

FACULTY SENATE
Minutes of February 15, 2000 - (approved)
E-MAIL: ZBFACSEN@ACSU.BUFFALO.EDU

The Senate met at 2:00 PM on February 15, 2000 in the Center for Tomorrow to consider the following agenda:

1. [Approval of the minutes of January 25, 2000](#)
2. [Report of the Chair](#)
3. [Report of the President/Provost](#)
4. [Second reading of the Teaching and Learning Committee's Resolution on Student Evaluation of Instruction](#)
5. [Second reading of the Grading Committee's Resolution on Reasonable Academic Progress to the Baccalaureate Degree](#)
6. [Report from the January meeting of the SUNY Senate](#)
7. [Old/new business](#)

Item 1: Report of the Chair

The Chair's written report was distributed with the agenda. The Chair verbally reported on an additional matter of urgency. The Chancellor's Office is doing a routine evaluation of President Greiner; by a letter delivered on February 9 the Senate has been invited to contribute comments by February 25. The Chair believes the short lead-in time and a prohibition on the use of a survey or questionnaire are designed to hamper the Faculty Senate's ability to respond in a meaningful fashion. None-the-less the Chair believes it is important for the Faculty Senate to respond, and he also believes it is important to the legitimacy of the Senate's response that it be based on wide-spread, signed faculty input. The Chair via the Faculty Senate e-list has asked Senators to solicit input from colleagues, via a memo has asked deans, directors and chairs to solicit the input of their faculty, and has arranged for publicity in the *Reporter*. The Chair will appoint a committee to help him draft a cover memo summarizing the responses which will accompany the responses themselves. The signed responses will be kept confidential; only the drafting committee and Dr. Beering, the outside evaluator, will see the signed letters.

Item 2: Approval of the minutes of January 25, 2000

The minutes of January 25, 2000 were approved.

Item 3: Report of the President

The President announced that he has promulgated the University's Sexual Harassment Policy. It has been thoroughly reviewed and is a very good policy. The President thanked the Faculty Senate for its comments on the Policy.

The President believes the new Chancellor made a very favorable impression on the SUNY Senate at its January meeting. Based on his own transactions with Chancellor King, the President judges the Chancellor to be a quick learner.

This year's Executive Budget treats SUNY reasonably well. While it does not fully fund the Trustees' request, it does cover contractual salary increases both for last year and this year and provides additional money to implement the Budget Allocation Process (BAP) as it relates to the growth of enrollment and sponsored programs. It is not clear, however, that there is money for inflation. The Western New York SUNY Presidents are meeting with the WNY state legislative delegation to encourage support for funding inflation.

The primary issue coming out of discussions on mission review between the SUNY Provost and Provost Triggles is enrollment strategy. The strategy which Provost Triggles has advocated would be to cap enrollment in a high quality undergraduate program while increasing enrollment in masters and professional programs and stabilizing enrollment in and increasing the quality of Ph.D. programs.. An alternate strategy would be to take all caps off and expand enrollment to 28,000-30,000 students over the next 5 to 7 years. If the BAP financially favors SUNY institutions with growing enrollments, the later strategy would be the safe one to adopt. However, this strategy does not address quality concerns. The Chancellor will have to decide what policy to follow in balancing quantity and quality within SUNY.

- are there signs that SUNY might revise the BAP to favor quality? (Professor Faran)

- no, but UB is raising the question; SUNY seems committed to an enrollment growth model, but the state will have to fully fund BAP to make it work, and the state has been chary of putting a formula driven funding program in place for higher education (President Greiner)

Later in the meeting the President made additional remarks. The *Buffalo News* has reported that the School of Medicine is being investigated by the WNY U.S. Attorney General. The facts are that at the request of the U.S. Health and Human Service records from some clinical departments and some faculty have been subpoenaed. The issue appears to arise from the relationship between resident and supervising physician. H.H.S. has taken the position that a supervising physician may not bill for services rendered by a resident unless the supervising physician is present or supplying some stringent level of oversight. Some medical schools have settled with H.H.S. over this issue, paying back large sums of money. We are still at the investigative stage which may last 6-12 months. The President stressed that no wrong doing has been proven, and he would be very surprised if any such pattern emerged. He urged that we be supportive of our clinical colleagues.

