

FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of October 30, 1996 (approved)

revised 10/3/95)

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The Chair convened the meeting at 2:00 PM in Room 567 Capen Hall to consider the following agenda:

1. [Report of the Chair](#)
2. [Approval of the Minutes of October 16, 1996](#)
3. [Academic Calendar](#)
4. [Report of the President](#)
5. [EPPC Update: Use of Animals in Undergraduate Education](#)
6. [Report of the Grading Committee](#)
7. [Report of the Bylaws Committee](#)

Item 1: Report of the Chair

After he welcomed to the FSEC Professor Bernice Noble (Microbiology), who replaces Professor Acara, Professor Welch reported that the Board of Trustees had met on campus the previous week. He distributed two handouts which summarized the main points of their discussion: first, a detailed analysis of the "migration" of students and the consequence to SUNY as a system; secondly, a report on the preliminary enrollment in SUNY which showed a drop in number of enrollments at several campuses, including UB. Professor Welch attributed this several reasons. He also noted that UB's budget is based on matriculating a minimum number of students per year; if the campus fails to meet this minimum, it suffers from reduced State allocations.

He announced the distribution of nomination ballots for the next Chair of the Faculty Senate, and requested that the nominations be returned to the Senate office by November 15. The Chair then

announced the four new members named to the President's Review Board: Mary Bisson (Biology), Pao-lo Liu (Electrical and Computer Engineering), Roberta Pentney (Anatomy), and David Perry (Architecture).

The Chair had met on Monday afternoon with the new student members of eight of the Senate standing committees, and was impressed by their maturity and commitment to the University. He is confident they will prove to be very helpful to the committees.

Every year, SUNY sponsors a conference on the use of computers in the classroom; the Chair announced the May 1997 conference and circulated three informational brochures. Professor Benenson had indicated he would not be able to serve as Chair of the University Governance Committee; also, Professor Bisson had resigned from the Library Committee. The Chair solicited nominations from the FSEC to replace them.

The FSEC discussed a letter from Professor Tall concerning faculty credit for team-teaching. Senior Vice-Provost Levy said he could find out if there were any University policy on this matter. Professor Malone mentioned that team-teaching was rather common, and was not aware that there was any problem. Professor Welch related that, according to the letter, the History Department does not let faculty teach courses unless they receive full credit. Professor Schuel remarked that, at least in the Medical School, there was no mechanism to reflect true faculty input into team-taught courses, and that this might be the problem indicated in the letter. Professor Noble explained that credit automatically went to the person who was listed as the course director, even if that person was the chair of the department; she thought the policy needed to be standardized and formally stated. Professor Jameson pointed out that Professor Tall's question was more an FTE issue than one of faculty workload. Professor Welch said he would work with Senior Vice-Provost Levy on this matter and would report to the FSEC.

Item 2: Approval of the Minutes of October 16, 1996

The Minutes of the FSEC meeting of October 16, 1996, were approved as circulated.

Item 3: Academic Calendar 1997/98

Following a vote of the FSEC (October 9, 1996) of 14-1-1 in favor of recommendations, the Calendar Commission had reconsidered the proposed academic calendar for 1997/98. President Greiner said the Commission had made two recommendations. The first, which he considered a "no-brainer", because of the advantages it offered, was to begin the Fall semester after Labor Day; the later start would require classes (including the final exam period) to extend through December 20. This met with general approval.

The only other question, President Greiner remarked, was how long an intersession we wanted. There were two alternatives for the Spring semester: beginning on January 20 and ending on May 17, or starting on January 12 and ending on May 10. He asked the members of the FSEC for their preferences. A possible advantage of the earlier starting/ending dates for students would be a jump on summer employment, but President Greiner indicated no personal preference on the issue. He mentioned only that UB has a rather long intersession, and asked whether the faculty needed it.

Professor Danford asked about the implications for energy consumption and costs. President Greiner replied that there were "modest" budget and environmental considerations. Professor Wetherhold claimed that the extended block of time in January is particularly beneficial in that it allows time for research and for preparing proposals for grants and conference papers. Vice-Provost Goodman noted that if the Fall semester were to start after Labor Day, the Spring semester should begin later as well so as to allow sufficient time between semesters for administrative matters. President Greiner agreed that this would seem to be the better alternative. Professor Miller strongly supported the later Spring semester starting date, noting that it would be especially stressful for the Dental School to begin earlier, since the Northeast Regional Boards take place at this time. He added that the Professional Staff Senate had also considered and rejected the earlier starting date.

