

# FACULTY SENATE

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

## Faculty Senate Steering Committee Minutes

October 14, 2003 – 3:00 PM – 307 Ferguson

### Minutes Approved at Steering Committee Meeting on Nov. 11, 2003

**Attending:** John Mason, Mathew Winston, Roy Ann Sherrod, John Vincent, Margaret Rice, Wolfgang Bertsch, Catherine Davies, George Franke, Mohammed Sharif, Caryl Cooper, Steve Miller, Harry Price, Karla Carmichael, Nanda Hopenwasser, Bob Sigler, Margaret Garner Guests: Joanna Hutt, Dialog, Chris Otts and Marlin Caddell, Crimson White, David T. Beito and Charles W. Nuckolls, ASA, Wythe Holt, invited by President John Mason and Hank Lazer, Office of Academic Affairs

The Faculty Senate Steering Committee minutes of September 9, 2003 were approved.

Dr. Hank Lazer, Office of Academic Affairs, at the request of the Provost asked for a sense of the Faculty Senate Steering Committee concerning the statements in the Faculty Handbook regarding **Study Week**.

"The week immediately preceding the final examination period each semester is reserved as a time in which students may concentrate on completing course work and preparing for final examinations. Only laboratory examinations omitted from the Final Examination Schedule are permitted during Study Week. The University prohibits all other examinations and extended assignments during Study Week."

The meaning of the third sentence is not clear. The definition of "extended assignments" could include an assignment to be completed at the student's discretion and the second definition could include any assignment with major materials presented up to and into Study Week. Student opinion is that this should be a pristine study time period without major assignments or exams. This year is an unusual schedule with all major work due the week prior to Thanksgiving. Discussion included the fact that assignments were given by a faculty member the first day of classes and those were due the last day the class met. The students had no objections to a major project being due and replacing a final exam. Extended assignments could be anything other than class attendance and participation. Makeup tests would be permissible since that would be at the student's discretion. It was suggested that a definition of "lab" be established. Some faculty members move final exams up to study week which is prohibited by University policy and the consequences vary by department. Most of the time it is a letter stating that this is not allowed. Members of the Steering Committee discussed various situations encountered in their teaching duties. Any assignment given a student to be completed and turned in during dead week would pose a problem.

**Faculty Life** – (*Karla Carmichael & Nick Stinnett*) The Faculty Life committee presented a **resolution honoring Gene Marsh** for his years of service as Faculty Athletic Representative. After it was pointed out that legal proceedings are currently underway involving Gene Marsh, a motion was made and the Steering Committee voted to recommit the resolution to the committee until such time that the legal proceedings were completed.

A "**Resolution on Sexual Orientation and the University's Policies**" was presented for

consideration by the Steering Committee. The University of Alabama's Student Government Association passed a resolution R-06-03 with the last "Therefore" clause stating "The University of Alabama Student Senate stands with the various Student Governments and Faculty Senate of The University of Alabama-Birmingham in their efforts to include sexual orientation in their University's Equal Opportunity Policy and calls upon President Witt, members of The University of Alabama administration, and The University of Alabama Faculty Senate to work towards the same goals and to take other steps as warranted toward ensuring compliance with this amended policy." The University of Alabama Faculty Senate passed a resolution on faculty support for diversity on March 21, 2000. The Faculty Life committee put together an updated resolution for the Steering Committee to consider.

### **Resolution on Sexual Orientation and the University's Policies**

Whereas, the University of Alabama bears a special moral and ethical responsibility to promote diversity and inclusiveness, and

Whereas, a diverse and inclusive learning environment which respects and enhances the potential of all members of our community is crucially important to the University's mission of achieving excellence in teaching, research, and service, and

Whereas, the Faculty Senate of The University of Alabama reaffirms its belief, first stated in its Diversity Support Resolution passed unanimously on Mar. 21, 2000, that "acceptance of diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, culture, gender, sexual orientation, or physical challenges is critical to responsible leadership and citizenship," and

Whereas, the Board of Trustees of The University of Alabama affirmed on Aug. 19, 2003, that our University system "promotes opportunities for equal access for all qualified students and values diversity among its students, faculty, staff, and administration" and "helps stimulate the continuing awareness of ethics and human values," and

Whereas, the current University policies on non-discrimination and equal opportunity are unclear regarding discrimination based on sexual orientation,

Therefore, be it resolved, that the Faculty Senate of The University of Alabama reaffirms its commitment to promote respect for and appreciation and celebration of diversity in all aspects of University life, and reaffirms the importance of an inclusive and welcoming environment for our University community, and

Be it further resolved that discrimination based upon sexual orientation is condemned, and that systems and practices embodying such discrimination must be dismantled, and

Be it further resolved that the Faculty Senate joins with the University of Alabama Student Senate, various elements of the University of Alabama-Birmingham Student Government, and the Faculty Senate of The University of Alabama-Birmingham in requesting that "sexual orientation" be included in the types of discrimination specifically abjured in the University of Alabama's Equal Opportunity Policy and in its Non-Discrimination Policy, and further joins them in requesting that all other

steps as warranted be taken toward ensuring compliance with this amended policy.

