

FACULTY SENATE MEETING
June 25, 2008

1. and 2. Call to Order and Approval of Minutes

Chair Robert Best called the meeting to order and asked for corrections to the minutes of the April 28, 2008 meeting. There were no corrections, and the minutes were approved as written.

3. Reports of Committees

a. Committee on Curricula and Courses, Professor Gail Wagner, Chair:

Incoming Chair, Professor Gail Wagner (Anthropology), on behalf of outgoing Chair Ina Rae Hark (English), presented changes in curriculum and/or courses within: the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Education, College of Engineering and Computing, the College of Hospitality, Retail, and Sports Management, the College of Mass Communications and Information Studies, The School of Music, the Arnold School of Public Health, and the College of Social Work [see Attachment 1, pp. 8-30]. In recommending the changes on behalf of the Committee, Professor Wagner reserved time for discussion of issues related to the changes proposed on pp.10-11 by the Department of English Languages and Literature. The Senators approved all changes, and Professor Wagner then introduced Professor Andrew Kunka, who called in from the Sumter Campus to discuss the issues.

Dr. Kunka requested that the following statement from him and Dr. Michele Reese be read into the record:

Professor Wagner urged that all departments consider the impact on the regional campuses when making decisions that affect how courses are to be taught.

Chair Best noted that this issue is one of the systems issues that we as a university need to mature in and to keep in mind as we go forward, and thanked Professors Kunka and Reese for raising the awareness of the Faculty Senate.

Professor Anne Bezuidenhout (Philosophy) suggested that the wording on the course change form could be modified to include a reminder to involve “any other units or branch campuses within your unit”.

Professor Jeanette Jerrell (School of Medicine) asked for confirmation that, after the vote, the Senate could expect some implementation meetings to address these issues for the regional campuses. Chair Best confirmed.

Professor Sarah Baxter (Mechanical Engineering) asked if the regional campuses could elect to defer implementing the course changes until spring. Professor Kunka, while not

proposing to speak for all the regional campuses, stated that he was in the process of implementing the changes and had gone too far to defer.

Professor Augie Grant (Journalism) raised a similar concern regarding a proposed course change (re: ENGL 611; see Attachment, p.10) that includes a potential “literary journalism” component. Professor Grant stated that he and his colleagues in Journalism had no prior notice that the English Department was proposing to teach journalism and, while they did not oppose the change, seeing it for the first time during the approval vote was disquieting. Professor William Rivers (Chair, English) made plans to discuss the issue with Professor Grant after the meeting.

The changes were approved as submitted, with a commitment to hold further meetings to address the issues involved for the regional campuses, and further discussion between the Departments of English and Journalism.

Chair Best thanked all the outgoing committee chairs for their service.

b. Committee on Faculty Welfare, Professor Beth Bilderback, Chair

Professor Bilderback (Libraries) updated the Faculty Senate on the Committee’s efforts pursuant to a resolution in April instructing the Committee to investigate the possibility of adding extra classes on the Monday/Wednesday time slots, especially around lunchtime. The Committee met with Bob Askins and Elaine Belesky from the Registrar’s Office and discussed a number of options relating to creative class scheduling, including altering time between classes, alternative classroom space, efficient space planning, and smart scheduling. During the course of discussions, the Committee discovered that the peak time for classes is 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Monday-Friday, which makes additional lunchtime classes on M/W unfeasible at this time. Discussions are continuing. The Registrar’s Office has asked Derrick Huggins, Director of Vehicle Services and Parking Management, to see if options exist for the shuttle schedule that would facilitate improved scheduling of classes.

Professor Bill Hastings (English) asked for an update on the issue of promotion increments, which was referred to the Salary Equity Committee. Provost Becker, having not spoken with that committee during the summer, could not comment on the issue, but assured the Senators that the issue would be back before the Faculty Senate when the committee had a report.

Professor Laura Walls (English) asked for confirmation that, although additional noon classes are not a feasible option at this point, a larger discussion is ongoing regarding scheduling issues more generally. Professor Bilderback confirmed, noting that the Registrar’s Office had already been looking at scheduling issues and alternative space issues. The issues raised by the April resolution have expanded the discussion, and Professor Bilderback cautioned that resolution would not be swift. The Faculty Welfare Committee will keep the Senators informed as answers become available.

4. Reports of Officers

Provost Mark Becker

President Sorensen had a previous engagement and could not address the Senate, so Provost Becker delivered the President's report on the budget. The Provost thanked Professor William Rivers (English) and Chair Best for their work in the budget development process.

The Provost addressed the issue of the 5.9% tuition increase that has been reported in the news, and the University concerns that will be addressed by the revenues generated. Part of the increase will address the budget cut from the State Legislature. Part will fund the portion of the 1% salary increase not paid from state dollars. Part will go to offset inflationary pressure concerning fuel and utility costs and costs associated with the acquisition of library materials. Part will fund the deferred maintenance of University buildings and infrastructure.

