

Faculty Senate Minutes

25 September 2006

Senators Present:

Anton (Chair), Bartanen, Beck, Bristow, Foster, Haltom, Hanson, Joshi, Ostrom, Rowe, Ryken, Singleton, Sousa

Call to Order:

Anton called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m.

Minutes:

Minutes of the 11 September 2006 meeting were approved with corrections.

Chair's Report:

Anton reminded senators about the upcoming Swope Lecture on Tuesday, September 26th, featuring E. O. Wilson. There was some discussion of the absence of tickets for the event and the problems this causes with arrival times and getting seats. Bartanen assured senators that the issue of ticketing for Swope Lectures was on the Swope Committee agenda.

New Business: Faculty Bylaws Revision

Discussion was led by those who had worked on revisions since the Senate's earlier consideration of the by-laws at the retreat in August.

- **Article II, Section 2: Responsibilities of the Faculty**

Ostrom introduced his drafted changes, explaining that he had attempted to maintain the responsibilities as the bylaws intended while also clarifying them by breaking them out individually. Haltom asked if Ostrom might read the revised draft aloud, which he did.

Rowe expressed concern about the first sentence of the final section of the revised draft, suggesting that the wording here was in conflict with the existing ASUPS bylaws. She noted that the original did not seem to contain this conflict. Currently ASUPS media is overseen in practice by Student Affairs and on paper by the ASUPS president and vice-president. Bartanen reminded senators that any changes in the media bylaws must be approved by the Board of Trustees. Ostrom wondered if the idea of faculty oversight was a holdover from an earlier time, and whether since then new institutions have emerged that were not yet in existence. This raised the question of whether the bylaws needed to be changed in this area. Rowe agreed that it seemed likely that institutions had outgrown the old bylaws. The Media Board, for instance, is only about 15 years old. Rowe asked if the Senate might shift the language to "advise" rather than "oversee." This would better reflect the spirit of the Media Board guidelines. "Included but not limited to..." is good language, because faculty will retain this as part of their charge, if, for some reason, Media Board ceased to exist. Ostrom asked if senators might just cut the last paragraph of his revised draft. Singleton noted that the Office of Student Services reports to the faculty to some degree at least, and suggested that if this is the group that oversees media, then indirectly faculty does perform this role. Ostrom then raised the question of whether

the Dean of Students reports to the faculty. At this point Bartanen urged senators to look at the ASUPS bylaws rather than attempting to make revisions out of context. Anton agreed this was a valuable suggestion, and Haltom asked if the senate might postpone this discussion until after senators had had a look at the ASUPS bylaws. Rowe agreed to circulate the ASUPS bylaws to other senators prior to the next meeting. Haltom also urged senators not to proceed on this issue without the presence of Dean Kim and others agreed.

Senators then proceeded to other elements of the Section 2 revisions. Beck raised a concern about the paragraph that discusses the establishment of “standards and methods of instruction” and the conducting of the “educational work” of the university, asking senators what this verbiage actually means. Discussion ensued. Sousa said that he had read the original to mean that the standards and methods of teaching were under the control of the faculty, and wondered about the apparent control by the Board of Trustees in the revision. Bartanen noted that the standards of instruction would have to do with criteria of evaluation of teaching, so it would be Board controlled. Others asked about the issue of teaching methods, and their clear control by faculty.

Singleton returned discussion to the issue of the oversight of student media, asking if the Student Life Committee, a Senate committee, performs this function. He wondered if the Senate could clarify this issue. Bartanen noted that there are parts of student media that are directly under the purview of faculty. Rowe asked about Crosscurrents, and Bartanen explained that even there a faculty member oversees who receives credits and determines grades. Rowe suggested that she would prefer to see this kind of faculty involvement more often, but noted that currently she sees less from faculty and more from Student Affairs. She explained that students have expressed desire for more involvement of faculty. She also pointed out that the guidelines for student media are set by the Media Board. Hanson raised again the idea of tabling the issue, but then asked a question about the use of the word “particularly,” which he found troubling because it seemed to establish authority over all of student life. He thought the word “particularly” should be removed. Joshi underscored Rowe’s point, suggesting that there should be faculty involvement, and that she would not favor faculty abdication of this role.

