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Meeting Minutes

Faculty Senate

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Senators in attendance:

Susan Allen, Michael Barnett, Mark Bing, Sarah Blackwell, David Case, Judith Cassidy, Yunghee Chang, Jason Kovari, Robert Doerksen, Daneel Ferreira, Les Field, John Garner, Carol Gohm, John Lobur, Soumyajit Majumdar, Mustafa Matalgah, Erwin Mina-Diaz., Mike Mossing, Brian Reithel, Charles Ross, Jeff Roux, Bashir Salau, Chris Sapp, Paul Scovazzo, Zia Shariat-Madar, Justin Sherman, Steven Skultety, Jason Solinger, Don Summers, Cristiane Surbeck, Durant Thompson, Lollie Vaughan, Alex Watson, Donna West-Strum, Ethel Young Minor, Ahmet Yukleyen

Senators absent with prior notification:

Melissa Bass, Bill Chappell, Jason Dewland, Ann Monroe, Stephanie Noble, Ronald Schroeder, Debra Spurgeon, Mark Walker

Senators absent with replacements:

None

Senators absent without notification:

Adnan Aydin, Will Berry, Douglas Davis, Mark Dole, Amanda Johnston, Brice Noonan, Philip Rhodes, Lorri Williamson

Agenda

- Senator Albritton opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.
- First order of business: approve minutes of last meeting
 - Moved by Senator Walker
 - Seconded
 - Approved unanimously
- First order of business: Interim Report of the FARTF from Assoc. Provost Eftink
 - History
 - FAC's have been done since university inception
 - All universities do some kind of FAR
 - Paper was superseded by e-FAC 6 years ago
 - There have been a number of implementations in assoc. with IT
 - Design has been difficult
 - Needs of very disparate fields to be balanced
 - At end of 2009-2010 senate run, was outcry for change
 - Task force created at that time
 - Started in June 2010
 - Too many IT projects in summer 2010 meant no brand-new system could be ready by spring 2011
 - Discussions were held for alternatives
 - Doing nothing was not an option
 - Task force had discussion of enhancements for existing in-house system in the interim
 - Many issues were addressed that have been perennial complaints
 - New interface is MyOleMiss-based rather than *sui generis*
 - Concept: database of activities is mined once per year for a static report
 - Data is entered into database
 - Articles
 - Teaching
 - Advising
 - Committees
 - Annual report is built from said entries
 - Audio-video tutorials are new addition this year
 - In place for major portions of the FAC process
 - Lists are now sortable
 - Number of clicks for each bit of data entry reduced
 - There are now default dates to use for start/end
 - Interface now uses tab-based navigation
 - Questions
 - Senator Strum: Seems easier than current system
 - Comment: entering articles one by one seems enormous task, especially for people with multiple extra-campus collaborators
 - Comment: might be helpful to be able to "duplicate" publications to edit them and build very similar papers
 - Eftink: That feature was in previous version; no one liked/used it

- Comment: there is now a grants selection
 - Eftink: items from local database cannot be edited
 - Grants not thru ORSP may be hand-entered
 - E.g. travel grants
 - New developments for FAR do not mean that we have decided in favor of an in-house product
 - Commercial products still on the table
 - Feedback will be collected via survey, etc.
 - In May, FARTF will try to make a decision Vis-à-vis in-house vs. vendor products
 - Will be made with feedback
 - Vendor products have plusses and minuses vs. in-house
 - If in-house system is retained, additional features will be developed
 - "Wish list" of features exists
 - e.g. tenure and promotion portfolios will be generated/built from FAR's automatically
 - Comment: this would be "magnificent" feature
 - Eftink: could also cover sabbatical applications, etc.
 - Question: can current system pull together a tenure/promotion portfolio?
 - Eftink: you can "do it by hand" now by generating/merging PDF's
 - The system would do most of the gruntwork and eliminate overlap and repetition
 - Senator Albritton: what if a database entry is incorrect? Can it be corrected?
 - Eftink: data must be corrected "at the source"
 - E.g. OSRP, dean's office, etc.
 - Anywhere that data should have been entered or edited
 - Data not properly entered can't be harvested
 - Senator Albritton: independent studies/dissertation supervision have been officially under a single faculty member; must this be corrected by hand?
 - Depends on department
 - E.g. Chemistry has empty faux classes for thesis/dissertation for every instructor
 - Will automatically be populated as long as students are "registered"
 - Other schools must follow their procedures
 - Data now goes back an extra semester (3 full semesters) into the past
- Second order of business: committee reports
 - Executive
 - Nothing to report
 - Academic affairs
 - Excused absences policy
 - Senator Bing: rewritten policy draft referred to Academic Affairs For revisions

