

**FACULTY SENATE STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
APRIL 14, 2009 – 3:00 PM – 206F SHELBY HALL**

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

ATTENDING: Karen Steckol, Clark Midkiff, Jeanette VanderMeer, Lowell Baker, Marcia Barrett, Melondie Carter, Carolyn Cassady, Marci Daugherty, Rona Donahoe, Margaret Garner, Deidre Leaver-Dunn, John Mason, Katrina Ramonell, Ed Stephenson, John Vincent

ABSENT: Steven Hobbs, Michael Martone, Shane Street

GUESTS: Cresandra Smothers, Dialog

Roll call and quorum check by Faculty Senate Secretary Jeanette VanderMeer.

The Faculty Senate Steering Committee meeting minutes of March 10, 2009 were approved with one correction.

President's Report – (*Karen Steckol*) **Meeting facilities** are not available in Shelby Hall for Faculty Senate meetings next fall. Meeting spaces will be checked in AIME, Ferguson Forum and Biology 202. President Steckol will be attending the **Board of Trustees** meeting in Huntsville, Alabama next week and meeting with the Faculty Senate President from UAB. Senator Shane Street is concerned about electronic **course evaluations** for large lecture classes. Some students do not attend class yet are asked for an electronic evaluation. The issue will not be pursued following consultations with several administrators. There was an extensive discussion concerning intellectual property, academic misconduct and plagiarism. Campus **parking fee** increases are now in effect.

President Steckol quoted the following from Human Resources concerning health insurance premium increases, “We expect there will be increases in our health insurance premiums and in some of our co-pays and deductibles for 2010; however, the final amounts have not yet been approved by Administration. Comprehensive/formal communications will be made just as soon as possible after all changes are approved.” The Faculty & Staff Benefits Committee make recommendations concerning faculty and staff benefits to the Vice President for Financial Affairs and Treasurer. The committee does not have the authority make or change any institutional policy. The committee was charged with presenting recommendations to fill the \$2.24 million dollar shortfall in the Blue Cross Blue Shield Health Care Plan’s reserve fund. The fund has been depleted due to added benefits and no premium increases last year. The University of Alabama spent \$28 million dollars for faculty/staff health care benefits. The committee has considered requesting the University pay a larger portion since the proposed increases would be borne by University employees only. Rona Donahoe was very concerned about the small \$10.00 differential in the lowest paid employee premium and the remaining employees. Currently a two tier system is in place requiring those making less than

\$26,000 (they pay \$10.00 a month less) pay a lower premium. A motion was made in the committee meeting recommending a third tier be added to the existing premium structure, to have the highest paid employees bear a higher proportion of the necessary premium increase, and the lowest paid employees (\$26,000/yr) a lower share proportionately. This motion passed and was also passed and recommended last year. Across the board increases are being proposed for everyone. The University of Alabama is ranked one of the lowest in health care costs in SUG. The proposed changes will eliminate insurance payment for eye exams. The proposal did not include any increase in the University's contribution toward employee health care plans. The University puts its share of the employee's single plan premium (\$86.00/month) toward the cost of a family plan. For two-employee families, the University puts its share of both employee single plan premiums toward the cost of a family plan, and has historically done so. The UA employee receives this benefit whether they have a single or family plan. The University has not increased salaries the past two years. The subcommittee recommended elimination of the "double offset" meaning a UA employed couple will no longer have the University's portion of their two single-plan premiums paid toward their joint family plan, but only one. This takes away the \$86.00/month health care benefit from the employee who does not pay the health care premium for the family plan. This would increase monthly health care premiums for married employee families by \$118/month (for those earning \$26,000/year) rather than \$32/month like everyone else. The proposed increases would be \$192/year for single plan premium, \$384/year in family plan premium, \$1056/year in two-employee couple's family plan premium, and \$1416/year increase for those earning more than \$26,000/year. Discussion included the need/overuse/penalty for emergency room visits, outpatient surgeries, tobacco usage surcharges, faculty/staff education in preventive health care, delaying health care due to cost and reducing/saving cost efforts. Based on approximately 4,500 UA employees premiums would have to be increased between \$400 and \$500 a year to maintain the current health benefits without any change or cuts. The Faculty Senate Steering Committee does not support the elimination of the annual routine eye exam insurance benefit. Increasing the emergency room co-pay even more and retaining eye care coverage was a suggestion. It would be some compensation for the lack of salary increases if the University contributed more per employee to health care benefits. The Steering Committee's greatest concern is the insurance premium discrepancy of those earning \$26,000 or less and those with higher salaries.