Professor Bruckenstein voiced the opinion that having two extra weeks in the summer would be invaluable, and more useful than the having four weeks between the Fall and Spring semesters. President Greiner countered that the earlier January starting date would compress too much the time

needed for grading and other administrative matters. Professor Miller asked why, if the professional schools could run on their own schedules, must they follow the same grading schedule; were the schedules different, there would be no problem. The issue of observing the second day of Rosh Hashanah was raised by Professor Schuel, who was concerned that peer institutions which observe it may attract students away from UB. President Greiner pointed out that the issue had been discussed exhaustively, and that UB does what has been done historically. He added that some peer institutions do not observe Rosh Hashanah at all, and did not consider the issue significant in terms of competitiveness. In his opinion, an individual must make accommodations for religious beliefs.

Professor Bruckenstein observed that a shorter winter break could be advantageous for students involved in graduate research programs; transportation during the break is much curtailed, and shortening the break would benefit those who rely on it. Professor Miller addressed the possibility of reducing the number of days for grading. He was concerned that "we are so wrapped up in trying to get our grades in because the only way to get them in that quickly is by doing it by computer", which he viewed as inappropriate for a University education and examination procedure. President Greiner said that that was outside the jurisdiction of the Calendar Commission. Vice-President Palmer commented that the Calendar Commission did reconvene as the FSEC suggested, and that the two draft calendars were equally acceptable to the Commission. President Greiner suggested we go ahead with the calendar with the later starting dates in both semesters, considering the discussion he had just hear.

The Chair expressed the hope that the Calendar Commission could project calendars ahead for a couple years; President Greiner agreed, saying that was its charge. A non-binding straw vote was taken on the two calendars for 1997/98; none voted in favor of the draft with the earlier starting dates, and the alternative draft passed almost unanimously, with one abstention.

Professor Malone asked whether there has been any recent study of the relation between the amount of money saved and the level of energy reduction; he explained that if a building's internal temperature were lowered below a critical level, the cost of heating it up again would outweigh the savings. President Greiner assured him that this is examined periodically, but had no data available.

Item 4: Report of the President

President Greiner had met with the SUNY Trustees the previous week at UB and at Buffalo State College. He reported that one item of discussion focussed on the place of the University centers within the State University, an issue (he added) which the Trustees only seldom consider. He believed that he, on behalf of UB, had made headway in getting them to think about the strategic importance of the University centers in higher education, about giving them a chance to advance rather than decline. He gave them data indicating that New York State, compared with peer states, spends quite reasonably on higher education; for example, in terms of percentage of total local governmental spending, New York State ranks 50th. Of the states with the ten highest populations, New York State's per capita spending on higher education is quite respectable, ranking 35th, compared with California's at 33rd. He concluded that New York is not being niggardly in spending on higher education, and furthermore that higher education is not the problem in New York State; rather, all the other expenditures constitute the State's budget problems.

President Greiner also suggested to the Trustees that they think about whether higher education should be a major part of the solution for New York's future. The Chair of the Board agreed that education is THE issue of the day, and that the State must take a different look at it. In general, the President found the Trustees to be open, de-politicizing, and deeply engaged in discussing academic and administrative policy for the State University. They are also thinking about the different types of institutions, and realize they cannot all be managed under the same rubric or same policies.

Professor Hare asked whether the Trustees found the comparison with California surprising; President Greiner replied he did not know. He said that, typically, the Trustees do not receive materials which get them to think "broadly and analytically" about education in New York State. They spend a lot of time discussing budget tactics, and seldom have the leisurely opportunity to consider the issues they discussed this past week. The more often they do look at these issues, he continued, the better off we are. To the Trustees he underscored the point that California has a tiered system, which makes a difference --- he pointed out that two more institutions in the California system (Davis and Irvine) were recently elected to the AAU. The disadvantage of being compared to the California system is that

SUNY does not fare well. Stratification does make a difference, and the relatively small size of units within SUNY has cost much.

