FACULTY SENATE

Minutes of April 8, 1998 - (approved)

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The Faculty Senate met at 2:00 PM on Wednesday, April 8, 1998 in Talbert Hall 107 to consider the following agenda:

Item 1: Report of the Chair

Professor Nickerson applauded the symposium on "The Role of Public Service in a Research University", held April 7 and featuring Professor Barry Checkoway (University of Michigan), as well as the collaborative efforts of the Senate and the Office for Public Service and Urban Affairs responsible for this event.

The Chair announced that, with the approval of the FSEC, he had scheduled a special meeting of the Faculty Senate for May 13, 1998 in order to hold second readings on two resolutions --- Grade Replacement and Mid-Semester Grades for Freshmen --- before the summer curtailment.

He had circulated at the meeting a proposal, "Faculty Fellows in Administration", and welcomed vivacious discussion via e-mail. Also circulated was a written Chair's report, which included the following items:

Michael Stokes, Chair of the Professional Staff Senate, has left the University for a new position at the University of Delaware; the PSS is currently holding an election for his replacement.

A new policy of the Graduate School, under which the letter from an outside reader must reach the Dean of the Graduate School prior to a defense, will be most likely implemented after the February 1, 1999 conferral of degrees.

The Chair encouraged faculty participation in the General Commencement scheduled for Sunday, May 17, at 10 AM.

The Chair announced that the Faculty Senate website has been updated and "jazzed up" for interested

visitors.

He then asked Professor Welch, Chair of the Academic Planning Committee, to comment on the APC's deliberations on mergers and reorganizations within the University. Professor Welch reported that the Provost had proposed merging the Department of Computer Science (currently in the Faculty of Natural Sciences & Mathematics) with the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering (currently in the School of Engineering & Applied Sciences).   The APC had met with the chairs of the two departments and the Associate Dean of Natural Sciences, but did not yet have the opportunity to discuss the matter more fully with the Provost, nor did yet receive full feed from all interested parties. The APC scheduled a meeting with the Provost a week from Monday; Professor Welch will develop a follow-up report at one of the Senate meetings in May.

Item 2: Approval of the Minutes of March 4, 1998

Because no quorum was present, the Minutes of March 4, 1998 could not be approved.

Item 3: Resolution on Universal Student Access to Computing

Prior to discussion of the revised proposal on Universal Student Access to Computing, Professor Nickerson, in keeping with a previous Senate resolution, raised the issue of the proposal's financial implications for the University with the Provost. The Provost promised a report on the costs by Fall 1998. They had also discussed whether the faculty would really "buy into" the resolution by actively incorporating computer-aided materials and activities into their courses, as well as the costs students would incur.

Dean Tufariello presented the revised proposal to the Senate, and addressed first the issue of faculty "buy-in". His Committee had discussed the matter extensively, and will recommend a series of initiatives designed to enable the faculty "to come on board quickly". It will also recommend hiring staff to assist those faculty members who need or want help. He added that although faculty will not be required to use computers in their classes, he expects that many, if not most, will want to.

Regarding the costs to students, which he and his Committee consider the single most important issue in the proposal, Dean Turfariello mentioned that all institutions with similar programs offer a variety of means of financial assistance for students who wish to purchase a computer, and hoped

these would be in place soon at UB as well. In response to a common misconception, he emphasized that no student will be required to buy a computer, and "there will be no computer police on campus" to check whether students bring one to class. He invited questions and discussion.

One Senator asked about ownership of courses taught on the Web, since he thought it was presently under litigation and thus should be a source of concern; Dean Tufariello said the Committee would refer this question to the Law School. Professor Eckert said that the School of Health-Related Professions has put together several courses on the SUNY Learning Network, which is similar but operated by SUNY Central as a distance-learning program using the internet as a base; under the agreement signed, course ownership is assigned to the individual faculty member who designed it. He hoped that future guidelines would follow suit.

