

FACULTY SENATE

Minutes of May 8, 2001 - (approved)

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The Senate met at 2:00 PM on May 8, 2001 in the Center for Tomorrow to consider the following agenda:

Approval of the minutes of April 10, 2001

- [Report of the Chair](#)
- [Report of the President/Provost](#)
- [2nd reading - Class Absence Policy - Professor William Baumer, Chair, Faculty Senate Grading Committee](#)
- [Report of the Faculty Senate Budget Priorities Committee - Professor Susan Hamlen, Chair](#)
- [Report on the survey of the Research and Creative Activity Committee - Professor Joseph Mollendorf, Chair](#)
- [Report of the SUNY Senate meeting in Cobleskill - Professor Judith Adams Volpe](#)
- [Old/New business](#)

Item 1: Report of the Chair

The Chair, noting that this was the last Faculty Senate meeting over which he would preside, reminisced about his past two terms and an earlier single term. During his six years as Chair of the Faculty Senate he worked with five Provosts and learned from each of them. He believes faculty governance is absolutely essential and that there has been progress in increasing its effectiveness. He urged that the Senate focus on improving communication, both between the Senate and the University administration and between Senators and their constituents. He thanked Anna Kedzierski for her outstanding work as the Staff Assistant for the Faculty Senate, Professor Kramer for her work as Secretary and especially the chairs of the Senate committees who have worked so very productively.

He summarized some of the matters discussed by the Executive Committee since the April Senate meeting: the Research Fair to be held May 16-17; difficulties raised by the formation of the College of Arts & Sciences on the allocation of Senate seats among decanal units; irregularities in the use of Undergraduate Teaching Assistants which discussion concluded with the appointment of an Ad-hoc Committee whose report was forwarded to the Interim Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences and the College's Policy Committee; general principles of space allocation to be applied by Director of Space Planning Ann Newman and a possible application thereof, viz. a rehabbing of Undergraduate Library space for student services which discussion

resulted in a resolution addressed to the Provost urging that no space be taken from the Undergraduate Library; and Vice President for Academic Information and Planning Sean Sullivan, reporting on freshman admissions and retention, projected an increase in the academic profile of the 2001 freshman class.

The Chair then counted the Senators present and found a quorum lacking.

- a number of Senators have lost their seats for non-attendance thus reducing the number needed for a quorum; factoring that in, believe we have a quorum (Professor Baumer)

Accepting Professor Baumer's observation, the Chair ruled a quorum present.

- appeal the ruling of the Chair as being based solely on my colleague's pronouncement (Professor Swartz)
- there are ex-officio members present who also count toward the quorum; any member may challenge a ruling of the Chair, whereupon the body votes on whether to support the Chair's ruling (Professor Malone)
- would like the record to show the number of Senators now present (Professor Swartz)

Later in the meeting, the issue of the quorum was again raised.

- there are 92 members of the Senate, 32 of whom are absent (14 from the College of Arts & Sciences, 18 from the School of Medicine & Biomedical Sciences); will urge that the attendance requirements for Senators be enforced next academic year
- Tuesdays are the heaviest teaching days; scheduling the Senate on other than a Tuesday would make it easier for Senators to attend (speaker unidentified)

Item 2: Report of the President/Provost

The President presented Professor Nickerson with a resolution in appreciation of his extraordinary service to the University as Chair of the Faculty Senate from 1993-1995 and from 1997-2001. He thanked Professor Nickerson for his "gentle, committed, relentless leadership." The Senate gave Professor Nickerson a sustained round of applause.

Item 3: 2nd reading of Class Absence Policy

Professor Baumer, Chair of the Grading Committee, identified changes in the policy made in response to suggestions from the Senate meeting of April 10. He then moved (seconded) that the policy be adopted, noting first that while only a small number of faculty have penalized students the consequences to the students are serious and second that the policy is not focused on absences related to athletics.

