

**FACULTY SENATE MEETING
AUGUST 26, 2008 – 3:30 PM – 150 SHELBY HALL**

APPROVED MINUTES

ABSENT WITHOUT ALTERNATE: Lowell Baker (sabbatical), Sheila Black, Arun Gupta, Lonnie Strickland, Karen Burgess, Thad Ulzen, David Arnold, Rona Donahoe

ABSENT WITH ALTERNATE: Steve Thoma/Steve Katsinas

GUESTS: Adam Jones, The Tuscaloosa News

Roll call and quorum check by Faculty Senate Secretary Jeanette Vandermeer.

The minutes of the April 15, 2008 Faculty Senate meeting were approved with corrections.

President Karen Steckol introduced The University of Alabama President, Dr. Robert Witt. Dr. Witt's comments began with a reference to the good working relationship between the Faculty Senate and UA's central administration. Provost Judy Bonner and the Faculty Senate have developed a working relationship resulting in a major asset toward the University's vision, goals and challenges. Dr. Witt stated that the purpose of his administrative staff is to support faculty in teaching, research and service. At the end of the Legislative session, The University of Alabama faced a \$23 million dollar cut in **state appropriations**. At the same time the University faced mandated increases in non-funded TRS (\$1.9 million) and PEEHIP (\$500,000). Due to an increase in tuition a moral obligation was met with an increase (\$2.4 million) in scholarship support for ongoing scholarships. Utility costs increased just under \$2 million and insurance costs increased about one-half million dollars. The debt service for Shelby Hall II comes on board this year at a cost of \$3.4 million. In view of the budget cuts it is important to continue to recruit new faculty hires. Three million dollars was allocated last year for new faculty hires with two million allocated for this year. Approximately \$350,000 was set aside for long-standing commitments that no faculty promotion should go forth without appropriate financial recognition. These costs total \$36 million. The University has been able to meet this financial challenge without going through staff cutbacks and program reductions that other institutions in the system have faced. Other institutions in our state had to eliminate approximately 300 faculty and staff positions and instituted severe program cutbacks. The University has not eliminated any faculty or staff position due to the financial cutbacks. The University continues to invest in new faculty and staff hires and will continue to maintain progress and momentum. The compensation for the financial cutbacks and increased costs came from the tuition increase (50%), approximately 32% came from growth reserves established in last year's budget, 17% from enrollment growth itself and one percent from academic savings. The incremental revenue associated with the University's enrollment growth was not budgeted last year. In last year's budget the same enrollment numbers from 2006 were used in the 2007 budget. The primary purpose was to avoid putting the University's faculty and staff in the position of a good year, bad year, proration situation dealt with in the past. A little less than 50% of the revenue from enrollment growth this year was invested in this year's budget. Without this investment the University would not be able to increase new faculty and staff hires. It would drastically cut deferred maintenance and increased scholarship support would not be possible. Five years ago the University was spending approximately \$10.4 million on scholarship support. In the last fiscal year ending in September approximately \$31 million was spent on scholarship support.

The University was recognized last year as having 73 **National Merit scholars** and ranked twelfth among 650 public universities. Due to a publication cutoff date, the actual number was 77. This fall the University will receive credit for 85 National Merit scholars with the actual number slightly over 90. U.S. News & World Report ranked the University 37th among public institutions. Forbes Magazine rankings with a heavy emphasis on student satisfaction with their university ranked UA number seven in the country out of 600+ universities. The University overall is being well received by the students. Recruiting will be more aggressive this year to maintain the overall quality of students. In the fall of 2007 there were 14,300 applications for a 4,500 freshman class. Over 18,000 applications have been received this year. The goal for next fall is a minimum of 20,000 applications. This will place the University in a position of accepting another outstanding freshman class.

The University is attempting to strengthen the **research environment** in part by providing start up costs necessary to establish faculty's research programs, providing health care for graduate teaching and graduate research assistants, and allowing GRA's on grants and contracts to receive a scholarship equal to their out-of-state tuition to keep our faculty competitive. A more user friendly Grants and Contracts Office has been established. The cluster hire program recommended by Provost Bonner will insure that the dollars spent by the University will have the greatest possible impact. The Office of Student Affairs will focus on the issue -- "What is it about the Alabama experience that makes an education at The University of Alabama today what it is and what can we do to enhance the quality of that experience to make Alabama even more of a preferred choice for students". "The Alabama experience - where the best and brightest come to belong and become" is being considered as the catchphrase for the University.

Dr. Witt believes the University will be able to absorb and buffer faculty, staff and programs from anticipated **budget** cuts next year. Building projects are continuing to progress. The aggregate goal of the University's Capital Campaign (\$500 million) was reached in June a year ahead of time. In July \$520 million was reached with increased efforts to obtain \$250 million goal in scholarship support. The goal of the Capital Campaign was successful due to over 100,000 individual gifts and seventy percent of University faculty and staff contributions. The realization of the Capital Campaign goal indicates there are many that believe in what the University is doing and the success that has been achieved.

The University of Alabama's faculty and staff participation in the **United Way** campaign was over seventy percent. One SEC school had forty percent participation with the remaining SEC schools rating below twenty percent. Dr. Witt feels this is an indication of faculty and staff morale and their commitment to the University and the community.

