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Faculty Senate

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Senators in Attendance: Robert Albritton, Mark Bing, Allison Burkette, Pete Campbell, Joe Turner Cantu, Bill Chapel, Donna Davis, Douglas Davis, Melissa Dennis, Jason Dewland, Robert Doerksen, Mark Dolan, Charles Eagles, John Garner, Carol Gohm, Angela Hornsby-Gutting, Amanda Johnston, Jason Klodt, Przemot T. Kranz, Joel Kuszmaul, John Lobur, Soumyajit Majumbar, Carmen Manning Miller, Stephanie Noble, Brice Noonan, Larry Pittman, Peter Reed, Brian Reithel, Philip Rhodes, Jason Ritchie, Charles Ross, Jeffrey A. Roux, Steven Skultety, Chung Song, Debra Spurgeon, Don Summers, Joe Sumrall, Durant Thompson, Laura Vaughan, Mark Walker, Jinquang Wang, Alex Watson, Lorri C. Williamson, Alexander Yakovlev, Yi Yang, Ahmet Yukleyen

Senators absent with prior notification: Deborah Barker, Melissa Bass, Daneel Ferreira (replaced by Jordan Zjawiony), Ivo Kamps, Angela Rutherford

Senators absent without notification: Laurel Lambert, Zia Shariat-Madar

- Senator Sufka opened the meeting at 7:00 pm
- First order of business: Approve January 26, 2009 Meeting Minutes
 - Motioned to approve and seconded
 - The Senate approved the minutes unanimously
- Second order of business: State of the University Budget & Distance Learning Q&A
 - Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance Larry Sparks reported that UM's budget is fluid; in December UM's budget took a 5% cut and overall UM has seen a 10% decline in state appropriations
 - Vice Chancellor Sparks remarked that UM might need to expect a cut each month yet expressed hope that the economic crisis would abate within three years. Nevertheless, UM should expect more funding cuts this year
 - Senator Reithel asked what tuition hikes would contribute to UM's budget
 - Vice Chancellor Sparks responded that tuition hikes would likely bring in \$15 million over a three year period
 - UM has a \$45.6 million budget hole to fill, and increased admission and increased retention will help fill that hole
 - Senator Noble asked when faculty would hear from Chancellor Jones about any consolidation of departments or elimination of positions
 - Vice Chancellor Sparks responded that this decision might come during the 2011-2012 fiscal year
 - Senator Noonan asked who makes decisions about increasing teaching loads
 - Provost Stocks said that these decisions come from the Deans and department chairs. Faculty will likely see increased class sizes rather than increased teaching loads

- Senator Bing asked if Vice Chancellor Sparks anticipated cutting the Center for Teaching Excellence or the Writing Center before cutting faculty positions
 - Vice Chancellor Sparks responded that everything should be on the table and up for discussion
 - Provost Stocks added that Senator Bing's suggestion is consistent with the Faculty Senate's Guiding Principles and Processes document, in that cuts should focus on non-essential programs before faculty positions
- Senator Noble asked if a hiring freeze would still be implemented on an individual basis or would it be implemented across the board
 - Vice Chancellor Sparks responded that he would prefer hiring freezes on an individual basis, as across the board cuts often do not benefit the university. Vice Chancellor Sparks added that right now all hiring freezes are voluntary
- Senator Albritton asked about unfunded mandates
 - Vice Chancellor Sparks responded that PERS is asking for a 13.5% increase in employers' contributions, and the State Employees Insurance Plan is seeking increased contributions, as well
 - Vice Chancellor Sparks added that planning budgets is not an exact science and that he always estimates conservatively
- Senator Dolan asked if graduate enrollment is still a priority since faculty hear so much about undergraduate enrollment
 - Vice Chancellor Sparks responded that UM should pursue increased enrollment in all areas
 - Vice Chancellor Sparks added that the funding formula provides one financial pie that is divided between the state's eight universities. Therefore if UM benefits, another state university loses out
 - UM is more like a private institution than other Mississippi universities because UM relies so much on tuition. However in contrast, private colleges may set their own tuition, while UM must rely on IHL to set tuition
- Senator Reithel asked if the \$45.6 million budget shortfall includes the loss of federal stimulus monies
 - Vice Chancellor Sparks said yes, the \$6.6 million is one time money and it will disappear in 2013
 - Vice Chancellor Sparks added that the administration realizes that UM cannot go three years without pay raises. Provost Stocks added that it is difficult to discuss raises in the current economic climate. Nevertheless, a positive factor is that there continues to be a demand among students to matriculate at UM
- Senator Lobur asked if steps were taken to absorb the budget cuts centrally
 - UM has absorbed \$5.5 million in cuts centrally. The goal is to make it through this year without going to departmental accounts for cuts. Vice Chancellor Sparks added that unless the economic

