

Faculty Senate Minutes
Oct. 10, 2005

Members Present: Anton (chair), Bartanen, Bristow, Buescher, Haltom, Holland, Hanson, Howes, Israel, Kim, Lear, McGruder, Orlin, Singleton, Sousa, Wimberger

Guests: Jessica Bruce, Alyce DeMarais, Rosa Beth Gibson, Karim Ochosi

Senate Chair Anton announced that the next Senate meeting will be Oct. 31

The Minutes of the Sept. 26 Senate meeting were approved.

Academic Calendars

Haltom made a motion to approve the academic calendar for 2006-2007 as proposed by the Curriculum Committee. The motion was seconded. The motion passed on a voice vote.

Wimberger made a motion to approve the tentative academic calendars for 2007-2008, 2008-2009, and 2009-2010. The motion was seconded. The motion passed on a voice vote.

Proposal to Alter the Academic Calendar Template

Bristow explained aspects of a proposal (formulated by a group of Senators consisting of Bristow, Holland and Lear) designed to alter the academic calendar template. (See Attachment) The proposal, she pointed out, reflects principles/priorities established by the Curriculum Committee.

Holland explained that the reduced number of teaching days (to 67 from 69 in the Fall Semester and to 67 from 72 in the Spring Semester) should be considered in light of the fact that many of our “aspire to” institution have far fewer teaching days than does UPS.

Lear pointed out that the proposal preserves the reading period and the number of exam days.

Wednesday (as a Travel Day)

Bartanen made a motion to add Wednesday (as a travel day) to Thanksgiving break (but to make no further changes to the existing calendar). The motion was seconded.

Bartanen suggested that adding a travel day to the calendar was the only change that had strong support among faculty and students. Arguing against the Subcommittee proposal, Bartanen contended that no compelling argument had been put forth to explain the need to equalize the number of days in each semester. In fact, she suggested, a longer spring term has distinct advantages in that it accommodates snow days and sick days. Further, she argued that eliminating one week at the end of Spring Semester would negatively

impact our athletic programs. Finally, she suggested that evidence was needed to demonstrate that the proposed changes would in fact promote student learning.

Buescher asked if Bartanen's proposal would create a mismatch between MWF and TTh classes. Bartanen responded that based on an assessment of class minutes rather than class days no significant mismatch would result.

Haltom supported Bartanen's motion as a logical first step toward calendar change. He suggested that a number of additional options could then be put to the full faculty.

Holland supported the Wednesday off idea but was concerned about how to keep students here on Tuesday.

Israel suggested that vacation creep (students taking extra days off prior to a scheduled vacation) could be dealt with later but that the Wednesday travel day is important to students.

McGruder called the question and Bartanen's motion passed unanimously.

The Senators' Proposal

Holland made a motion to adopt the Senators' proposal. Her motion was seconded.

Bartanen asked for the Senators' rationale for the proposed changes.

Bristow responded that students need a longer break in during Fall Semester to catch up and recharge. Further, eliminating a week from Spring Semester was necessary to equalize days per semester.

Holland pointed out that equalizing days per semester was a principle guiding the Curriculum Committee's deliberations and reiterated that the data suggest high caliber institutions have fewer teaching days.

Thanksgiving Week Amendment

Buescher made a motion to amend Holland's motion so as to eliminate Fall Break and extend Thanksgiving Break to a full week. His motion was seconded.

McGruder spoke against the amendment suggesting that students and faculty need a break sooner during Fall Semester and that it would be difficult to get energy levels back up after a week-long break with only one week left in the semester.

Buescher responded that we still need to get the energy levels back up after the existing Thanksgiving Break and the several of our peer institutions have a week-long Thanksgiving Break.

Kim supported the amendment pointing out that it would eliminate the vacation creep issue surrounding Thanksgiving.

Orlin spoke in favor of the amendment noting that a full week off creates time for catch up and rest up – so students would have more energy for the end of the semester.

Wimberger agreed with McGruder that students need a break to recharge in October. He argued that it is up to individual faculty members to deal with the vacation creep issue and that we have been and can be successful in curbing vacation creep.

Lear opposed the amendment suggesting we need the Fall Break and that a longer Thanksgiving Break would be too disruptive.

Israel noted that some institutions have a week long Fall Break and wondered if that would be possible at UPS.

Howes suggested most students don't consider Fall Break essential.

Holland wanted to hear more from students regarding the amendment.