Wythe Holt reviewed the sources of each paragraph in the resolution. The date of August 19, 2003 in the resolution is incorrect since the Board did not meet in August. The date should be September 19, 2003. The Board of Trustees resolution was based on a 22-page report presented by Dr. Charles Nash, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. This report will be posted on the Faculty Senate web page. The question was asked to clarify the phrase "systems and practices embodying such discrimination must be dismantled". Systems would include hiring people regardless of their sexual orientation. Practices would include intentional discrimination and system would be discrimination already built into the system. It was suggested to change the word "that" to "any" in this paragraph. It was felt by the Steering Committee this resolution demonstrates shared values and solidarity. Upon the passage of this resolution, John Mason will include along with his letter to Dr. Witt, Dr. Portera and Provost Judy Bonner, copies of the resolutions from the UA SGA, UAB's Faculty Senate, UA Faculty Senate's resolution passed in 2000 and the UA Board of Trustee resolution. Harry Price moved that this resolution as amended (date change and word change to "any") be forwarded to the Senate. This passed the Steering Committee with one abstention.

**Planning & Operations** (*Mathew Winston & Mohammed Sharif*) This committee has researched changing the **summer session to two four-week terms**. The advantages would be allowing greater flexibility beginning and ending the fall and spring semesters, would avoid a situation like this last summer where July 4<sup>th</sup> was on a Friday and Saturday exams were required and would allow a fall break during the week of Thanksgiving. President Witt had asked at the last Steering Committee for input regarding a half-day on Wednesday prior to Thanksgiving. The Steering Committee voted against allowing early dismissal. The disadvantages would include the issue of how much a student could read, absorb and create in this short time period. The public schools are not out of school for Thanksgiving but have one week fall break during October. The main problem would be squeezing five weeks worth of work into four weeks. It would also mean changing the beginning of fall semester to an earlier date and would need further schedule adjustments. That would affect the nine-month schedule and the employment status of faculty. The discussion of the Planning and Operations committee included beginning classes on a Monday rather than a Wednesday or Thursday but that would affect the orientation scheduled and would move them to the weekend. This would call for overtime for employees. The committee recommends that this issue be put aside for the time being.

The possibility of University discrimination against the Alabama Scholars Association regarding **intra-campus mail privileges** was the next item on the agenda. Mathew Winston gave a report that included potential problems with the distribution of the newsletter of the Alabama Observer. The August issue was distributed across campus in August for a thirty-dollar charge. The second issue was ready to be distributed. David Beito and Charles Nuckolls were told this issue did not qualify for the thirty-dollar rate. The relationship between campus mail and the post office is not clear. The director of University Printing, the Director of Payroll and Human Resources, the Manager of Campus Mail Services, the Faculty Senate president, a University ombudsperson and a University attorney have been involved in the efforts to determine the University's policy regarding this issue. Contradictory information has been given. The University Coordinating Council for Student Organizations recognizes student organizations. There is not an equivalent for faculty organizations. The ASA has a web site and is an organization. Does that entitle them to organization privileges? The Alabama Observer is the house organ for the Alabama Scholars Association. It states in the first issue that second-class postage was paid. That will not appear in future issues. The other statement in the Observer is that this organization is a private non-profit organization not affiliated

with any college or university in the state of Alabama. There seems to be three problems: faculty should determine what faculty groups are official organizations, there is not a University policy regarding this issue and the third problem is that the University sought an attorney's opinion on this issue. Two main points emerging are the method used to determine a *bona fide* faculty organization and clarification of the qualifications for use of campus mail at a minimal charge. Copies of a draft from the Provost's office regarding what constitutes a *bona fide* campus organization was handed out with a request for feedback on this issue. This issue has been assigned to Planning and Operations for further research and to report back to the Steering Committee. It was suggested that this committee consult some outside people perhaps from administration and others to assist them in looking at these two issues. It was also suggested to consult UCLA since they have a faculty organization policy.

John Mason will update the Senate on his attendance of the **Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics** in conjunction with the NCAA in Indianapolis, Indiana at a later date.