Professor Schack argued that it would be premature to act on this resolution without the informaiton on its financial implications, and that it "makes us look foolish" for the Senate not to abide by its own well-considered resolutions and statutes. He further stated that "we should not take too seriously the notion that we are only requiring access to computers" rather than ownership, drawing the analogy that we also only "require access" to pens and pencils. If the use of computers become integral to courses, students without computers would be at a decided disadvantage among their peers. Moreover, despite all the discussion, and despite all the obvious advantages, nobody has yet indicated "that we have specific academic demand for introducing this requirement on the students", nor that it is necessary and appropriate at the freshmen level. From the personal experience of others in his field, he related that instructors must often spend too much time teaching students how to use computers, at the cost of teaching the course material itself.

From a different perspective, Professor Easley noted that he uses the internet and intranet extensively in his courses, and that this has been well-received by his students. He added that most students in fact already own computers, which is just as well, since this better prepares them for their professions. For course protection, he suggested that faculty post their courses on the intranet, rather than the internet.

Professor Lawler agreed that the faculty should buy into the plan, but that first the University must "buy into the faculty" by providing resources for faculty preparation, upgraded computers, and other services that require funding.

In reply to Professor Schack's comments, Professor Schroeder observed that one reason for

promoting this initiative is to reduce the necessity of teaching students how to use computers in particular courses; if we assume that students have access to computers, we can assume that they will teach themselves how to use them. Once computers become part of the culture, like answering machines and videorecorders, there will be no need to invest time for training. He added that Dean Tufariello should include his opening points in the resolution, and spell these out explicitly --- namely, the non-requirement of ownership, the commitment of the University to enable students to have access, the commitment to maintaining and upgrading the public labs, and the commitment of the institution to spend money on faculty equipment and training.

Professor Adams expressed concern about the option of relying on computer labs, since this would "make the planning process extremely difficult". It would also be "a disservice to our students", since we would need to expand these facilities to a much greater degree than is presently planned. She feared that requiring computer access would not only entail a greater use of the public labs, but also a considerable sacrifice of class time. Even if students are required to own a computer, use of the public sites will necessarily increase considerably. Professor Tufariello agreed, but did not see the sites "expanding exponentially the way they would have to, it seems to me, if we didn't have a student access program".

Dean Tufariello did not expect that the [positive] experiences at other universities would be much different at UB. He reminded the Senate that the policy is intended "to provide a measure of equity that does not currently exist" between students who own computers and those who do not.

Although there is as yet no definite blueprint for action, his Committee is considering several models of training and assistance for both students and faculty. Furthermore, faculty willing to teach computer-assisted courses will be provided with computers fit for the task.

In order to remain competitive and to take full advantage of the policy, we must enact it as quickly as possible, lest other institutions (he cited the University of Florida) leave us behind in the race.

Professor Singer wondered how we would deal with problems in software compatibility. Professor Tufariello replied that one subcommittee is examining this issue, trying to determine what standards we should adopt. The entire project of implementing this policy, he added, is extremely complex, and requires open dialogue and cooperation from everyone in the University.

Professor Malave doubted that the University has, or will have, the necessary infrastructure to

enact the policy by 1999. Not only the sheer number of purchases, but also the problems of compatibility, of servicing so many machines, of training, and a host of other concerns create a project that is simply too massive to act on quickly. Dean Tufariello said he shared the same opinion when he first presented the idea to the FSEC; but the FSEC "jumped all over" him and encouraged him and his Committee to act on it as quickly as possible. In response, the Committee is acting accordingly; only now, after visiting the University of Florida, Professor Tufariello deems it possible to implement the program by 1999.

Judging by the cars they drive and by the numbers of students who drink expensive coffee at Starbuck's, Professor George did not think the costs would prove to be prohibitive. He did not sympathize with those of his colleagues who are concerned about the lack of funding for upgrades and training: "We are fairly well-paid for what we do; [...] there is a certain cost to professionalism, and we are not talking much money here. Why should we ask others to invest in us if we are not willing to invest in ourselves?" >

Transfer interrupted!

s the students know computers better than the faculty, obviating the need for us to train them. He insisted that UB is indeed ten years late in implementing such a policy. He reminded the Senate of a quote by Feinmann, who, in answering the question why it took 30 years for modern physics to be accepted, replied that it did not take 30 years for the ideas to be accepted --- it took 30 years for all the old physicsts to die off. We will always have dinosaurs with us; the trick, he claimed, is not to become one of them.

