

# FACULTY SENATE

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

## FACULTY SENATE MEETING

SEPTEMBER 16, 2003 – 3:30 PM – FERGUSON FORUM

### APPROVED MINUTES

#### Roll call and quorum check by Roy Ann Sherrod

**ABSENT:** Janis Nuckolls, Rasma Lazda, Karen Burgess, Doug McKnight, Garry Warren, Carol Drolen

**ABSENT WITH ALTERNATE:** Daniel Goldmark, Jay Lindly, Mohammed Sharif,

**Guests: Joanna Hutt, Dialog; Cindy Summerville, Crimson White; Seth Burgess, GSA; John Schmidt, Office for Academic Affairs; Jim Holliman, Professional Staff**

The minutes of the August 26, 2003, Faculty Senate meeting were approved with the addition of the names of the absent senators.

The meeting opened with the introduction of John Schmitt. The **SACS Reaffirmation Process** was presented with two handouts titled, "Reaffirmation of Accreditation" and "Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Section II Core Requirements". John Schmitt serves as The University of Alabama's Institutional Accreditation Officer. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools gives accreditation for the University to offer doctoral, graduate, baccalaureate, and master degrees. The points of Reaffirmation of Accreditation regarding The University of Alabama's status will include two primary reports, three teams, evaluations of reports, timeline and the advantages of the revised principles and processes. The University of Alabama's reaffirmation of accreditation status was conducted in 1994 with a ten-year reaffirmation through 2004 and has been extended through 2005. Ten years ago a large report was generated with 150 or more people conducting the review. With the extension of one year, The University of Alabama will be able to review the new process and principles being applied. The revised Principles of Accreditation will have twelve core requirements, 53 comprehensive standards (mission, governance, effectiveness, programs and resources) and eight federal mandates. As part of the process UA will produce two primary reports. The first is Compliance Certification report addressing twelve core requirements, 61 comprehensive standards totaling 73 total "Principles of Accreditation". The second report will address a Quality Enhancement Plan. This will focus on "student learning outcomes" that are critical to the University's mission. There will be three UA teams. The first is the Leadership Team consisting of the UA President, Chief Academic Officer, the Accreditation Liaison and the Planning and Evaluation Officer(s). The function of this team will be to coordinate the review process. The second will be the Compliance Certification Team. The team will gather documentation for each of the 73 principles to determine whether the institution is in compliance, partial compliance, or non-compliance with a particular principle. This team of 32 people will produce a written report for review by the off-site team in Atlanta. These teams have been trained on methods of review by SACS and will be reviewing several institutions at the same time Reports will be submitted to SACS by August of 2004. The third is the Quality Enhancement Plan Team whose responsibilities include developing a QEP plan of action for institutional improvement. The QEP will address one or more issues that contribute to institutional quality and issues that should be critical to the

mission. The QEP will pay special attention to student learning outcomes and their report will be limited to 75 pages of text and 25 pages of appendices. The off-site team will not visit campus but will submit their report to the on-site team and direct them on what they should look for while they are on campus. The SACS liaison will give an oral report to the Leadership Team. The off-site team will evaluate the submitted reports and will scour UA's web sites and seek other documentation to confirm that there is compliance to SACS principles. The QEP will be the primary focus of the on-site team and will be in possession of that plan six weeks before their on-site visit. They will focus on any problems with the compliance document. They will then consult with the University about their Quality Enhancement Plan. There will be eight or nine evaluators headed by a chair SACS will use for off-site reviewing of institutional effectiveness, governance, learning resources, student services, finances and educational programs. The QEP will number seven or more for on-site review headed by a chair. Members will have expertise in institutional effectiveness, educational programs, faculty, learning/student support services and will include two QEP members recommended by the institution. The timeline begins with a one day visit to Atlanta by the Leadership Team for orientation. The Compliance Certification is due on August 15, 2004, the off-site review is due in November of 2004, the Quality Enhancement Plan is due January 15, 2005, the on-site review (3 days) is due March 15 to April 30 of 2005 and the decision on re-accreditation for UA will be made in December of 2005. The advantages of the new process is a reduction in cost, no preliminary visit by SACS liaison or on-site visit chair, no large first-night get-together, fewer site visitors, visitors spend less time on campus, more consistent review due to training of reviewers and shorter reports possibly entirely electronic. The new principles put in place by SACS include fewer principles (73) rather than the former criteria (460), less redundancy, more latitude for institutions and the on-site team will be mostly consultative. For more information the UA home page has a link to SACS. Stated in the Core Requirements under Institutional Effectiveness is, "The institution identifies expected outcomes for its educational programs and its administrative and educational support services; assesses whether it achieves these outcomes; and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results". This is an over-arching principle. The institution assesses whether set goals have been achieved and identifies what progress is being made toward the mission of the institution. The UA reports will be on the web site along with additional information for feedback from faculty, staff and students. SACS off-site team will not submit a written report but will communicate with UA's Leadership Team verbally. Dr. Jack Allen, UA's Liaison to SACS, will communicate with our on-site team concerning the off-site team's area of concerns. Attention was called to #24 on page 9 of the Core Requirements section stating, "The institution publishes policies on the responsibility and authority of faculty in academic and governance matters". This would include the Faculty Handbook. Last year the Faculty Senate was asked for recommendations to fill two positions on the Compliance Certification Team. Both recommendations were accepted – Tony Friar and Phil Beidler. Each team member will be assigned principles to review. There are 15 to 20 agencies with SACS giving authority to institutions to award degrees.

