

Minutes of
THE FACULTY SENATE
OF
ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

The Faculty Senate met Wednesday, October 11, 2006, at 3 p.m. in Room 300 North of the Ross Pendergraft Library and Technology Center. The following members were present:

Dr. Cheryl Smith	Dr. Tim Smith
Dr. Carey Roberts	Mr. Rick Ihde
Dr. Jeff Robertson	Dr. Shelia Jackson
Dr. Jeff Mitchell	Dr. Trey Philpotts
Dr. Robert Fithen	Dr. Sammie Stephenson
Dr. Scott Kirkconnell	Ms. Sarah Robison
Dr. Brenda Montgomery	Dr. David Ward
Ms. Pat Buford	Dr. Andrew Cannon

Dr. Hanna Norton was absent. Dr. Jack Hamm, Dr. Robert Allen, Dr. Dan Bullock, and Dr. Carl Greco were visitors.

CALL TO ORDER
APPROVAL OF
MINUTES

President Jackson called the meeting to order and asked for action on the September 13, 2006, minutes. Motion by Dr. Roberts, seconded by Dr. Cannon, to dispense with the reading of the minutes. Motion carried. There being no amendments or corrections, motion by Dr. Montgomery, seconded by Dr. Cheryl Smith, to approve the minutes as distributed. Motion carried.

REPLACEMENT OF
FACULTY SENATE
MEMBER

President Jackson reported that Ms. Wilkerson had resigned from the Senate due to personal considerations and had been replaced by the School of Liberal and Fine Arts with Dr. David Ward. She welcomed Dr. Ward to the Senate.

OLD BUSINESS:
DISCUSSION ON
SEXUAL
HARASSMENT
POLICY

President Jackson asked Dr. Greco to address the Senate. Dr. Greco expressed his appreciation for being allowed to speak and reminded the Senate that he had been a member the previous three years. He stated that Dr. Brown had asked the Senate to assist with the formulation of a sexual harassment policy during the spring, 2006, semester. He noted that the Senate had formed a sub-committee to work on the policy, had taken the draft formulated by the sub-committee and submitted it for review by all faculty, and had finalized the policy during a May meeting and submitted it to Dr. Brown. Dr. Greco maintained that the policy approved by the Board of Trustees is "significantly changed" from the policy submitted by the Faculty Senate and complained that extensive changes had been made without faculty input. Dr. Greco emphasized that a strong sexual harassment policy is needed but observed that the "bullet list" in the policy (page 20A, *Faculty Handbook*, 2006 update) allows for broad interpretation. For example, Dr. Greco stated that the item "Repeated unwanted discussions of sexual matters" could be interpreted to mean discussion of sexual issues in a biology class. He also noted a change in the individual to whom a faculty member would report a complaint of sexual harassment. The Senate had recommended that a member of the Faculty Welfare Committee serve in the role of an "ombudsman." This has been changed to the Affirmative Action Officer. Dr. Greco questioned the training this individual might have regarding academic issues and activities. He then questioned the disposition of complaints that are never filed in the permanent record

of the faculty member and expressed his concern that faculty may never even know that such complaints have been filed if the Affirmative Action Officer decides that the complaints are not valid and does not proceed with disclosure. Dr. Greco indicated that the timeline for notification for a formal complaint was not “well spelled out.” Additionally, he expressed concern that five working days (ten working days during the summer) may not be sufficient time for a faculty member to respond to a complaint filed against them (page 20B, *Faculty Handbook*, 2006 update). Dr. Greco offered the opinion that the policy “is flawed, does not protect the faculty and does not protect the students.” He asked the Senate to discuss this issue with their constituents and take action to “fix these problems.” Dr. Greco thanked the Senate again for their time and left the meeting.

Dr. Mitchell referenced Dr. Greco’s concerns and the fact that the Senate had not been involved in the revision of the policy. President Jackson pointed out that she and Ms. Wilkerson conferred with Dr. Brown during the summer, a time when it would have been very difficult to assemble the entire Faculty Senate. Dr. Mitchell noted that the sub-committee formed last spring had consciously avoided including a “bullet list” in the policy. He asked that the Senate consider ways to “tighten and clean up the language.” Dr. Robertson stated that the leading paragraph contains language clarifying the list as it notes that the speech or conduct of the professor “must also be persistent, pervasive and not germane to the subject matter” (page 20A, *Faculty Handbook*, 2006 update). Dr. Mitchell observed that this “helps” but stated his belief that the bullet list still needed clarification. He commented that the reason the Senate had advocated an ombudsman for a faculty member to report complaints to was due to the questionable experience and knowledge of the Affirmative Action Officer. President Jackson stated that the Affirmative Action Officer is to serve as a screener before complaints go to the appropriate Vice President. She also reported that this office has been handling reports of harassment between students for the past year or so. President Jackson stated that Dr. Brown had given the option of having all complaints go directly to the appropriate Vice President. President Jackson reminded the Faculty Senate that its role is advisory.

