

FACULTY SENATE

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

FACULTY SENATE STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

DECEMBER 2, 2003 – 3:00 PM – 307 FERGUSON

MINUTES

ATTENDING: John Mason, Mathew Winston, Roy Ann Sherrod, Bob Sigler, Margaret Garner, Wolfgang Bertsch, Karla Carmichael, Catherine Davies, George Franke, Steve Miller, Mohammed Sharif, John Vincent, Robert Moore, Margaret Rice

ABSENT: Harry Price (excused), Caryl Cooper, Nick Stinnett

GUESTS: Bill Jones, UA Legislative Liaison; Tom Davis, ACHE; Chris Otts, Crimson White; Joanna Hutt, Dialog

The Faculty Senate Steering Committee minutes of November 11, 2003 were unanimously approved with one correction.

The meeting began with Bill Jones giving some background about the organization. ACHE was created many years ago with efforts to strengthen the input of higher education. When budget shortfalls occur in Alabama there seems to be a cry to reduce state dollars given to education in general. ACHE is a coordinating body charged with some of the same duties that Board of Regents performs in other states. There will be a political decision somewhere determining where state dollars are spent and program recommendations. The UA system with a strong Board of Trustees, the Legislature making decisions about state dollars and ACHE being the coordinating body that makes recommendations and approves new programs serves Alabama in a very positive manner. The UA Board of Trustees composed of businessmen, professionals and various backgrounds seems to serve well with a commitment to education. There is a push from the President of the University of North Alabama for a Board of Regents. This is a response to a proposal approved by the Council of Presidents that recommended some changes including some strengthening of ACHE. Roland Pugh visited with the presidents of institutions around the state. From those conversations he determined that a central governing body for higher education was needed. Other recommendations were in this document but ACHE had not seen the document. The governor-appointed Education Spending Committee will issue a report on December 10. February will be the earliest that discussion could begin following fine-tuning. The Steering Committee was urged to delay any action until there is more solid issues to take action and debate. February 26 will be Higher Education Day in Montgomery and will present an excellent opportunity to speak to members of the Legislature concerning issues. Bill Jones offered to bring Legislature members to the Steering Committee or the Senate to speak and answer any questions. One of the issues is a proposed reduction in retirement benefits. It was pointed out that when the University hires employees, they are told the retirement benefits are a great plus and that the Legislature could not change those benefits. When costs increase the governor and Legislature look at various ways to reduce costs and retirement benefits are usually in that group. Governor Riley had a study conducted comparing Mississippi, Florida, Tennessee and Georgia retirement benefits to Alabama benefits and found that they are very closely matched. In Alabama you can retire with 25 years and draw 50% of your salary. With 30 years you may draw 60% of your salary. The Legislature determined that there are short-term marginal savings in this area. It would be possible to change retirement benefits for

new employees but there is a contract with present employees and the retirement system. Health costs are increasing dramatically and could be possibly controlled legally with increased co-pays and other methods. The present budget crisis calls for changes and many avenues are being discussed. Three handouts to the Steering Committee were from the Birmingham News titled "*Changes Proposed to Save State Money*", "*State Budget Cutters Eye Pensions*" and "*Comparing Alabama, Other States' Pensions*". Between 2003 and 2005 budget years Alabama's contributions to the retirement system will increase \$141 million dollars. The University of Alabama's contribution to PEEHIP increased \$4.2 million dollars and contribution to the retirement system will increase a little over one million dollars.

Tom Davis from ACHE gave information about his background associated with this organization. ACHE is a twelve-member group of attorneys, businessmen, mental health areas, etc., making this a coordinating body with some oversight responsibilities. It is not a governing body over higher education in Alabama. This group presents a unified budget to the Governor and the Legislature for their review. There are no actions taken by ACHE that input is not pursued from the Council of Presidents, the Council of Deans, the Graduate Council and others. Mr. Davis expressed his belief that ACHE should be strengthened and that there has to be some central governing board to work with higher education (everything above grade 12) in this state. The two-year colleges in Alabama belong to the State Board of Education. Many of the things regarding programming in those colleges are approved by ACHE following approval by the State Board of Education. The University of Alabama proposals does not go to ACHE until approval by our Board of Trustees. ACHE needs new staff members, increased funding and a Chief Academic Officer with proper credentials to work in this area. ACHE will be meeting Thursday, December 10th and Friday, December 11th at Bryant Conference Center. By statute ACHE has to do a viability study of existing programs and should be strengthened according to Davis. ACHE approves all new programs. Davis believes all new construction should be approved by ACHE making certain that there is a plan in place. He also believes ACHE should have administrative control over Athens State College. This institution is under the State Board of Education. Athens issues baccalaureate degrees. The Governor, Lt. Governor and the Speaker of the House appoint ACHE members with the Senate giving final approval. A review was given by Mathew Winston of the meeting of ACUFP in Florence, Alabama. The four-point document composed by the chair of ACHE, Roland Pugh, was presented to the group by Robert Potts, President of the University of North Alabama. Mathew drafted a resolution and forwarded it to President Witt and asked for a meeting to discuss the resolution. Mathew, at the last Senate meeting, withdrew the original resolution and proposed a substitute resolution. Mathew also withdrew this resolution as premature. There was some concern that there are very few members from higher education on the ACHE commission. The point was made that the Faculty Senate has various methods of voicing any concerns and that the time is not right for any action concerning the four point document issue. The suggestion was to be in touch with legislators and the Faculty Senate will consider what action they should take in the future.