Vice President's Report – (*Clark Midkiff*) No report.

Secretary's Report – (*Jeanette VanderMeer*) A record of senator absences for the past year and excerpts from the Senate bylaws concerning absences were distributed. The bylaws state:

2. **Faculty and Senate Governance Committee.** The Faculty and Senate Governance Committee:
 - A. Is responsible for the continuous review of faculty participation in University governance, including university committee structure and Faculty Handbook compliance

- B. Is responsible for continuous review of the Senate's organization and procedures and for recommending changes it deems desirable in either the Constitution or By-laws.
- C. Considers the reasonableness of all absences in excess of two by a Senator during the April through March term, in which a Senator is not represented by a duly elected alternate. In such cases the Committee will make a recommendation to the Senate on whether the position should be declared vacant. The Committee will also be responsible for determining if a Senate seat is vacant for reasons other than absence and will make appropriate recommendations to the Senate.
- D. Interprets the Constitution and By-laws and may receive requests for interpretation from the Senate or the Senate President, or may initiate action by itself. All such interpretations must be reported to the Senate and are subject to Senate concurrence.
- E. Determines the constitutionality of any proposed changes in Senate By-laws. Such determinations must be reported to the Senate and are subject to Senate concurrence.

The Secretary will call the roll of senators at each meeting of the Senate. Any absences in excess of two by a senator will be reported by the Secretary to the Faculty and Senate Governance Committee. The Secretary shall also record the attendance, by name, of each visitor having floor privileges pursuant to Article III, Section 3, paragraph 4, of every attending member of the press, and of other special visitors to the Senate.

A senator is responsible for securing an alternate to attend Senate meetings in the event of the senator's absence. The senator is also to inform the alternate of any important issues on the agenda and how to vote as the senator's proxy.

The 2008-09 Senate year has ended. President Steckol will send a letter concerning excessive absences to those senators continuing to serve through their re-election for the 2009-10 year.

Academic Affairs – *(Marcia Barrett & John Vincent)* John Vincent has found core curriculum documents including history dating to the mid-1990s. The Academic Affairs Committee will review those files. There is a Core Curriculum Oversight Committee which met in 2006-07, did not meet in 2007-08 and met three times in 2008-09. The Oversight Committee has re-written the definition of a core course. President Steckol suggested the Academic Affairs Committee meet with Mark Nelson, Vice President of Student Affairs, to discuss needs from the faculty's perspective. The core curriculum was put into effect in 1982 to determine the status of those courses that did not fit into the state-wide articulation/core curriculum agreement. The Academic Affairs Committee will give a report at the next Steering Committee meeting and will make efforts to move this issue forward.

Faculty Life – *(Deidre Leaver-Dunn & Lowell Baker)* The new Faculty Life Committee will be meeting with Bob Smallwood, Assistant to the Provost for

Assessment, to review the climate survey issue. A meeting has been scheduled for April 29th.

Financial Affairs – (*Katrina Ramonell & Steven Hobbs*) No report.

Research & Service – (*Ed Stephenson & Shane Street*) No report.

Faculty & Senate Governance – (*John Mason & Michael Martone/Marci Daugherty*) No report.

Student Affairs – (*Melondie Carter & Carolyn Cassady*) The Student Affairs Committee was charged at the last Faculty Senate Steering Committee to obtain more information concerning SGA football ticket recommendations. Richard Byrd, SGA Athletic Department football ticket liaison, was contacted. The ten recommendations were immediately forwarded to the Student Affairs Committee. The recommendations have been adopted.

Recommendations and Rationale

3/05/09

- Students can continue to “transfer” (student to student via MyTicket system) as many tickets as they want.