Provost Becker noted that a major result of funding these competing priorities has been the slow-down in the authorizing of new positions. The University has been able to authorize only FEI 11 searches in the coming recruiting cycle, instead of 20, as would have been typical. The Provost emphasized that the number of positions is not being reduced, but that the pace at which hiring will be done is slowing down in order to avoid double-digit tuition increases.

Provost Becker then reported on a series of meetings that he has recently attended regarding the interplay between accreditation, general education and curriculum revision. Following the publication of the Spellings Commission's Report on Higher Education in America, academic accrediting bodies (in our case, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools), are putting increased emphasis on assessment. There is a heightened expectation that we will specify learning outcomes, assess student performance on learning outcomes, and that we will take the assessment data and use it to drive curriculum revision and reform. Our SACS accreditation visit is a little over two years away and, when they visit, they will be looking for evidence that we are specific about what we expect students to learn, and that we assess how well they meet those expectations. SACS will be expecting us to function in a more evidence-based world, using assessment data to revise our curriculum and keep it fresh, current and relevant. This trend is developing in universities across the country and will impact on the way that we develop curricula and courses.

The Provost reported that again this year the University is receiving strong student interest and that we can expect an entering class this fall that is larger numerically and academically stronger than any class before it. Provost Becker noted that the University's reputation is doing extremely well and that while we should all be proud of

that, we should be mindful that with success come the challenges of success. He then invited questions.

Professor Laura Walls (English) asked how, given the high level of constant assessment of curricula in University departments, the current process would change to accommodate the SACS enhanced standards of assessment evidence.

Provost Becker commented that the extent of changes in the assessment process would likely depend on the department, as some departments may be using heightened standards of assessment already. The ideal is to have all units and departments using and documenting evidence-based standards of student performance and curriculum revision.

Professor Gail Wagner (Anthropology) requested confirmation that, beginning this year, professors submitting course proposals to Curricula and Courses will have outcomes listed on their syllabi, which has not been a requirement in the past. Provost Becker confirmed that this is the case, and that this is an example of the type of changes that are in the pipeline.

Professor John Kupfer (Geography) noted that while we are expecting an increased incoming class size this fall, we have also discovered that our classroom space is maxed out. He wondered whether the University has any mid- to long-range plans for increasing teaching space. Provost Becker explained that classroom space is not necessarily constrained at all times, but that between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. classroom space is indeed intensively scheduled. The Registrar's Office monitors classroom utilization and will be focusing on scheduling outside these peak times. New classroom construction is desirable but must be deferred until funding sources are identified.

Provost Becker announced the next Faculty Senate meeting on the first Wednesday in September, which is also the day that new faculty members are introduced at the General Faculty meeting. The Provost concluded by wishing the Senators an enjoyable summer.

5. Report of the Chair

Chair Best began his report by reading the names of the Faculty Senators who have attended every meeting this year: Collin Webster, Joseph Flora, Karen Brown, and Laura Schwartz.

He then read the names of the Senators who have missed only one meeting this year:

David Lincoln
John Grego
Jenny Jerrell
Paul Housley
Jodi Spillane

John Burrow
Elizabeth Ravlin
Shawn Chillag
Judy Alexander
Noni Bohonak (Lancaster)

Chair Best then thanked those in attendance for the last meeting of the year, noting that this is probably the hardest of meetings to make and expressing his appreciation for those present.

Chair Best reported that the University's Presidential search is still underway and is nearing conclusion. He invited interested Senators to attend the upcoming meeting of the Search Committee, and mentioned a recent article about the search in the USC Times.

Professor William Thesing (English) asked if there was any way for the faculty to meet or see the candidates at an earlier stage in the process. Chair Best explained that many of the candidates would be in tenuous positions at their current institutions if it were known that they were interviewing elsewhere. The interview process must be structured to preserve the candidates' anonymity until they are willing to have their candidacy made public, which precludes the faculty meeting them early in the process. Speaking as the representative of the faculty, Chair Best stated that he has had full access to the proceedings involved in the search and that the Search Committee has been very responsive to his input in presenting the faculty viewpoint.

6. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

7. New Business

Professor Dorothy Disterheff (English, Linguistics) objected to the perception that any individual department has a monopoly on descriptive terms that no other department should use in developing new courses.

Chair Best suggested that, while no one is advocating this perception, open communication between departments is the best option for settling issues where legitimate cross interests arise in curriculum development.

Professor Augie Grant (Journalism) called for open collegial communication and collaboration between departments to break down barriers between individuals and units, and to combat the silo effect that develops when departments function in isolation.

8. Announcements

There were no announcements.

9. Adjournment.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed to adjourn the meeting.