FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of February 11, 1998 (approved)

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The Faculty Senate Executive Committee met at 2:00 PM on February 11, 1998 in 567 Capen Hall to consider the following agenda:

1. Report of the Chair
2. Universal Computer Access
3. Grade Replacement
4. Report on the SUNY Senate Meeting at Stony Brook

Item 1: Report of the Chair

Professor Nickerson reported the following items:

- He had congratulated the new president of the Student Association, Brendan Keene, and welcomed his cooperation with the Faculty Senate.
- · The Chair presented the UB Faculty Senate resolution on the New Paltz issue at the SUNY Senate meeting held last weekend at Stony Brook.
- · At the meeting of the deans on Monday, Dr. Landi discussed expanding sponsored research at UB, a topic upon which Professor Baier will report at the February 25 meeting of the FSEC.
- · A symposium on public service, with Professor Checkoway as invited speaker, will be held on April 7.
- · Dr. Gresham is in the final stages of assembling part two of a Compendium on Public Service, soon to be published.
- · Vice-Provosts Sullivan and Goodman presented the enrollment plan for fiscal year 1998/99, including their ideas on enrollment realities and new incentives for performance. (The Chair circulated one of the handouts from the meeting.)
- · Professor Nickerson delivered to the Provost the FSEC response to the Mission Review document that was distributed at a previous meeting and discussed on the e-mail list. The

issue had also been discussed at the SUNY Senate meeting; the Chair reported that people were not happy with the implementation of interlocutors (up to 6), because the number of individuals did not seem sufficient.

- · The FSEC had discussed faculty reporting with the Provost, who indicated that Cornell seems to be doing this quite well. Professor Ripple, a colleague at Cornell, provided the FSEC with a form that is used in his Department of Education. The Chair circulated the form.
- · The UB Council had met yesterday to hear presentations on Student Housing and an overview of the Capital Budget.

Professor Welch requested an update on the activities of the various Senate committees, which the Chair agreed to provide at the next open FSEC meeting.

Item 2: Universal Computer Access

Dean Tufariello delivered a presentation with overheads to argue the case for universal student access to computing. He began by defining universal access in the words of William Graves (the former head of IT at the University of North Carolina) as *"convenient and affordable access to a personal computer connected to the campus network at any time and from almost any place [the students] are working or studying"*. (He noted at this point that the Subcommittee did not necessarily endorse a laptop.) Reasons for having universal access include:

· Personalization and customization of instruction;

· Relief from overcrowded inappropriately expensive public computing labs;

· Enhanced employment opportunities for students after graduation;

· Participation in the teaching and learning technological revolution;

· Equity --- allowing ALL students, including the financially disadvantaged, to have access;

· Marketing UB in a more favorable light, through training our students more effectively for their future.

One goal of universal access is to allow a faculty member to require every student in a class to perform certain computer-based tasks, among them the use of communications tools (such as e-mail), web-browsers, and document-preparation software.

Professor Tufariello pointed out that some universities already have similar policies. He focussed on two distinct models which might prove most appropriate for UB, the Wake Forest model and the Sonoma model.

The Wake Forest Model

All freshmen are presented, when they arrive on campus, with and IBM ThinkPad computer with a software package containing Lotus Notes, MS Office, Windows 95, Netscape, and 28 other programs. The model is highly standardized, on the assumption that a single platform facilitates on-campus servicing of the computers, as well as student and faculty training and teamwork. A tuition increase of $3,000 a year finances the program, and comprises not only the cost of the computers, but also of service and infrastructure.

Wake Forest doubled its IT staff [he noted that UB would not need to do this, since Wake Forest was farther behind and had to catch up], hired and placed academic computing specialists in clusters of departments (similar to our nodes), and developed a "STARS" program of resident Student Technical Advisors in the dormitories.

A student training program provides ThinkPad orientation, a technology guide to the World Wide Web, freshman seminars, on-line training, and help desks; faculty training also includes ThinkPad orientation, as well as introductions to the Wake Forest template, the STARS program, and CELI, or the Computer Enhanced Learning Initiative.

Professor Tufariello described it as the "Cadillac" of universal access models, expensive but well-designed, perhaps more suited for private than for public institutions.