There was discussion from the floor:

- policy still treats non-academic matters as the equal of academic matters; policy is overly prescriptive and will result in the need for further elaboration (Professor Schack)

· policy is incredibly anti-academic; in some areas 30% class attendance is not uncommon and rigorous attendance policies are an attempt to deal with this problem; this policy says that extracurricular activities have precedence over academics; have drafted a substitute policy which recommends that "each instructor apply reason and consideration to students who ask for permission to miss a class due to a conflict with a valuable alternative activity", that "the principle of fairness in administering grades includes justified absences" and that "the student who feels that s/he has received an unfair grade for class attendance reasons has a right to appeal the decision" (Professor Segal)

Professor Segal moved (seconded) to amend the Committee's recommendation by total substitution. There was discussion of the motion to amend:

· Professor Segal's proposal does not address academic versus academic conflicts, and these are the most common conflicts (Professor Adams-Volpe)

· substitute proposal leaves the interpretation of what is a reasonable absence solely to the discretion of the instructor; the Committee's policy sets parameters for what is a reasonable absence (Professor Baumer)

· Committee has not considered the complexities of class offerings throughout the University, nor has it consulted with colleagues to persuade or to be persuaded about what is reasonable; the substitute formulation has its shortcomings, but prefer it to the main motion (Professor Swartz)

· Professor Segal's recommendation that "fairness in administering grades includes justified absences" will ensure that all faculty will have a policy for such absences (Professor Gentile)

· important thing is that students learn the material not that they be in a class room; if a student can demonstrate she knows the material there should not be a penalty for the absence (Professor Bennett)

· the Committee's policy simply says that faculty must give students the chance to demonstrate that they know the material (Professor Malone)

· ask that Ms. Stewart, Director of Equity, Diversity and Affirmative Action, comment on the impact on equal opportunity of the substitute policy's assertion that extracurricular activities cannot supersede the value of the classroom (Professor Adams-Volpe)

· the two are apples and oranges; important to note that decisions should take into account the different circumstances presented; if there are abuses there are mechanisms to take care of that (Ms. Stewart)

· Committee's policy is too complex to be workable; substitute policy is not perfect, but if it is adopted we can make changes (Professor Schack)

· substitute resolution doesn't solve anything and will promote grievances on which there will be no basis to decide; substitute says we should all be reasonable but gives no guidance about what reasonable is (Professor Schroeder)

- have no definition of what is reasonable, but a rigid listing of acceptable circumstances does not allow for a continuum of what is reasonable and will lead to miscarriages of justice (Professor Segal)
- Professor Segal's commentary claims that the Committee's policy requires an instructor to set a limit on absences, but in fact the Committee's policy only says that if an instructor decides to set a limit on absences, that limit must be disclosed in the syllabus; the Committee's policy sets a base line of what are justifiable absences but does not limit an instructor's ability to go beyond the base line (Professor Baumer)
- just as there are students who goof off, there are faculty who are totally inflexible; Committee policy deals with that fact (Professor Churchill)
- what is reasonable varies among departments, but within a department a chair should be able to make at least a first judgment when a student appeals; Committee is proposing a very rigid policy for an unquantified problem which it admits is small (Professor Schack)
- problems are usually between departments not within departments and cannot be dealt with by a single chair (Professor Churchill)
- the total number of incidents is probably small, but when they occur, they are extremely costly to settle; there needs to be discipline directed to faculty by faculty with regard to faculty interactions with students; if the substitute policy is adopted, it's wording should be strengthened to require rather than recommend (Professor Greiner)

The Chair asked for a vote on the motion to amend the Committee's policy by substituting Professor Segal's policy. Because of the lack of a quorum, there was a motion (seconded) to postpone the vote until the Fall. There was discussion on the motion to postpone:

- since we will have to redo the vote, better to postpone (Professor Adams-Volpe)
- substitute policy could be redrafted to reflect today's discussion (Professor Gentile)

The motion to postpone carried.

Item 4: Report of the Faculty Senate Budget Priorities Committee

The report of the Budget Priorities Committee was postponed because Professor Hamlen, Chair of the Committee, was unable to attend the meeting.

Item 5: Report of the survey of the Research and Creative Activity Committee

Professor Mollendorf, Chair of the Research and Creative Activity Committee, presented highlights from the Committee's survey of faculty actively involved in research and creative activity to see what was on their minds regarding those activities. He thanked Professor Nickerson for his help in guiding the Committee and the active members of the Committee for their hard work..

The Committee was very concerned that the survey be unbiased, hiring Buffalo Survey and Research, Inc. to critique the survey instrument. The intent was to generate light, not heat, to help UB achieve its goal of substantially increasing research and creative activity.

The survey was administered electronically, being sent out to listserves provided by the various deans. The identity of respondents was verified against lists of faculty, but confidentiality was then strictly enforced.

