

FACULTY SENATE

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

FACULTY SENATE STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

APRIL 1, 2003 – 3:00 PM – 307 FERGUSON

CORRECTED MINUTES

ATTENDING: John Mason, Steve Miller, Norm Baldwin, Subhabrata Chakraborti, Catherine Davies, Wythe Holt, Beth Macauley, Harry Price, Bob Sigler, Nick Stinnet, Garry Warren, Mathew Winston, Keith Woodbury, Joanna Hutt, Dialog

The minutes of the March 11th Faculty Senate Steering Committee were approved.

President's Report – (*John Mason*) There will be a SEC Faculty Governance Conference at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, on May 1 and 2. This organization is composed of Faculty Senates of SEC schools. Some of the presenters will be Mike Slive, SEC Commissioner; Myles Brand, NCAA President; Todd Turner, Vanderbilt Athletic Director; Gene Marsh, Faculty Athletic Representative of The University of Alabama and Bob Eno, Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics, Indiana University. Various items of information have been requested including number of students at UA, number and name of colleges, number of senators, senate officer titles, number and name of Senate committees and information about the role, structure and involvement of our Faculty Senate. Once this information is collated, it will be shared with our Faculty Senate.

The process of the selection of the UA Faculty Athletic Representative was discussed. It was shared that under Dr. Sayers as President of The University of Alabama, it was agreed that a list of three names would be submitted from the Faculty Senate for this position. If needed, more names would be submitted for consideration. Norm Stein has been contacted for any written material concerning this process. If obtained, this will be given to Senate Operations committee with the goal of centralizing all Faculty Senate materials.

John Mason attended the spring ACUFP meeting in Montgomery in conjunction with Higher Education Day. A copy of a UAH Faculty Senate resolution converted into a petition concerning funding of public education and advocating tax reform was presented. The UA Faculty Senate has passed a resolution on constitutional reform but has not passed a resolution on tax reform. Tax reform is a controversial topic and details of this reform have not been presented. It was motioned, seconded and passed to bring this resolution, with slight modifications, to the Senate for a vote. It was suggested following this vote to convert the resolution to a petition form for supporting signatures. The Steering Committee voted to approve this action. This petition would be presented to the Governor, members of the Legislature and other interested parties as appropriate.

John Mason, as a member of the University Committee on Committees and Liaison to the Information Technology Committee, read their minutes. Stated in the minutes was the statement that the "Banner" plan that will replace the computerized information systems at UA and integrate it with equivalent new systems at UAB and UAH would cost \$9.5 million the first year to convert and another \$4.1 million over the next three years. It would cost UAB \$50 million. The Board of Trustees passed a resolution mandating that certain systems be implemented by the year 2006. Based on this mandate, the University will move from the existing SCT Plus system to a full "Banner" system. In a meeting with Priscilla Hancock, it was revealed that system now runs on an IBM compatible mainframe.

The "Banner" system will run on a Unix box. After the three year parallel run, the NBS system will be turned off. After the three years, the operating cost will be about the same as the Plus system. Estimated cost of migration from Plus system to full implementation of the "Banner" system one-time cost for hardware, software and consulting will be \$9.4 million. The cost of running parallel for three years will be \$4.1 million. The total cost would be around \$14 million. The plan for funding this project will be a bond issue. The cost of the bond issue will be paid by an increase in student tech fees per semester. This increase will be \$25 a year over three years. At the end of three years, the fee will be increased to \$130 per semester or \$260 per year. If a delay in implementation occurs, the cost will be \$1.6 million the first year. If there are additional delays after the first year, the added cost could be from as low as \$4 million or as high as \$11 million. The high end would be if the University had to replace its mainframe system. There are other institutions such as Utah State that are moving toward "Banner" system migration with the promise of better information, web interfacing and other pluses which make this system desirable. According to Priscilla Hancock, the faculty and students will not be impacted in any negative way by this system. The question was asked if the funding would come exclusively from the increase or would the funding come from student fees. Student fees in the past have been available to colleges to enhance their technology and it was questioned if the increase is included in the 12% tuition increase or would that be a tuition and fee increase. This is a point that needs clarification and further follow up will be done to obtain more information. It was also brought up that maintaining two systems would be costly and would a request for a delay be appropriate. A delay would also be costly – approximately \$1 1/2 million.

It was emphasized that members of committees, particularly liaisons to University Standing committees make minutes available to the Faculty Senate and be responsible for notifying the Senate of any problematic issue that surfaces. This will be handled as a recurring agenda item.

