

FACULTY SENATE MEETING
APRIL 21, 2009 – 150 SHELBY HALL – 3:30 PM

APPROVED MINUTES

ABSENT WITHOUT ALTERNATE – Lowell Baker, Sheila Black, Steve Burch, Martin Evans, Tsun-Zee Mai, Timothy Murphy, Mike Dugan, John Hill, Gary Hoover, Lew Silver, Lonnie Strickland, Karen Burgess, Janis Edwards, Brent Hardin, David Arnold, Marcia Barrett

ABSENT WITH ALTERNATE – Bronwen Lichtenstein/Rona Donahoe, Clark Midkiff/Keith Woodbury, Cassandra Simon/Brenda Smith

GUESTS – Adam Jones, Tuscaloosa News; Cresandra Smothers, Dialog

Roll call and quorum check by Secretary Jeanette VanderMeer.

The minutes of the March 24, 2009 Faculty Senate meeting were approved with one correction.

President Karen Steckol began the meeting with committee assignment information. The Faculty Senate voted to approve the committee appointments. Faculty Senate committee members went to assigned meeting spaces to elect committee co-chairs. Those elected were:

Academic Affairs	Marcia Barrett & John Vincent
Financial Affairs	Katrina Ramonell & Steven Hobbs
Research & Service	Ed Stephenson & Harold Stowell
Faculty Life	Lowell Baker & Deidre Leaver-Dunn
Student Affairs	Chapman Greer & Melondie Carter
Faculty & Senate Governance	Marci Daugherty & Michael Martone
Information Technology	Jim Hall & Ray White

Legislature Agenda – (*Margaret Garner*) Margaret Garner thanked President Karen Steckol for comments regarding the **Senate Bill #581** during her address to the University-wide faculty/staff meeting. Roger Bedford has proposed legislation to control tuition increases for those affected by the loss of PACT funds. There are 2,500 UA students affected by this loss. If passed, this legislation would have far reaching effects on higher education institutions including bond ratings. Higher education institutions do not have control over state appropriations but does have control over tuition increases. The senators were asked to call on personal phone, write on personal stationary, email on personal computers expressing opinions that the proposed bill would not be favorable for higher education institutions. The Governor's education budget just passed treats all institutions of learning fairly. **HEP** is the only advocacy group for higher education in the state. Only 177 of UA's 4,000 employees are members. Membership is critical to the effectiveness of this advocacy group. Membership dues are extremely affordable and everyone was encouraged to join. The membership form is available on the Faculty Senate web page.

President's Report – (*Karen Steckol*) Senator Ray White expressed concern about **electronic course evaluations** for large lecture classes by some students not attending class yet are asked for an electronic evaluation. This issue will be discussed in the next meeting with the Provost and will be pursued. Discussion included other institution's methods, incentives that are offered and electronic solutions to the problem.

Faculty Senate meeting attendance has not been followed closely the past couple of years but will now be monitored. The bylaws state:

2. **Faculty and Senate Governance Committee.** The Faculty and Senate Governance Committee:
 - A. Is responsible for the continuous review of faculty participation in University governance, including university committee structure and Faculty Handbook compliance
 - B. Is responsible for continuous review of the Senate's organization and procedures and for recommending changes it deems desirable in either the Constitution or By-laws.
 - C. Considers the reasonableness of all absences in excess of two by a Senator during the April through March term, in which a Senator is not represented by a duly elected alternate. In such cases the Committee will make a recommendation to the Senate on whether the position should be declared vacant. The Committee will also be responsible for determining if a Senate seat is vacant for reasons other than absence and will make appropriate recommendations to the Senate.
 - D. Interprets the Constitution and By-laws and may receive requests for interpretation from the Senate or the Senate President, or may initiate action by itself. All such interpretations must be reported to the Senate and are subject to Senate concurrence.
 - E. Determines the constitutionality of any proposed changes in Senate By-laws. Such determinations must be reported to the Senate and are subject to Senate concurrence.

The Secretary will call the roll of senators at each meeting of the Senate. Any absences in excess of two by a senator will be reported by the Secretary to the Faculty and Senate Governance Committee. The Secretary shall also record the attendance, by name, of each visitor having floor privileges pursuant to Article III, Section 3, paragraph 4, of every attending member of the press, and of other special visitors to the Senate.

A senator is responsible for securing an alternate to attend Senate meetings in the event of the senator's absence. The senator is also to inform the alternate of any important issues on the agenda and how to vote as the senator's proxy. If an alternate is not secured, but attempts were made, notification should be forwarded to President Steckol or Secretary VanderMeer and no penalty will be assessed.

A request to the appropriate dean to replace those senators with excessive unexcused absences could possibly be a repercussion of those absences.

Parking fees have increased as was outlined in a presentation by the Director of Transportation Services, Ronnie Robertson. Transportation is an ancillary, self sustaining service. With increased numbers of faculty and students parking and

transportation costs have increased. An inquiry was made by a senator pertaining to a twelve month rather than a five month payroll deduction for parking fees. One possible problem would concern those leaving the university after one semester after paying parking fees. This issue will continue to be addressed.

The **Board of Trustees** meeting concerned the budget issues facing the UA system. At the meeting Chancellor Mack Portera stated five key points concerning the economic downturn. The first point was the system will take the current downturn seriously, the second point was to meet the downturn with budget cuts, the third point was to support leadership on each of the campuses and position our institutions for the future, the fourth point was the protection of teaching and research missions, and the fifth point was to protect fiscal integrity. The system is losing \$40 million dollars a year in funding support. The federal stimulus money will not make up for this shortfall. Anyone can attend the Board of Trustees meeting which will be held in Tuscaloosa this summer and fall, at UAB next winter and at UAH in the spring of next year. Those dates will be made available as soon as possible. The University of Alabama President, the Faculty Senate President and the SGA President will address the Board of Trustees meeting this fall.

The cost of health benefits will increase next January. Rona Donahoe will be Faculty Senate representative on the Health Benefits Committee. This committee was charged to make recommendations to fill a \$2.2 million dollar shortfall in the Blue Cross Blue Shield Health Care Plan's reserve fund. There were no increases in insurance premiums last year. The recommendations are presently in the discussion phase and were presented to the Faculty Senate Steering Committee at the meeting on April 14th. President Karen Steckol then met with Charlotte Harris, Associate Vice President for Human Resources; Bob McLeod, Chairman of the Benefits Committee and Professor of Economics; and Lynda Gilbert, Vice President for Financial Affairs, to discuss the particular disagreements of the Steering Committee. Adding a third tier to the existing premium structure and increasing the lowest salary standard (\$26,000/year) is being considered. The University spent \$28 million dollars on health care last year. In comparison with other SUG institutions the faculty and staff of The University of Alabama pays significantly lower insurance premiums with better benefits.

Academic Affairs – *(Marcia Barrett & John Vincent)* No report.

Faculty Life – *(Deidre Leaver-Dunn & Lowell Baker)* There will be a meeting next Wednesday to address the climate survey.

The Evaluation for Deans survey is out but the Evaluation for Chairs is not.

Meeting adjourned 5:00 PM