The next item on the agenda is the proposed change to the by-laws regarding nominations for **Ombudspersons**. The Faculty Senate established the Ombudsperson position last year with faculty electing three to serve in that position. Only one person was nominated for a vacant position causing reconsideration of the process to elect an Ombudsperson. This was brought forward by the Steering Committee. It was proposed to change the last three sentences to read: "These will be reviewed by the Senate Operations Committee for candidates who meet criteria as itemized under items 5, 6, 7, and 8 in the guidelines. The slate of nominees will be distributed for election at the same time as Senate elections. Every effort shall be made to nominate multiple candidates and to rotate representation through the various departments and colleges over a period of time." This would call

attention to the charge given to the committee. This was presented as a motion by Marvin Johnson and was seconded by Wythe Holt. Discussion included the points that the Ombudsperson criteria is the longest section of Faculty Senate by-laws, the proposed change is redundant, the purpose of Ombudsperson criteria being in the Faculty Senate by-laws and the purpose of adding more language to this section. The vote to close the discussion and vote on the amendment proposed by Marvin Johnson passed. The vote to accept the amendment proposed by Marvin Johnson passed. The proposed change to the by-laws will be voted on at the next Faculty Senate meeting. A change to the by-laws must be presented at one meeting and voted on at the next meeting.

Frannie James and John Petrovic brought forward a "Proposed Resolution Regarding **VIVA Health** Option". Wythe Holt also brought forward a proposal regarding the VIVA Health Plan Option. Wythe Holt moved to suspend the rules to allow discussion and a vote, if needed, on two separate proposals was passed by the Senate. On August 14 Charlotte Harris of Human Resources presented the chair of the Faculty and Staff Benefits Committee, Frannie James, a proposed change to the University's health care plan to offer VIVA Health Services as an option to University employees. On August 27 the Faculty and Staff Benefits Committee was presented with this information and the Deans were presented the same information the same morning. On August 28 the Faculty Senate Steering Committee was presented with this information. The Benefits Committee had a meeting September 11<sup>th</sup> with a VIVA representative and the Provost. Questions were addressed by the representative and at the end of a 3 ½ hour meeting, a brief resolution was passed by the Benefits Committee stating, "Be it resolved that this committee recommends against the addition of the proposed VIVA plan to our health benefits program at this time". The committee felt that there was insufficient time to consider and research the advantages and disadvantages of the health plan. The committee felt that UA employees have had longstanding positive value of excellent health care coverage. Frannie James moved that the "Frannie James & John Petrovic Proposed Resolution Regarding VIVA Health Option" be adopted by the Faculty Senate. One possible result could be that VIVA's low rates would eventually drive out Blue Cross-Blue Shield. It was suggested that the Senate act quickly and suggested that the "therefore" clause in the resolution is not relevant since there has not been enough time to consider this change. The VIVA Health Care Organization is 99% owned by UA System's Board of Trustees. It was suggested to certify that this statement is factual. One senator felt that this issue pertains to governance. It was suggested that perhaps next year other providers be sought to bid on the University's health care. The Benefits Committee was told the plan passed the Executive Committee of the University, approved by the Deans and then to the Benefits Committee. The Benefits Committee is comprised mainly of staff employees. Not a staff member on the Benefits Committee voted in favor of this plan. The out-of-state coverage under VIVA is minimal and catastrophic illness also has minimal coverage. The lower rate of VIVA insurance coverage according to their representative is due to aggressive management. Wythe Holt made a motion to replace the James-Petrovic resolution with his proposed resolution. The differences in the separate resolutions were pointed out. The duties of the Faculty and Staff Committee were read and the possibility that this procedure possibly is within the framework of due process was noted. The vote to close the debate was passed by the Senate. All in favor of the substitute resolution (Frannie's & John's) vote was 33 in Favor and 6 Opposed. The 7<sup>th</sup> "Whereas" was changed to read: "Whereas VIVA is owned by the University of Alabama Board of Trustees thus interjecting into the crucial issue of our health care concerns about the University System's attempting to achieve cost reductions at the expense of our health care". It was pointedly suggested to verify the statements in this resolution. In the fifth and sixth "whereas" the change was suggested to have it read: "Whereas the Faculty Senate upholds the value that all UA employees should have the same high-quality, non-market driven health care plan, and (the sixth whereas)