If any issue such as Reallocation, Banner system or any other issue needs to be revisited, it could be done by a Faculty Senate resolution. A senator suggested that the Faculty Senate devise a method to monitor success/action/effect by the Faculty Senate and a method to determine the status of issues addressed by the Faculty Senate. When officers are in the Senate for a number of years, there is an institutional memory of actions taken. The turnover prevents this from being accomplished in a detailed manner. A motion or suggestion was made to ask Dr. Witt about some of these matters. Dr. Witt will speak at the next Senate meeting with a question and answer period to follow. John will ask Dr. Witt to be prepared to answer questions including, "How much was reallocated, what accounts and divisions were impacted and how much, and should/are we going through this again?" He will also be asked about the University's position on tax reform and his vision of the role of the Faculty Senate in his administration. It was suggested to continue to bring up the EEO, Domestic Partner benefits and Greek diversity and ongoing issues.

It was suggested to increase the membership of the Senate Operations committee with the goal of going back to the beginning to review by-laws and put all available documentation and records in place. There could be a review of the committee structure also. The membership increase to six members was approved. In the position of liaison to CUC, John came across the information that the Faculty Senate would select five faculty members of the CUC. This has not been done in more than two years. Now the selection is processed through Senate Operations.

The Pic-a-Prof project is facing complications with Dr. Witt asking for the sense of the Faculty Senate concerning this issue. It was suggested to approach the SGA with the proposal of the University handling this on the web if this is implemented. The question

that comes back from students is what is the faculty hiding if they do not want grade distribution posted. Students can log on and post their own evaluations. Pic-a-Prof has sued institutions for this project to be implemented and all suits have been won. The feared result could be that students will choose the courses that are the easiest. The faculty was surveyed on this issue with 51% disagreed or somewhat disagreed with this information becoming public, 34% agreed and 15% had no opinion with approximate 320 faculty responding. In the past, grades were posted publicly.

It was proposed that the Faculty Senate have a representative on every Search Committee for any position above a Dean including the position of Athletic Director and a representative on the Council of Deans and Presidential Executive Cabinet. It was suggested to issue an invitation to the administration to attend the Faculty Senate Steering Committee meetings even though they are open to anyone wishing to attend.

The manner of the dismissal of Dr. Nancy Barrett was also discussed. Some are still concerned about the post-tenure review issue. UAB is facing reallocation and reprioritizing. The president of UAH is retiring.

A Legislative Update from the Alabama Scholars Association titled "Accountability: What Should be the Message on Higher Education Day" was handed out and discussed. Forming an ad hoc committee to address grade inflation was proposed. Telling the story of The University of Alabama – excellent teaching, research and students - should be emphasized.

There have been reports of incidents of derogatory phrases being shouted at Muslims in our community. The perpetrators need to be identified and the community should, at every opportunity, convey reassurance to our Muslim citizens that we support them and abhor any acts such as this.

Faculty Life – (*Wythe Holt & Nick Stinnett*) The revised "Resolution in Support of Professor Susan Hamill" was presented. It was revised to read:

"Be it resolved by the Faculty Senate of The University of Alabama that we stand with our colleague, Law Professor Susan Pace Hamill. We commend her willingness to research the controversial issue of the present tax structure of Alabama. We defend the legitimate independence of her research. While we recognize the rights of citizens and scholars to engage in critique of her research and her conclusions, we decry any attempt to silence her or to limit her academic freedom by personal attacks. We believe that any personal attacks against our colleagues are also attacks on the freedom of speech and the academic freedom of all of us."

The Steering Committee voted to forward this to the Senate for a vote.

Academic Affairs – (*Beth Macauley & Garry Warren*) With approximately 322 responses to a faculty survey conducted by the Academic Affairs committee, the question "Is grade inflation a problem at UA?" received 55% agreed, 36% disagreed and 8% no opinion. "Should something be done?" 48% said "yes", 15% "no opinion". "Is grade disparity a problem, that is differences across units" 46% agreed, 20% "no opinion". "Should course grades or rank go on transcripts?" over 50% said "no". "Should grade distributions be made public?" 51% disagreed, 34% agreed, 15% "no opinion". "Should grade disparity or grade inflation be addressed by Deans and Department Chairs?" 62% said "yes", 28% disagreed, 10% "no opinion". "Should grade distribution be included in tenure and promotion?" 55% "no", 15% "no opinion", 30% "agreed". "Is the withdrawal date too late in the semester?" 46% "agreed", 40% "disagreed". "Should the "no credit" be revoked?" 42% "yes", 39% "no". Support for the scholarship enhancement fee was 70% "yes", 13% "no" and 18% "disagreed". Many in the poll expressed strong opinions against grade

inflation being addressed at all.

The ombudspersons were asked by a senator to try to come up with more names. It was the opinion expressed that the person nominated is well qualified.

5:00 PM Meeting adjourned.