Rationale: The commission feels as though students should be able to make their strongest effort to allow themselves and their fellow students to attend as many home football games as possible, and we believe that the transfer system on MyTicket is the most efficient and effective way to achieve that goal. We did not want to limit the total number of tickets a student can transfer in a given year.

- After a student upgrades (change a regular student ticket to a student guest ticket) more than 3 tickets, or half the home season, then that student is ineligible to purchase postseason tickets (SEC Championship and bowl game).

Rationale: The commission believes that this rule will reward those students who have utilized their student tickets during the home regular season by giving them priority for SEC Championship and bowl game tickets and will discourage students from selling tickets to non-students on a regular basis. We also believe that this will limit the number of students upgrading their ticket every week solely for the purpose of selling to a non-student. We recognize how valuable the student-guest upgrade is for students, but we wanted to limit the number of people abusing this policy. Last season 392 people upgraded their student tickets more than three times. We felt that three was a fair number because that number is just less than half of the home football games in a given year.

- Once a student has 3 “resets” (unused, non-donated, non-transferred) they immediately become ineligible for postseason tickets for that year, and are also ineligible to purchase tickets for the following year.

Rationale: The commission strongly believes that “reset” tickets, which are in effect wasted, need to carry a punishment. The award winning MyTicket system is extremely simple to use, and donating a ticket takes less than a minute. We know that there are many students who desire to go to the game, but cannot find a ticket due to the lack of supply. Therefore we are adamant in having every ticket used at every home game. We feel that this disincentive for not attending games or donating tickets is fair and will effectively increase the number of students at each home game.

- An SGA board and an appeals process will be set up in August to review all complaints regarding penalties issued from the ticket usage standards/policies.

Rationale: The commission wants to make sure those students with legitimate conflicts or unforeseen emergencies do not get punished for their lack of attendance at home games and their lack of properly finding an alternative owner for their tickets.

- We recommend that the regular season purchase process remain the same in that:
 - All eligible current students purchase tickets at a set date beginning at 7am in the morning
 - The firewall settings of the server be set to accommodate the unique settings of the University of Alabama purchasing and prevent students from being “locked out”
 - There is a well publicized informational campaign regarding the ticket purchasing system and potential test website for students to use in advance of the purchasing date

Rationale: We understand that there are many directions in which the ticket office can go on this particular issue. We know that this purchasing system (website purchase through RollTide.com) causes anxiety among many students; however, we recommend that we keep our process largely the same. After talking with athletics regarding the technical issues people had last year, we are confident that these issues can be solved by altering the security settings of the servers. We have been informed by athletics that the traffic (number of students online at the same time) will not cause the servers to crash. Based on those two issues, we recommend that the purchasing system remain largely the same. We would like to partner with athletics and the university administration to create an informational campaign that is visible to students and will help to decrease some of the anxiety experienced when purchasing tickets.

In regards to who is eligible to buy tickets, we had much debate, and a range of ideas were discussed. The core of the problem lies in the fact that the demand for

student tickets is greater than the supply. After talking amongst the ticket commission and with students on campus, we understood that students like to control their own destiny when purchasing football tickets. Therefore, we immediately knew that a lottery of any kind would eliminate that control and upset many students. Furthermore, we felt that there is something to be said for those students who are willing to wake up early and be online to purchase tickets on a given date. After being assured by athletics that their servers and technology can handle the traffic, we felt that a “first come first serve” online purchasing system will be the best way to satisfy the majority of students.

- Postseason tickets should be broken down proportionately, based on the composition of the University student body. The two main groups should be graduate and undergraduate, then once broken down amongst those two groups, the tickets should be distributed based on UA credit hours.

Rationale: The commission believes that this will be the most effective and fair way to distribute postseason tickets, preventing one segment of the student population from receiving most or all of the postseason tickets allotted to the student body. By basing it off of seniority within the two groups of graduate and undergraduate, we ensure that students who come to the university should have the opportunity to purchase postseason tickets regardless if they stay for graduate school.