A replacement for Jim Otteson on the Faculty Participation in the Selection of Deans and Department Chairpersons and in the Evaluation of Academic Programs Committee is needed. Harry Price is the Faculty Senate Liaison with Amy Ward serving as the chair. The Provost will make the final selection from nominees forwarded from the Faculty Senate. Those nominated are: Steve Miller and Norm Baldwin with Pat Bauch and Nancy Rubin serving as reserve nominees. Margaret Garner made a motion to accept this slate of nominees with a second by Catherine Davies. The Steering Committee voted unanimously to accept these nominees.

Karla Carmichael of the Faculty Life committee gave a report on the closing of the Harry

Pritchett Golf Course operated by The University of Alabama. Revenue decreased 25% in the fiscal years 2000 to 2003. Budget information was handed out to the Steering Committee. The last three years the deficit was \$162,000, \$103,000 and \$121,000. The only reason fiscal year 2003 was \$121,000 was that there were no indirect costs charged to the golf course by the University. The Pritchett family gives a gift in the amount of \$35,000 to \$40,000 for the maintenance of golf at the University. University officials are requesting permission from the Pritchett family to use the funds for golf programs within University recreation area. A wee link three holes of golf, driving and putting range, a machine that analyzes golf swings at the cost of \$50,000 is being proposed. This would be part of golf instruction and would be located adjacent to the Rec Center. The University golf team plays at the Old Colony golf course. The students only use the Pritchett course when it is free. The prime users were beginner and intermediate players including senior citizens and faculty. There was a 20% decrease of faculty using the course. It was suggested that the proposed use of the land be researched and the owner of the land be determined. It was stated that the University leased the land for recreational purposes from the United States government and the lease expires in 2004. Some proposed use of the land could be expanding the Arboretum and the Biology Department asked about the pond. The Arboretum lacks the staff to maintain extra land. The VA Hospital has expressed an interest in the course remaining open. Suggestions to keep the course open were dismissed as short-term solutions. The closing of the course could be viewed as a reduction of benefits for faculty. John Mason will follow up on these questions.

Governor Bob Riley has proposed changes to the Teacher's Retirement System including paying state income tax on pensions, stopping payment of cost-of-living pension increases and changing the number of years required for retirement. Retirement requirements could be stiffened for future employees, but the savings would not be realized for years. When the proposals become more formalized, it was suggested to pass a resolution stating that faculty is 15% below the median faculty salaries for the Southern University Group and sent to Governor Bob Riley, Lt. Governor Lucy Baxley, President Pro Tem of the Senate, Lowell Barron and Steve Hammonds, Speaker of the House. Benefits are comparable to other states. The Faculty Life committee will compose the resolution at the proper time.

It was suggested to pass a resolution in honor of deceased Bailey Thomson's contribution to be presented to his family. Joanna Hutt will assist in composing the resolution and forward to Karla Carmichael of the Faculty Life committee.

It was reported by Catherine Davies that there is more faculty involvement in the reallocation process.

The Provost is interested in two four-week and one eight-week summer terms. This will be discussed at the meeting with the Provost. Steering Committee members thought that it would be very difficult to teach a course in a four-week period. Also to be considered are lab components in the sciences and pay for the faculty. It would be almost impossible for a student to take two courses in one semester. The SGA passed a resolution supporting a week off at Thanksgiving. Beginning classes on Monday rather than Wednesday would solve part of the problem. A break another time in the semester could be considered. These are issues that will be discussed with the Provost. Two major issues also to be discussed with the Provost are how to approach low enrollment in programs and faculty workload. It was suggested that each department look at the workload of each individual faculty member. Beginning in January the Provost has requested meeting with the Steering Committee twice a month. Another question was should a reward system be considered with the projected 40% increase in enrollment over the next ten years.