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The Sonoma Model

In contrast to the Wake Forest model, the minimum specification for computers is access to the Web, through Netscape, Internet Explorer, or a similar program. In this multi-vendor model, a student can use any computer. The Sonoma model is phased in over four years.

Students have a variety of means by which they can afford a computer --- through outright purchase, through a loan program (through a local credit union), through financial aid, work programs, or loaner pools.

Throughout northern California, the publicity of the program proved so positive that admission inquiries increased by 50%, leading to a record number of freshman applications, an increase in show rate, improved freshman and sophomore retention, an increased average student course load, and an increase in the number of students graduating in four years.

Despite the increases in cost, both programs led to increased enrollments and, consequently, enhanced images of the institutions. Dean Tufariello emphasized that, if we are to benefit in a similar fashion, we must act as quickly as possible; once all institutions implement such programs, the competitive edge vanishes.

The key to success of a model of universal access is _faculty involvement and commitment_.

Among its specific objectives, the University will

· expect all students to be able to access information and course material on-line;

· expect all students to have the necessary hardware and software to accomplish this;

· suggest specifications to students who purchase computers;

· develop programs to help ease the burden of computer purchase;

· develop and environment conducive to computer usage.

Since timing is critical, the Subcommittee proposed upgrading the public sites by the Fall 1998 semester, piloting the program in Health-Related Professions and in Computer Science, and implementing the project in full by Fall 1999.

Professor Cowen underscored the importance of acting quickly; once other institutions initiate similar programs, our advantages disappear. Nevertheless, there are huge technical difficulties we must address first.

Professor Schuel asked how students have performed academically under the programs with universal access; Dean Tufariello answered that there are as yet no hard data. Professor Meacham voiced full support and asked what we would need to do to put the plan into action as soon as possible; the dean replied that they are looking into a number of problems right now, particularly those dealing with the infrastructure necessary to handle universal access. Among other things, the IT Committee feels that a modem pool "is not the way to go", since it is simply too slow. In addition, he emphasized the necessity that the faculty actually use computers in their courses; we cannot ask students to purchase them. However, we must be careful not to rush in recklessly, nor to "nickel-and-dime" the operation by being too frugal; it is more important to take enough time and invest enough money to "do it right" --- otherwise, it could prove to be a disaster.

Professor Sridhar observed that it is equally important that every faculty member have computing access as well. Professor Baier suggested investigating partnership with some company about providing computers. Dean Tufariello replied that the IT Committee had already talked with IBM, a company that "would *kill* to get this contract at UB"; however, the Dean was reluctant to commit at this point, preferring instead to shop around a bit longer. UB could prove to be particularly attractive

to corporations because it might well become the first *major* public institution to require universal computing access.

Professor Jameson suggested that, rather than delay implementation for the sake of running a massive training program for faculty not yet comfortable with computers, we could re-deploy computer-literate faculty to high-enrollment and high-impact courses. Vice-Provost Fischer proposed an additional, somewhat larger pilot program for Fall 1999, one which would "bring to the College of Arts & Sciences some notion of a technology advantage, driven not by technology but by educational goals", especially in the introductory courses, since these provide a focussed place for computer-assisted instruction.

Professor Faran warned that not all faculty will be keen on the idea, that some even find it pedagogically wrong to teach with extensive use of computers. Dean Tufariello said he did not recommend "that every faculty member be forced to use a computer"; what is important is that students use computers for a large part of their curriculum. Technology is weaving its way into every aspect of education, regardless of whether some faculty are unwilling to use it.

Professor Tufariello suspected an "evolution" from a laptop to a networking model, which would shift a little more of the cost burden to the University but enable students to access the necessary software without directly purchasing it.

Considering the decline in enrollment, which is costing UB a substantial amount of potential revenue, it makes little sense, Professor Meacham argued, to quibble about costs; he suggested we put the initiative "on the fast track" since we can only benefit from it. He added that several high school students already use the computer extensively, and will increasingly expect a lot from post-secondary institutions with respect to computers in instruction. This only underscores the urgency of acting with due celerity.

