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Faculty Senate

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Faculty Senate Minutes – December 4, 2012

1. Call Meeting to Order

Chair Barnett called the meeting to order promptly at 7:00 p.m. and declared a quorum present.

2. Approval of November 6, 2012 Minutes

MOTION: To approve PASSED unanimously

3. Address by Chancellor Dan Jones and Vice-Chancellor Brandi Hephner LaBanc regarding the Incident Review Committee and the charge to the Sensitivity and Respect Committee

Chancellor Jones began by thanking the Senate for an opportunity to present an update. He also introduced Dr. Hephner LaBanc, new Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs.

He presented a brief overview of the process associated with the particular event that transpired on the evening of the presidential election in November 2012. At approximately 10-11 p.m., a number of actions took place, including some race-based "inappropriate hate language" that was used along with some political speech unrelated to race. Reports indicated several dozen students were potentially involved along with 300-400 onlookers.

Because of UM's difficult history with regard to race, it creates interest from around the country when an incident such as this occurs. Social media reports contained both accurate reports and inaccuracies. Some of those reports raised alarm for parents viewing events at a distance. The University took immediate steps to attempt to provide accurate information about what transpired so that students and faculty members would feel safe going to class the next day. It was difficult to manage communication during that period.

In a basketball game last Saturday, a technical foul was called due to some pushing and shoving. The referee reviewed the sequence of events on a monitor. That's very different from untangling an outdoor event involving several hundred students.

There was a temptation among some to find scapegoats and punish them; however, that would not have been effective. An Incident Review Committee, including several faculty members, was formed to look into the events of that evening.

Aside from this event, it was clear that there was a need to re-evaluate the culture within the university to see if the institution was doing something to encourage or discourage this kind of behavior. We have a standing committee of faculty, staff, and students that was expanded with some ad hoc membership consisting of additional faculty and staff. They are meeting tomorrow and will be charged to review the environment and see if anything needs to be done.

Some of what happened here was ugly and inappropriate while some of what happened here was legal and protected by free speech rights. This was not the only place in America where this kind of thing took place that night.

Regardless of how the university responds, there will be people in the Senate who will feel that too much was done in response to this effort. Likewise, there will be others who will say that not enough was done. Both groups are right, in part. This is a difficult issue to balance.

Dr. Hephner LaBanc began by reporting on the ten individuals on the "Incident Review Committee" and the work they have done so far. This is not a judiciary body. The inclusion of the student voice is important.

The Committee was charged on November 12th to try and provide a safe space for students to come and tell their story. Were students victimized? Do any of them know the identities of those involved? So far, the committee has met with approximately thirty (30) involved parties to gain a better understanding of what occurred. The committee will be able to make referrals to the judiciary committee for further handling.

She feels that the committee is doing a very thorough job in a short period of time. There may be a draft report available by the end of the semester. They have reviewed all available videos and tweets related to the incident. A lot of the students have been compliant and helpful.

Questions from the floor:

Q: One faculty member asked about "what students really think" -- has an attempt been made to conduct a sensitive opinion poll on a range of issues dealing with race?

A: a lot of ideas have been brought forward to the standing Committee on Sensitivity and Respect Committee. A campus-wide climate survey had already been under development and discussion prior to the election-night incident using the "Higher Education Research Institute" from California, which would yield data that could be compared with other institutions. It would probably be administered to sophomores and juniors, but that is still being debated. This ability to benchmark is really critical to us, in the Chancellor's opinion.

Q: Will the incident review report be made public?

A: There are legal restraints on what can be made public from judicial proceedings. The committee is exploring what they can produce and intends to develop a report suitable for public release, in addition to their detailed report to the Chancellor.

Q: Will any of this involve more regulations about behavior and what's allowed?

A: That will be a part of the discussion. Our current approach is to stay very close to the U.S. Constitution and then to use the University Creed to indicate our aspirations regarding behavior. When individuals break policies, there are judicial avenues. There is real tension around the issue of punishment and expulsion versus education. A number of faculty members have called upon the Chancellor to expel those who violate our policies and creed. Others have urged an educational approach in line with the university's purpose.

Q: Can you speak to what other universities are doing and how we compare?

A: Chancellor Jones spent some time discussing Dr. Hephner LaBanc's wide experience in dealing effectively with race-based incidents at other institutions. Many of those incidents are historically handled within the student affairs division. She was pleasantly surprised at his interest in being more deeply involved in this area.

Dr. Hephner LaBanc discussed the need for us to always review what we are doing and exploring ways to take incidents like this and have an intervention that begins to really norm the campus in accordance with the Creed more pervasively.

Q: Does the climate study help build toward the multicultural center?