Within SUNY the funding of the three SUNY hospitals remains an unsettled issue and poses a \$200 M liability. The Trustees have taken the position that there will be a firewall between the hospital problem and the academic side.

Item 4: Second reading of the Teaching and Learning Committee's Resolution on Student Evaluation of Instruction

Taking into account Faculty Senate comments at the first reading of the Resolution, the Teaching and Learning Committee made several revisions. Professor Gentile, Chair of the Committee, pointed out the following changes: 1. the addition of definitions of norm and criterion referenced evaluations; 2. clarification that the dean's role in the evaluation process is to appoint a faculty committee to administer it; 3. the addition of three administrative duties in the evaluation process, viz. to construct or otherwise ensure use of appropriate items for the instrument, to assure that ratings from criterion referenced questions are reported appropriately and not as norm referenced data, and to decide

whether and how to make available course ratings and the norms for providing the context for interpreting those ratings.

The Resolution was moved (seconded). Discussion followed:

- why does point 3 prohibit the publication of students' written comments? (Professor Holstun)
- the next sentence which says deans are responsible for having a published policy on student written comments is in conflict with the first; the Committee basically thinks that each decanal unit should establish its own policy (Professor Gentile)

Professor Meacham moved (seconded) to amend point 3 to read: "Students' written comments should be given to the instructor and should be distributed to chairs, deans, or others (such as personnel committees), depending on the needs, traditions, and protections offered by these units. Therefore, the responsibility falls to each Dean to have a policy on publication of student written comments." There was discussion on the amendment:

- policies on the publication of written student comments should themselves be published to ensure access (Professor Wickert)
- amend amendment to read "have a published policy on the distribution of written student comments" (Professor Davis)
- distribution/publication of written comments from a small class is no problem, but from a large class could be prohibitive; shouldn't prescribe details of implementation, but allow units to develop policies appropriate to themselves (Professor Meacham)
- don't agree that the wording of the original point 3 is contradictory; am concerned that written comments will tend to represent either extremely happy or unhappy students, rather than the majority of students who don't make written comments (Professor Schroeder)

The amendment to the Resolution passed (32 to 8 with 4 abstentions).

Speaking to the main motion, Professor Meacham suggested that as a friendly amendment point 2 be changed to read: "Deans are responsible for appointing faculty committees to establish policies for the administration of these evaluations..." Professor Gentile accepted the change. The main motion as amended passed.

Item 5: Report from the January meeting of the SUNY Senate

Dr. Durand described the order and tenor of the January meeting of the SUNY Senate at UB, January 27-29. The highlight of the meeting was Chancellor King's address to the Senate. Chancellor King affirmed his belief that the future of New York State is intimately connected to SUNY's success. He noted that businesses don't just want technicians; they also want employees who are well rounded in general skills and know how to learn. He promised that he will not lead SUNY by dictate and that he will be an advocate for SUNY. He touched briefly on the SUNY budget, pointing to new incentives for teachers and in the physical sciences. He also challenged campuses to look to funding sources other than the State, mentioning specifically alumni giving and sponsored research.

Provost Salins followed. He reported on the progress of mission review, which he characterized as one of the most ambitious and comprehensive undertakings of a university in the nation. 63 campus visits have been completed and 6 regional meetings have been held. Remaining steps include the development and signing of the Memorandums of Understanding and the establishment of the next round of reviews in 6 years. He noted that 18 months ago SUNY had set a goal of doubling its sponsored research from \$400 M to \$800 M within 5 years. Chancellor King has challenged SUNY by raising that goal to \$1 B. Provost Salins covered such other topics as reforming the review process, distance learning and improved channels of communication within SUNY. He made the following points about the General Education Requirement: students at community colleges have to fulfill a 21 hour requirement, not the 30 credit hours required at 4 year institutions, a common course numbering scheme is being explored for SUNY.