situation gets substantially worse, this year UM can absorb cuts centrally

- Senator Walker asked if there were a possibility of using endowment funds for operating expenses
 - Vice Chancellor Sparks responded that it is not legally possible as donors often stipulate where in the university their money is used
- Senator Reithel asked about the situation on recruiting, admission, fund-raising
 - Vice Chancellor Sparks responded that recruiting is being beefed up, and UM must keep recruiting, admission, fund-raising strong. Also, providing student financial aid is important
 - Senator Reithel asked about the dollar amounts spent on recruiting
 - Vice Chancellor Sparks responded that he did not have those numbers, but that over the last 18 months UM has added two new recruiting positions
- Provost Stocks remarked that budget cuts affect a small piece of the university's financial pie. Provost Stocks added that tuition is growing faster than appropriations are declining, and indeed that is UM's goal. Also, UM's retention rate is the highest ever
 - Provost Stocks added that graduate enrollment is a key part of the funding formula, and when the funding formula is reinstated, UM wants its graduate enrollment to be up
 - This year endowments will pay 4.5% rather than 1.5%, so the increased earnings will be beneficial to the university
- Provost Stocks responded to Senator Vaughn's inquiry about distance education, commenting that it is a critical issue. IHL has advised UM to set a five year goal on distance education and indeed one IHL board member believes that distance education is the future of higher education
 - This semester 3500 students are enrolled in distance education. Enrollment on branch campuses is increasing faster than enrollment on the Oxford campus
 - UM currently offers 49 online courses with an average of 31 students per course
 - Provost Stocks said that UM has not been aggressive in creating online degrees and certificate programs. There are currently only two online degrees: the Professional MBA (which has struggled in the past) and the PharmD (which has low enrollment and may have a limited life)
 - Four programs are hybrid programs, which have at least 3 courses fully online. UM is moving toward a greater online presence
 - Online programs tend to start at the graduate level rather than at the undergraduate level. UM pales in comparison to other Mississippi universities. MSU, for instance, has 30 online programs
 - There is no standardized incentive program to develop online degree programs and thus the process has floundered