A: Not designed specifically with that in mind. It is more focused on uncovering the current climate.

Follow up question/comment: It was suggested that the administration contact the University of Chicago to learn more about their past related work. Also, some of the more recent studies of the effects of the confederate battle flag could be considered.

A: There is a group of scholars on campus who focus on race. Some of them have been included on this committee to incorporate their expertise and input. Also, the Chancellor has stated that additional resources are available as needed.

Q: If protests without a racial dimension had taken place regarding the election, would the university respond in the same way.

A: There was a group of students that were gathered and were asked to disperse in order to ensure a safe environment. Had there not been a racial element, he does not believe there would have been news reports or these kinds of conversations after the event. He also affirmed his strong commitment to First Amendment rights and the fact that UM has received a very high rating from an external group that ranks universities according to their commitment to uphold free speech rights. There is a lot of pressure against it; but, the administration will always value the First Amendment.

Q: How have faculty members been affected in terms of recognizing this as a teachable moment? Also, how will this influence student leadership development? Will it become broader and less elitist?

A: He believes that faculty members have been engaged in this issue and have discussed it in a number of classes, based upon their communications to him. At the Fall Faculty Meeting in August, he laid out several challenges to the faculty related to the 50th anniversary of James Meredith's admission to UM. He plans to review those challenges at this Friday's end-of-semester faculty meeting and ask faculty members to engage in this issue. He believes that faculty members are the best hope for a solution to this problem for the university.

On the second issue, there is a large opportunity and a lot of risk. Race, gender, the greek system, and social life on this campus factor into those conversations. Whenever this kind of event happens, it is very personally painful to individual student leaders and he worries about the impact it will have on their lives. He hopes this will not discourage non-white students

from putting themselves forward for leadership positions. He commented on the remarkable student leaders he has met and hopes that will continue.

Q: Has there been any thought about advancing a separate narrative forward about what Ole Miss is all about? Nationally, it would be helpful to have a different/positive narrative about what we are all about.

A: Most of the university leadership spent the bulk of the morning today with a person who had just completed a marketing survey in the Memphis area about how folks think about the university. The university is re-evaluating the message and the position that the university wants to focus on after the 50-year anniversary. Expect to see "leadership, excellence, and service" emphasized in the future.

Q: In the 2008 election, one faculty member recalled some racial comments being shouted from the dorms. Are there people thinking about how we might be more proactive in the future?

A: If you have good ideas about what that is, we'd like to hear from you. The administration is open to ideas about how to do that. There are some conversations going on at present about what to do on Inauguration Day and Martin Luther King Jr. Day in January. One prominent African American alumnus suggested to the Chancellor that they need to get all of the older folks out of the way (both alumni and administrators) and let the students take the lead here. Another prominent alumnus with extensive public relations experience also suggested that the students need to take the lead on this issue.

Q: Was there any effort made to include any outsiders on the Incident Review Committee?

Has there been any discussion yet about bringing back the old University Studies 101 course?

A: A lot of discussion about the US 101 course with a wide range of opinions, even before the incident. Also, discussions have explored other ways of accomplishing this during orientation in student-led sessions as well as lots of other good ideas. On the outside representation, it was his intent to include non-UM individuals on the committee initially. The folks he approached suggested that the focal point should be on the students and let the students lead this process, rather than bringing in a "heavy hand" from the outside. He felt that having faculty members involved and using the existing judicial process would have greater credibility.

Q: Is this backlash to the success we've been enjoying?

A: He has explored that idea in conversations with students and it gets mixed reactions.

Chancellor Jones and Dr. Hephner LaBanc thanked the Senate for allowing them to speak tonight. He also highlighted the invitation to members of the Senate to the annual Holiday Reception at Carrier House for them.

4. Presentation by Dr. Kathy Gates – Information Technology Overview and Updates

Dr. Gates came to highlight about eight different projects.

First, the Mississippi Optical Network went live in January 2012 with Ole Miss as the first university to connect. We used to have a single 1 Gig connection. We now have two 10 Gig connections to Jackson. The four research universities, UMMC, and ERDC at Vicksburg as well as the Stennis Space Center are connected.

Along with this is some really exciting news about the new Internet2 connection in Jackson that recently went live. UM has been a member for over 10 years, but prior to June the nearest connector sites were in Nashville, Atlanta, and Baton Rouge. This new connection is a result of joint lobbying by the research directors at the IHLs in our state.

A new facility will be available to faculty that provides a set of cloud-based applications that have been customized for higher education. The first of these services is the Net+ Box service. It is an enterprise solution for file storage, similar to DropBox. As of this past Monday, all employees and students can have a Box+ account with 10 GB default quota. It is FERPA-compliant and provides support for mobile devices. UM folks will login using their Web ID and password, as part of a "federated identity" architecture to support a single set of credentials.

