

FACULTY SENATE

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

FACULTY SENATE STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

FEBRUARY 14, 2006 – 3:00 PM – 206F SHELBY HALL

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

ATTENDING: Mathew Winston, John Vincent, Karen Steckol, Karen Burgess, Priscilla Davis, Margaret Garner, Jenice "Dee" Goldston, Jim Hall, John Mason, Clark Midkiff, Steve Shepard, Bob Sigler, Jeanette Vandermeer

GUESTS: Adam Jones, Tuscaloosa News; Wesley Hallman, Crimson White

The minutes of the January 10, 2006 Faculty Senate Steering Committee were approved with one correction.

President's Report – (*Mathew Winston*) The **SGA resolution** requesting prior notification of one day regarding dismissing classes due to bad weather has been addressed by President Witt in a two-page memorandum. A sheet with a memo to the chairs of departments in the College of Arts and Sciences from Mathew Winston was handed out. This memo urged individuals to become involved in the Faculty Senate. It also listed the reasons faculty members should participate in the Senate and listed accomplishments of the Senate. The Steering Committee was urged to draw something along the lines of the memo to hand out to members of their colleges. Prescription drug benefits were discussed. The University is self-insured with Blue Cross-Blue Shield administering the health plan. It was pointed out that the University should notify faculty by October of any increase in **health insurance coverage** costs. This would give an opportunity to make financial decisions concerning BamaFlex. Mathew Winston received an email expressing concern about **cigarette companies** being on campus to recruit future employees. These companies have diversified greatly. Concern was expressed about these companies being an inappropriate partnership with the University. The consensus of the Steering Committee was to take no action on this issue.

Vice President's Report – (*John Vincent*) No report.

Secretary's Report – (*Karen Steckol*) Karen presented current statistics regarding apportionment of senators for 2006-07. The Faculty Senate Constitution states:

"Each division of the University, including colleges, schools, and the University Libraries, is represented in the Faculty Senate by one senator for each twenty persons, or fraction thereof, serving on the date of the election under a regular appointment as an instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, or professor engaged in teaching or research at least half of a normal load during the regular year, or a librarian having corresponding rank and professional engagement."

The request from Institutional Research should be for half-time, associate, assistant or full professors as determined by Personnel Apps.

Academic Affairs – (*Marcia Barrett & John Vincent*) In the last meeting with the Provost and this committee, comments regarding Chapter Two of the Faculty Handbook

were presented. Comments regarding Chapters Three and Four will be presented at the next meeting.

Faculty Life – (*Steve Shepard & Nick Stinnet*) – At the end of last year, this committee reviewed the definition of a faculty member under the grievance system in **Appendix B in the Faculty Handbook**. A non-tenured or non-tenure track instructor is not allowed to use the faculty grievance system because they are considered staff. The committee discussed methods to formulate the definition, whether to change the definition and the process to follow regarding any decisions made. The committee presented a draft of a proposal recommending modification of the current definition of faculty as stated in the Faculty Handbook to include "temporary full or part-time instructors 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 University". Discussion included the status of faculty members under contract, and questioned the inclusion of those earning tenure at another institution. All UA employees have access to a grievance system. The question is to determine the definition of those that should have access to the **faculty grievance system**, and clearly define the categories outside tenure and tenure-track faculty that should have access to the system. Any changes would have to be approved by a full faculty vote, the President, Provost and the Council of Deans. The faculty voting would be tenure and tenure-track faculty members. The grievance system was designed for those with specific knowledge of faculty member's problems and situations. Mathew Winston offered to contact Sunee Lavender, President of the **Professional Staff Assembly**, and Susan Lucas, Professional Staff Assembly representative to the Faculty Senate, to suggest that they pursue the establishment of a third category or tier of the grievance system as suggested by Karen Steckol. The committee will reconvene and give a report at the next Steering Committee meeting.