- Dr. Rychlak reported that at UM 25 student athletes have a 4.0 GPA and 187 made the honor roll for Fall 2009. UM's athletes have better graduation rates than the campus population at large
- Recently UM's athletes have been involved in charity efforts such as shipping gently used athletic shoes to Haiti, organizing canned food drives, and sending calling cards to soldiers that are serving overseas
- Senator Sufka asked Senators to encourage their colleagues to be understanding when dealing with student athletes that represent UM in out of town athletic competitions. Senator Sufka also encouraged faculty to clearly note attendance and lab requirements on their syllabi so that student athletes may know if it would be best to take a particular course during a different semester
- Fifth order of business: UM Teaching Evaluations
 - Senator Ritchie reported on his meeting with Associate Provost Maurice Eftink and Dr. Kathy Gates regarding teaching evaluations
 - Senator Ritchie explained that two to three weeks before final exams, the teaching evaluation window opens. During final exams week the evaluation interface closes and on the Friday of finals week the interface reopens
 - Students must complete at least 50% of their course evaluations to view their final grades. If students have completed 50% of their course evaluations, they may skip ahead to see their grades
 - If students have completed less than 100% of their course evaluations, the system prompts them to complete more evaluations
 - Before beginning of the following semester, faculty can normally view the evaluations of their courses
 - Senator Ritchie clarified that once students have seen their final grades, they are not able to complete any further course evaluations
 - The majority of evaluations are completed after final exams week and before grades are open for viewing
 - Based on data, Senator Ritchie reported that a professor's ranking essentially does not change based on when the student completes the evaluation
 - Regarding the question of whether the number of written responses is indicative of quality of the review, following final exams week written responses goes down but not significantly. Students submit more written responses before final exams week than after finals
 - Senator Albritton commented a question of concern was whether evaluations could be completed after grades were accessed
 - Senator Ritchie said no. There was a loophole in Degree Audit that allowed access to grades before evaluations had been completed, but this loophole will not return
 - Faculty may access the Instruction Evaluation Count from the pull down menu of the MyOleMiss interface
 - Associate Provost Eftink and Dr. Gates also supported the possibility of revising the list of questions asked, which was last revised ten years ago.

They suggested that the Senate may want to work with the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning to make suggestions

- Senator Noonan asked why the Senate is spending so much time on faculty teaching evaluations since research and service count heavily toward tenure and promotion
 - Senator Ritchie responded that the importance of teaching in tenure and promotion decisions depends on the department
- Associate Provost Eftink and Dr. Gates have offered to open the evaluation window open one week earlier in Spring semester. Would the Senate like to do so?
 - Motioned and seconded
 - Senator Doerksen posited that in evaluating a course too early, students would not truly be evaluating the course, especially if there are multiple instructors
 - On a voice vote, the Senate approved opening the evaluation window one week earlier in the Spring 2010 semester. Senator Sufka will communicate this decision to Associate Provost Eftink and Dr. Gates
- Sixth order of business: Senate Committee Reports
 - Senator Turner Cantu's Academic Affairs subcommittee will have recommendations at the Senate's March meeting regarding course packs and pricing
- Seventh order of business: Items from the floor
 - ASB Mascot Initiative
 - On February 23, 2010, students will vote to develop and propose a new on-field mascot for the Ole Miss Rebels. An opposition organization has formed, as well
 - The Coronel Reb issue was decided seven years ago by Chancellor Khayat, and therefore is not open to discussion
 - Chancellor Jones will work with students, and will be assisted by design professionals and the Athletics Department
 - Senator Sufka mentioned that the Senate may want to be prepared to support ASB in its March meeting
 - Sustainability Task Force
 - The Director of the Office of Campus Sustainability Jim Morrison addressed the Senate about the University Taskforce on Sustainability, explaining the Climate Action Plan and the student internship program
 - The taskforce is charged with evaluating UM's infrastructure to facilitate environmental management to benefit the "triple bottom line": preserving people, the planet, and profits
 - The taskforce is promoting the OUT bus, organizing carpooling via Facebook, eliminating styrofoam take-out containers from dining services, investigating the feasibility of a Zip Car business in Oxford, and investigating energy management on a per building basis with wireless meters

- Dr. Kristie Willett reported on the education and research aspect of the taskforce, which will make curriculum recommendations to the Provost
 - Dr. Willett presented example course objectives of sustainability focused courses and asked faculty to self-report if their courses fit these criteria
 - Dr. Willett will send faculty an email link to a survey about sustainability related courses and research, and asked Senators to encourage their colleagues to complete the survey
- Senator Sufka will get information regarding faculty lines in each department, and Senators will take these numbers back to their home departments for confirmation in preparation for Senate elections in April
- The Senate's next meeting will be Tuesday March 9, 2010
- The meeting adjourned at 8:58 pm