

Faculty Senate Minutes
February 3, 1997

Senators Present: Beardsley, Haltom, Hummel-Berry, Kay, Kirchner, Lind, Matthews, Maxwell, Robertson, Sloane, Smith, Steiner

Announcements: March 17 Senate Meeting is rescheduled for March 24 to avoid meeting during spring break.

Discussion Of Faculty Bylaw Changes Related To Committee Membership: Changes under consideration dealt with committee size, membership constituency and specific wording of Bylaws. Kirchner reported that it is becoming harder to find faculty volunteers to serve on standing committees which is further support for the downsizing or elimination of some standing committees.

A conflict expressed by several senators with elimination or downsizing of committees is that the faculty does not want to give up faculty oversight and input into policy decisions, while at the same time does not want to spend so much time in meetings.

Kay pointed out that some committees, such as the Academic Standards and Curriculum request a committee size larger than the minimum proposed in the Bylaws. In the case of Academic Standards the large number of petitions necessitates a larger committee to reduce the time demands of the members.

The current and proposed Bylaws wording for several of the committee memberships is "no fewer than." In several cases a recommend size larger than the minimum was included in the proposed change. Senators agreed with Beardsley's recommendation that this be eliminated since the minimum is specified and there is no limit on the maximum size.

It was recommended that the specification of a specific student representative to the Student Life Committee should be an ASUPS decision, not a faculty decision and this should be eliminated from the proposed Bylaw.

Haltom questioned the use of "ex-officio" in the Bylaws, whether it is properly used to describe the role of administrative representatives to the committees. Kirchner indicated that she would gather information on the use and appropriateness of the term "ex-officio" for the next meeting. The use of titles, in cases where an administrative position includes multiple responsibilities, was also questioned. What if, at a future date, the responsibilities were split? For example, the Academic Vice President and Dean of the University are currently administrative titles for the same individual. If both were included in the Bylaws and the administrative position was at some later date partitioned into two positions, this would create a Bylaws problem. There are also a number of places in the Bylaws wording in which the administrative titles are used interchangeably. The need for consistency and clarity was stressed. The senate indicated a preference for the use of the term Dean of the University rather than Academic Vice President.

Kay, recommended the inclusion of the Director of Access to College Initiative as a member of the Diversity Committee. Lind pointed out that Access to College Initiative may not always exist or the title or position may change or disappear. We must be careful about putting titles in Bylaws because they may change. Matthews suggested that the Director of Access to College Initiative could serve as a resource person to the Diversity Committee similar to the manner in which Carrie Washburn serves the Curriculum Committee. Kirchner suggested that perhaps the Diversity Committee Bylaw description be returned to the Diversity Committee to clarify titles and functions and specifically to address the concerns raised by the Senate.

Sloane recommended that consideration be given to eliminating the Library/Media Committee. Kirchner reported that she has raised this question with Mary Rose Lamb, current Library/Media chair.

Mary Rose has sent a survey to the committee membership questioning the need for the committee. Kirchner pointed out that when a committee is eliminated, some of the policy role of faculty is lost. Lind felt that the committee had been very productive, helping determine how allocations were made. Matthews feels that it was a mistake to establish a joint committee of Library/Media and that there is a need for faculty oversight for both Media and Academic Computing. Kirchner suggested that the input from Lamb's survey be considered before making any recommendations.

Haltom suggested that the expectation that a committee must meet every two weeks needs to be examined. If there is nothing to do, the committee should not meet.

Beardsley suggested that there are other models to keep in contact with various functions of the University, for example, appointing a Senate member to serve as oversight to various functions. The sense of the Senate was that the faculty does not want to give up faculty oversight, but there is no need for as much time spent in meetings. Kay pointed out that having the committees does give administration an established avenue to consult about policy.

Kay questioned whether it is necessary that the Dean of the University be a member of all standing committees.

Student Evaluation Of Teaching: Continuation of discussion from January 27 meeting. Kirchner reported that the Professional Standards Committee is currently involved in conflict of interest issues. Chair Breitenbach indicated that if a charge is forwarded to the committee, a sub committee would probably be appointed to address the Senate charge.

Maxwell is concerned that student evaluations are measuring factors such as gregariousness, humor, etc., which may have little to do with teacher effectiveness. If the University considers effective teaching to be more than this, then it must seriously consider how else faculty evaluation might be done. He recommends that an ad-hoc committee be appointed to study (allow people to volunteer) the issue. Kay suggested that a reexamination of measuring teacher effectiveness could tie into the ten-year institution review, in which one of the key issues is how to assess student performance. Kirchner pointed out that the tasks are parallel and both could become very large, and should mesh as much as possible. Robertson & Sloane expressed concern about how the evaluations are read and interpreted. Sloane suggested an interesting exercise would be to read several sets of student evaluation of instruction, without faculty names. She suggested that the readers would come up with very different evaluations.

Several senators commented that student evaluations are viewed by junior faculty as a very unreliable tool and that colleague morale is very low. There is a sense that this is an amorphous measurement being used to either make or break faculty. There is a perception that too many use only the numbers to evaluate a faculty member's effectiveness. Students may not provide open comments because of the numbers option on the form. Perhaps it is time to eliminate the numbers.

Haltom indicated that the quantitative data does allow the reader to get some useful information on the effectiveness of the person evaluated. Kirchner stressed the need for some quantitative measure if the University is to conduct any validity studies of the instrument. Haltom pointed out that the University does make an effort to include a variety of sources of evaluations, such as peer visitations, etc.

A number of Senators pointed out the importance of conveying to students the message that their evaluations are important and valued.

**ACTION
MOTION M/S/P**

To appoint an ad-hoc committee to study the issue of student evaluations and their use in the evaluation process and make recommendation to the Faculty Senate by November 1, 1997.

The ad-hoc committee needs to be made aware of the history of 1) this issue, 2) the evaluation form and 3) the evaluation process. Its membership should include individuals with expertise in evaluation.

The Senate adjourned at 5:15.

The next meeting of the Faculty Senate is scheduled for Monday, February 17 at 4:00 PM in the McCormick Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert L. Steiner