

## FACULTY SENATE MEETING

JANUARY 22, 2002 – 3:30 pm – FERGUSON FORUM

### CORRECTED MINUTES

**Roll Call and Quorum Check** – (*Keith Woodbury*)

**ABSENT:** Bill Chaplin, Jimmy Williams, Anup Agrawal, Benton Gup, Mark Nelson, Carol Donovan, Debra Nelson-Gardell

**Guests:** Joanna Hutt (Dialog), CW reporter

The December 11<sup>th</sup> minutes were approved.

**Action Items:** The Planning and Operations committee presented modifications of the **final exam schedule**. The SGA brought this issue forward and further investigation by the Planning and Operations committee found that the Registrar's Office was concerned about this issue and had formed a Task Force. Some students were faced with three exams in one day or "stacking". The modifications proposed would resolve those problems. The proposal would have the following exam schedule Monday through Friday with a four-slot daily schedule with hour breaks, keeping the current 2.5-hour exam blocks: 8:00-10:30 AM; 11:30-2:00 PM; 3:30-6:00 PM and 7:00-9:30 PM. Rules for determining the priorities in case of conflict or "stacking" would be departmental exams have lower priority than other course exams; exams for higher-level classes by number (which generally have smaller enrollments) have lower priority; and for the same course level, the 6:30-9:00 p.m. slot defers. The student could choose to take all exams at the scheduled time. If not, these rules determine which exams should be deferred. The proposed 3:30-6:00 p.m. slot would be used only for departmental exams, with two additional departmental slots in the evening times. This proposal would provide 20 rather than 17 exam slots and reduces the chance of three or four exams on the same day. This leaves the student and instructor the option to make other mutually acceptable arrangements. It was requested that the resolution supporting this new schedule be approved by February in order to be incorporated into the printing of the final exam schedule for next fall. Discussion included these points: students should provide documentation that there is a conflict in their final exam schedule; a deferred exam would be given at the beginning of the next semester and this would give the student extra time to study; exams would not be given on Saturdays; students were represented in the formation of this proposal; the length of time that should expire before readdressing this issue should it not prove feasible; and why departmental exams are rated lower since that could conceivably wreak havoc on small courses. During the discussion, several faculty expressed concern about the possibility that students may face an increase in "stacking" owing to the compressed schedule and one senator that expressed the sentiment that 3 (engineering) exams in one day was draining and 3 exams in one day should be avoided. The resolution passed with three abstentions.

The Senate Operations committee brought forward the following paragraph to be inserted in the Faculty Senate **by-laws to define the term "regular" faculty member:**

**"FACULTY HOLDING REGULAR APPOINTMENTS"**

*"A faculty member holding a regular appointment is someone who is tenured, tenure earning, or a temporary full- or part- time instructor at The University of Alabama. Temporary full- or part-time instructors are individuals who teach six hours or more per*

*term on a continuing basis (three or more consecutive academic-year terms) who do not hold tenure or are tenure earning at another institution of higher education."*

This definition would allow the preceding faculty members with the above qualifications to be represented in the Faculty Senate. There are over one hundred temporary full- or part-time faculty at the University at this time in this category. Anyone with information regarding the reported numbers of faculty in each department should contact Steve Miller. Discussion included the view that this would be an encroachment on the status of tenured and tenure earning faculty. The Faculty Senate deals with many issues not directly affecting those members. It was suggested that "have been teaching" be inserted to replace "who teach" in the proposed definition stated above. The Senate Operations committee will write to each dean and share this definition and state the number of senators that should be elected. This definition, since it is for the Faculty Senate by-laws only, would not be used to define those qualified to vote in a campus-wide referendum. The definition of faculty member in the Faculty Handbook would be used. The suggestion that tenure and tenure earning faculty would be outnumbered by representation of those defined above would not be probable since, at the present time, there are 750 tenure track and tenure earning faculty compared to 100 temporary full- or part-time instructors. There is a trend for Faculty Senates to expand to Faculty and Staff Senates. This proposal was presented at this meeting and will be voted on, as amended, at the February meeting.

In order to officially establish the **Vice President of the Faculty Senate as the faculty ombudsperson**, the Senate Operations committee also proposed the following change to the Senate by-laws:

*"The Vice President will serve as the **faculty ombudsperson**—an impartial and confidential resource to assist faculty in resolving problems, complaints, conflicts, or other issues. As the ombudsperson, he/she will assist faculty in finding just and timely resolutions to problems. In so doing, the Vice President will act as a neutral resource rather than taking sides on issues."*

