

## FACULTY SENATE STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

January 15, 2001 – 307 Ferguson – 3:30 PM

**Attending:** Norm Baldwin, Steve Miller, Keith Woodbury, Bob Sigler, Bing Blewitt, Bill Keel, Beth MacCauley, Wythe Holt, Harry Price, Margaret Garner, Don Desmet, John Mason and Guest, Joanna Hutt, Dialog

The December 4 and 11 minutes were approved.

The meeting began with a report from Planning and Operations concerning the proposal to change the **final exam schedule**. The SGA brought this issue forward and the Planning and Operations Committee found that the Registrar's office already had the issue under advisement. The reasons to address the final exam schedule include exam conflicts with three daily exam slots over six days, students and faculty do not like Saturday exams and the current Saturday-evening timeslot is unused. Departmental exams have been especially problematic since these are given with many sections and required content, in which uniformity of assessment is important. Math, Econ, French, Spanish, Accounting and Chemistry are some examples. A number of students now have conflicts, not just with other courses and departmental exams, but between two different departmental exams. The proposal is to follow a four-slot daily exam schedule with hour breaks and 2.5 hour exam blocks which would be the following: 8:00-10:30, 11:30-2:00, 3:00-5:30, and 6:30-9:00. There was discussion concerning establishing a policy that would determine which final exam takes priority in the event of a schedule conflict. Proposed principles include: departmental exams have lower priority than finals for other courses; high-level classes, which generally have smaller enrollments, have lower priority and for the same course level; and the 6:30-9:00 pm slot defers. The new proposed schedule reduces the chance of three or four finals on the same day. The definition of a 24-hour period was one day of the week. The resolution, with minor changes, passed with one opposed.

The Senate Operations committee brought forward proposed additional language to the Faculty Senate By-laws defining the **role of ombudsperson**. It was determined by this committee that the ombudsperson should be neutral. There could be a situation where the ombudsperson would not necessarily want to advocate the position of the faculty member. This would not preclude the ombudsperson assisting the faculty member or restating his/her position. This issue will be presented to the Senate at the January meeting coming from the Steering Committee. The vote will come at the February meeting. With a change in the Bylaw section numbers, the following was passed:

*"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."*

With 101 faculty members that are not tenure or tenure track, the Steering Committee felt that those faculty members have a right to be heard and a right to participate in faculty governance, however, this would exclude Teaching Assistants. After discussion of the definitions of permanent part-time, temporary part-time, permanent full-time and temporary full-time, the following **definition of "a regular faculty member"** was agreed upon:

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 per term or more 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."*

The Senate Operations suggested that a letter be sent to the deans with the number of enfranchised faculty members in their area. This would be the basis for the number of senators elected from their school/division. The numbers will be confirmed by Senate Operations committee before such a notice is sent.

Plans for the **Constitutional Reform Seminars** are being formed. There was discussion of what weekdays would be best and some dates were suggested. Bailey Thompson will be conducting these informative seminars the Higher Educational Partnership, UA Faculty Senate and Alabama Citizens for Constitutional Reform are sponsoring. It was suggested that the seminars be limited to two hours and the dates be spaced a couple of weeks apart. Norm will contact Bailey to determine dates and length of session. The Legislative Breakfasts will begin again in the near future.

The Steering Committee agreed, with one abstention and minor changes, that the letter of commendation to the Lambda Sigma Phi fraternity for **racial desegregation** achieved during fall semester of 2001 be sent from the Steering Committee.

It was also agreed, with two abstentions and amendments, to send a letter to Sidney McDonald, President Pro Tempore of the UA Board of Trustees, raising concerns over the **selection process used to fill the office of Chancellor** for the UA System. The process did not include a national search, which potentially excluded women and minority candidates. It was suggested that one addition to the letter should be the statement a campus representative has been on the search committee in the past and practice should be re-instituted in the future.

A **resolution**, with minor changes, commending **Professor Cornelius Carter's** recent recognition as United States Professor of the Year by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education and by the Carnegie Foundation was approved by the Steering Committee.

**President's Report** – (*Norm Baldwin*) Dr. Sorensen has requested that his Executive Staff meet with the Faculty Senate every semester. This gives administration an opportunity to obtain information about the activities of the Faculty Senate and an opportunity for the senators to ask questions. The Steering Committee discussed methods to have more meaningful interaction with this staff. It was suggested, since this takes so much time in the Faculty Senate meeting, to have a special meeting as provided in the Faculty Senate Constitution and By-Laws on the fourth Tuesday of the month. If they attended a regular Faculty Senate meeting, it was suggested to have a time limit of thirty minutes on administration's participation due to a heavy agenda. Another option would be for one staff member at a time attend meetings, to issue an invitation for them to speak at the end of the Senate meetings rather than the beginning or for one staff member at a time attend a Steering Committee meeting to interact with them in a more informal setting. This issue was referred to the Senate Operations Committee for further review. Also, for the committee to review having non-voting representation on the Council of Deans and their non-voting representative attend Steering Committee meetings. The President of the Faculty Senate will take some informal action concerning this issue.

Norm Baldwin presented the Priorities Faculty Survey results. Those issues were assigned to the appropriate committees. Some of the most important issues according to the survey were grade inflation, not enough emphasis on raising academic standards, declining student effort and increasing grade expectations, and mental health benefits.

The Faculty Life Committee discussed maternity leave with the Provost who requested that this be divided into two parts, cost and no cost items. They are continuing to work on this issue. The employment statement that includes gender and sexual orientation was addressed by the committee and will present something at the next meeting. Hiring and retention of minority faculty was the next issue discussed by the committee. The decision was that this was the most important issue they are addressing. However, there are so many other groups addressing this issue that we should wait and see when a situation arises where the Faculty Senate would be of support and then provide assistance. The committee decided that no consideration should be given to a proposal that came from Emory University about an Emeritus College where emeritus faculty would be provided office space and equipment, but would pay for these benefits.

The President, Norm Baldwin, encouraged the Faculty Life committee to have an EEO statement by March, a resolution dealing with library fines and book replacement by the Research & Service committee and a Fall Break policy to be proposed by the Planning & Operations committee by February or March.

Meeting adjourned 5:45 PM