

FACULTY SENATE

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

FACULTY SENATE STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

JULY 13, 2004 – 307 FERGUSON – 3:00 PM

APPROVED MINUTES

ATTENDING: John Mason, Mathew Winston, John Vincent, Bob Sigler, Priscilla Davis, Wythe Holt, Clark Midkiff, Robert Moore, Karen Steckol, Jerry Weaver, Margaret Garner
Guest: Joanna Hutt, Dialog

The June 22, 2004 Faculty Senate Steering Committee minutes were approved with corrections.

It was noted that Priscilla Davis should be added as co-chair of the Student Affairs committee.

Karen Steckol and John Vincent were misquoted in The Tuscaloosa News article regarding the salary increase being given by the University.

The *Faculty Senate's Faculty Feedback Survey for Department Chairs* report by the Faculty Leadership Review Committee recommended that the report be sent formally to Dr. Witt and the Provost. The letter would include the information that the Deans will be reviewed next year and copy to the Deans. It was suggested that this be done if it does not reinforce the preconceived conclusion that the purpose is negative. The means are four on a scale of one to five and does not indicate a negative purpose at all. One member stated that the means is not that important but the important point being whether a significant number of highly dissatisfied people are indicated. It was suggested that numbers (how many strongly disagreed, how many agreed) could be given in an effort to restructure the data without revealing identities. Giving a score to the chairs indicating the ranking in a document such as a chart was discussed. The Steering Committee was reminded that this is the first year for the feedback and it is establishing a base and comparisons could be made the following feedback survey. Thirty-five of the 55 individuals receiving data initially had one to four questions with incorrect means due to the software inadvertently coding "don't know" responses as zero and including them into the calculation of the means. *No* other problems with the survey results existed, and only one individual complained about the data. The data were corrected and all chairs that received "don't know" responses were provided corrected survey results. The purpose of the survey was to provide non-threatening feedback to the chairs and this has been accomplished. January was selected as the time of the survey to give new faculty time with their chairs and Deans. Wythe Holt made a motion with a second by Bob Moore to send out the Leadership Review Report plus a scatter-graph to the Deans, Department Chairs, the Senate, President Witt and the Provost and to post it on the Faculty Senate's web page for faculty members to access. John Mason will email the faculty with the information that the report is on the Faculty Senate web page. The Steering Committee approved this motion unanimously. It was also suggested that Wythe Holt write a resolution thanking Norm Baldwin and the Leadership Review committee for their contribution and hard work to be brought before the Senate for a vote.

Jacksonville State University is in the process of gathering **textbooks** to send **to the University of Baghdad** in Iraq. Due to the burning of libraries and ten years of embargo

the University systems of Iraq are about 15 years behind in educational material. A motion was made by Wythe Holt and seconded that the University participate in conjunction with the SGA and for John Mason to approach the SGA for this project. The motion passed unanimously. The cost of shipping is a concern and efforts are being made to find the least expensive method of sending the material. John Mason will contact Kelly Gray of JSU informing them that the Steering Committee voted unanimously to join them in this project.

Dr. Witt has received a number of emails requesting that the University recognize and observe **Memorial Day** as a holiday. Discussion included the possibility of adding 15 minutes per class a day during interim and the possibility of teaching or giving interim exams on a Saturday. The SACS standard of class time of 15 week-45 hours of class time is no longer the SACS standard for accreditation. The point was made that the staff's pay is low and that an additional holiday would be a benefit for them. It was also suggested that not observing Memorial Day is a poor image for the University. There has been no change to the fall semester other than the addition of the Wednesday before Thanksgiving for students. It was suggested to review the whole University calendar and check on the calendars of other institutions in the state. Interim usually begins the Monday following graduation and ends the Friday after Memorial Day. In 2003 interim was being conducted during the day of graduation. The opinion was expressed that the whole of the University calendar should be reviewed. Alabama is second in the nation regarding the people entering and volunteering for the military. Wythe Holt made a motion and it was seconded by Bob Moore to issue the following statement:

"It is the consensus of the Faculty Senate Steering Committee that we are strongly in favor of the Memorial Day holiday but we are concerned about the integrity of interim period and the overall University calendar".

This was approved unanimously by the Steering Committee. John Mason will convey this to the President and the Provost.

Copies of four **surveys** conducted by the Faculty Senate in the past were handed out. In most cases the priority was to increase salaries. These surveys contain some issues that might reappear this fall. The Reallocation Survey contained some tough questions such as what is your feeling on eliminating unfilled positions and closing low enrollment programs in their or other colleges. A faculty member in the Law School received a memo stating that classes of fewer than ten would be discouraged. Prior to this memo four students per class was the minimum. Closing **low enrollment programs** would be a method of saving money. Summer school classes of fewer than ten will be cancelled. This year the University is anticipating an increase of 400 students over last year. There is a large increase in Honor Students of one-third last year and one-third this year. This will be from 300 to 600 students. John Mason will ask the Provost for the average ACT scores of this year compared to the last two years. The Birmingham News reported that in the third round of sixty additional National Merit students from Alabama, 15 were planning to attend UA and 12 planning to attend Auburn. The University is more actively recruiting students. There was discussion that UA has a great need to improve the method of recruiting students during their visit to the UA campus. It was suggested to find out what impresses the students during their recruitment and what the problems are and to refer those problems to administration.