Others attending the Senate added their comments. Professor Adams-Volpe thanked President Greiner for generously funding the Senate meeting. She added that the Senate is doing work on distance learning, specifically on issues of privacy of course materials on the web and their ownership. Having the Senate as an avenue for communication with SUNY administrators is very valuable. The

Chair said that President Flynn believes the healing process needed after the Senate's vote of no confidence in the Board of Trustees has begun. Professor Malone said that the presence of a new Chancellor presents opportunities, but that we will have to wait to see what the Chancellor actually does.

- would like to hear more about the healing of the rift caused by the Board of Trustees' illegitimate action in adopting its General Education Requirement; would like to hear more about raising graduate stipends; am pleased that under the UUP contract adjuncts, whose number is increasing, get health benefits (Professor Bono)
- believe that the Trustees in fact do share responsibility with faculty for setting the SUNY curriculum and defining in qualitative terms what it means to be a SUNY graduate; SUNY needs a good discussion of the respective roles of the faculty and the Trustees in regard to curriculum; instead one Trustee has supported scurrilous attacks based on poor data which have made SUNY students and faculty look as bad as could be (Professor Meacham)
- what the Trustees did was legitimate in a narrow sense, but highly inappropriate given the norms that have traditionally governed relations between faculty and Trustees; there is good dialogue going on between campus academic officers and the committee implementing the General Education Requirement; the committee has accepted most of our program, with a question only about whether American Pluralism will satisfy the American history requirement; if the committee attempts to approve every syllabus and every course, the apparatus will collapse of its own weight; our concern should be to protect the rigor of our current program against being reduced to the lowest common denominator (President Greiner)

Item 6: Second reading of the Grading Committee's Resolution on Reasonable Academic Progress to the Baccalaureate Degree

Professor Baumer, Chair of the Grading Committee, stated that points 1 and 2 on page 1 of his Committee's report are the action items on which the Senate will vote. He moved (seconded) adoption of those items.

The Chair called for discussion:

- explain why the GPA required at the 115 credit hours attempted step of the sliding scale has been changed from 2.00 to 1.95 (Professor Adams-Volpe)
- dropped the last step which was 120 credit hours attempted at a 2.00 GPA in order to create enough wiggle room that a student wouldn't be summarily dismissed if her GPA fell below 2.00 on her last course; this does not change the requirement of a 2.00 GPA for graduation (Professor Baumer)
- support the resolution, however, this policy, which provides for the mechanical dismissal of students, is a very significant change from current practice; would like guidance on whether the intent of the Senate is that a letter of dismissal be automatically generated or that a committee first review a dismissal for reasonableness (Vice Provost Goodman)
- the sense of the Committee is that these are minimal requirements to be expected of matriculated students; review should be the exception, not the rule; a major objective of the Committee was that dismissal should be triggered when financial aid is cut off (Professor Baumer)
- how would this requirement affect a student who has been re-admitted to a different program and is doing well, but who is carrying the baggage of the GPA she earned earlier? (Professor Ahmad)
- there is a fresh start program that at re-admission sets aside the old GPA for purposes of computing current GPA; the transcript continues to show the student's earlier attempt; the current program requires that a student have been away for a minimum of 5 years; the Grading Committee will be considering the appropriateness of that timetable; the recently adopted course replacement policy also gives a student the opportunity of retaking a course and replacing the old with the new grade for purposes of GPA (Professor Baumer)
- am concerned that faculty will be pressured to change grades to avoid dismissal; should not allow appeals after a letter of dismissal has been generated (Professor Boot)
- don't want to deny a student the right to find out whether her grade has been reported correctly and why she got a particular grade (Professor Baumer)
- the two grounds listed for exemption should be illustrative, not exhaustive (Professor Charles Smith)

Professor Smith moved (seconded) the following amendment: "Exemption from this may be petitioned on grounds that include the following: serious illness or injury; death or serious illness in the immediate family." Professor Wickert suggested the following change: "Exception from this may be petitioned on grounds of exceptional hardship." The Chair asked if there were objection to the change; hearing none the Chair continued the discussion of the amendment as amended.