Financial Affairs – (*Jim Hall & Jeanette Vandermeer*) No report.

The request was made to keep as a priority the impact of the legislation passed concerning **health insurance benefits**. If a person retires with less than 25 years of service, it costs two percent per year of what the University pays toward PEEHIP. After 25 years, the cost is two percent less. It is felt this will be a negative in hiring people in mid-career with 10 or 15 years of career years remaining.

Research & Service – (*Jenice "Dee" Goldston & Clark Midkiff*) This committee will meet with Marianne Woods, Associate Vice President for Research, to discuss the methods used for selection of Research Advisory Committee members.

Faculty & Senate Governance – (*John Mason & Kim Andrus*) On March 1, 2006 there will be a campus-wide faculty vote for **Ombudsperson**. Scott Hestevold and Hobson Bryan have been nominated.

Student Affairs – (*Priscilla Davis & Karen Burgess*) – The President of the **Graduate Students Association**, Denny Brubrig, met with the Student Affairs Committee. The GSA compiled research from several institutions. They have requested the Faculty Senate endorse their request for medical insurance coverage for graduate students. The approximate cost per student per year would be \$900 with approximately 700 assistants needing **insurance coverage**. The total sum of \$591,478 would need to be budgeted to provide medical insurance. It was suggested to send a letter to the GSA stating that the Faculty Senate supports this issue. Those graduate students over 24 years of age not covered by their parents' insurance program would be eligible. Coverage would include graduate student teaching assistants or research assistants. This issue should remain as a high priority for funding and implementation. Those receiving outside grants would need

to have their insurance premiums paid for by those grants. It would cover maternity benefits for female teaching and research assistants. Concern was expressed regarding a student receiving the **grade of "F"** in a course for not attending class. A grade of "N" (no grade) or "I" (Incomplete) can be given. There is a process in place for a student to appeal. The University requires a grade be given to a student. The Provost agrees that there should be another option available. Mathew Winston will continue to follow up with this issue.

Legislative Agenda – (*Margaret Garner*) – The Legislative Agenda Committee met with Bill Jones. The vote on the state budget by the House of Representatives could possibly be in the next few days. **Higher Education Day** will be held in Montgomery on Thursday, March 2, 2006. The theme of the meeting is "Focusing on the Number of Votes". Higher Education has 150,000 voters to make a difference in Alabama. Mathew Winston will send an email reminder about the meeting. It will include a request that faculty members be considerate of participating students. The names of participating students will be posted on the Faculty Senate web page. It was noted that a link to the application form for Higher Education Partnership has not been placed on the Faculty Senate web page. Keith Woodbury will be contacted to put this on the web page.

Participation in the **Academic Common Market** was the next issue discussed. This program enables students in participating states to take courses in another state, that are not offered in their home state, and pay in-state tuition (while the school they actually attend is budgeted for out-of-state tuition). This program currently costs UA nearly two million dollars per year. The question is whether to drop our participation in the undergraduate program, in part or entirely, and likewise in the graduate program. The proposal to disengage the University from the academic common market came from the Resources and Priorities Committee, but to maintain it at the graduate level. The undergraduate aerospace engineering degree program is a participant in this program and has expressed concern about the proposal to disengage. They have several outstanding students that would not have chosen The University of Alabama without this program. Design is another program that would be adversely affected. John Vincent made the motion with a second by Margaret Garner to recommend that the Provost consult with the chairs of the departments that would be seriously affected by dropping them out of the Academic Common Market. This would give the affected programs an opportunity to present the impact on their program and defend it. The cost of supporting the total program will be increasing dramatically over the next few years. The opinion was expressed that discontinuing any academic program should be defended.

The nominees for Faculty Senate offices for next year at this time are John Vincent for President and Karen Steckol for Vice President. The Steering Committee requested that the Faculty and Senate Governance Committee present a slate of nominations at the February meeting. Voting will be in March.

Meeting adjourned. 4:45 PM