both the Libraries and CIT, would ascertain, with the help of others, how best to produce consumer satisfaction in computer use at UB. This must result in some clear definition of CIT responsibility and decanal responsibility; over time there should be a greater distribution of resources and responsibility to the academic unit, while still maintaining a centralized infrastructure. The distribution of responsibility for computing is in a state of flux, and will be so for some time yet.

Professor Jameson noted that students and faculty need greater access to better computing technologies for certain classes, and wondered whether the appropriate strategy would be

to politely ask that CIT provide the necessary upgrades "before resorting to provostal money". Provost Headrick replied that CIT is responsible for the student computing labs, and needs to keep them upgraded; faculty and departmental computing, however, are a distributing responsibility.

Professor Meacham related that he was piloting a procedure which he hopes to make a requirement in the near future, one which puts 200-300 students on Netscape. He added that other faculty members had similar plans, and wondered it would be possible to have so many students working on Netscape simultaneously. Provost Headrick replied that it will not work as well as desired and that they should consult with each other and with CIT, otherwise it would not work. He speculated that the capacity to expand at such a rate is probably not possible, and entertained the idea of getting the students on a different network.

Item 5: Research and Creative Activity

Professor Yeagle, Chair of the Committee on Research and Creative Activity, began by pointing out that the Committee is attempting to define more narrowly the term "conflict of interest", a task made all the more difficult by the absence of any existing policy. His understanding is that the faculty at UB need, or would be best served by, a policy of guidance in areas in which the faculty are encouraged to explore more entrepreneurship and more connections with the broader community. In looking almost exclusively toward the future rather than to the past, Professor Yeagle said the Committee was most anxious to gather input and feed from a wide variety of sources, to glean comments and suggestions which would help delineate the issue (send comments to pyeagle@ubmedg.buffalo.edu). Professor Hull then cited several examples illustrating the multifarious manifestations of "conflict of interest" and the difficulty of drafting sufficiently broad yet clearly defined guidelines.

Professor Welch added that there have been numerous ethical and professional issues which universities have muddled through and that we need an effective way of dealing with such hypothetical issues and avoiding potential problems. Provost Headrick stressed that the issues are not hypothetical, but are real with real consequences. For example, he noted that state comptrollers are responsible for the distribution of state funds; were this funding to be misused to further a private gain unrelated to academic research, civil and criminal penalties would result.

Professor Bruckenstein related an incident from Rice University, in the wake of which a two-to-three day course on how not to get into trouble doing research was established. Professor Frisch, who as Chair of the Public Service Committee expressed special interest in the topic, pointed out that although most cases involve a conflict between missions, faculty members at UB need to wrestle with conflicts which arise within the mission/research activity for which they were hired. This is especially the case now, as the university looks for ways to become more involved in society. Professor Meacham agreed, saying that certain conflicts would arise because faculty members would be doing what the university wants them to do, and because we often are not aware of what our real interests are. The University's mission statement, which should state these interests, is too nebulous to provide any guidelines.

Professor Awad asked about the policy which allows faculty to practice or engage in off-campus consulting one day per week. Professor Hull replied that this is an unwritten rule. Provost Headrick agreed, saying this was widely believed, yet he could find no document in which this was codified.

Professor Jameson wondered about the conflict of interest which arises between work and family, since many of the faculty have young children with problems which may require them to be called away or otherwise not perform at full capacity; would the Committee include such conflicts in its deliberations? Professor Hull replied that such cases are common, and many are handled by simply notifying the Chair or supervisor of the department in which that faculty member is active. He said the Committee will investigate

whether this is indeed an adequate resolution to the problem. Professor Sternberg expressed concern about broadening the charge of the Committee to such an extent that it would be unworkable; instead, the Committee would concentrate on issues of professional and research conflicts. Professor Yeagle echoed this, noting that the depth and breadth of the issue have already made it very difficult to narrow the charge and focus on something attainable. Professor Miller urged the Committee nevertheless to acknowledge that the family problem exists, and that it should be included in writing in the report. Secondly, he noted that one's mere presence at the university does not imply productivity; in cases of those who work extensively at home, the opposite can apply. Thirdly, he cautioned the Committee against ignoring the past, since long-established habits of faculty members must be considered. Professor Hull replied that one might handle such problems by partitioning one's life into non-overlapping periods of time devoted to potentially conflicting interests. He added that the Committee will also consider the appearance of conflicts of interest, and how these might best be avoided.

