

## **FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

### **Minutes of September 17, 1997 (unapproved)**

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The Faculty Senate Executive Committee met at 2:00 PM on September 17, 1997, in 567 Capen Hall to discuss the following agenda:

1. [Report of the Chair](#)
2. [Enrollment Update](#)
3. [Issues Related to Grading; Charging the Faculty Senate Committee on Grading](#)
4. [1997-1998 SEFA Campaign](#)
5. [SUNY Senate "Draft of General Education Report"](#)
6. [Committee Appointments \(Executive Session\)](#)

#### **Item 1: Report of the Chair**

Professor Nickerson reported the following items:

With the retirement of Professor William Miller, the Public Safety Committee needs a new chair, nominations for which were solicited.

The Faculty Senate website is continually being updated; the Chair asked the FSEC members for their preferred e-mail addresses to be posted there.

There will be a roundtable discussion of the prospects of child care on the North Campus on Tuesday, September 23, from noon until 1 PM. Vice-President Dennis Black asked Professor Nickerson to participate. The Chair agreed, saying he would use the information from the report of the Task Force on Women as a ground for his views.

Notices for the Meeting of the Voting Faculty have been sent out; the Chair encouraged increased faculty attendance.

Professor Baier will attend the meeting of the Graduate School Executive Committee in place of Professor Nickerson, who will attend instead the Fall Planning meeting of the

University Faculty Senate in Albany, both as a governance leader and as a member of the Public Information Committee.

The Chair invited the Budget Priorities Committee to give a presentation at the first Faculty Senate meeting and to help lead a discussion on the issues of national indices of academic reputation (mainly the Stony Brook Productivity Index and the National Research Council rankings). The Provost will also provide an update on issues in his office.

The FSEC approved the appointment of three Senate committee chairs: Professor Baier (Research and Creative Activity), Professor Ludwig (Student Life), and Professor Welch (Academic Planning).

The Professional Staff Senate held its Silver Anniversary commemorative dinner yesterday evening. Among the activities it is planning for this academic year will be a lecture, "Time Trap", in early October at a brown bag luncheon.

Vice-Provost Sean Sullivan has been invited to attend all meetings of the FSEC, the Faculty Senate, and appropriate committees. Vice-Provost Sullivan has asked the FSEC for help in nominating members for the committees on Classroom Quality (Chair: Peter Gold) and Classroom Utilization (Chair: Howard Foster).

## **Item 2: Enrollment Update**

Vice-Provost Goodman presented a sheet with enrollment figures in various categories --- "projected" (based on Spring 1997 enrollment), "filed plan" (or budget numbers, negotiated with SUNY and in part determining UB's budget), "internal plan" (UB's attempted enrollment targets), and "actual" (crude estimate) numbers; the official enrollment figures, he added, would be computed soon.

The unofficial actual enrollment falls short of the budgeted enrollment, which should cost the University between \$2.5 and \$3 million. On the positive side, however, we have exceeded the freshman targets --- a surprising and very "significant achievement", particularly on the part of director Toomey and the admissions staff. Also better than expected is the number of transfer students, up slightly from last year, despite its decline in the SUNY system as a whole; this Vice-Provost termed an "institutional achievement", the result of the efforts of several units, faculty, and staff.

Although the number of continuing students decreased by about 400, Vice-Provost Goodman pointed out that the unusually large freshman class of 1993 (over 3000) meant that roughly 700 more students than usual graduated this past May; if this is taken into account, a drop of only 400 from the previous year indicates that we are doing quite well on retention. On the whole, UB undergraduate enrollment is better than had been expected. Professor Welch asked about the numbers in terms of FTEs; Vice-Provost Goodman replied that we are about 2000 credit hours per student below last year's numbers (including graduate students). It is difficult to be precise about budgetary implications, he added, since there will need to be negotiations with Albany; we have as yet no Resource Allocation Model, no agreed-upon formula for determining budgets of the SUNY institutions. Professor Welch asked how UB's shortfall compared to that of others in the system. The Vice-Provost replied that, based on freshman enrollments, "we look good"; however, no data were available for a comparison of continuing and returning students.

Professor Malone asked about the scholastic profile of the incoming class compared with those in the past. Vice-Provost Goodman replied that, among the freshmen who have made deposits (as opposed to actual enrollment), the mean high school average is 89, and the mean combined SAT score is 1135, which he considered quite competitive with other AAU institutions. Professor Ryan observed that the average may be satisfactory, but he suspected that UB may be admitting more and more students who are less well prepared for university study --- a fact which may come to haunt us in terms of retention. To counteract this, we must have an infrastructure in place which will help these students succeed.