Professor Schack countered Professor Schroeder's earlier comment by arguing that, in specific courses, faculty will indeed need to spend time teaching students different programs or applications on the computer. Posting notes on the intranet, he added, amounts to little more than using the computer as a "glorified xerox machine". He suggested we allow sufficient academic needs to drive the requirement for a computer, and not let our academic programs be determined by people "just stampeding to be fashionable".

Professor Wooldridge agreed, noting that using computers

simply for the sake of using computers can prove disfunctional; instead, we should wait until we are sure that implementing this policy will be beneficial in attaining definable academic objectives.

Student Association Representative Barbara Natal remarked that, in contrast to Professor George's opinon, several if not most students do not drink at Starbuck's and cannot afford a computer; many students work (some full-time), have children, tuition is increasing, TAP and EOP are being cut. She did not see how incoming freshmen will be able to afford computers; this, in turn, may deter some students from applying to UB --- ironically, since a public university is "founded on the ideals of a low-cost education".

Student Shelly Beere told the Senate that most faculty do not know how students work. For instance, two computers often suffice for several students on a single dormitory floor; not everyone needs his/her own computer. He asked what tasks students would be expected to execute with computers. He criticized the Committee for not informing the student body of this proposal, and for failing to take it into its deliberations: "All your research is done on other schools, and not on this school; not on the parents, not on the people paying the money that are going to suffer the ultimate costs."

John Celock, Campus Editor for The Spectrum, suggested that the Committee conduct a study to determine what incoming students want, and let the results determine University policy.

Ariel Shea, Director of Academic Affairs for the Student Association, said she was "pretty upset by the fact that this has advanced so far, and there has been absolutely NO solicitation for student involvement at all". This, she noted, is "ridiculous", since students are the ones most affected by this policy. Among the issues not yet addressed, she cited the following:
Will computers really improve the student experience at UB?
Will students be able to learn more with a computer?
Will computers deepen students' feelings of alienation in an institution of this size?

Professor Tufariello replied that, as far as he knows, every institution initiating a similar policy has experienced upward trends in application, enrollment, and retention; he surmised this is because "students are smart enough to recognize" that computers will not only enhance their education, but also their

employability. How would students use their computers? As a word-processor, as a calculator, as a library accessible through the internet, and as a communications device --- which, instead of isolating students, could bring them closer together with each other and with faculty. Finally, he apologized that the Committee moved much faster than it had expected, but noted that it had met with Vice-President Dennis Black and has arranged meetings with several student groups. Under time pressure, he invited the student representatives to further discussion after the meeting.

President Greiner waived his report for the day, offering instead a few observations. First, he stated that students would be added to the Committee for Universal Computer Access. He noted that the resolution now before the Senate is not a resolution for closure, but rather a resolution just to encourage the administration, faculty, and students to continue moving forward toward implementation of a policy of universal access. It is not, he emphasized, a requirement for students to buy computers. It is simply a stipulation that every faculty member and every student have access to a computer and to computing. It would be unfair to the students not to continue to move as rapidly as possible toward this goal.

He believed that several needless misconceptions will be allayed once we get students involved in the process. In conclusion, he assured the Senate that the administration will move forward on the proposal, and will do it carefully and sensitively, in the best interests of ALL constituents of the University, as the resolution requests.

Professor Meacham exhorted the Senate to approve the resolution as strongly as possible, especially since UB is "far behind the rest of the country" in computer use. He pointed out that incoming students three or four years from now will make demands on the faculty that few will be able to satisfy.

Professor Doyno advised caution, especially at times "when there is a combination of lack of information, and public relations as a motivation". We need to know first how many students do not have access to computers. He pointed out that UB does not spend what it should on undergraduate education, and remarked that requiring computers, or access to computers, "isn't going to solve that problem".

Professor Easley warned the Senate that every sector outside the University --- government,. industry, the corporate world in general --- expects computer skills. The University owes it to the students to provide these.