• 308 faculty responded to the survey; 302 of respondents currently are funded with most funding coming from the NIH, the NSF and private foundations; 150 respondents also provided written comments

• survey consisted of 80 questions; responses were given values of -2 for Strongly Agree, -1 for Agree, 0 for Neutral, +1 for Disagree, and +2 for Strongly Disagree

• the following six statements ranked highest in agreement: SUNY-funded tuition scholarships for graduate students are important in supporting research; should be a uniform University policy on periodic faculty review of key administrative personnel; exit interviews are useful to determine what could have been done to retain faculty; should be a uniform University policy on periodic faculty review of Chairs; secure electronic means for preparing, sending and receiving all funded purchase forms should be implemented complete with electronic tracking; should be a uniform University policy on periodic faculty review of deans

• the following six statements received bipolar responses: the Provost usually acts in a timely fashion to retain successful researchers; politics are more important than scholarship in determining faculty promotion; student concerns take precedence over faculty research and creative activity concerns in determining budget priorities; the Provost will take the results of the survey seriously; would encourage a colleague in my own specialty to seek a position at UB; there is adequate institutional coordination of Institutional Review Boards at UB

• the following themes were repeated in the written comments: improve direct two-way communications; clarify our mission; increase support for infrastructure; increase support for pilot projects; improve the responsiveness of sponsored programs, address the difficulties of clinical faculty; demystify indirect costs; survey should give more attention to creative activity; provide PI-specific, convenient, user-friendly and useful information on funding sources; improve planning

• survey is a starting point for serious, ongoing dialog between faculty and administration

• Committee intends to repeat the survey annually

· complete report is available on the Faculty Senate web page <<http://wings.buffalo.edu/faculty/governance/fac-sen/>>

· survey geared very much to the sciences (Professor Steiner)

· only need to do survey every couple of years to see trends (Professor Farkas)

Item 6: Report on the SUNY Senate meeting in Cobleskill

Professor Adams-Volpe reported on the 128th Plenary Meeting of the SUNY Faculty Senate.

· Joseph Hildreth from the College at Potsdam was elected 2001-2003 President

· Trustee de Russy has proposed "reporting requirements for SUNY's Teacher Education programs" which include: the distribution of all final course grades; the average and median SAT or ACT scores of all candidates enrolled in the programs; a listing of all undergraduate secondary education majors and their courses requirements; and, the distribution of final course grades by departments in such programs; SUNY Provost Salins does not believe her proposal will be adopted by the Board of Trustees

· Provost Salins prefers a "decentralized approach as phase 2" of the SUNY General Education requirement

· the Office of the Provost is "moving toward campus-based assessment" of the General Education requirement

· Mission Review has received a national bench mark excellence award

· Provost Salins believes the report of the Advisory Council on Teacher Education is comprehensive and its recommendations will enable SUNY to serve the state's needs

· report on the 2001-2002 SUNY budget included the following information: both Houses have rejected proposals for campus differential graduate/professional tuition; the Assembly has proposed that broad based students fees be limited to 25% of tuition in 2002-2003 and 15% in 2004-2005; the Executive, Senate and Assembly budgets underfund fringe benefits by about \$8M; the Assembly has proposed replacing the Board of Trustees with a governing council of campus presidents; the Assembly proposes \$3.75M for "technology initiative"; the Senate and Assembly reject \$7.5M funding for Charter Schools

· SUNY Senate passed two resolutions in opposition to the de Russy proposal on reporting requirements for Teacher Education programs, a resolution seeking an exemption from a law prohibiting SUNY faculty from serving as expert witnesses in cases brought against the state in the Court of Claims, and a fourth resolution in support of campus-based assessment of student outcomes in General Education

· is Trustee de Russy aware of the regulations recently imposed on Teacher Education programs by the Department of Education? (Professor Schroeder)

- don't know (Professor Adams-Volpe)

Item 7: Old/New business

At the April 10, 2001 Senate meeting, Professor Schack, Chair of the Committee on Tenure and Privileges, presented the Committee's report on Provost Capaldi's November 2000 memo to the deans on faculty workload, which memo was in apparent conflict with the 1993 policy promulgated by President Greiner. The Committee had also prepared a Resolution pertaining to the matter, but Professor Schack asked to postpone its discussion. Subsequently the Committee met with the Provost to discuss her memo and the Committee's Resolution.