Motion by Dr. Mitchell, seconded by Dr. Ward, to form a sub-committee to review the bullet list and consider other policy issues discussed at today’s meeting. Dr. Philpotts expressed his opinion that the Senate has already done the appropriate review and the policy is fairly clear with “no perfect path in the end.” Dr. Roberts noted that the Senate will not know for some time how the policy is actually going to work and indicated that his “biggest problem” with the policy was the inclusion of the Affirmative Action Officer. Dr. Fithen emphasized that the students need to be “comfortable” speaking with the individual with whom they are filing a complaint. Dr. Cannon asked Dr. Hamm if it was possible to have an ombudsman appointed from off campus to assist with the process. Dr. Hamm stated that this would only be done after a “good bit of review.” Dr. Kirkconnell pointed out that it may be best for the sub-committee to begin its analysis by asking for clarification as to the rationale behind the changes made in the sexual harassment recommendations that were initially formulated by the Faculty Senate before considering whether or not to agree with the alterations. Dr. Roberts called for the question on formation of the sub-committee. After a secret ballot, the motion carried. President Jackson asked for volunteers; Dr. Mitchell, Mr. Ihde, and Dr. Montgomery expressed interest in serving. President Jackson asked Dr. Mitchell to serve as chair of the sub-committee.

President Jackson reported that students had received information concerning the new policy in the *Student Handbook* and by a general email. She stated that Student Services had not specifically referenced the policy during the orientation sessions at the beginning of the fall

semester. Dr. Philpotts asked if this could be included in future orientation sessions, and President Jackson acknowledged that she would make this request of Student Services.

NEW BUSINESS:
COURSE
EVALUATION
FORM

President Jackson asked Dr. Hamm to speak to this issue. Dr. Hamm referenced the sequence of events leading to the draft course evaluation form distributed at last month's Senate meeting. He noted that he had been asked over the past few years by several individuals to conduct a review of the form, specifically in relation to concerns over whether faculty, including adjuncts, are meeting their classes regularly and for the assigned amount of time. As part of early discussions with the deans concerning the form, he stated that the academic deans had a number of course evaluation forms in their possession which needed to be used before a new form could be ordered as the forms are expensive. Those forms will be sufficiently depleted by the end of the fall semester to warrant a new order of forms for spring, 2007. Therefore, Dr. Hamm stated that it is now time to try to finalize a form to be used for future course evaluations. The draft form distributed is a "starting point" for discussion and dialogue. He emphasized that he would like for the final result to include questions relating to the concerns expressed to him about cancelled and abbreviated classes which indicate abuse by the instructor and not just normal cancellations due to illness or some other professional obligation. Dr. Hamm announced the formation of a committee to review the course evaluation form and make recommendations and asked that the Senate appoint four members to serve on that committee. He stated he would also appoint at least one dean and department head and a representative of the Assessment Committee to the committee. The target date for the committee's final recommendations is tentatively set for mid December in order to finalize the form and be able to order sufficient forms for the entire campus by mid May. He emphasized that the evaluation of web courses utilizes a separate form which may come under review at a later time. Dr. Roberts requested that at least one student also be included on the committee. Dr. Philpotts questioned whether the deans and department heads shouldn't be accountable when faculty are not meeting their teaching obligations. Dr. Hamm noted that gathering this information will make it easier to "get the message out to everyone" and give the deans and department heads information to use in conjunction with other corrective measures. At this time, Dr. Hamm thanked the Senators for their time and left the meeting.

President Jackson asked for four volunteers to serve on this committee. Dr. Kirkconnell, Ms. Buford, Dr. Stephenson, and Dr. Ward volunteered to serve. Several senators expressed doubt that this process could be completed successfully by mid December.

INAPPROPRIATE
GRADES

President Jackson indicated the Grade Distribution Analysis for both fall, 2005, and spring, 2006, which were included in the Senators' packets and asked for discussion. Dr. Robertson observed that his review of the material indicated some schools/departments were giving out grades matching a bell-shaped curve and others were giving out a "litany of As to Fs." It appears there are two schools of thought on campus. In one school of thought a C is considered an average grade and in another a C is considered below average. Dr. Mitchell questioned whether the Senate could promote the idea that a C is an average grade.

Dr. Roberts observed that the number of students at commencement receiving honors has some faculty concerned. Dr. Philpotts questioned what the Senate could do about these issues and suggested that the grades given in the instructor's courses should become part of their overall evaluation. He stated that the grade point average should be included also when the Promotion and Tenure Committee is considering portfolios and when the Excellence Award Committee is considering the awards each spring. It was noted that the grade distribution analysis is being reworked to include additional summary information such as

the number of withdrawals the instructor had in a given semester. This information will be available starting with the fall, 2006, grade distribution analysis.

Dr. Mitchell asked that this issue be tabled until the November meeting and encouraged the Senators to form motions to be considered at that meeting.

NOISE ORDINANCE President Jackson reported that the City of Russellville does have a noise ordinance (i.e., Ordinance No. 1895) and referred to the paragraph in the distributed copy referencing excessive noise close to schools. She stated that excessive, loud noise which occurs on a regular basis near classrooms should be reported to Campus Security for investigation.

OPEN FORUM There were no items presented at this time.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS/
INFORMATION
ITEMS** There were no items presented at this time.

ADJOURNMENT The meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Shelia Jackson, Ph.D., President



Scott Kirkconnell, Ph.D., Secretary