Planning and Operations is looking at the issue of legitimate faculty organizations using

the campus mail system. This committee is working to develop a plan to identify bona fide faculty organizations. The suggestion that any faculty organization not connected with a department go through the Academic Affairs committee of the Faculty Senate was disagreed with strongly. The Provost stated in an email to Philip Johnson that the Alabama Observer is not published by UA faculty for UA faculty but is published by a statewide organization for distribution state wide and the Academe – the newsletter of the Alabama Conference of the American Association of University Professors – with a return address of Auburn University must comply with postal regulations. These organizations can use the mail system if paying for those services. The Planning and Operations Committee will continue to work on this issue and report back to the Steering Committee. The sense of the Steering Committee is that faculty organizations should be connected to a department and that the Faculty Senate should not have a part in identifying other faculty organizations as legitimate.

Vice President's Report – (*Mathew Winston*) A poll was conducted of Arts and Sciences faculty on the matter of voting for Faculty Senate representatives. The question was not asked concerning the voting separately in the departments of Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and Arts and Humanities. The committee chose not to include this question because one department is much larger than the other two. About 37% voters responded. The results were that Deans should not vote for Faculty Senate representatives. Assistant and Associate Deans and Chairs being eligible to vote were acceptable. There is a part-time faculty member from Arts & Sciences serving in the Faculty Senate. According to Arts & Sciences bylaws, that senator may serve but is not allowed to vote to elect Senate members. The method of selecting faculty to serve in the Faculty Senate is left with the school or college to determine. Since Arts & Sciences are rewriting their bylaws, it was suggested to Arts & Sciences to bring their bylaws in line with the Faculty Senate.

Secretary – (*Roy Ann Sherrod*) No report.

Academic Affairs – (*John Vincent & Margaret Rice*) This committee is working on two resolutions.

Faculty Life – (*Karla Carmichael & Nick Stinnett*) This committee gave a report on the closing of the Harry Pritchett golf course which is stated above.

It was reported that the cost of renting a cap, gown and hood for graduation ceremonies has increased from \$30 to \$54. Some departments cover that cost. John Mason will bring this up in the meeting with the Provost.

Financial Affairs – (*Catherine Davies & George Franke*) This committee met with Vice President Kennedy and was given a presentation on budget issues. He is working on a power point presentation and George will email that to the Steering Committee if needed. It will also be posted online with a pointer to it. Planning for the 40% growth projected over the next ten years was also discussed.

Research & Service – (*Wolfgang Bertsch & Don Hooks*) No report.

Senate Operations – (*Harry Price & Robert Moore*) Frannie James has resigned to accept another position. Robert Moore has agreed to be interim co-chair of this committee. Revising Senate bylaws is one of the issues being worked on by this committee and should be ready in January. They are also monitoring senator attendance. A few senators have classes at the same time the Senate meetings are being conducted. The faculty member may not be aware of their teaching schedule until the last minute. It was suggested to send a reminder to the Deans asking the elected senators from their school/college not have classes at the same time the Senate meets. Discussion included the elections of senators

and methods used to conduct those elections. It was also suggested to ask the Provost to place a reminder for the Council of Deans meeting and for John Mason to meet with the Dean of Arts & Sciences concerning the elections.

Student Affairs – (*Caryl Cooper & Steve Miller*) The Student Handbook revisions will be presented at the Senate meeting.

Legislative Agenda Committee – (*Margaret Garner*) There will be a meeting with Bill Jones and Gordon Stone, Director of the HEP, this Thursday looking at a membership campaign for HEP and the University PAC. The Legislative Breakfasts will probably resume during the legislative budget session.

Margaret expressed dismay at the censure of Shelton State concerning the art display that was removed. It was pointed out that the Faculty Senate's function is to deal with issues on The University of Alabama campus and that there was no investigation of the facts. The artist is a part-time instructor at UA. There has been negative effect from this resolution. It was suggested the Faculty Senate set some standards for resolutions such as eight days for consideration of the proposed resolution and increase the number of votes needed to pass a resolution. The Shelton State issue went to a committee and the committee declined to pursue. The bylaws state that if five senators agree, they can have an issue placed on the floor of the Senate. It was also suggested that when a resolution is passed to determine the persons to receive it.

Meeting adjourned 5:35 PM