

Minutes of the Faculty Senate Monday, February 13

Senators present: Anton (chair), Bartanen, Bristow, Buescher, Haltom, Hanson, Holland, Israel, Lear, Maxwell, Orlin, Singleton, Sousa, Bartanen

Guests: Lipika Choudhury, Rachel Decker, Priti Joshi, Jeff Matthews, Susan Stewart, Jonathan Stockdale, Carolyn Weisz

Announcements

Anton announced that the Faculty Senate Award for Distinguished Faculty Service has found a home. It will be placed outside the Misner Room in the Collins Library.

Anton announced that he had attended a Board of Trustees meeting. He indicated that Trustees had asked that the Board be informed when the faculty proposed substantive changes to the Faculty Code.

Bartanen announced that the General Board of Higher Education of the United Methodist Church will be on campus for its decennial visit on February 27 and 28. There will be an open meeting for faculty in Trimble Forum at 4:00 on February 28, and all are invited to attend.

Bristow announced that the SAAC will hold a Faculty FanFest to honor faculty support for the university's athletic programs on Friday, February 17 at the basketball games.

Discussion of the Ad Hoc Committee on Tenure and Evaluation

The Ad Hoc Committee disbanded upon delivering its report and handling questions from the Senate on February 6. Senator Bristow, who served on that Ad Hoc Committee (AHC), answered a series of questions about the report from senators and guests. Bristow stressed that she could not speak for the entire committee on some matters.

Singleton took issue with the finding (p.4) that over the past fifteen years Code violations had occurred at every level of the review process, arguing that the conclusion is not justified by the evidence the AHC gathered. He argued that the AHC heard allegations of violations, but that too often it heard from just one side on these matters, and that others with different views of things should have been heard. Singleton asked how many of the eight in-depth interviews conducted by the AHC were with individuals denied tenure. Bristow answered that the committee had interviewed three people who had either been denied tenure or left the university before the tenure decision. She also noted that two of the other in-depth interviews were with deans, both of whom had been granted tenure at UPS. Singleton suggested that there should have been a broader range of in-depth interviews.

Bristow acknowledged that the AHC had focused on problems in the tenure and evaluation processes in order to meet its charge to find ways to improve the process in the future. She noted that AHC could not have conducted the kind of investigation that Singleton called for because confidentiality rules blocked most who had participated

directly in evaluations from speaking about the specifics of those evaluations. She did note that the AHC had spoken at length with past members of the FAC, the PSC, and the deans, always avoiding discussion of specific cases.

Singleton suggested that the report be revised to read that the AHC had heard “allegations” of violations. Senators noted that the report had already been accepted by the Senate and that the AHC had been disbanded. Singleton suggested that the Senate pursue with more focus the question of whether there had indeed been Code violations.

Bristow replied that the AHC was not charged with investigating past violations of the Code, but with making recommendations that might improve the process in the future. In any event, confidentiality rules would block such an investigation.

Singleton suggested that the structure of the report suggests that the findings lead to the recommendations, and that if the findings are questionable the recommendations may be flawed as well.

Bristow said that she stands by the AHC’s report, noting that the AHC had gathered information from many sources beyond the in-depth interviews. Singleton once again suggested a revision of the report, objecting to the phrasing that the AHC had found violations of the Code.

Haltom noted that Singleton’s objections to the report would be reflected in the minutes of the Senate meeting, and wondered whether this shouldn’t be enough. Singleton asserted that he wanted the sense of the Senate about this language.

Orlin noted that we might be able to use some of the AHC’s recommendations even though we might not agree whether there were violations or merely allegations of violations. Lear noted that despite the methodological problems confronting the AHC, they had come as close as we are likely to get to an understanding of how this process has worked. Joshi suggested that the AHC had studied a particular part of campus culture and that its methods may have been appropriate to understanding that culture; she suggested that in any event it seemed sensible to defer to the judgments of the AHC.

Singleton questioned whether such a small and biased sample could represent campus culture and asserted that he speaks for a sizable number of faculty members who are deeply concerned about the language of the report and who would be disaffected by this report.

Bristow urged the Senate to note that the allegations of Code violations are a small part of the report. Haltom suggested that the Senate could move forward to the recommendations, and in cases where it found a recommendation hinging upon the validity of a finding we could confront that issue then.