The **College of Arts and Sciences** is in the midst of **revising their bylaws**. The bylaw now reads that a senator must be of the rank of assistant professor or above. The Senate constitution specifies that a senator "under a regular appointment as an instructor or assistant professor ... engage in teaching at least a half a normal load during the regular year". The Senate now has one part-time teacher serving from A&S. Arts and Sciences have been asked to reconcile their bylaws with the Faculty Senate bylaws. A&S has also been asked if they want to sub-divide their elections according to their divisions – Arts & Humanities, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences. Arts & Sciences has a college wide election for allocated seats from each of those divisions. Two vacancies for A&S has been filled with one senator and they are still short one senator.

**Academic Affairs** – (*John Vincent & Margaret Rice*) John Dew of CQI requested an appearance before this committee to talk about the **accreditation process**. There was a national student survey looking at senior and first year student's opinions. The University was above the national average in all categories except one. First year students did not feel they were receiving enough one-on-one time with their instructors, time broken into small groups, project oriented, course work, team collaborative learning and other categories under this one heading. It was asked if the Senate would have a problem with the accreditation team going to the chairs of certain departments with large classes and talk to the chairs to improve this area. The Academic Affairs committee determined that they would not look into a problem with the Book Store since it seemed to be a situation that does occur periodically and seemed to be a communication problem. Margaret Rice was elected as a new co-chair of this committee.

**Financial Affairs** – (*Catherine Davies & George Franke*) This committee requested a charge. John Mason charged this committee with obtaining **budget information** for the year ending September 30. Also to obtain this year's budgeted data. The situation was cited that at the Board of Trustees meeting a presentation was being made concerning the financial situation of the Athletic Department. It showed that the budgeted revenue and budgeted expenditures was five million dollars. A question was asked about the actual data. The data given was for June 30. It was revealed that budgeted revenue was two or three million dollars more and that budgeted expenditures were two million dollars less. Instead of having a five million dollar differential, there was a ten million dollar differential. The five million dollars went into Replacement and Repair.

The **Board of Trustees** will meet in November in Tuscaloosa at the Bryant Conference Center. John Mason will send out information with the date and time of this meeting. The Board usually conducts most of the business on Thursday during committee meetings.

**Research & Service** – (*Wolfgang Bertsch & Don Hooks*) It was suggested that the **faculty workload** issue should reside with this committee. It was also suggested to make contact with the new Vice President for Research to set up meetings. This will give them an opportunity to communicate. Also a member of this committee could possibly substitute for a senator unable to attend the Library Committee meetings.

**Senate Operations** – (*Harry Price & Frannie James*) - This committee is going through the **Senate bylaws for updating and prioritizing**. There will be a good bit of time required of the Senate to consider all the changes this involves. It was suggested to have a called focused meeting to consider the changes in the bylaw structure. The Steering Committee in January and February will spend a good portion of their time on this issue with the finalized version being presented to the Senate in February with a vote to be held in March. There could possibly be a called Steering Committee meeting in February. This vote would be before the new senators are in place. The material will be distributed to the Steering Committee prior to the meetings and a time line will be sent out also. Those running for senator should be aware of Senate meeting dates and if they are not available to serve at that time, they should not be eligible. It is the unplanned situations that prevents faculty from attending the meeting. The question of not attending a meeting and being able to discuss the issue at the next meeting was discussed. The Senate has no provision pertaining to this.

**Student Affairs** – (*Steve Miller & Caryl Cooper*) This committee will be bringing to the next Steering Committee meeting several rules and regulations pertaining to the **Student Handbook** and also will be meeting with the new Vice President for Student Affairs. The proposed changes are coming from Healthy Campus. Student Affairs will make the ultimate decision concerning any changes. A recommendation could be brought from the committee, bring a motion to ask the Senate to approve certain measures or they can be silent.

**Legislative Agenda** – (*Margaret Garner*) Confusing information has been distributed and it was suggested to the Governor's office to clearly identify the amounts mentioned concerning the budget deficit.

**Selection of Deans and Chairs Ad Hoc Committee** – (*Harry Price*) The Provost promised this group that the group would convene and that a chair would be selected. These events have not happened. John Mason will communicate with the Provost regarding this.

The new list of committee assignments has not been posted. This delays the identification of those members and it will be communicated that these assignments should be posted without any delays.

The issue of faculty identifying themselves as being helpful to homosexuals and bi-sexual and transgender students was brought forward. Nothing was done about this. A follow up will be done and perhaps the faculty list serve used as the identifying and communication tool.

It was expressed that the University web site was not liked. University Relations will be contacted concerning this.

Meeting adjourned 5:05 PM