An example was given concerning the excellent relationship between University students, the University police and the Tuscaloosa Police Department. A senator questioned the possibility of the demise of the University yearbook. Dr. Witt's response was: The yearbook is in financial difficulties with decreased sales. The length of time the University can subsidize the yearbook is in question.

The next question concerned the **bus system**. Dr. Witt's response was: There were approximately 12,000 to 13,000 riders last year. Riders should increase in the next two to three years according to comparisons with other institutions. The addition of buses is a necessity with consideration of electric vehicles a possibility. Smaller buses along with the current fleet would supply transportation for students, faculty and staff. One Senator stated that campus transportation accommodations for handicapped individuals are in need of improvement. The senator bringing forth this issue was told to email the Provost with the situation and include suggestions to accomplish those improvements.

Dr. Witt discussed the possible acquisition of the Bryce Hospital property and the hotel/game-day condo development headed by the Spectrum Capital organization. The Hillel facility and Jewish temple will be relocated on campus near St. Francis Parish and Student Center.

President's Report – (*Karen Steckol*) The “Full-Time Instruction Faculty **Salaries by Rank** – UA, UAB, UAH and UAS Averages Compared to SUG 50th Percentile” report was made available to the senators. The 50th percentile was reached for professors and associate professors, but was not reached for assistant professors. The question was asked if UAB numbers included non-medical faculty only. The answer to the question will be followed up. The University is in good shape regarding budget cuts due to the financial situation. Other institutions are making drastic cuts in faculty, staff and programs. It was suggested to write a **letter to Dr. Witt** acknowledging his vision to financially protect the University's programs and services.

The **SEC Faculty Senate Presidents** met in South Carolina. This group will meet in Birmingham in September. Any interested senator was invited to attend.

A nomination is needed for someone to serve on the **University Assessment Council**. An email will be sent to the senators requesting names.

President Karen Steckol met with John McGowan, Vice President for the **Office of Information Technology**. Dr. McGowan will be speaking to the Faculty Senate meeting on September 16. Senators were encouraged to bring any questions in this area to the next meeting.

The **Curriculum Oversight Committee (COC)** has been reinstated with Ed Stephenson named to serve as a member. John Vincent is also a committee member. This committee determines if an application for a course designation as a core course is justifiable and fits into the core curriculum. However, the COC does not design or modify the actual core curriculum. Dr. Steckol said there should be a determination whether this committee will be looking into revamping the core curriculum. The committee did not meet last year. In the prior academic year the committee looked at rewriting what constituted each of the categories in each of the core groups. The Faculty Senate will be informed by Ed Stephenson of the progress made by this committee.

President Steckol attended the **new faculty orientation** meeting last week. It is a diverse group of over one hundred.

The **Vice President for Research and the Vice President for Student Affairs** have ads placed for the positions and the search committees have been formed. These will be national searches. Everyone was encouraged to attend the meetings with the candidates when they are scheduled. Those attending the Faculty Senate meetings in Shelby without faculty parking permits will be provided tokens to park in the garage across the street. There are Crimson Ride bus stops behind Shelby Hall.

Vice President's Report – (*Clark Midkiff*) No report.

Secretary's Report – (*Jeanette Vandermeer*) No report.

Academic Affairs – (*Marcia Barrett & John Vincent*) The Academic Affairs Committee will meet next Tuesday in Mary Harmon Hall at 3:30 PM.

Faculty Life – (*Deidre Leaver-Dunn & Lowell Baker*) No report.

Financial Affairs (*Katrina Ramonell & Steven Hobbs*) The Financial Affairs Committee will meet next Tuesday in Bruno Library.

Research & Service – (*Ed Stephenson & Laurie Bonnici*) No report.

Faculty and Senate Governance – (*John Mason & Michael Martone/Marci Daugherty*) No report.

Student Affairs – (*Melondie Carter & Carolyn Cassady*) No report.

Legislative Agenda – (*Margaret Garner*) The “Stars Retreat” was held providing leadership training for students in conjunction with the Higher Education Partnership. Eight students from The University of Alabama attended. The theme of the meeting was to provide communication skills and knowledge relating to tuition increases and budgets cuts for higher education. Approximately 140 students from around the state, two university presidents and eight university lobbyists attended.

New Business – Margaret Garner announced that the “MentalHealthEdu” program has been purchased from the same company that produced the AlcoholEdu program for students. The “MentalHealthEdu” program is directed to faculty and staff and student workers. There are national concerns about students in distress. Often times signs of student mental health issues are overlooked. This is a 30-minutes online program that can be taken any time and will provide ways to recognize signs of stress in students and ways of talking to that student. The student can be referred to resources that can assist them. The personnel of the Office of Student Affairs have started this program. Each Dean has been requested to assign someone in their school/college to coordinate this program. National surveys show a significant number of freshmen have serious difficulties coping with the stress of college life. Ninety-eight percent of UA freshmen have completed the alcohol program.

Announcement – President Karen Steckol will be emailing a brief outline of each Faculty Senate meeting to all faculty members hoping to create more interest in the activities of the Faculty Senate. There are continuous meetings with the Provost and senators are encouraged to let the Faculty Senate officers know of any issue that should be brought to her attention.

Meeting adjourned 4:45 PM.