The Faculty Senate Vice President serves as the faculty ombudsperson, and this proposal assures that the ombudsperson would be a mediator and an impartial and confidential resource to assist faculty resolve problems, complaints, conflicts, or other issues. The opinion was expressed that this person should not be an officer or member of the Faculty Senate but rather a senior, well-known, and well-respected person in a position to serve the entire University. Discussion included the points that a separate officer would be difficult to find. The Vice President of the Faculty Senate would be in a position to ask senior and qualified people to assist in the event of heavy scheduling of the Vice President. The Vice President's office is a good plateau to meet people in administration and to determine the workings of the University. There have been no requests for the services of an ombudsperson in the last several years. It was suggested that the past President of the Faculty Senate could serve as ombudsperson. The past President has remaining and substantial responsibilities including serving on the Steering Committee. Additional responsibilities could possibly adversely affect someone's willingness to accept the office of President. It was pointed out the difficulties of establishing a permanent ombudsperson and that the present proposed system is the best available. The present system provides a link to the Faculty Senate's legislative body. The motion was made to refer the proposal back to Senate Operations to consider the issues that have been raised. A second substitute motion was made that Marvin Johnson draft a substitute proposal including the points he has made and that both proposals will be considered at the next meeting. This motion passed.

**A resolution commending Cornelius Carter** for his Professor of the Year Award from

the Council for Advancement and Support of Education and the Carnegie Foundation was presented. This is a nation-wide award with Professor Carter being the only recipient from research and doctoral institutions. It will be printed on special paper with the signature of the President of the Faculty Senate and the date on the resolution. Professor Carter will be invited to the next Faculty Senate meeting to receive this resolution. This resolution passed.

**President's Report** (*Norm Baldwin*) The Higher Education Partnership and UA Faculty Senate are co-sponsoring a **Constitutional Reform Seminars** on The University of Alabama campus Friday, February 15<sup>th</sup> with Bailey Thompson conducting the two-hour seminars. This will precede Higher Education Day in Montgomery, and everyone should be encouraged to attend both events. Every senator should make an extra effort to attend since the Senate passed a resolution supporting constitutional reform.

President Sorensen continues to emphasize the need for the Faculty Senate to support funding efforts in the Legislature. He also indicated that the housing committee dealing with potential housing discrimination, including the Greek system, has a draft report which will be ready in the near future. He encouraged us to consider of the concerns of the broader student body (81%) outside the Greek system. The Provost is consistent in her focus on a potential \$3-4 million dollar shortfall in the budget caused by increased costs of benefits and utilities, reduction in tuition monies (resulting from lower enrollments), and appropriations reductions.

The **faculty priority survey** listing the top ten common concerns of the faculty included problems with mental health benefits, Greek integration issues, sexual orientation non-discrimination policy, and domestic partner benefits. Diversity was the number one broad area of concern of the faculty, academic affairs was number two, and the University budget and finances was the number three area. The standing committee on the selection and evaluations of deans and chairs has sent the Senate proposal to the deans and chairs for their feedback.

**Faculty Life Committee** – (*Wythe Holt*). The Faculty Life Committee will present at the next meeting proposed changes to the equal opportunity and anti-discrimination policy. Changes in the very poorly stated maternity leave policy will also be proposed. The Provost requested those changes be divided into cost and no-cost issues. An Emeritus College was proposed (came from Emory University) but the committee considered it to have no considerable benefits. The Faculty Life Committee discussed the lack of diversity among our faculty. This is of the greatest importance, but since other organizations are directly involved and acting on this issue, the committee decided to wait for some circumstance for their direct involvement and action.

**Strategic Planning Initiative** – (*Margaret Garner*). This committee has not received any feedback from UAH and UAB regarding the Strategic Planning Initiative. The deadline is next month for the committee to give their report. It was proposed that this committee prepare a letter to the UA President, Provost, Chancellor and the Senate with a strong statement supporting the preface that establishes how the document should be interpreted. Senators were also encouraged to write letters.

**Faculty and Staff Benefits Committee** – (*Wythe Holt*) This committee voted 11-10 endorsing the Senate's prior call to bring health care benefits to same-sex domestic partners. The entire voting membership of the committee was present at their meeting. The proposal was sent to Bob Wright who returned a letter to the committee turning down the request solely on the basis of cost of benefits. The committee majority felt that it would not be more costly, but in the long run would assist with health care costs. Vice President

Wright stated in the newspaper that the campus was overwhelmingly opposed to the proposal. Domestic partner benefits had support expressed by faculty and the community. Further action by the Faculty Senate was encouraged with the suggestion that the affected community members be invited to come before the Senate to express what action they feel should be taken. Supportive committee members were extremely disappointed in the action of the Vice President and President concerning this issue. This issue will be on the agenda for the next Steering Committee meeting.

**Legislative Agenda Committee** – (*Margaret Garner*). In a meeting with Chancellor Portera, the priority of faculty salaries was reiterated by the Chancellor, as well as the promotion of economic development and the state's economy. It was reported at the HEP Board meeting that membership (21% growth) and its influence has increased. The Partnership Board established three new councils including Faculty Senate President's Council, Student Government Association Council, and University Staff Council.

Meeting adjourned 5:10 PM