- Concerns over quizzes, academic freedom led to said referral
- Rewrites intended to preserve flexibility, academic freedom
- Current and proposed revised policies read aloud and disseminated to senators prior to meeting
- Chair: move to adopt revised policy
 - Seconded
 - Senator Solinger: English dept discussed policy
 - Voted at faculty meeting unanimously against adoption
 - Policy is complicated, obfuscates rather than clarifies
 - Takes on "impossible task" of imagining every possible absentee
 - As written, provides no incentive for students to avoid enrolling in classes that would be disrupted by many absences
 - e.g. athletes encourages to take comp classes in semesters with no travel
 - No incentive not to have absences
 - Comment: if sport spans semesters, would students never take a comp class?
 - Response: concern was that policy constrained faculty autonomy; all situations and faculty are different, and there are situations in which students can't complete coursework with too many absences
 - Therefore current policy is fine, as it has legitimate appeals process built in for exceptional cases
 - Senator Field: corresponded with history dept.
 - Of same mind as English
 - "basically overrides" professors' prerogatives on absences (email)
 - Prof. Sullivan-Gonzalez: athletes are out 6 of 14 class periods; "cavalier attitude" of athletics department places too much burden on student athletes
 - "concrete instance" of where policy fails
 - Senator Bing: shares concerns with senators Solinger and Fields
 - Athletics rep said that there were too many exceptions and that appeals process was not sufficient
 - Senator Reithel: if there is a pervasive problem, athletics should present evidence directly

- Comment: not just an effort of police "3 or 4" people, but an attempt to manage behavior of new faculty
 - Consultations with peers/chair can do this
- Biology department supports more or less
- Senator Scovazzo: chemical engineering is in favor
 - Students have been forced to choose between their major and their sport
 - Is "agonizing" to watch student-athletes have to change majors
- Senator Field: only way around the issue is to force faculty to change syllabi
 - "life is full of painful choices"
- Senator Solinger: call for concrete evidence from Ath dept is warranted
 - Senator Albritton: athletics is not only party
- Senator Reithel: experience in students traveling has pointed to no systemic problems in faculty members' approach to absences
- Comment: both drafts have exceptions
 - Must be dealt with either way
- Senator Barnett: Theatre supports only if theatre is mentioned specifically and not reduced to an "etc."
 - Band, theatre, music have all been proposed as friendly amendments
- Senator Scovazzo moves the question
 - Passed unanimously
- Vote
 - Aye 18
 - Nay 16
 - Abstain 1
- Will be forwarded to academic council
- Friendly amendments specifically mentioning various departments will be added later
 - Management wants "excused" changed to "accommodated"
 - Point of order: voting has been closed
 - Senator Albritton: technically, yes, but wording can be changed later if senate wills it
- "Dead week" proposal
 - "Last Class Week Policy"
 - Moved for adoption
 - seconded
- Discussion:
 - Senator Bass: ASB brought issue to senate notice

- Task force was formed with ASB, senate, admin members
 - Proposed amendment also sent out
 - Serious changes to first point; "asked" is revised to "cannot"
 - "asked to" not have exams becomes "cannot" have exams
 - Amendment proposed as substitute motion
- Discussion of substitute motion:
 - Senator Doerksen: multiple minor and major changes made
 - Senator Scovazzo: "ask" means guideline, "cannot" means policy; original is too weak and substitute is much stronger
 - Senator Doerksen: idea is period without much else to do is whole point; some academic activities may still go on that week
 - Senator Bass: student reps should be consulted on stronger substitute motion
 - Accepted "asked" language out of deference to academic freedom
 - ASB reps: "certainly support" stronger language
 - Senator Field: premise behind resolution is that making things easier for students will result in more study
 - Infringements are being made on syllabi and other freedoms
 - There is already a finals week for study
 - "one size fits all" solutions don't work
 - Senator Solinger: agrees with Senator Field
 - English sees it as constraining faculty autonomy
 - Would be amenable in the face of data supporting improved student performance
 - Senator Scovazzo: protecting one professor's academic freedom when it infringes on another's is an issue
 - E.g. a de facto final during the last week will steal attention from other professor's instruction time
 - Students will study for an early final instead of participating in normal last week of classes
 - Senator Cassidy: accounting doesn't like item #5
 - Not giving tests and being required to give things back, academic freedom was infringed upon
 - Would prefer to do nothing
 - Senator Monroe: field placements in education is not compatible with the new language, and could not be accommodated
 - Senator Bass: old language sets expectation even if not ironclad