Referring to the shortfall of \$2.5 - \$3 million, Professor Jameson asked about the "scheme for distributing this pain around". The Vice-Provost answered that a unit would receive a \$2500 bonus for each enrolled student beyond the unit's assigned head count; for each number under the target, there would be a corresponding "savings factor". Professor Jameson wondered how this would be calculated for double-majors and for graduate programs whose faculty are also responsible for the undergraduate programs in their units. Vice-Provost Goodman said the plan intends to use the aggregate, or total, number of students per unit. Details concerning double-majors still need to be worked out; however, he added, the number of double-majors is rather small.

Professor Baier noted that the actual numbers for graduate and professional programs matched the projected numbers, and wondered why their "filed plan" and "internal plan" projections were raised. The Vice-Provost explained that the first projection is related to the way in which SUNY allocates resources: If a filed plan shows a lower number, funds will be cut accordingly; submitting a higher target brings greater fund allocation. Although there is a penalty for not meeting the raised target, it is assessed in the following year; this "lag" is considered the more rational alternative. The even higher internal plan projections were designed to be "motivational", to encourage units to make more serious efforts in increasing enrollment.

### **Item 3: Issues Related to Grading; Charging the Faculty Senate Committee on Grading**

Now that students can access their grades through BIRD and (as of October) through the World Wide Web, Vice-Provost Goodman asked the FSEC for advice on whether his office should stop mailing grade reports, which would save a great deal of money (estimated roughly at 50 cents per student per semester --- about \$12,000, not including administrative and processing costs).

Professor Welch noted two advantages to mailing the grades: First, it is "psychologically soothing" for the parents to see that a grade report has come from the institution; secondly, the grade report, as a written record with the University seal, is a tangible piece of evidence that can be shown to a potential employer. Parental support, Professor Wooldridge added, is sometimes contingent on a student's satisfactory progress as shown on a grade report.

Professor Jameson felt that administration should first consult the student associations on this matter, and the Vice-Provost agreed; Professor Baier added that this is the only feasible process to follow. Professor Meacham warned that this could be one of those small moves which could "blow up", and advised against not mailing the grades. Graduate Student Association representative Kevin McCue added that, because the BIRD system is sometimes "a nightmare", a student could incur hefty long-distance phone costs trying to find out a grade. Professor Nickerson wondered whether it would change the faculty's reporting of grades, i.e., whether it would be an incentive to instructors to wait a bit longer before

submitting grades; Vice-Provost Goodman doubted this.

Professor Ryan urged consultation with the students, since it could well be that they do in fact want grade reports mailed to them; he also guessed that, in reality, students do share these reports with their parents and employers. Professor Faran warned that not mailing the grades could discriminate against students at the lower end of the economic spectrum. Not mailing grade reports, Professor Wooldridge noted, could symbolize to students that the University does not care about them; thus it could prove to be "penny-wise, pound-foolish". Dean Eckert advised that, if there were any uncomfortable feelings about the issue, it would be best to drop it, since reactions from the students could bring about a political cost as well.

On another issue, Vice-Provost Goodman reported that administration had hired an enrollment management consulting firm. Among the firm's recommendations is the need to identify quickly those students who are likely not to finish their studies; apparently, there are patterns they exhibit which could facilitate this process. He suggested in this context that the Grading Committee discuss mid-semester grades as early warning signs of a student's unsatisfactory progress.

Professor Malone mentioned that Athletics has been using these for a long time, and they have proven very helpful. Professor Welch added that we all share the responsibility of student retention, and added that the Admissions and Retention Committee, in addition to the Grading Committee, also look into this issue. The decentralization of University Advising, Professor Churchill commented, has made it difficult for students to find a particular advisor; Professor Jameson countered that local advisement has been very successful, at least in some units.

