

Minutes of  
THE FACULTY SENATE  
OF  
ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

The Faculty Senate met Wednesday, March 10, 2004, at 4:00 p.m. in Room 325 of the Ross Pendergraft Library and Technology Center. The following members were present:

Ms. Peggy Lee	Mr. Ken Futterer
Dr. Sid Womack	Mr. Ron Robison
Dr. Charles Busch	Dr. Jeff Robertson
Dr. Scott Kirkconnell	Ms. Darla Sparacino
Dr. Carl Greco	Dr. Trey Philpotts
Ms. Marti Wilkerson	Dr. Kathy Pearson

Dr. Annette Holeyfield, Dr. Kevin Mason, and Dr. Joe Moore were absent. Dr. Jeff Mitchell, Dr. David Underwood, Dr. Chris Kellner, and Dr. Eldon Clary were visitors.

CALL TO ORDER  
APPROVAL OF  
MINUTES

President Sparacino called the meeting to order and asked for action on the minutes of the February 11, 2004, meeting. Motion by Mr. Futterer, seconded by Ms. Lee, to dispense with the reading of the minutes. Motion carried. President Sparacino asked for any amendments or corrections. Ms. Wilkerson asked that the sentence on page 2, Announcements/Information Items section, be corrected to read "President Sparacino reported that a University Elected Standing Committees website has been created and that she had requested committee chairs to post minutes to this site." Ms. Wilkerson noted that the Quick List on the university's home page listed this site as titled above. Motion by Dr. Greco, seconded by Dr. Pearson, to approve the minutes as amended. Motion carried.

President Sparacino noted that Dr. Hamm had not be able to attend today's meeting to give his report.

OLD BUSINESS:  
GRADE  
INFLATION

President Sparacino asked for discussion on the issue of grade inflation. Dr. Womack stated that, after further review of the data previously distributed, he did not see any reason for a study to be performed. Dr. Greco distributed a sheet with several graphs depicting much of the information previously seen in spreadsheet form by the Senate. Dr. Greco stated that his regression analysis of the data indicates that there is grade inflation, that it is statistically significant, and that it is the result of a trend over the last ten years. When questioned whether better qualified students would not account for the upward trend in GPA and numbers of students making the Dean's List, Dr. Greco stated that the statistics given are for freshmen and that these statistics would not account entirely for the trend. Dr. Womack then questioned what the Senate would do if it were determined that grade inflation exists, asking if the faculty would be required to limit the number of As given. Dr. Greco replied that the data do not give answers to those types of questions but does indicate that there is grade inflation and that it is statistically significant.

Dr. Kirkconnell stated that he had sent out an e-mail earlier to the Senators giving a website address (i.e., <http://www.gradeinflation.com>) where this issue is discussed. He distributed copies of information downloaded from this site. Dr. Kirkconnell noted that this information indicates that grade inflation is a nationwide problem and that he would like to see an authoritative analysis of how significant grade inflation is at Arkansas Tech. Discussion of the information noted that Arkansas Tech may fall

below the regression line provided on that website which would indicate a low level of grade inflation compared to other institutions shown. Mr. Futterer noted that the average in GPA had risen from 2.72 in fall, 1993, to 2.81, in fall, 2003, which is one-tenth of one point, and emphasized his difficulty in seeing this as worrisome grade inflation. Dr. Clary noted that he would be hesitant at this point to use the word “inflation” to describe this scenario as this would imply that everything else contributing to the situation is being held constant and that the change in grades is not related to a change in student body. Dr. Underwood also emphasized that the less academically prepared students drop out as they progress and that, as a result, the average GPA and ACT composite score for each successive student level (i.e., freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) is, on average, higher.

Discussion concerning polling the faculty on this issue progressed through three main points: questioning whether faculty should be polled to see if the belief that grade inflation exists is as widespread as has been noted, how to perform such a survey and what questions to ask, and whether such a survey is even needed if the Senate believes that the question of grade inflation should be answered.

Dr. Underwood emphasized that an analysis of the data can determine whether the upward trends can be accounted for statistically by controlling for the observed increases in high school GPA and ACT scores; however, he stressed that a statistical analysis may not settle the issue of grade inflation from a practical sense because the implications associated with the term “grade inflation” go beyond a simple analysis of GPA averages.

Mr. Robison stated that the entire issue of grade inflation centers on academic quality and noted that successfully correlating grades with academic quality is something which he reported he has never seen done nor known how to do. Dr. Kirkconnell reiterated that this issue should be investigated for both on campus purposes and to show the community and accrediting bodies that the university has looked into the issue.

Ms. Wilkerson suggested that a sub-committee be formed to look into the issue in depth and report back to the Senate. Motion by Mr. Futterer, seconded by Ms. Wilkerson, to form the sub-committee. Motion carried. President Sparacino asked Dr. Greco and Dr. Kirkconnell to serve on this committee and charged them with requesting such assistance as they need to complete the task whether it be this spring, during the summer, or by next fall.

ELECTED  
STANDING  
COMMITTEES

President Sparacino asked Ms. Wilkerson to speak for the sub-committee reviewing the elected standing committees. Ms. Wilkerson noted that the sub-committee had met again on March 3 and distributed a final report making the following recommendations:

*Maintain current elected standing committees with the goal of enhancing effectiveness of each committee.*

*Revise the committee structure chart on page 8 of the faculty handbook to include “student affairs” committee under VPAA.*

*Revise the February 11, 2004, subcommittee recommendation from naming the VPSS as ex officio member to recommending that the chairman of the Student Affairs committee invite the VPSS to meetings, provide [the VPSS with] copies of minutes, and provide VPSS*

*opportunities to address student service concerns to the committee.*

*The Library, Instructional Materials, and Equipment committee membership includes the Director of Library, a position which is quasi-faculty. The committee elects a chairperson and secretary from its membership.*

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*Faculty Senate should facilitate all elected standing committees to adhere to changes in faculty handbook (i.e., meeting once per semester, election of chair and secretary, and submission of minutes to Faculty Senate chairperson) upon publication of revisions in the handbook.*

Ms. Wilkerson reported that Dr. Biller had been informed of the sub-committee's change in recommendation relating to the VPSS serving as an ex officio member of the Student Affairs Committee and that he was agreeable to this change. She stated that he also felt that this committee should fall under the VPAA on the committee structure chart due to the faculty representation on the committee. Ms. Wilkerson also reported that Dr. Willmering, chair of the Student Affairs Committee, has met with Dr. Biller and has scheduled a meeting of this committee for March 11, 2004, with a subsequent meeting planned before the end of the spring semester. Motion by Dr. Greco, seconded by Dr. Philpotts, to accept the recommendations of the sub-committee. Motion carried.

OPEN FORUM

President Sparacino asked for any comments at this time. Dr. Underwood announced that reports relating to assessment and the merger with Arkansas Valley Technical Institute had been sent to North Central and that a team visit is scheduled from April 25 to 27, 2004. He asked that the Senators review the assessment report which is posted on the university's institutional research website and stated that the team may wish to visit with Senators.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/  
INFORMATION  
ITEMS

President Sparacino reported that the Elected Standing Committees election will be held on Tuesday, April 20, in Pendergraft 323. Volunteers to help with the election will be solicited at the April meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Darla Sparacino, M.Ed., President



Scott Kirkconnell, Ph.D., Secretary