Whereas the Faculty Senate believes that faculty and staff governance over health care coverage has been a longstanding positive value at The University of Alabama, exercised through careful yearlong regular processes adopted and used by the Faculty and Staff Benefits Advisory Committee, a value which has yielded what all consider to be excellent health care coverage." If there are no objections and there were none, these changes will be accepted by the Senate. The vote to close the debate passed. The vote to accept this resolution as amended was 34 in favor, 4 opposed and 2 abstentions.

Margaret Garner of the **Legislative Agenda Committee** made a presentation following the defeat of the tax reform package proposed by Governor Bob Riley. At this point, an 8.7 million dollar cut is projected for The University of Alabama. For example, grants for neo-natal care for high-risk infants have been eliminated and other programs and cuts will be implemented. Another example is the Business School's program for economic development in black-belt counties has been eliminated. Federal matching monies will be lost due to the budget cuts. A better way to communicate with the people of Alabama should be found. The University will make every effort to protect academic programs. The Governor has proposed that education would not be treated disproportionately from one another. There are many cuts that will gravely affect the citizens of Alabama in the areas of education, health and public safety. The point was made that faculty should be involved in the budget decisions. It was noted that a debt of gratitude was due Margaret Garner for her dedication and hard work in the efforts to have the voters approve the tax reform package.

No other reports were given.

Meeting adjourned 5:20 pm

## **Wythe Holt**

### **Proposed Resolution Regarding VIVA Health Plan Option**

Whereas faculty and staff governance over health care coverage has been a longstanding positive value at The University of Alabama, exercised through careful yearlong regular processes adopted and used by the Faculty and Staff Benefits Committee (FSBC), a value which has yielded what all consider to be excellent health care coverage managed by Blue Cross Blue Shield (under the current competitively-bid contract) for the University as a self-insurer; and

Whereas the UA community has long upheld the value that all UA employees have the same high-quality, non-market driven health care plan; and

Whereas, the University administration went outside the usual processes to develop an alternative health care coverage plan, not notifying the FSBC at the time, not allowing any alternative bidding from the current plan administrator or any other potential providers, bringing the alternative both to a meeting of the Vice Presidents and to a meeting of the Deans before the FSBC was notified, notifying the FSBC of the alternative only a month or so before it had to be adopted (due to enrollment period considerations), and giving the FSBC the leeway only to adopt or reject the plan in toto; and

Whereas, the Provost of the University has given the faculty reason for suspicion by using

the term "petty" to describe the faculty's concern over this avoidance of the proper faculty staff governance process, thereby denigrating the faculty and staff and attempting to perpetuate an erroneous image of the faculty as childish, silly, and incapable of engaging in governance, and

Whereas, there are further reasons for suspicion in that the only alternative health care coverage plan the University administration chose to consider would be managed by a wholly- owned subsidiary of the University System, VIVA, thereby possibly allowing the System to save money at the expense of our health coverage and our health, and

Whereas, the proposed VIVA plan gives the appearance of significant cost savings for some University community members, but also appears to present the possibility of serious risks, most importantly, the risk of adverse selection, which might lead to the loss of our excellent Blue Cross Blue Shield coverage.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Faculty Senate of The University of Alabama expresses its strong support for the resolution passed on September 11, 2003, by the Faculty and Staff Benefits Committee, with no dissent heard, which recommends against the addition of the proposed alternative VIVA plan to our health benefits program at this time, but recommends to the administration of The University of Alabama that the Faculty and Staff Benefits Committee investigate this VIVA plan and other possible options through its normal process.