"Online Grade Changes" went live in June. It replaced the old paper/card system. The system is workflow-driven and includes the chair and the dean. When the dean clicks "approve", the transcript is actually updated at that moment. Since June, over 1,000 requests have been successfully processed.

There is currently a pilot study underway in with professors John Bruce and Charlie Miles to support attendance tracking using networked scanners in two classrooms. Students scan their ID cards and the scan hits the SAP system in real-time. Twelve more classrooms are planned for January 2013, thanks to Provost Stocks' support. Instructors can view the attendance scan results in myOleMiss as needed.

The "Degree Audit" project has been live since 2008, but its full potential has not been realized yet. A new position has been established with funding from the Provost's office to work with deans' offices and should be filled in Q1 2013. IT plans to unveil a "Degree Progress" report that offers a simpler and more attractive view next Spring. Dr. Gates is very hopeful that the report will help a lot of folks.

The official Ole Miss iPad App is out now. There is an iPhone version going into beta testing next week. It will become available in early 2013 via the Apple Store.

The new & improved UM website is expected to go live in February 2013. It will feature an

updated look, striking photography, responsive design, and attention to accessibility. The site will also include a new search function that was developed as a thesis project by UM graduate student Sai Kiran Vudutala under the direction of Dr. Tobin Maginnis. This feature is actually live on the current Ole Miss website.

Finally, a major network upgrade is planned for Summer 2013. The last major upgrade was in 2005. There was an interim upgrade in 2009 when some of the equipment from the presidential debates was repurposed. Three areas of focus are included in the upgrade: data center, campus core, and wireless. The goal is to move to the next generation of technology with: increased bandwidth and coverage, improved management tools, and solid, convenient security. One goal is to make it so that you only have to log into the wireless network once every 90 days instead of every single day.

In addition to the high-bandwidth internet capacity purchased by UM with Internet2, etc., the university purchases "commodity internet" for the campus community. Cisco has been telling the IT department to anticipate that every student who comes to campus will bring six devices. Dr. Gates presented a graph showing the exponential growth in UM internet consumption over the past decade.

Q: Is the Internet2 HIPAA compliant? No.

Q: What classrooms will have scanners? Large classrooms. She will provide a list.

Q: Are there ways to request that scanners be installed into particular classrooms? That's a good question. She hopes that it may be added into the existing instructional technology committee's charge each year.

Q: Why do we need to surveil students? There are mixed feelings on that issue. According to those who study student retention, attendance may be an issue for students that we admit who may be less well-prepared.

Q: Why use technology? The manual approach averages 12 minutes per class. This just saves time.

Q: Will the new storage facility provide a peer-to-peer capability for very large (10GB+) files or datasets? The alternative is a "condominium" of disk drives that we have already. Dr. Gates will certainly be watching for opportunities to push that need forward with the Internet2 group. She does not know of any other alternatives off the top of her head.

Q: Isn't attendance a prerequisite for financial aid eligibility? Not that she was aware of; however, Provost Stocks indicated that there are times when we have to "retrace" when a student stopped attending class related to financial aid issues.

Q: Would you please speak about the "vault" email archiving tool? Dr. Gates reported that the Vault is a tool that helps move content that is not accessed as frequently to invisible storage. Individuals run it as a client and it automatically moves your email to this background storage space. It looks like the email messages are still in your inbox, but they are only retrieved when you click on a message. This also helps overcome the limitation for inbox/mailbox size that currently exists.

5. Senate Committee Reports

a. Executive Committee

No report

b. Academic Affairs

i. Update on elective “W” Grades and Grade Appeal Process

1. Should the University limit the number of “W” grades allowed per student? What policies are currently in place? What are the potential ramifications of limiting the number possible?

The Committee reported that this year's seniors did not seem to exhibit a problem with taking a large number of W's. Less than 1% took two W's. Only one student out of over 4,000 seniors had eight W's. The committee felt that there were no problems and that it had no further need to pursue this issue. Therefore, it recommends no Senate action at this juncture.

2. Consider the ramifications of creating a new Standing Committee (similar to the Academic Discipline Committee) to create continuity in the Grade Appeal Process

This issue was studied in response to a request from Dr. Maurice Eftink. His task force on this issue has completed its work. There will be a 7-person committee including four faculty members and three students (2 undergraduate, 1 graduate). This Committee would only become active after the Dean's review. The draft report from Dr. Eftink's committee will be available soon.

ii. Update on Repeating Course Policy

1. Explore the impact of updating this policy to make it more consistent and potentially more lenient.

A separate task force was pursuing this issue. The task force is examining whether or not the policy is too restrictive as well as the interaction with plus/minus grading. A consensus was developed to expand options by allowing three attempts for lower-division courses and two for upper-division courses. Another issue is that there is not much of a mechanism to enforce this policy.