The Provost agreed, but pointed out that one costly --- and absolutely necessary --- part which must be in place is the presence of advisors/consultants/support groups who can provide *immediate* assistance to students. Without these, the resulting student frustration will doom the program.

Item 3: Grade Replacement

Professor Hennessey presented a proposal for grade replacement as an alternative to current policy. The current policy allows students to repeat a course for which they received a grade of D+ or lower, but credits the hours only once and averages the two grades in calculation of the QPA. The main problem, Professor Hennessey argued, is that the existing policy discourages students from repeating course material they have not yet mastered, but should. Repeating key courses is necessary for students to obtain a level of competency required for them to stay in their major and in the University; current policy discourages this by offering them "a raw deal".

Professor Hennessey argued that individual grades and the overall GPA should represent the level of knowledge a student has attained, even if a student must repeat a course to attain that level. Repeating a course --- without penalty --- would raise the GPA as well as the level of knowledge. Furthermore, the alternative proposal would re-establish students' confidence in both themselves and this University, and would significantly improve student retention and placement after graduation. Overall, it would make UB more attractive.

For various reasons, good students slump, and should be given a second chance to prove themselves should they receive a grade of C- or lower. The second grade would replace the first completely, and would not be averaged with it for calculation of the GPA. Professor Hennessey pointed out that other institutions, in particular the Universities of Pittsburgh, Arizona, Texas-Austin, and Canisius College offered similar benign policies.

Professor Malone noted that the proposal did not specify how many times a student could repeat a course; Professor Hennessey replied that he preferred that it be only once, but was reluctant to impose this stipulation, preferring instead to leave this decision to the wisdom of the Faculty Senate.

Professor Jameson was concerned about the possibility that students would abuse the new policy and take lower-level courses "to polish up their GPA", even though they may have performed well in an upper-division course in the same field; Provost Headrick agreed that this must be precluded.

Professor Singer warned against a possible inequity in the proposal, since more affluent students, for example, could stay longer in school and repeat courses at their leisure. Professor Hennessey suggested that, as is done at other universities, we could establish a limit on the number of courses that could be repeated.

Professor Welch moved that the FSEC refer the proposal to the Grading Committee for its recommendation, and request a report by the Committee by mid-March; the motion passed.

Item 4: Report on the SUNY Senate Meeting at Stony Brook

Dr. Fisher briefly reviewed the main points of discussion at the SUNY Senate meeting at Stony Brook, in particular the New Paltz conference, resource allocation methodology (RAM), mission review, the upcoming celebration of 50 years of SUNY, and remarks on the desirability of "a common General Education period" within the SUNY curriculum. He distributed a detailed set of notes to the members of the FSEC.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert G. Hoeing

Secretary of the Faculty Senate

Present: Chair: Peter A. Nickerson
Secretary: Robert G. Hoeing
Architecture & Planning: Sherri Wallace
Dental Medicine: Robert Baier
Engineering & Applied Sciences: Ramalingam Sridhar
Graduate School of Education: Thomas Schroeder

Health-Related Professions: Judith Tamburlin

Management: Ramaswamy Ramesh

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: Boris Albini, Herbert Schuel, Cedric Smith

Natural Sciences & Mathematics: James Faran

Social Sciences: Jack Meacham, Simon Singer

SUNY Senators: John Fisher, Maureen Jameson, Dennis Malone, Claude Welch

University Libraries: Marilyn Kramer

University Officers: Thomas Headrick, W. Fischer

Guests: Joseph Tufariello (*Dean of Natural Sciences and Mathematics*)

Computer Services Committee: Robert Straubinger

Interim Chair, Michael Cowen, Chair (on leave), Todd M. Hennessey

Michael Stokes (*Professional Staff Senate*)

Sue Wuetcher (*The Reporter*)

Kevin McCue (*Graduate Student Association*)

Ariel Shea (*Undergraduate Student Association*)

Excused: Information & Library Studies: George D'Elia

Absent: Arts & Letters: Martha Hyde

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: Ronald Batt

Natural Sciences & Mathematics: Melvyn Churchill

Nursing: Powhatan Wooldridge

Pharmacy: Nathan