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Meeting Minutes

Faculty Senate

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Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, April 13, 2010
Meeting held in Bryant 209

Senators in Attendance: Robert Albritton, Deborah Barker, Mark Bing, Pete Campbell, Joe Turner Cantu, Douglas Davis, Melissa Dennis, Jason Dewland, Robert Doerksen, Mark Dolan, Charles Eagles, Daneel Ferreira, John Garner, Carol Gohm, Amanda Johnston, Ivo Kamps, Jason Klodt, Przemot T. Kranz, Joel Kuszmaul, Laurel Lambert, Carmen Manning Miller, Stephanie Noble, Brice Noonan, Larry Pittman, Brian Reithel, Philip Rhodes, Jason Ritchie, Jeffrey A. Roux, Paul Scovazzo, Zia Shariat-Madar, Steven Skultety, Chung Song, Don Summers, Joe Sumrall, Durant Thompson, Laura Vaughan, Jinqiang Wang, Alexander Yakovlev, Yi Yang, Ahmet Yukleyen

Senators absent with prior notification: Melissa Bass, Allison Burkette, Angela Hornsby-Gutting, John Lobur, Soumyajit Majumdar, Peter Reed, Angela Rutherford, Debra Spurgeon

Senators absent without notification: Aydin Adnan, Bill Chappell, Donna Davis, Charles Ross, Mark Walker, Alex Watson, Lorri C. Williamson

- Senator Sufka opened the meeting at 7:00 pm
- First order of business: Approve March 9, 2010 Meeting Minutes
 - Motioned to approve and seconded
 - The Senate approved the minutes unanimously with no abstentions
- Second order of business: 2010-2011 Senate Election Process
 - Senator Sufka explained that the new Senate will be elected by the end of April. In August the Senate will elect subcommittee chairs and the Senate Executive Committee will elect representatives to the University's standing committees
 - Senator Sufka asked Senators to encourage their departments to complete their elections and reminded them that tenure track faculty on the Oxford campus are eligible to serve on the Senate
- Third order of business: Plus/Minus Grading Taskforce Update
 - Senator Sufka shared preliminary details of a proposal from the plus/minus grading taskforce. The proposal will require the approval of the Undergraduate Council, the Graduate Council, and the Council of Academic Administrators
 - The proposal calls for a 4.0 scale (and thus will not include the A plus of a 4.33 scale) and will not include D plus or minus nor F plus or minus
 - The rollout is planned for Fall 2011
 - The Senate is being asked to weigh in on the proposal, which may be on the agenda for the May meeting. Senator Sufka will distribute the proposal to Senators via email
- Fourth order of business: Online Teaching Evaluation Update
 - Senator Ritchie reported that the online teaching evaluation system went live yesterday and reassured the Senate that the loophole through which students could prematurely see their grades has been closed
 - Dr. Maurice Eftink is seeking best practices of how to use teaching evaluations across departments

- Since Senator Ritchie will not be serving on the Senate during the next academic year, the Senate Executive Committee will seek another Senator to guide changes to the online teaching evaluations
- Fifth order of business: Student Initiative on New Mascot
 - Senator Sufka observed a spirit of calmness and open dialogue with initiative. Since the initiative was not receiving heavy criticism, Senator Sufka recommended that, for the time being, the Senate should be mindful of the process but not take action at this time
 - Senator Watson asked if the Senate could offer a resolution of support when the students had completed their work
 - Senator Sufka responded that such a resolution would certainly be possible in the fall
- Sixth order of business: Senate Committee Reports
 - Senator Albritton asked the Governance committee to meet after tonight's meeting
- Seventh order of business: Items from the Floor
 - Senator Stephanie Noble volunteered to serve on the search committee for the Executive Director of the National Food Service Management Institute
 - The memorial service for faculty members that have passed will be held on April 29, 2010 at 5:30 pm at Paris Yates chapel
 - Senator Sufka reported on his meeting with incoming ASB President Virginia Burke and their discussions on implementing the plus/minus grading proposal
 - The ASB is considering the implementation of a “dead period” prior to final exams. Senator Sufka encouraged ASB President Burke to focus on how such a dead period would maximize student learning outcomes
 - The dead period issue came up a few years ago and the consensus was that most faculty do not assign significant coursework during the week prior to final exams
 - If the ASB moves to implement a dead period, the Senate would likely want to issue a response
 - Senator Noble asked about the timing of the dead period and its rationale
 - Senator Sufka responded that there are various models, such as professors meeting classes but not assigning homework, while other institutions do not hold classes during such dead periods. The rationale for dead periods is that mass studying prior to final exams tends to lead to poorer student learning outcomes
 - Senator Sufka asked Senators to solicit opinions from their colleagues to be able to discuss the dead period at the May meeting
 - Senator Scovazzo asked if a dead period would affect the number of contact hours
 - Senator Sufka responded that state laws mandate a certain number of contact hours per semester. A possible solution would be to start the semester two days earlier (for instance, on a Monday instead of a Wednesday) to be able to absorb those days as a dead period at the end of the semester
 - Senator Watson requested models of dead periods from other institutions

- Senator Sufka assigned the task of gathering this data from other SEC institutions to his assistant Kristen Hymel
 - Senator Eagles urged the Senate to address the problem of professors administering exams at times other than those on the UM final exam schedule
 - Senator Scovazzo registered his colleagues' dissatisfaction about the FARs, noting their inconvenient timing and the technical limitations of the FAR interface
 - Provost Stocks reported that Dr. Eftink had examined the possibility of uploading the FAR as a Word document. The timing of the FARs allows for faculty evaluations to be completed in time to determine faculty pay raises
 - Senator Noble reported on the ease of use of the Sedona system licensed by the Business School
 - Provost Stocks confirmed that he had looked at Sedona and has recommended the system for wider use at UM
 - Senator Eagles asked who, beyond department chairs, looks at or uses the information gathered in the FARs
 - Provost Stocks responded that the goal was to have one database for all information and admitted that it does not seem like the administration accesses it very often. Provost Stocks added that the current FAR creates a great deal of unhappiness among faculty
 - Senator Scovazzo added that the Engineering Deans do access the data, but oftentimes the data is incorrect
 - Senator Kamps reported that Dean Hopkins asked for data on publications by Liberal Arts faculty, and rather than being able to access the FAR data directly, department chairs had to compile the information by hand
 - Senator Noonan motioned that the chancellor discontinue the current FAR system and examine other commercially available alternatives
 - Senator Eagles recommended that UM return to the paper copy system instead of assuming that it is necessary to purchase a new system
 - Senator Reithel noted that accrediting bodies want this data and offered a friendly amendment to the motion to consider more efficient alternatives (in lieu of commercially available alternatives)
 - On a voice vote, the Senate approved the motion, with no opposed and no abstentions
- Following an IRS audit, Honors College thesis supervisors will no longer be allowed to transfer funds to 25 accounts for supervising theses, rather they must take payments as salary
 - Since many faculty are unhappy with this change, Honors College Dean Douglass Sullivan-González is exploring alternative methods to provide compensation to faculty and has asked the Senate for assistance

- An alternative would be to transfer funds to departments and then department chairs would distribute the funds to faculty as they saw fit
 - Within the HR system, there are ways to funnel funds into 25 accounts
 - Senator Sufka directed the Finance Committee to explore alternatives
- The next Senate meeting will be Tuesday May 4, 2010
- Meeting adjourned at 7:51 pm