Beck asked about the source of the concept of the “development of the university” that appears in the first paragraph. Ryken reminded senators that this term was moved from another section of the bylaws because of a recommendation from the Senate’s previous conversation. Ryken also suggested that the discussion of faculty’s responsibility for the standards and methods of instruction be moved higher in the section, to the second paragraph position, because of its importance. She also suggested that the reference to trustee control over teaching methods be stricken.

Sousa returned senators to discussion of the relationship between the faculty and student media, asking if the bylaws should be clearer about which student media the document is concerned with. At present, the phrase “students’ media” seems very broad, and might cover just about any utterance. Lively discussion ensued. Rowe explained that her initial concern with this relationship as expressed in the bylaws revision was not about faculty

having too much power, but rather about her interest in consistency in university documents. Haltom agreed, and added that documents should be consistent with each other, but also with actual practice. He also reminded senators that it requires a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority to make any changes in the bylaws, so if any issues appear particularly contentious, the senate should be sure to talk to the full faculty about them.

- **Article III: Organization of the Faculty**

Anton led senators through the changes made in the revised draft before them. Ryken pointed out the need for the addition of an “all” in the sentence on the appointing of the Faculty Standing Committees to create a parallel with other responsibilities. Hanson then raised the question of the quorum for faculty meetings, arguing that the current rule—“a quorum necessary for the transaction of all business shall be constituted by the members of the Faculty present”—is a dangerous situation in which a few faculty could decide major issues for the faculty as a whole. He hoped the Senate would think seriously about this. Bristow spoke in favor of Hanson’s suggestion, expressing her own concern at the low attendance at meetings, even when issues of importance are under consideration. Ostrom asked about what new quorum might be established, and a great deal of discussion followed. Haltom noted that attendance did not reach $\frac{1}{4}$ of the faculty at the last faculty meeting. He also agreed that some change would be in order, though he hoped faculty would postpone on important issues when low numbers were in attendance. He also noted, though, that he could imagine someone trying to prevent a faculty meeting through absence of a quorum in order to avoid losing on an issue.

Singleton raised a related issue—provisions for voting by mail—and wondered if it would make sense to use electronic voting on faculty meeting issues. Joshi asked if a quorum would be required only for voting, and suggested she would prefer a quorum be required for all discussions as well. Ryken pointed out that there are no protected hours for a faculty meeting, which means there are always people who cannot come to faculty meetings due to their schedules. Sousa noted that this made clear again the importance of providing opportunity for those who want to participate in final decisions, even if they cannot attend meetings, and wondered if more mail votes, instead of a quorum, might be the right direction to move. Much discussion followed on the issue of voting, how voting by mail might work, and the reality that a vote by mail would have to be approved by a meeting of the faculty.

Hanson returned senators to the issue of raising the quorum. How many would be required in order to approve a mail ballot? If you are ensuring that more people can participate in a vote with vote by mail, would you then set a lower standard for the approval of the use of a mail ballot? Hanson suggested that you might set the requirement for votes necessary to move to a mail ballot at $\frac{1}{3}$. Foster suggested she would put it even lower. Bartanen thought the discussion had moved to leaving the quorum as is, and shifting to mail balloting to encourage participation. Ostrom thought this seemed realistic. Bristow worried that the conversation itself at faculty meetings was important, noting how often she had been persuaded to view an issue differently due to discussion at a faculty meeting. She argued in favor of raising the quorum requirement. Foster reminded senators, though, about those who cannot attend, and also worried about

how to get attendance for discussion at faculty meetings, arguing that both seem important. Achieving both goals, she suggested, might require a different solution. Hanson reiterated that the issue of the quorum is an important one, and suggested he would put it at 25%. Sousa agreed with Hanson about the need for a quorum requirement, and also suggested his sense that the question of opening up voting is an important one. Could we enhance participation across the faculty, even for those who can't /won't attend? He suggested we might collect some data from other institutions on whether they have quora and whether they do electronic voting. Joshi suggested the faculty might want to go to electronic voting for all votes. Ostrom suggested this would eliminate any attendance at faculty meetings. Bartanen suggested that mischief could still happen with electronic ballots. Foster asked if we should actually design policy around preventing "mischief." Haltom suggested that we should. He also wanted senators to understand the process for quorum calls under Sturgis's rules of order. Adjournment would follow immediately upon a call that discovered the absence of a quorum. Beck asked for institutional memory on this issue. Was there a reason the bylaws used this standard for the quorum? Was it a response to what was going on when these bylaws were written? What was the problem they were facing that this was meant to solve?