There was no support to have a get-acquainted social for the Steering Committee and new senators but to continue the new senator orientation session.

The next item on the agenda was **ASA** with discussion including information on their

website. The article regarding the ombudsperson election where there was only one nominee of a few years ago is still on their website. The past election had four nominees with a run-off needed. There was an incident a few years ago where a resolution was presented to the Provost and, Charles Nuckolls in an amendment to the resolution, stated that the University had the highest ratio of administrators to the number of students in the SUG when in fact it was just the reverse. This caused the Faculty Senate embarrassment. The opinion was expressed that the Senate should support the University in its decision to refuse to pay the postage for this publication.

In February, **skilled technicians** were **reassigned** to groundskeeping during their surplus time. This is of great concern. It was suggested that they could be doing preventive maintenance during their surplus time. John Mason will bring this to the Provost's attention. Discussion included a situation at a Board of Trustees meeting where answers could not be given to a question concerning a large difference of 25% to 30% in bids for the same project. There has been dismissal of some management and construction management employees. At the end of July, the Provost will provide a list of buildings in order of deferred maintenance priorities.

It was suggested to obtain information about UA's ranking in the SUG after the raises are given to faculty and staff.

A 2003 information sheet titled "*Additional Dollars Generated from Increasing U of A Tuition to SUG 75th and 50th Percentile*" was handed out. Even with the 16% tuition increase last year and the 12% increase this year, UA will probably remain below the SUG 50% percentile. John Mason will request this information from Institutional Research. Using this data and the data budgeted for this year and last year, tuition for 2004-05 is projected to be \$96 million dollars, a 42% increase due partly to increased enrollment. State appropriations have increased one million and three million dollars the last two years. John Mason will have the University update the information on this sheet.

Vice President's Report – (Mathew Winston) The Alabama Academe, a statewide publication, was printed with "Banned" in bold red letters stamped on the front page. This refers to the University withdrawing free postage for this publication. They, in turn, have accused the UA administration of taking bold steps in the direction of limiting academic freedom. The perception that the publication stands for UA faculty's voice could be possible. In response to a question by Joanna Hutt of Dialog, John Mason gave instructions that any inquiries be directed to the officers of the Faculty Senate. The CUC is trying to clarify the voting rights of liaison and ex-officio members of University committees. The Faculty Senate's liaison member on University committees normally votes. Rona Donahue, Chair of University Committee on Committees stated that the Faculty Senate has a representative on every committee. Mathew Winston made a motion with a second by Wythe Holt to change the title of "Faculty Senate Liaison" to "Faculty Senate Representative". This was unanimously approved by the Steering Committee.

John Mason received a letter from Florida Atlantic University stating that the Faculty Senate of that institution passed a resolution supporting academic freedom and tenure. This was in response to the firing of the two professors at the University of Southern Mississippi. The UA Faculty Senate passed a resolution a few months ago pertaining to the same issue.

There were no other reports from the Secretary or other committees.

Legislative Agenda – (Margaret Garner) Hank Sanders made a commitment last year that K-12 problems would be addressed and that next year the focus will be on higher

education. There are personal visits being made to senators to remind them of the needs of higher education. There is need for a big drive to increase the membership of the UA system PAC. Organization and funding is needed to assist in the efforts to keep Legislators informed of primary and critical issues facing higher education. There is a board in place that determines how the funding is distributed. It was speculated that the Legislative commitments of last year possibly included PEEHIP concessions. Last year the University was assessed four million dollars for PEEHIP health care for the retirees and this year an additional \$600,000 was assessed. No additional costs were assessed to teachers. The use of emergency facilities for non-emergencies is costly and people should be more responsible for their use of health care dollars increasing the cost to all consumers. Benefit information distribution to faculty and staff is in need of improvement. Discussion included nurse practitioner care and benefits, establishment of a wellness program and center, achieving lower drug costs and duplicate co-pays. It was suggested to request that the Board of Trustees lobby for lower drug costs. John Mason offered to include that in his presentation to the Board in November. Getting the issue to the Board earlier for consideration might be preferred. Wythe will forward to John what the Benefits Committee has discussed. It is understood that a wellness program proposal will be forthcoming in the near future.

Mathew Winston brought up the issue of the **non-discrimination policy** of the University sent to all faculty members and staff members by President Witt. He suggested that it would have been a perfect opportunity to include sexual orientation in that statement. The Faculty Senate passed a resolution last fall asking that sexual orientation be included in the non-discrimination policy statement.

It was suggested that an **internal wellness program** be established between the Student Health Center, Nursing and the University Medical Center. This was proposed in 1999 and funding was the problem at that time. This would have to be sold on a cost-saving basis. The benefits could be health education and research, and research overhead to assist in the funding. It could be marketed to the public with a lower cost for faculty. There would have to be grant support since participant fees could not support the cost of such a program.

Meeting adjourned 5:05 PM