Bartanen noted that a week long Fall Break is possible but that we should not be holding a popularity contest in the design of our calendar but should instead be making such decisions based on a clear rationale that any proposed change is in the best interest of student learning. Bartanen also contended that the vacation creep argument is without merit.

Buescher countered that vacation creep is a real problem for students who choose to leave early and even for students who remain in suddenly smaller classes. He also contended that Fall Break is inconsequential.

Bristow pointed out that Fall Break under the Senators' proposal would be four days – a reasonable amount of time for students to regroup. Bristow also spoke against a week long Thanksgiving Break because is simply too long. She also felt that dealing with the vacation creep issue effectively will require a change in the campus ethos – a possible and desirable change.

McGruder noted that she still preferred the original Curriculum Committee proposal, but she was persuaded by Bartanen's argument that the Spring Semester should be longer.

Lear noted that the Curriculum Committee was very concerned about symmetry – nonetheless, he supported making Fall Semester changes as in the Senators' proposal but leaving the Spring Semester as is.

Holland opined that equalizing semester days is not critical but urged respect for the effort the Curriculum Committee made in this regard.

Orlin called the question regarding Buescher's amendment. The amendment failed receiving 3 yes votes, 8 no votes. There were 3 abstentions.

Discussion Returns to the Senators' Proposal

Sousa asked for the rationale for reducing the number of teaching days by 7.

Orlin suggested that asymmetry creates problems and inequalities and necessitates two different syllabi for each course. The costs are too great.

Bristow responded that the reducing teaching days is necessary to preserve reading days and the five day exam period.

Sousa reiterated his question.

Holland noted that the Curriculum Committee proposal would end Spring Semester one week earlier.

Orlin added that the Curriculum Committee proposal would reduce Spring Semester to 69 days not 67 days as in the Senators' proposal.

Fall Semester Amendment

Wimberger noted that the data indicate that Fall Semester is on average 1.25 days shorter than the Spring Semester at comparison institutions. Wimberger proposed an amendment to approve the Fall Semester changes called for in the Senators' proposal (thereby adding Tuesday to the Fall Break). The motion was seconded. The motion carried on a voice vote.

Discussion Returns to the Senators' Proposal

DeMarais indicated that she could not clearly recall the Curriculum Committee's rationale for shortening the Spring Semester (in order to equalize teaching days).

Bristow asked Hanson if symmetry was critical in the Sciences.

Hanson responded that his colleagues have adapted successfully to unequal semesters.

Wimberger noted that Biology also adapts successfully.

DeMarais (putting on her other hat) noted that Biology 111 adapts lab times successfully.

Kim noted that a shortened Spring Semester would accommodate a Senior Week.

Israel asked if the Senate determines when graduation occurs.

Bartanen suggested that we defer further discussion of the Spring Semester template until such time as we have a clear Senior Week proposal.

Haltom made a motion to postpone discussion of the Spring Semester template. The motion was seconded. The motion passed on a voice vote with 4 abstentions.

Medical Leave Policy

Anton asked Rosa Beth Gibson, Associate Vice President for Human Resources, for information regarding our Medical Leave Policies.

Gibson explained that our policy is based on federal and state law, on contracts with our vendors, and on university governance. The issue at hand she suggested was the question of responsibility for medical plan premiums in the event of a disability. If a faculty member becomes disabled the faculty disability benefit obtains with salary and benefits continuation based on the length of tenure at UPS. (One months of continuation for each year of service.) Human Resources encourages the disabled faculty member to apply for disability insurance at which point a six months waiting period ensues. If a faculty member has only 4 years of service there will be a two month period during which the faculty member has no salary or benefits. The faculty member can continue medical benefits during this period through COBRA. After the six months waiting period when disability insurance kicks in the faculty member no longer receives salary or benefits from UPS – but can obtain medical benefits through COBRA.

Gibson suggested the Faculty Salary Committee could look at this situation and propose changes in benefits. Or, the Senate could make recommendations to Kris Bartanen or to Rosa Beth Gibson.

Anton asked what percent of income is replaced by disability insurance.

Gibson responded – 60% including social security benefits. She was not certain if this income is taxable. [After the meeting, Gibson stated, “I’ve confirmed that Social Security disability benefits are not taxable. Disability income benefits from the university’s long-term disability insurance plan are taxable because the premiums for the insurance plan were paid for by the university. Only if the full premium for the insurance were paid by faculty and staff members on an after-tax basis, would disability income benefits be nontaxable.”]

The Senate adjourned at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ross Singleton, Scribe pro tempore