No quorum was present; a vote on the resolution was postponed until the next Senate meeting.

Item 4: Report of the Faculty Senate Committee on Research and Creative Activity

As most of the remaining Senators were exiting the room, Professor Baier, Chair of the Committee on Research and Creative Activity, requested they at least pick up a copy of the Committee's findings and recommended actions. He noted that the main driving force behind the Committtee's deliberations "has been the notice that the total cash flow --- and money is the ultimate accounting tool --- has diminished here over recent years, and it has not diminished at our sister institutions, in particular, SUNY - Stony Brook, with whom we are compared". The source of the cash shortfall has been identified as not being associated with the Medical Sciences, nor with the Natural Science and Engineering groups, but predominantly with the Life Sciences, mainly on the South Campus. The Committee is presently investigating the reasons underlying this problem; part of the problem can be attributed to the 70-80 faculty who left UB over the past 5-6 years, taking with them approximately $8 million; they were replaced by fewer faculty, all new and young, who have not been properly mentored in securing funding. He concluded by noting that we are in the fifth year of a ten-year review process for accreditation; a report from 1993 noted that available funds for helping faculty get started in research is "very much lower than it should be" --- now about $300,000, down from $1 million.

Professor Doyno complimented the Committee on its multi-cause, multi-effect thinking, which "has been needed at the University for quite a while now".

Professor Wooldridge recommended that the Chair forward these comments to the President.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert G. Hoeing

Secretary of the Faculty Senate

THOSE PRESENT:

Arts & Letters: V. Doyno, J. Holstun, J. Ludwig

Dental Medicine: R. Baier, M. Easley

Educational Studies: B. Johnstone, L. Malave, T. Schroeder, L. Yang

Engineering & Applied Sciences: D. Benenson, C. Bloebaum, W. George, M. Ryan,

    R. Sridhar

Health Related Professions: J. Tamburlin

Information & Library Studies: G. D'Elia

Management: J. Newman, C. Pegels

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: M. Alashari, B. Albini, D. Amsterdam, R. Batt, M. Spaulding

Natural Sciences & Mathematics: J. Berry, P. Calkin, J. Reineck, J. Faran, C. Fourtner,

M. Ram, S. Schack

Nursing: P. Wooldridge

Pharmacy; R. Madejski

Social Sciences: P. Hare, J. Meacham, M. Harwitz, J. Lawler, S. Singer

SUNY Senators: J. Fisher, M. Jameson, D. Malone, C. Welch

University Libraries: J. Adams, W. Hepfer, M. Kramer, D. Woodson

Guests:

President William R. Greiner

Vice Provost Nicolas Goodman

Dean Barry Eckert

Dean Joseph Tufariello

Kristin Lord, Spectrum Editor

Ariel Shea, Student Association

Betty Voltaire, Student Association

John Celock, Spectrum Campus Editor

Bhavana Chawla, Student Association

Sheldon Beery, Student Association

Jordan Rutsby, Student Association

Those Excused:

Arts & Letters: R. Mennen

Management: R. Ramesh

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: S. Rudin, A. Saltzman, C. Smith, A. Valdutiu

Those Absent:

Architecture: M. Hadighi

Arts & Letters: M. Frisch, N. Grant, M. Gutierrez, M. Hyde, J. Rickard

Dental Medicine: A. Aguirre, G. Ferry, R. Hall

Educational Studies: L. Klenk

Engineering & Applied Sciences: S. Mohan

Health Related Professions: L. Gosselin, S. Nochajski

Law: L. Schwartz

Management: J. Boot

Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: M. Acara, E. Fine, W. Flynn, S. Gallagher, S. Greenberg,

R. Heffner, C. Leach, B. Noble, F. Schimpfhauser, H. Schuel, J. Sulewski, A. Wakhlo,

B. Willer

Natural Sciences & Mathematics: S. Bruckenstein, M. Churchill, K. Regan

Nursing: M. Johnson

Pharmacy: N.

Social Sciences: D. Banks, J. Charles-Luce, H. Calkins, C. Sellers, P. Luce, B. Smith

University Libraries: C. Densmore