Professor Schroeder, Chair of the Grading Committee, added that the Committee intends to investigate grade inflation, as charged by the Bylaws. Vice-Provost Goodman stated that it would be very easy to provide any information the Committee would want, but questioned what it would do with the results. Professor Malone suggested adding a "relative grade", estimating a student's grade to the mean grade in the course. Professor Schroeder replied that the Committee had looked at similar systems used at Dartmouth and Columbia, but

decided against them because of technical complications; for instance, relative grades are not assigned in smaller courses, and the costs of re-formatting transcripts are considerable. The Grading Committee felt that grade reports should include more detailed information, and that this information should be shared with the department/faculty in which a student is majoring to use as they deem appropriate. Professor Faran pointed out that, since different faculty grade differently, their systems are incommensurate with each other; hence no one should be accused of grade inflation because of someone else's standards.

Another issue the Grading Committee will consider is the practice of how grades are handled when a student takes a course over again. One faculty member had suggested that the current practice encourages students not to retake a course which they indeed should, since an earlier low or failing grade counts in the QPA even though the number of credit hours is not affected.

#### **Item 4: 1997-1998 SEFA Campaign**

Dean Eckert, Chair of the 1997-1998 SEFA campaign, sought the advice of the FSEC on the possibility of publishing the names of people who contribute at the pacesetter level (\$500) or who increase their support significantly, in addition to those at the leadership level (\$1000), as is the current practice. Professor Malone added that, in publishing the names of people who contribute at a given level, the implication is that many others do not.

Professor Meacham suggested the possibility of publishing contributions on a percentage basis. Professor Albini considered a SEFA contribution a personal choice, and that it would be best to leave it alone and not publish names. Professor Faran asked whether there were any data to suggest how effective this tactic is in encouraging contributions; Dean Eckert replied only that data have indicated that it can be effective. Professor Schroeder supported the idea that the default be not to be acknowledged, but if people opted to be recognized, at whatever level, fine.

#### **Item 5: SUNY Senate "Draft of General Education Report"**

Vice-Provost Goodman, in providing a context for the document under discussion, reported that some Trustees feel it desirable to have a SUNY-wide general education curriculum, the kind which "would strike most people at this campus as a step into the past". There is considerable pressure to advance this idea. The outcome of a meeting organized by Vincent Aceto and Michael Kinney was that the SUNY Senate studied the issue and produced the document at hand; another meeting will take place in Ithaca to discuss further steps. Vice-Provost Goodman himself opposed the proposal, saying that our current Arts & Sciences curriculum is "very good, and much better than what is available at most SUNY campuses"; he suggested we need to extend that curriculum to the rest of our undergraduate students as promptly as possible.

Professor Malone noted that the Provost of the SUNY system established the meeting, and that "due, no doubt, to an oversight, included no faculty whatsoever" in the discussion group. The Vice-Provost reminded the FSEC that the document represented the thinking of the SUNY Senate, and not of the SUNY Provost. Professor Welch noticed that, in the cover letter, Vincent Aceto mentioned preparing a final report "for discussion and, hopefully, endorsement [...] in October"; such a tight timetable could hardly allow for the resolution of certain "contrasts" and vagaries in the document. At any rate, we already have very sensible principles underlying our own curriculum. As a final point, Professor Faran pointed out a few inconsistencies among the goals presented in Appendix 3 of the document.

After an executive session devoted to committee appointments, the meeting was adjourned at 4:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert G. Hoeing,

Secretary of the Faculty Senate

Present: Chair: Peter A. Nickerson

Secretary: Robert G. Hoeing

Architecture & Planning: Sherri Wallace

Arts & Letters: Martha Hyde

Dental Medicine: Robert Baier

Engineering & Applied Sciences: Michael Ryan

Graduate School of Education: Thomas Schroeder

Information & Library Studies: George D'Elia

Management: Ramaswamy Ramesh

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: Boris Albini

Natural Sciences & Mathematics: Melvyn Churchill, James Faran

Nursing: Powhattan Wooldridge

Social Sciences: Jack Meacham

SUNY Senators: John Fisher, Maureen Jameson, Dennis Malone, Clause E. Welch

University Libraries: Marilyn Kramer

Guests: Kenneth Levy, Senior Vice-Provost

Nicholas Goodman, Vice-Provost for Undergraduate Education

Barry Eckert, Dean of Health-Related Professions and SEFA Campaign Chair

Kevin McCue (Graduate Student Association)

Sue Wuetscher (The Reporter)

Absent: Arts & Letters: Victor Doyno

Health-Related Professions: Judith Tamburlin

Law: Isabel Marcus

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: Bernice Noble, Herbert Schuel

Pharmacy: Nathan

Social Sciences: Michael Farrell