Professor Schack reported that the meeting was a good one. The Provost did not intend her memo to be in conflict with the existing policy and agrees that work load is a departmental rather than a decanal matter. She generally supports discipline specific bench marking but felt that gathering work load data from peers as urged by the Committee's resolution would be very onerous because of the sensitivity of the issue in most institutions.

In light of its discussion with the Provost, the Committee revised its Resolution. It now reads: "The Faculty Senate reaffirms its support for President Greiner's policy, "Faculty Responsibility: Policy and Process", promulgated on June 2, 1993." Professor Schack moved (seconded) the Resolution. He then recapitulated the major arguments against a differential workload policy made in prior discussions: it would make UB less competitive in attracting and retaining faculty; it would give UB a black eye nationally; it would be a case of institutional hypocrisy to market UB as offering undergraduates the chance to study with active researchers while giving differential teaching assignments to "unproductive" faculty; it is an accepted academic career pattern that early and mid career faculty work very long hours but fewer hours in late career; would create a caste system, encouraging hiring within the caste, rather than actively seeking the best researchers; it looks petty.

There was motion (seconded) to postpone a vote on the Resolution.

- since we voted to postpone the vote on the class absence policy when we had more Senators present, we should also postpone this vote as a matter of symmetry (Professor Hopkins)

- workload is a very sensitive issue, and it is important that the Senate speak to it now, even if only with a straw vote; postponing a vote on class absence policy was appropriate because of its controversial nature, but this Resolution is not controversial; because the workload issue has been on the table since November, a more immediate response is required (Professor Schack)

- postponed the vote on the class absence policy because of ambiguity and lack of clear language; this Resolution is clear; the Senate needs to reaffirm the existing policy to give guidance to chairs on which policy to use (Professor Meacham)

The motion to postpone failed.

The motion to accept the Committee's Resolution carried.

There being no other old/new business, the meeting adjourned at 4 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn McMann Kramer

Secretary of Faculty Senate

Present: Chair: P. Nickerson

Parliamentarian: D. Malone

Architecture: H. Steiner

Arts & Sciences: W. Baumer, H. Bennett, L. Bian, B. Bono, J. Bono, A. Cadenhead, W. Chang, M. Churchill, J. Faran, C.

Fourtner, E. Kazmierczak, L. Kurdiel-Formato, J. Meacham, S. Schack, E. Scarlett, E. Segal

Dental Medicine: G. Ferry

Education: R. Gentile, T. Schroeder

Engineering & Applied Sciences: W. Anderson, D. Malone, J. Mollendorf

Health Related Professions: G. Farkas, S. Nochajski

Law: L. Swartz

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: D. Amsterdam, M. Kulaylat, B. Noble, R. Noble, S. Ohki, P. Spurgeon, A. Vladutiu

Pharmacy: R. Madejski

SUNY Senators: J. Adams-Volpe, J. Boot, P. Nickerson

University Libraries: A. Booth, W. Hepfer, J. Hopkins, S. Tejada

University Officers:

W. Greiner, President

E. Capaldi, Provost

Guests: J. Lewandowski, Reporter

L. Stewart, Director, Office of Equity, Diversity and Affirmative Action

Excused: Secretary: M. Kramer

Arts & Sciences: D. Eddins

Education: L. Malave

Engineering & Applied Sciences: R. Sridhar

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: S. Rudin

Absent: Arts & Sciences: J. Campbell, J. Conte, J. Dugan, S. Elder, J. Ellison, T.

Gregg, J. Guitart, J. Holstun, M. Jardine, H. Luo, A. Markelz, C. Mele, J. Pappas, A. Petrou, D. Radner

Dental Medicine: B. Boyd, E. DeNardin, M. Easley, L. Ortman

Education: J. Ernest, J. Hoot

Engineering & Applied Sciences: R. Mayne

Law: E. Meidinger

Management: S. Gunn, G. Hariharan, J. Ogden, C. Pegels

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: M. Alashari, P. Bradford, M. Caty, M. Dryjski, W. Flynn, B. Grant, S. Greenberg, T. Guttuso, J.

Hassett, V. Li, F. Loghmanee, F. Mendel, C. Pruet, R. Sands, A. El Sohl, J. Sulewski, L. Wild

Nursing: J. Brown, T. Obst, E. Perese

SUNY Senators: H. Durand

University Libraries: M. Zubrow