Foster asked if we needed to think about why faculty do not attend meetings in order to think about how to solve the problem. Ostrom wondered if it was because of the lack of a protected hour. Joshi maintained there were other issues involved as well, for instance childcare. Haltom thought senators should collect information on why faculty are not attending faculty meetings, and noted that for some there is a longstanding reason, that this is simply chronic behavior. This made Foster wonder if a change in hour would help, perhaps to the noon hour. Haltom asked if the Senate could engage in an experiment prospectively, pushed far enough into the future (Fall 2007) so that people would have a chance to rearrange their schedules to make it to meetings. Joshi agreed that talking about the timing of faculty meetings was useful, but she worried that senators were assuming this was the only cause for poor attendance. She raised again the possibility that senators might talk to other faculty about why they do not attend. Anton agreed that senators should poll other faculty, also asking about the noon hour possibility. He suggested, too, that he could get data on teaching times to gain a sense of when people are in the classroom. Rowe raised what she had heard as a persistent belief among students, that there are many classes during lunchtime, and many during practice times for sports teams, and that this is intentional to control traffic in the diner. Faculty quickly suggested that this was not the case. Bartanen reminded senators that the Academic Standards Committee has looked at this issue twice in last few years.

- **Article IV: The Faculty Senate**

Anton again led the initial discussion of this section of the bylaws, explaining the revisions he had made. He explained that he did not write the material on the responsibilities of the vice chair, because this would have been presumptuous. Ryken suggested that she was still struggling with Section 5 "responsibilities" and was concerned about the language and how it might be read. She wondered what the Senate is trying to accomplish with this change. Foster noted that she has also been worried about the "powers and duties" phrase. Ryken suggested crossing out the first phrase and

beginning with "...shall serve as a forum..." Anton explained that he sees the Senate serving as an executive committee of the faculty, acting when the whole faculty is not available to meet immediately, in lieu of the full faculty. Bristow agreed, remembering earlier events when the Senate acted on behalf of the faculty during a crisis. Joshi found Anton's explanation useful and suggested language that reflected this role, for instance, "when faculty meetings cannot be convened, the Senate can act on behalf of the faculty." Haltom wondered if this wasn't what the bylaws already say. Ryken expressed her own negative reaction to the existing language and noted that others new to the university might share this reaction. She wondered aloud if this was somehow about a power grab that she was not aware of. Suggestions from Sousa, Joshi and Bristow resulted in proposed language stating: "When the faculty is not meeting, the Senate can act on behalf of the faculty and shall serve as a forum for..." Ostrom worried that this language would strip the Senate of its power, but Hanson disagreed. Singleton acknowledged that he has always been a little unclear about the role of the Senate relative to the faculty, and suggested that this might be an opportunity to clarify this relationship. He suggested, too, that the Senate is more than just a group who meets if the faculty isn't in session. The Senate considers governance issues and passes on various substantive issues that come from its committees. He worried that the new proposed language does not convey these responsibilities.

Bartanen suggested that she had also been thinking about this, and wondered why there isn't anything about how an issue gains standing in the Senate. In other words, beyond issues rising up from the standing committees, how do other things become agenda items? Ostrom suggested that in practice this has been left up to the discretion of the chair. Anton pointed out that there was not a call for agenda items as is the case with faculty meetings.

Foster returned to the issues raised by Singleton regarding language describing the Senate's role. She suggested a return to the earlier language: "the senate shall represent the faculty and serve as a forum..." Singleton agreed that this language gets closer to his understanding of the Senate's role, but noted that the Senate is also a legislative body. He argued that the Senate should clearly spell out its duties in the bylaws. This would help faculty understand what the Senate does, and how governance works. Joshi wondered if the Senate's responsibilities could be spelled out in a separate item. Foster proposed that since this is an issue of significance and concern, that a sub-committee might be formed. Following the rule that no good idea goes unpunished, Foster was assigned to the sub-committee, along with Singleton and Joshi.

Beck noted a problem in material that had been eliminated but not replaced and urged it be returned to the document.

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 5:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy K. Bristow