FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of October 11, 2006

(unapproved)

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee met at 2:00 PM on Wednesday, October 11, 2006, in 567

Capen Hall to discuss the following agenda:

1. Approval of the Minutes of September 27, 2006
2. Report of the Chair
3. Report of the Faculty Senate Computer Services Committee on *TURNITIN*
   - o   Professor John Ringland, Chair
4. Discussion on Wellness
   - o   Larry Labinski, Chair of the Professional Staff Senate
5. Executive Session
6. Adjournment

Item 1: Approval of the Minutes of September 27, 2006

The Minutes of September27, 2006, were approved pending corrections to the spelling of a name.

Item 2: Report of the Chair

Professor Nickerson attended the meeting of the Professional Staff Executive Committee, at which Professor Shibley reported on the UB Master Plan; the FSEC will witness a similar presentation next week.

The UB Alumni Association Board of Directors met on Saturday during the Homecoming activities. Thee new executive director, Graham Steward, was introduced. The Alumni Association now has 20 domestic chapters and 12 international chapters, with a current total paid membership of 6500. Professor Brazeau pointed out that, since UB has about 180,000 graduates, we still have a long way to go, and that we should perhaps follow examples set by other alumni

associations at other universities.

The Academic Planning Committee, which met last week, has finalized plans to contact the faculty in the School of Informatics and to ask those who would like to make comments on the proposed reorganization to appear before the Committee.

The Chair also reported that the Governance Committee planned to meet next Wednesday.

Item 3: Report of the Faculty Senate Computer Services Committee on *TURNITIN*

Professor Ringland reported that, due to faculty demand for a plagiarism detection service, the University now subscribes to "*TurnItIn*". Although subscription to this service was recommended by a group that had significant faculty membership, the Computer Services Committee believes now there are important emerging issues which warrant a reconsideration of UB's participation in this service.

The first issue is legality. Whether the practice violates students' rights is now under discussion; Professor Ringland cited an article in the *Washington Post* (Sept. 22, 2006), as well as a case at McMaster University, in which a student successfully sued not to have his work submitted to the service. The official policy at McMaster is now that students may refuse to have their work submitted, cannot be compelled to do so, and should not be penalized for refusing.

The second issue is privacy. Professor Ringland pointed out that there is enormous potential for accident and, even worse, abuse in the creation of a permanent, central, data-minable repository of everything that every student ever writes. The fact that this database is completely outside the ownership or even the influence of the University magnifies this problem. Such a database could be

used as a resource for any government that would seek to police thought, and the consequences of the release of these data could have serious negative consequences for students' lives.

The third issue centers around pedagogical concerns, in particular, how student concern over surveillance and/or exposure may cause self-censorship in writing, thus constituting a threat to freedom of thought or expression. Professor Ringland found this to be the gravest concern, especially since the faculty should be the first line of defense against this threat.

Since these legal, social, and pedagogical issues are beyond the purview of the Computer Services Committee, it recommends that another appropriate Faculty Senate Committee be asked to take up the matter.

In the ensuing discussion, Professor Churchill asked whether the students submit the papers themselves and receive reports from the program. Professor Ringland responded that there are various ways of using the program, including the option of students first testing their work against the database; Professor Baumer affirmed this, saying the service notifies students of where there might be plagiarism problems in their work. Alternatively, the instructor may submit it. Either way, it is possible *not* to use the student's name, making it thereby untraceable. He pointed out further that it is ultimately up to the instructor to determine whether plagiarism had indeed occurred. Thus, if the service is handled with appropriate care, concerns about privacy would not arise.

Professor Street favored an approach based on mutual respect and trust between student and instructor, commenting that it is fairly easy to detect cases of plagiarism based on hunches, and to confirm them with appropriate searches. Professor Woelfel asked whether someone could data-mine the database for "unpleasant themes" and to publicize them to the detriment of the University. Professor Ringland responded that, since the database resides with TurnItIn,

this seems plausible. He added that, although names could be kept secret, there will still be associations with particular courses; thus the process is not completely anonymous. Professor Baumer disagreed, arguing again that it depends on how one uses the service; the service is fast and proves effective in helping to identify or confirm suspected cases of plagiarism. He added that we need to alert the faculty to the different options of using the service in such a way as to ensure the students' privacy while at the same time ensuring academic integrity. Professor Nickerson suggested we review our existing policy on the issue before deciding whether to keep or scrap the service. Professor Adams-Volpe suggested it might be helpful if the Educational Policy Center would post some guidelines for the faculty.

Item 4: Discussion on Wellness

Professional Staff Senate (PSS) Chair Mr. Labinski reminded the FSEC that, once every year, the PSS coordinates a Wellness Fair at UB. He had discussed expanding the event with Interim Executive Vice-President Willis, who suggested that the PSS and Faculty Senate combine efforts to develop a Wellness *Plan* for all employees which would continue throughout the year, rather than be highlighted only one day each year. Mr. Labinski and Professor Nickerson proposed establishing, between both Senates, an ad hoc committee with the charge of coordinating a plan to significantly increase University participation in wellness-related events, such as a Cancer Walk, Ride for Diabetes, or the like. Dr. Willis had pointed out that a sizeable grant had been given to the School of Public Health by the State Legislature, the purpose of which was to promote wellness events, or series of wellness events, at various businesses for employees to participate in. UB, having five to six thousand employees, could make use of a portion of that grant. Thus a secondary charge to the ad hoc committee would be to find out what internal and external resources are available for developing the wellness plan. Mr. Labinski suggested finally that the ad hoc committee might draft a set of "best practice" rules or

guidelines, similar to those developed by Human Resources departments in various industries or at other academic institutions. Ideally, the committee would report to the FSEC by February 2007, so that the new plan could be initiated that Spring.

Professor Brazeau urged that we consider wellness as a *lifestyle change*, and not in terms of a single event. She suggested that obesity is one widespread, rampant problem we could target through promoting better nutrition and more exercise. Thus educating faculty, staff, and students how to change their lives for better health should be the goal, and not so much urging them to participate in a few isolated events.

The FSEC approved establishment of the proposed ad hoc Wellness Committee.

Item 5: Executive Session

Item 6: Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Hoeing,
Secretary of the Faculty Senate

Attendance (P = present; E = excused; A = absent)

Chair: P. Nickerson (P)
Secretary: R. Hoeing (P)
Architecture & Planning: GS. Danford (P)
Arts & Sciences: M. Churchill (P), J. Faran (P), K. Tekeuchi (E)
Dental Medicine: R. Hall (A)
Graduate School of Education: X. Liu (P)

Engineering & Applied Sciences: P. Alexandridis (E), R. Wetherhold (P)

Informatics: J. Woelfel (P)

Law: T. Miller (A)

Management: W. Lin (P)

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: William Fiden (A), James Springate (E), M. Dayton (E), J. Hasset (E)

Nursing: P. Wooldridge (A)

Pharmacy: G. Brazeau (P)

Social Work: B. Rittner (A)

SUNY Senators: W. Baumer (P), P. Bradford (P) H. Durand (E), H. William Coles III (E)

University Libraries: JA. Volpe (P)

Guests: M. Thompson (Graduate School), J. Ho (Graduate School) J. Ringland (Computer Services Committee), L. Labinski (Prof. Staff Senate), M. Cochrane (*The Reporter*), S. Duval (*The Spectrum*)