- "Getting assignments back" clause has plenty of "outs" to allow professors wiggle room
 - Senator Cassidy: some may be offended that you even asked them to do so
- Senator Doerksen: "major projects" clause would assuage education's fears about field placement
- Question: wouldn't midterms and other tests similarly cut into other professors' time a la Senator Scovazzo's remarks? If so that is going on already
- Senator Mossing: Negative response from Chemistry and Biochemistry
 - Would eliminate flexibility vis-à-vis other department obligations
- Comment: system has been working well thus far, and changes are far more disruptive than good
- Senator Doerksen: would play well to student body
- Senator Barnett: concern among performance faculty about both resolutions, specifically #2
 - Are not specifically lab or design class, would feel better if language mentioned performance class specifically
- Assistant Hymel: Most of SUG has a policy
- Senator Albritton cedes control of meeting to Senator Barnett to make a remark
 - Exams were once spread over two weeks
 - Idea of 4-5 exams in a one-week period is "mindblowing"
 - Is a significant burden
 - Faculty need to be responsive to said burden
 - Sympathy for students' plight
 - Students did come to us for help
- Senator Barnett returns control of meeting to Senator Albritton
- Comment: perhaps because our semester is shorter, this is more of an issue
- Senator Bing: research indicates that many schools have only a single day, and several school have no dead period whatsoever
 - Assistant Hymel: however, schools often have a dead period, regardless of length
- Senator Solinger: is a problem with a short semester even fixable, as it would cut into intercessions
- ASB representative: initiative is a compromise
 - "Final instructional days"—still normal class days
 - 3 such days
 - Language recognizes need for flexibility

- Very carefully phrased
 - Change to plus/minus grading system means students may not have grades going into finals week
 - Faculty need to appreciate/respect students' perspective on the issue
 - Tried to develop policy that would balance faculty and student needs
 - Senator Socuzzo: how free are we in defining a "final"?
 - Can presentations and projects be defined as finals?
 - Does the university have a definition
 - Senator Barnett: projects aren't mentioned; Theatre has many such projects falling in finals week
 - Comment: last three days is only item under consideration; faculty are still free to have exams on Monday or Tuesday
 - Senator Monroe: original policy is better
 - Is "guidance" without compromising academic freedom
 - Senator Doerksen: There is no substantive difference between "asked" and "must"
 - Senator Bing: respectfully disagree, language is meaningful and different
 - Senator Albritton: call for amendments for altered motion
 - Senator Case moves question
 - Seconded
 - Passed unanimously
 - Vote
 - Aye 4
 - Nay 30
 - Abstain 1
- Senator Case moved the question on the original motion
 - Seconded
 - Passed with one nay
- Vote on original motion
 - Aye 22
 - Nay 12
 - Abstain 1
- Academic Support
 - No report
- Finance
 - No report
- University services
 - No report
- Governance
 - No report
- Third order of business: Old business
 - None

- Fourth order of business: new business
 - ASB to present on "UM Big" event
 - March 26
 - Students will go out into Oxford/Lafayette to do volunteer work
 - 1200 students have applied
 - New volunteer projects solicited
 - Housework and other unskilled labor all fair game
 - Senator Doerksen: can faculty participate?
 - ASB rep: not at this time, but it may become an annual event
 - Support possible in future
 - Perhaps supervision
 - Senator Albritton: memos will go out regarding upcoming fac. Senator elections
 - Should be elections
 - Not appointments from chair
 - April will be last meeting at which business can be done; May will be largely election housekeeping
- Senator Albritton closed the meeting at 9:00 p.m.