

Faculty Senate Minutes February 22, 1999

Senators Present: B. Beardsley, N. Bristow, T. Cooney, B. Haltom, D. Hulbert, K. Hummel-Berry, J. Kay, H. Ostrom, B. Steiner, G. Tomlin, P. Valentine, A. Wood

Visitor Present: Kris Bartanen

The meeting was called to order at 4: 00 p.m.

Minutes. Minutes of January 25, 1999 and February 8, 1999 were approved as written.

Announcements. Haltom announced that the next meeting of the faculty senate, on March 8, 1999, would be held in the Misner Room. (Library 134)

One-minute pronouncements: Haltom introduced the new ASUPS representative, Pablo Valentine.

Timeslot charge to the Academic Standards Committee

Senators moved to consideration of the charge, drafted by Cooney for the Academic Standards Committee and circulated to senators at the January 25, 1999 meeting, regarding course scheduling. It was suggested that, in view of the timing of the charge, there should be an interim report on this charge as part of the end of semester committee report to the Senate, with the final report of the committee on this charge to be due by fall semester 1999.

Discussion of this charge included a question as to whether consideration of a non-scheduled hour would be done in the context of the schedule as it would look after construction of the new arts and sciences building as opposed to under current conditions, which was answered in the affirmative. Some senators expressed doubts about the feasibility of identifying an hour which could be free for meetings and such, because of the density of scheduling of lengthy lab classes and/or music rehearsals. The concern was also raised that if all committee meetings were held during the same time slot, it would be an insurmountable logistical challenge to academic administrators who must attend the meetings of several committees each. Kay suggested that while a "free hour" may indeed not be identified, it would be very beneficial for the co-curricular program if such an hour could be identified. Cooney replied to all that the purpose of the charge is to begin discussion about these issues of scheduling, a topic that has not been systematically examined in a long time. While the results of such discussion may well be to conclude that status quo is the best way to schedule classes, the committee may also ultimately be able to suggest other solutions for current scheduling challenges.

M/S/P (unanimous): The Faculty Senate therefore charges the Academic Standards Committee with studying the question of course scheduling in depth and with bringing back to the Senate a proposal or proposals for a course scheduling framework that might reduce conflicts, allow a common meeting time, and permit an effective use of classroom resources. The Senate requests an interim report as part of the committee's year-end report in May and a final report by fall semester 1999.

The full text of the charge, as drafted by Cooney and with minor amendments incorporated, is included at the end of these minutes.

Core curriculum: Senators discussed the discussion of the core curriculum which will take place over the next several faculty meetings and attempted to anticipate the pace of such discussion, and how to plan the agenda for each upcoming meeting in a manner that would promote open discussion and the best use of time, as well as matters of procedure at the meetings. It was pointed out that efforts to clarify the role of the senate in this procedure (which is one of "floating

ideas to structure debate”) should be ongoing, since there appears to be some confusion about that.

The meeting adjourned at 4:45.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathie Hummel-Berry

A Charge from the Faculty Senate to the Academic Standards Committee

Current patterns of course scheduling at the University of Puget Sound reflect an overlay of history, habit, adaptation, and convenience. Some twenty years ago, discussions of scheduling occurred around the move from a four-day-a-week norm (with no classes held on Wednesday) to a dominant pattern of MWF or TuTh classes. Since that time no serious or sustained discussion of scheduling has occurred among the faculty as a whole. Some classes have persisted on a four-day schedule, some meet five days; and requests have grown more frequent for scheduling classes on two days, or even one, claiming longer blocks of time on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

Several considerations coming together at this time suggest that a thorough review of scheduling would be appropriate:

(1) For a number of years, different people have asked the question whether it might not be possible to reserve an hour or two during the week that might be kept free for committee meetings, department meetings, student meetings, and the like, to minimize the seemingly inevitable conflicts that now arise in attempting to get even relatively limited numbers of people together at a common time.

(2) As the number of classes meeting in late afternoon has risen (in part but not entirely in response to classroom availability issues), student activities and organizations have found increasing conflicts with rehearsals, athletic practices, and the like. If we are to have a vibrant student life, we need to pay heed to this concern.

(3) Individual faculty requests to schedule classes for blocks of time or on patterns of days that do not match the basic schedule outlines occur without much awareness of potential effects on the schedule as a whole and the possible difficulties for students. Such considerations can become especially important, for example, if a department schedules a course that majors must take at a time or in a fashion that creates multiple conflicts. A larger discussion of scheduling may help us bring a wider range of concerns to light as we seek the best balance of flexibility and predictability.

(4) With the remodeling of existing buildings and the construction of a new academic building, our classroom inventory is about to change. Although the number of classrooms may not rise appreciably, the type and quality of classrooms will provide the basis for a more satisfactory match between the courses we are teaching and the rooms available. This is a propitious moment to ask how scheduling patterns might help us make the most out of our improved resources.

(5) We need to ask whether in fact a different scheduling pattern could address current needs by making a greater number of desirable class blocks available or by helping reduce the number of conflicts between classes for students.

The Faculty Senate therefore charges the Academic Standards Committee with studying the question of course scheduling in depth and with bringing back to the Senate a proposal or proposals for a course scheduling framework that might reduce conflicts, allow a common meeting time, and permit an effective use of classroom resources. The Senate requests an interim report as part of the committee's year-end report in May and a final report by fall semester 1999.

We suggest an exploration of the following possibilities, not with the assumption that these point toward encompassing solutions but simply as ideas that should be part of the process. The Academic Standards Committee will no doubt wish to add questions and options of its own.

(1) Because longer classes, usually upper-division seminars, often conflict with more than one class period if scheduled on MWF, might we consider allowing only 50 minute classes during certain parts of the day while defining another part as available for longer seminars?

(2) Tuesday-Thursday classes are intended to last approximately 75 minutes when two TuTh class meetings are seen as parallel to three MWF class meetings, yet the schedule allows two-hour blocks on TuTh. Might we consider time blocks of 90 minutes (75 minutes plus time between classes) rather than 120 on TuTh and thereby gain additional time blocks in the schedule?

(3) Might we consider defining at what hours four-day-a-week classes can be scheduled to minimize the elimination of whole sets of other classes from a student's range of selection because of the fourth day? Might current four day a week classes be scheduled with three MWF days and a fourth hour at a different time (compare lab or discussion section scheduling) rather than in a fixed TuTh time slot? Currently, for example, a four day a week class scheduled at 10:00 a.m. eliminates a large number of other possible courses for any student enrolling. Can that situation be improved?

(4) Can we define more clearly when and under what circumstances faculty may propose courses meeting in time blocks that run counter to the dominant patterns?

(5) Should we consider evening scheduling (assuming faculty and student interest) for courses seeking extended time for a single long seminar meeting?