Professor Malone asked whether there had been any discussion of reducing the difference between in- and out-of-state tuition. President Greiner replied that three of the colleges which thought they had an out-of-state market had indeed talked about the issue; the Provost of Purchase thought that if he had more flexibility, his college could attract more students from the neighboring region and from Connecticut for continuing education programs, as well as charge higher tuition for its Fine Arts programs. One problem we have, President Greiner continued, is that the Trustees have viewed SUNY as twelve colleges plus four university centers, and have spent a relatively large percentage of money on other parts of the system which handle only 20% of the students. He believes the Trustees are beginning to realize that they need to treat the university centers and colleges differentially.

Item 5: EPPC Update: Use of Animals in Undergraduate Education

Professor Loretz reported that the EPPC had met over the summer to examine UB's policies with respect to dissection in undergraduate courses. The EPPC assembled a fact sheet which summarized the use of animals in teaching. Only a few departments were involved. The Committee identified three types of uses: visual examination and/or dissection of preserved specimens, field and laboratory observation of animals and embryos, and the harvesting of live tissues for physiological and immunological experimentation.

In addition, the EPPC collected policy statements from courses at UB and elsewhere, as well as from a number of national societies and scientific organizations; the Committee found the policies at UB to be consistent with those promulgated by those organizations. Students are informed of the policies well before the final date for Drop/Add, and their choice to participate or not to participate in specific labs does not influence the timely completion of their undergraduate programs. He added that the pattern of live animal use has changed over the last decade; the use of mammalian species has been virtually eliminated in favor of (often computerized) simulation. In conclusion, the policies and practices at UB

are in accord with nationwide professional discourse. Consequently, the EPPC recommends no further action.

Professor Nickerson found the report to be carefully reasoned and compiled, and thought the Committee should be commended accordingly. Professor Miller moved to accept the report, which was seconded by Professor Noble; it was approved unanimously.

Item 6: Report of the Grading Committee

The chair of the Grading Committee, Professor Schroeder, introduced the other members of the Committee who were present at the meeting: Vice-Provost Goodman (ex officio), Professors Baumer (Philosophy), Churchill (Chemistry), Straubinger (Pharmaceutics), and Stuart Goldberg (undergraduate student). He circulated copies of notes from the Committee's initial meeting of the academic year, which included possible topics for consideration.

Professor Welch stated that one major concern had been the revised policy on academic good standing, and invited Vice-Provost Goodman to share some relevant data with the FSEC. Vice-Provost Goodman reported that, following the implementation of the new policy which the Senate adopted, there had been some improvement on the total number of students placed on probation. He cautioned that he was not sure whether the numbers were real, since some may be due to an "overall relaxation of the rules", but that the situation improved nevertheless, regardless of how one interpreted the data.

Professor Malone observed that seniors formed the largest group of students making unsatisfactory progress, and wondered if Vice-Provost Goodman had any comment. Vice-Provost Goodman had nothing specific to say on that issue, but pointed out that the group with the largest number of academic difficulties were sophomores. Professor Schuel asked what the difference was between unsatisfactory progress and academic probation. Vice-Provost Goodman referred to the Senate resolution approved last Spring, by which a student is placed on probation if the overall GPA falls below 2.0; in other cases (not having declared a major, GPA falling below 2.0 in a semester, etc.), the student is considered as not making satisfactory academic progress for two semesters. Professor

Schuel then asked whether a student would be penalized if some requirement could not be fulfilled. Vice-Provost Goodman replied that this was not the case.

Professor Bruckenstein asked what percentage of students getting into trouble represented the same students. Vice-Provost Goodman replied that the pattern is very much one of repetition for the same students; after aggressive advisement in the freshman year, Vice-Provost Goodman noted that there is not much that the university is doing to monitor the student's progress. It is his hope that the department would intervene and advise at this point. Professor Bruckenstein asked if there was any performance distinction between transfer students and those who begin at UB. Vice-Provost Goodman replied that this had been studied a great deal; based on the reports and data he received, both groups perform the same. He cautioned that there were some who believe the right study had not yet been carried out, and that they may reach the opposite conclusion. Professor Bruckenstein explained that his question was narrower, directed only at the data in the tables. Vice-Provost Goodman responded that transfer students who do not do well in the first semester often leave, but those who do stay "get it together" after a period of shock and perform better afterward.