Dr. Gates reported that she has spoken about this issue with Dr. Eftink about ways that IT could provide support. They are exploring options.

At this point, data similar to the "W" grade data has not been available, but that is being sought.

Similar universities are all over the map on their level of restrictiveness.

iii. Update on Forgiveness Policy

- 1. The current policy is quite strict compared to similar universities and has a negative impact upon retention. Explore updating this policy to be more in keeping with similar universities.**

It has been suggested that the limit be raised to four courses, rather than the current two, perhaps with a 12-hour limit. Drs. Eftink and Hopkins are currently preparing drafts for the task force's consideration. If approved, this may take effect in the Fall of 2013, depending upon the administrative review and approval process.

c. Academic Support

i. Update on Fall Academic Break Schedule

- 1. It has been proposed that the University have both a "Fall Break" and a Thanksgiving Break. This would allow both the faculty and students the opportunity to recharge closer to the middle of the semester rather than only at the end of the semester as we do under our current structure. There is concern that students begin to lose focus well before we reach the current academic break and that by having an additional break earlier in the semester the University may forestall this problem.**

The committee reported that it was asked to research this issue. At this point, they have a process underway and plan to report to the Senate in February. They intend to meet with the administration to learn more about the current policy, which has been in place since 2002, and will also gather more information from other institutions. The committee welcomes input from the faculty if anyone has ideas that would be helpful as the effort proceeds.

Q: Would there be a Fall Break and then a shorter Thanksgiving Break? The discussion was that a 2-3 day Fall Break would be offered and then a shorter Thanksgiving break. The committee is still exploring the implications of these options.

Q: Was there any consideration about faculty & staff members whose children are out of school all week? Provost Stocks indicated that the

university coordinates breaks with the local school system.

Q: What motivated the change of schedule in 2002? Also, if we move toward the new system, would we vote on it or would it just be imposed on us? The committee is gathering data. They are going to ask the administration about the rationale that was used for the change in 2002.

It was reiterated that the primary motivation for bringing this issue up initially was a perception that there was a "drag" in motivation and energy among the students in the middle of the semester.

One senator reported that in 2002, the shorter week with days off at the end of the week led to a drop in attendance.

MOTION: That the Senate conduct a non-binding "straw vote" on whether or not the committee should continue its current course of investigations PASSED 19-15

d. Finance

No report

e. University Services

No report

f. Governance

i. Update on Ombudsman

The committee reported at its last meeting, there was discussion of two types of figures involved. Dr. Showalter in the University Counseling Center is very supportive of this initiative and suggested that there is already a resource in place to serve as an ombuds for students. Second, he would recommend more than one ombuds in order to address situations in which an ombuds might have a conflict of interest with investigating an issue in his/her own department. Third, the Counseling Center already has an Employee Assistance Program that can help with some of these matters and it already provides counseling for staff and faculty. There is a sense that the Counseling Center would probably need another employee to help manage the workload.

6. Old Business

a. Update on Second Bachelor's Degree Task Force (Dr. Robert Doerksen & Dr. Adam Smith)

- i. The University of Mississippi may confer a second bachelor's degree upon either its graduates or those of another institution when a student has completed the specific course requirements for the second degree as defined by The University of Mississippi. In addition to the credits used for the first degree, the candidate for the second bachelor's degree must complete at least 30 semester hours in residence from the school or college recommending the degree, with a minimum 2.00 GPA for those courses.**

Professor Doerksen reported that the task force that looked into this issue explored the question of whether or not the university's current policy was adequate. The task force has met once and will continue to meet at least one more time. One example that was considered was in the College of Liberal Arts when a student wished to earn two different BA degrees from different departments. Another possibility involves a student earning a degree from a different school/college. They will continue to investigate and compare with similar policies at peer institutions.

Q: Should there be a requirement that students must complete the 30 additional hours? Some feel that it is unfair to award two degrees unless the student has completed at least 150 hours.

Another example of a situation in which a student may be required to take additional hours would be if they were earning a degree in mathematics education and also wished to earn a degree in math. There are only six hours difference between the two degree programs.

7. New Business

The University's Energy Committee has been meeting. Any questions, comments, or concerns can be directed to the Senate's representative on that committee, Professor Noonan (bnoonan@olemiss.edu) in the Biology department.

8. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn PASSED at 8:55 p.m.

These minutes are hereby respectfully submitted,

BRIAN J. REITHEL, Ph.D.

Senate Vice Chair and acting Secretary for this one meeting