- If you gain free access, or access without a ticket, to home football games, you are eligible to purchase tickets, but upon finalization of rosters in August, your tickets will be refunded, pulled, and resold in another ticket sale conducted by the ticket office.

Rationale: We feel that this is a fair policy and it aims to maximize the number of students in the game and minimize scalping. There are various organizations (Million Dollar Band, SGA block seating, NCAA athletes, Capstone Men and Women) who gain access to home football games without tickets. We feel it is unfair for these people to have a second set of tickets. We understand that some organizations may have unusual situations, but would like to see every effort made to have these tickets distributed to other students who would otherwise not be able to get into the game. Since many rosters change between when ticket purchasing occurs and when the football season begins, we feel it is only fair to wait until August to refund anyone’s tickets.

- We recommend that, in the future, a “point system” could be used to allot tickets for postseason and away games. This point system could include factors such as athletic event attendance and academic standing.

Rationale: The commission would not like to suggest this proposal at this time, but we would like to ask the University to keep an open mind about pursuing a point system for postseason and away games only if the difference between

supply and demand increases significantly. We did not feel that a point system would be fair for regular season purchasing. We feel that students who want to attend home football games should be allowed to do so without being mandated to attend other events. Many people who love football may not necessarily be fans of other sports, and football runs deep within our culture at this university. We want to make sure all students have the opportunity to experience that. We do feel that a point system is a potential idea for postseason and away game purchasing in the future, just not at this time.

- We recommend that students be allowed to purchase one ticket for all away and postseason games, except for this year's game at Virginia Tech where students should be allowed to purchase two tickets. We also recommend that Athletics do what they can to accommodate students that would like to sit by each other.

Rationale: The commission wants to ensure that the most students possible can purchase tickets for and attend away games. We believe that selling only one ticket per student is the best means to achieve that goal. We make an exception for the Virginia Tech game since the University will receive many more tickets than it would for a regular conference or non-conference away game. We understand that most students do not want to attend a game by themselves or sit by themselves, and therefore we encourage athletics to take all steps possible to accommodate students that want to sit next to each other at away games. This would be a great way to ease the frustration students have with being separated from their friends at away games. While it would be easier to make this happen by allowing students to purchase multiple tickets, this would obviously dramatically decrease the number of students eligible to purchase and most likely lead to scalping and fewer students receiving the tickets designated for students.

- We recommend that, in the future, the university administration and the SGA continuously work together and pursue all initiatives to improve and increase the number of students in the student section for all football games.

Rationale: The commission feels that this will be very important with the upcoming stadium expansion. We all know that there will most likely never be enough student tickets available to completely satisfy student demand, however we think it is important that all parties involved work together to maximize the use of the limited number of tickets allotted for students.

Melondie Carter made the point that senior students should have football ticket priority. Melondie and President Steckol attended the SGA inauguration of new officers, awards presentation and recognition of past officers and were very impressed with the event. The lack of attendance of a SGA representative at the Faculty Senate meetings was discussed.

Legislative Agenda – *(Margaret Garner)* The attendance and effectiveness of Higher Education Day held in Montgomery was discussed at the last Steering Committee meeting. Margaret Garner brought this to the attention of Bill Jones, Director of Government Relations for the UA System. Mr. Jones stated that it is difficult to have an event that will draw the attendance of Legislators. Higher Ed Day is not perfect but does draw the Legislators and media attention and includes the participation of all thirteen higher education institutions in Alabama. The addition of another day to meet with the Legislators was suggested. Mr. Jones is willing to meet to discuss any ideas that would add interest to Higher Education Day.

There is a three-day advocacy workshop retreat held in May annually. It will be held in Destin this year. Attendees include higher education presidents, alumni, faculty and students. The SGA and the Student's Team Advocating Realistic Solutions (STARS) organization coordinate the event.

There are approximately 4,000 University employees and of that number 177 are members of the Higher Education Partnership. Attracting more members is the focus of the HEP Membership Committee. Suggestions included competition between the campuses for new members.

Meeting adjourned 5:00 PM.

Officers met to make committee assignments. Meeting adjourned 5:50 PM.