Professor wondered if Vice-Provost Goodman could amplify more on the nature of intervention, whether it differs with respect to the different status of students with academic difficulties. Vice-Provost Goodman replied that the system has only been through one cycle, and that he does not yet know the answer. He said that Nina Kaars (Director of Advisement) would be the one to ask on this matter. In the past, students who did poorly in the first semester were contacted, and various measures were undertaken to diagnose the problem; the action then taken depended on that diagnosis.

Professor Meidinger asked whether the drop-off of 40% between freshman and sophomore years was characteristic, or whether that was perhaps, as Professor Welch suggested, a statistical artifact of how we define sophomores in terms of number of hours completed. Vice-Provost Goodman said he had seen data on the retention of students, i.e., what percentage return the following Fall semester; thus they represent chronological data, whereas the data under consideration deal with the number of credits. Professor Wooldridge noted the pro-active, rather than retroactive, nature of the intervention by the Student Advisement Office, and cited two attempts to keep students out of trouble: first, the

early and timely distribution of warnings of their unsatisfactory progress and secondly, the availability of faculty mentors to advise those students in difficulty.

Discussion then turned toward possible items for the agenda of the Grading Committee. Professor Schroeder reminded the FSEC of a special charge to the Committee given a few years ago to look into the issue of academic integrity; since it is not part of the Bylaws charge, he asked whether he should take it off the agenda. Many members of the Committee had voiced this as one of their interests. Another matter the Committee is considering is that of monitoring the distribution of grades actually awarded for evidence of grade inflation or erosion.

Professor Malone addressed first the question of "Incomplete" grades. He said the Senate policy regarding Incompletes is rather clear and explicitly stated. He suggested that the Committee examine the problem of "participation" courses, in which (according to anecdotal evidence) the grades awarded are based on effort and improvement rather than on accomplishment. Professor Wetherhold addressed the possibility of including "rank in the course" along with grades on a student's transcript, and asked what type of ranking this might be. Professor Schroeder replied that the Committee had only begun to consider this; at the moment it is an idea of making grades more meaningful. He added that a criterion of ranking might be unfair in smaller courses, but more helpful in larger ones.

On the issue of academic integrity, Professor Wetherhold described as a "nightmare" any attempt to prove that a student plagiarized a project or term paper, and suggested the faculty should pose tasks not easily cheated on. Professor Schroeder responded that some faculty members have techniques that ought to be more widely disseminated. Professor Nickerson related that several professional schools make known the grade distributions in their courses, making it easy to detect any grade inflation. He asked the Committee to think of suggesting that for relevant programs. Professor Welch remarked that grade reports from McGill in the early 1980s included the average median grade for each course. To this, David Toscana-Cantaffa objected that setting up rank in course sets up an unnecessary level of competition, just one more thing for students to worry about.

Professor Malone questioned whether, in light of the fact that so many problems stem from grading, we should continue giving grades at all. He suggested as an alternative a European system, in which students take an exam after a few years of study. Professor Welch noted that this could raise some

interesting questions such as NCAA standards. Professor Schuel added that such a proposal would put our students at a disadvantage when seeking admission to graduate and professional schools.

Professor Wooldridge told of a strategy at the University of Chicago which falls somewhat in between - every section of widely-taken courses takes a common, six-hour objective examination at the end of the year, and students' grades were determined by their performance on that examination. An Honors pass/fail system was tried in the Dental School, remarked Professor Miller, but was abandoned because it proved difficult for students to get into post-graduate institutions; but he said it was not a totally hopeless idea when supplemented by letters of recommendation.

Professor Meidinger questioned what the proper solution to the problem of participation courses could be; should we begin with definition of certain grades --- for example, does an A mean mastery in a field? On the topic of academic integrity, he suggested we not simply make it an exercise about the validity of a student, but rather as a way of defining the way the academic community should be, in terms of the norms we hold. He preferred we do not operate in such a penal approach. Professor also addressed the topic of participation courses, and noted it was important to review carefully courses that are proposed by the people who come in to teach these courses. The mechanism for courses approval must be more carefully examined.