Professor Frisch suggested it might be helpful to look for points of overlap with other Senate committees and offices in trying to define conflict of interest. He further noted that as the University changes, we must ask ourselves how we are to modify our notions of our mission as well as our behavior. Professor Meacham argued that, as long as one fulfills any obligations to the university, the reasons for an absence or other apparent conflict should not matter. Professor Hull replied that certain activities relate more directly to one's professional obligations than others. Professor Sternberg repeated his concern over broadening the charge of the Committee, saying that many problems must be resolved by an individual's conscience. Professor Bruckenstein addressed the issue of workload, observing that the underlying argument is that what we do at the university is different from any other job and that we define individually what we do or what we should do; he noted this is potentially very dangerous.

Professor Faran cautioned against establishing guidelines of what we should do to make our colleagues behave; instead, they should be guidelines for our own behavior. Vice-Provost Fischer suggested that at the moment at which a contractual agreement is made, one

should consider what obligations are specified, and what is expected from that individual. To this, Professor Welch noted that there is a provision requiring the Chair of a department to review with faculty both accomplishments and expectations on an annual basis.

Professor Yeagle thanked the FSEC for the helpful discussion.

Item 6: Faculty/Staff Handbook

Professor Welch welcomed suggestions for the revision of the Faculty/Professional Staff Handbook. Professor Meacham urged that as much of it as possible be produced in electronic form, and that a complete table of contents and index in printed form be made available to faculty in any numbers, informing them how to access the handbook on the computer. Professor Wetherhold supported the idea, deploring the waste of money spent in printing the handbook for wide circulation; at most, one hard copy should be sent to each unit. Professor Danford urged a variety of formats, in order to accommodate people with various disabilities. Professor Faran recommended that the computerized version be made searchable, and that if anyone or any department wishes a hard copy, this could be printed directly from the screen. Professor added that a considerable advantage to having the handbook on-line is that it can be easily and instantly updated.

After this discussion, the FSEC switched to executive session to discuss committee memberships, after which the meeting was adjourned at 4:17 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert G. Hoeing

Secretary of the Faculty Senate

THOSE PRESENT:

University Officer(s): Thomas Headrick, Ken Levy, William Fischer, Nicolas Goodman

Chair: Claude Welch

Secretary: Robert G. Hoeing

Architecture & Planning: G. Scott Danford

Arts & Letters: Michael Frisch, Nathan Grant

Dental Medicine: William Miller

Engineering & Applied Sciences: Robert Wetherhold

Graduate School of Education: James Hoot

Health-Related Professions: Atif Awad

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: Margaret Acara, Boris Albini, Herbert Schuel

Natural Sciences & Mathematics: James Faran, Stanley Bruckenstein

Pharmacy: Nathan

SILS: George D'Elia

Social Sciences: Peter Hare, Jack Meacham

SUNY Senators: Maureen Jameson, Dennis Malone, Peter Nickerson, Claude Welch

University Libraries: Marilyn Kramer

Guests:

REPORTER: Sue Wuetcher

SPECTRUM: Eric C. Fleming

Other Guest(s):

Research and Creative Activity Committee: Philip Yeagle (Chair), Ernest Sternberg, Richard Hull

Excused:

Law: Errol Meidinger

Management: Ramaswamy Ramesh

Absent:

Educational Opportunity Center: Areta Buchner

Nursing: Mattie Rhodes