

FACULTY SENATE

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

FACULTY SENATE STEERING COMMITTEE MINUTES

NOVEMBER 11, 2003 – 3:00 pm – 307 FERGUSON

Attending: John Mason, Mathew Winston, Roy Ann Sherrod, John Vincent, Margaret Rice, Catherine Davies, George Franke, Mohammed Sharif, Caryl Cooper, Steve Miller, Harry Price, Karla Carmichael, Bob Sigler, Margaret Garner, Frannie James Guests: Chris Otts, Crimson White; Joanna Hutt, Dialog; Holden McAllister, The Alabama Observer, Wythe Holt, Faculty Staff Benefits Committee

The Faculty Senate Steering Committee minutes of October 14, 2003, were approved.

The meeting began with a report by Wythe Holt concerning University Health Care costs. President Witt suggested that this report should be circulated in the Faculty Senate and the faculty as a whole. The open enrollment time is in November and this precluded any length of time to address this issue. Blue Cross-Blue Shield manages the University's self-insured health-care plan. The crisis is a \$500,000 estimated deficit of this year and the deficit from last year. Health care costs will rise in 2004 by \$2.9 million dollars. The amount of \$3.4 million dollars revenue for next year is needed. The additional crisis is that there are no reserve funds. The University proposed various additions to premiums and co-pays and put in \$1.2 million dollars. A reserve of \$4 million dollars is desirable to meet any possible catastrophic health care costs. The Faculty Staff Benefits Committee has several concerns: increased co-pay would be a burden for less-well-paid employees of the University, co-pay should not be used as revenue, requested that the University research purchasing drugs in Canada, concern that increased costs would bring another proposal of the VIVA health plan, investigate the possibility of University employees joining PEEHIP, the costly use of Out-Patient Clinics and Emergency Rooms and questioned why Congress is not being lobbied to reduce health care costs particularly prescription drugs. The committee feels that there will be management of some type concerning health care costs and that the demand should be made that the management be open and information about guidelines be shared. One senator gave a personal example of wasted money in the insurance coverage. Jim Walters, a retired faculty member and Reggie Smith, a retired staff member are outspoken members of the Benefits Committee along with other well-qualified members. The Benefits Committee also proposed a multi-tier co-pay and monthly premium structure for those with a higher salary would pay more for health care coverage. The University of Alabama is the only institution in SUG with a two-tier health care structure. The point was made that there will be no raises for University employees this year, however, there are increased costs being proposed and activated concerning health care, parking and the membership costs of the Recreation Center. It was suggested that some way should be determined other than salaries to enhance the morale of University employees. It was suggested that monies raised (no co-pay increases) be used to build the insurance reserve delaying the costs shouldered by the faculty and Faculty Senate officers meet with President Witt to discuss this possibility. The proposed \$960,000 could possibly be taken out of the proposed \$4 million reserve. The proposed increase in co-pay from \$20 to \$30 and \$30 to \$50 would raise \$960,000 dollars with \$75 prescription drug deductible to be paid beginning January 2004. It was suggested that premiums be based on income. There would be problems determining the salary of each employee and spouse. Harry Price made a motion asking that all three Faculty Senate officers approach President Witt to discuss the allocation of, if not all, part of the \$4 million dollar reserve

toward benefits such that reduce the cost of faculty/staff avoiding a salary cut. Karla Carmichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. The \$4 million dollars is the result of reallocation of 2.35% from various colleges. \$4,025,000 is the difference between additional revenues and additional expenses and it will be requested that as much of that amount as possible go to the insurance reserve thereby reducing the cost to faculty and staff. The administration was disappointed that the Faculty Senate asked that the VIVA health plan be delayed. There is the possibility that this plan will be presented again next year. It was suggested that the Benefits Committee get a report from UAH concerning VIVA. Enrollment dropped so low that the plan was discontinued at UAH.

The possibility of violations of Faculty Handbook procedures in the search and selection of a Dean for the College of Education was the next item on the agenda. Harry Price, the Faculty Senate Representative to the Committee for Faculty Participation in the Selection of Deans and Department Chairpersons and in the Evaluation of Academic Programs, received an email expressing the opinion that the faculty in the College of Education was not given any opportunity to review and evaluate the candidates prior to the selection of candidates to be interviewed. According to the email, faculty members have not been given access to the credentials or names of any candidates other than the four being interviewed.

The Faculty Handbook states "Throughout the search process, the committee shall solicit, encourage, and provide for faculty participation and the participation of other constituent groups. Faculty members should have ample opportunities to review the credentials of qualified candidates, except that the search committee may protect the identity of candidates who request confidentiality during the initial screening process. On the basis of faculty evaluations and its own judgment, the search committee will reduce the list of candidates to those deemed to be best qualified for the position. The committee and the President will select those to be interviewed from this reduced list". (Page 72)

Requests have been made to the Provost that the above named committee has not met in over a year and a chairperson has not been named. The Provost stated that she is restructuring this committee. There are two deans, two department chairs and four faculty members. The majority of these named had terms ending in August, 2003. It was suggested that a member of the Faculty Senate's Senate Operations Committee chair this committee. The monitoring of the Selection of Deans and Department Chairpersons committee should come from the Faculty Senate. A candidate was to be brought in that did not meet the minimum qualifications. Historically, two deans of the College of Education in past years received negative reviews and the deans were reappointed. Through the efforts of Chuck Hobby, the "Committee for Faculty Participation in the Selection of Deans and Department Chairpersons and in the Evaluation of Academic Programs" was established. The suggestion that the two issues, the lack of committee meetings and the faculty being ignored in the search for a Dean of College of Education be linked. It was pointed out that these are two distinctly different issues. Historically the dossiers have been made available and either ranked or rated by any interested faculty before interviews began. In the current situation an evaluation form has been handed out and the faculty has been asked for feedback, no ranking or rating is requested. The critical issue is that the procedures written in the Faculty Handbook have not been followed. The following was proposed, "By a unanimous vote on November 11, 2003, the Faculty Senate Steering Committee strongly protests the failure of the University to follow procedures stated on Page 72 in the Faculty Handbook with regard to the search for the Dean of the College of Education. We encourage the President of the University to see that the faculty of the College of Education have ample opportunity the review the credentials of all candidates. It may be strongly argued that such an egregious breach eviscerates the entire search."