Vice-Provost Goodman agreed that these were all important issues, but that the DUAS Curriculum Committee reviews all new course proposals. The problem, he claimed, is much more the enormous log of courses on the books which have not been reviewed in a long time, and which have evolved under different techniques and teachers into something totally different. "Topics" courses also evade close scrutiny. Professor Baumer warned that that was a briar patch one best not touch.

Professor Grant wondered whether something could be done about limiting the length of time for removing Incompletes. Professor Welch said this was a Senate responsibility, and that this should be raised with the EPPC. Professor Wetherhold related that he and a student with an Incomplete make a contract that the student will finish work by a certain date. Professor Hare strongly endorsed having transcripts show grade distribution for every class a student takes. Professor Faran addressed the question of integrity, and a previous suggestion that instructors present materials in such a way that

would decrease the possibilities of cheating; he wondered whether we should consult the Teaching and Learning Committee of the Senate on this matter.

Item 7: Report of the Bylaws Committee

The chair of the Bylaws Committee, Professor Hopkins, presented to the FSEC two documents -- the proposed amendments to the Bylaws and Standing Orders, and the Standing Orders of the Faculty Senate. With one exception, all proposed changes to the Bylaws were based on proposals made by the University Governance Committee to the Senate last spring, and adopted by the Senate. The one exception concerned a suggestion by the Governance Committee that there should be a typed minimum description of a Bylaws that every unit must have; the Committee decided that this did not fit in as a separate section of the Bylaws, since it represented no real amendment to the Bylaws, and was therefore included as a footnote to Article 2, Section 6.

Most changes concerned the Charter of the Faculty Senate, and were self-explanatory. Professor Hopkins explained the changes in Article IV, Section 4 of the Charter dealing with the allocation of senatorial seats to electoral units. With the now explicit inclusion of Geographic Full-Time faculty (GFTs), it became possible that the faculty of the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences could constitute over 40% of the total Voting Faculty of the University. After a series of private negotiations, a cap of 25% was agreed to by the Academic Council of that School. Article VI, Section 1. C. as amended would raise the cap from three to four Senate seats for the largest unit.

A clause stipulating that appointments to Senate committees be made at the beginning of the academic year was relegated to the Standing Orders, since the Bylaws Committee did not feel it belonged in the Charter. All changes will need to be forwarded by the FSEC to the Senate with a recommendation, and will need to be approved by two-thirds of those voting. The FSEC moved and seconded the motion to do so.

Professor Faran expressed some concern over the vagueness of the language concerning the numbers and percentages of senatorial seats allotted to each electoral unit. Professor Wooldridge explained that the intent is that each unit is entitled to a minimum number of representatives, and that 25% was to be the cap for any given unit. Furthermore, the fraction by which one determines how many additional representatives each unit is entitled to is calculated in such a way that we arrive at a total Senate membership of one hundred. Such a three-step process implied an occasional re-apportionment within the Senate. Professor Faran said he did not get that from the wording as it currently stands, and that the language should be cleaned up and made explicit before being submitted to the Senate for approval.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:22 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert G. Hoeing,
Secretary of the Faculty Senate

THOSE PRESENT:

University Officer(s): William Greiner, Nicolas Goodman, Ken Levy

Chair: Claude Welch

Secretary: Robert G. Hoeing

Architecture & Planning: G. Scott Danford

Arts & Letters: Nathan Grant

Dental Medicine: William Miller

Engineering & Applied Sciences: Robert Wetherhold

Graduate School of Education: James Hoot

Health-Related Professions: Atif Awad

Information and Library Studies: George D'Elia

Law: Errol Meidinger

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: Bernice Noble, Herbert Schuel

Natural Sciences & Mathematics: James Faran, Stanley Bruckenstein

Nursing: Mattie Rhodes

Pharmacy: Nathan

Social Sciences: Peter Hare

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

University Libraries: Marilyn Kramer

Guests:

REPORTER: Sue Wuetcher

Graduate Student Association: David Toscana-Cantaffa

Other Guest(s):

Bylaws: Judith Hopkins

EPPC: Chris Loretz

Grading Committee: Thomas Schroeder (Chair), Melvin Churchill Stuart Goldberg Nick Goodman
Robert Straubinger

Excused:

Arts & Letters: Michael Frisch

Management: Ramaswamy Ramesh

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: Boris Albini

Social Sciences: Jack Meacham

Absent:

Educational Opportunity Center: Areta Buchner