- the grounds specified are the same grounds as for exemption for federal financial aid; the amendment effectively means that exemptions will be granted at the discretion of the reviewing body (Professor Baumer)
- the federal financial aid guidelines do not require an institution to have as rigorous a dismissal policy as its policy for awarding federal financial aid; the argument is that fairness requires the criteria for dismissal to be the same as grounds for financial aid ineligibility since such ineligibility is effectively a dismissal for students who rely on financial aid; own preference is to reserve the element of discretion in pronouncing an academic death sentence (Vice Provost Goodman)
- there is a discrepancy between the assertion that the guidelines for federal financial aid recognize as grounds for exemption only serious injury or illness and the description of exemptions found in the last paragraph on page 2 (Professor Bono)
- the paragraph describes our practice which has not been in compliance with federal guidelines (Vice Provost Goodman)
- amendment doesn't give students enough guidance on what circumstances will trigger an exemption (Professor Adams-Volpe)
- a firm rule puts students more on notice and will encourage them to take defensive measures (Professor Boot)
- we should always listen to students' special circumstances rather than operating on strict pre-set criteria (Professor Wooldridge)
- there are safeguards for students faced with hardship circumstances; they may withdraw from a course, and they may petition for administrative withdrawal from a course, even retroactively (Professor Baumer)

The amendment failed.

There was discussion of the main motion:

- why tie dismissal to loss of financial aid? (Professor Dryden)
- first, for a significant number of students being ineligible for financial aid is de facto a dismissal; it is equitable to tie financial aid eligibility and dismissal criteria together so that students who are just as academically poor but financially more able can't continue either; second, if the students who had relied on financial aid continue without it, they may incur significant debt with no real hope of academic success; by dismissing those students at the same time financial aid is cut off, we avoid this trap (Professor Baumer)
- within the last week my office saw several students who have incurred thousands of dollars of debt by unsuccessfully persevering as students; would have been better for the students to have been dismissed much earlier (Dr. Coles)
- the GPA requirements for reasonable academic progress are low and identify the really poor student who is in need of seeing the error of her ways (Professor Schroeder)
- is there any intention to depress the threshold for admission to majors? (Professor Dryden)
- no (Professor Baumer)
- Baudelaire would call the argument for automatic dismissal "beating up the poor", i.e., making them aware of the realities they confront to develop their backbone so they will come back fully reformed; this approach does not fulfill the responsibilities of those who implement the policy; the real question is our criteria for giving financial aid (Professor Wickert)
- students with a 4.00 who complete less than the required percentage of courses could also be dismissed; advisors should warn students about the consequences of dropping courses (Dr. Coles)
- to administer the program need clear criteria for giving financial aid (Vice Provost Goodman)

The Resolution carried.

Item 7: Old/new business

Since many Senators arrived after the Chair's report, the Chair repeated that portion of his report dealing with the Chancellor's request for Faculty Senate input into President Greiner's evaluation.

There were comments and questions from the floor:

- who are the members of the drafting committee? (Professor Holstun)
- they have not yet been appointed, but they will probably be persons with broad University experience who have been through a presidential evaluation process; ultimately the Chair is responsible for responding (Professor Nickerson)
- rather than past performance, the relevant question is a prospective one, whether UB will be best served by an additional term for President Greiner (Professor Boot)
- is self-evaluation part of the evaluation process, and if so, will we have access to it? (Professor Fourtner)
- don't know if there has been a self-evaluation; even if there were, there would not be time enough to share it (Professor Nickerson)
- what is the purpose of a committee screening the faculty responses? (Professor Mollendorf)
- the committee will help me summarize and interpret the responses, but all signed responses will also be sent (Professor Nickerson)

There be