Singleton accepted this but noted that department heads and chairs who are “charged” with errors in this report would have liked to have been heard from. Bristow replied that

the AHC had no intention of singling out any department or any individual for criticism, and that the report should not be read as a critique of any department or individual.

Bartanen noted that the number of questions raised by head officers supports the recommendation that chairs be more carefully trained to handle evaluations, particularly given the frequent rotation of department chairs.

Maxwell urged the Senate to move forward to the recommendations, following Haltom and Orlin's suggestion that the Senate return to the issue of the validity of findings in cases where the recommendations seemed tightly linked to specific findings.

Orlin M/S/P that recommendations 3, 11, and 12A, all of which deal with the PSC, be put aside until the Senate hears the report of the Senate's Ad Hoc Committee on Professional Standards, which is focused on the grievance process. Hanson, the chair of that ad hoc committee, stated that the committee hopes to report by the end of spring term.

Haltom focused the Senate's attention on pp. 22-23 of the AHC report, in which the AHC addressed the question, "When and how may 'personal and professional characteristics' be used in faculty evaluation?" Haltom suggested that the Senate devise some process by which it can put before the faculty the question, "What did the faculty intend to do when it dropped personal and professional characteristics as a formal evaluation criterion?" Haltom, noting confidentiality constraints on his ability to provide detail, asserted that assessments of personal and professional characteristics continue to appear in evaluations.

Hanson said that we don't need a new process or a new statement of the sense of the faculty. The FAC should simply call departments on this. Bristow noted that there clearly are different views across campus about the role that personal and professional characteristics play in the evaluation process, citing one comment from a colleague that it was appropriate to use such characteristics in evaluation, and that the elimination of this criterion from the Code meant only that faculty are no longer *required* to assess personal and professional characteristics.

Orlin suggested that we ask the PSC for clarification.

Hanson asserted that the Code is clear about what the criteria are. If a colleague's personal and professional characteristics are somehow germane to her or his performance in one of the four areas (teaching, professional growth, advising, service), they might be addressed. If the characteristics were not germane to performance in the listed areas in which colleagues are to be evaluated, they are not legitimate.

Israel directed the Senate's attention to recommendation 3, which asks the Senate to consider what should be done in cases in which it is alleged that the Professional Standards Committee itself has violated the Faculty Code. He noted that it might be problematic to have the faculty's "final" adjudicatory body subject to appeals that it has

violated the Code. Haltom noted that on grievances the PSC recommends to the President, who is actually has the final word on these matters.

The Senate briefly discussed the Senate's relationship to the FAC, noting that while the FAC reports to the Senate there is no way for the Senate to actually oversee the committee because of confidentiality requirements in the review process. Maxwell noted that the FAC can report to the Senate on its procedures.

Lear asked for Dean Bartanen's view of some of the recommendations that would ultimately call for action from the Dean. Bartanen said that she would be happy to implement recommendations 6 and 7 (pp.11-12), which call for a gathering of second-year faculty for a discussion of the evaluation process, and new measures for training head officers to conduct evaluations.

Lear noted that recommendation 9 (p.12), on the possibility that evaluation processes should include an external participant of some kind was potentially very important and would need further study and discussion.

Discussion of charge to the Ad Hoc Committee on Professional Standards (AHC-PS)

As our time together once again neared an end, the Senate turned to a request from the Ad Hoc Committee on Professional Standards for clarification of the Senate's charge to the Committee. The new AHC-PS read its charge to focus on the grievance process, but noted that some colleagues conflate (confuse?) the grievance process and the appeals processes that take place in the evaluation system. AHC-PS wanted to learn the Senate's view of the meaning of its charge to avoid any confusion.

The AHC-PS's request for clarification had gone out to senators via e-mail a few days before the meeting, and discussion quickly turned to Haltom's reply to that e-mail, which had been distributed to all Senators electronically. Singleton questioned the tone of Haltom's reply, noting that Haltom seemed to charge the AHC-PS with presuming that there had been significant violations of procedure by the PSC in recent years. Members of the AHC-PS clarified the nature of their request for information from the Senate. Haltom replied that he was entitled to his premises and that the language of his email did not carry any charge to the AHC-PS.

A move to adjourn was seconded and passed.

Respectfully submitted,

David Sousa