

Minutes of
THE FACULTY SENATE
OF
ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

The Faculty Senate met Friday, March 12, 2010, at 3 p.m. in Room 456 of Rothwell Hall. The following members were present:

Dr. Jennifer Helms	Dr. David Eshelman
Dr. Glen Bishop	Dr. Penny Willmering
Dr. Eric Lovely	Dr. Tom Limperis
Dr. Gill Richards	Mr. David Mudrinich
Dr. Linda Bean	Dr. V. Carole Smith
Dr. Alex Mirkovic	Dr. Cathy Baker
Mr. Ken Futterer	Dr. Larry Morell

Dr. Annette Holeyfield, Dr. Jim Walton, and Dr. Jeff Robertson were absent. Mr. Ken Wester, Dr. David Underwood, Mr. Michael Stoker, and Mr. Sean Carnahan were visitors.

CALL TO ORDER
APPROVAL OF
MINUTES

President Bishop called the meeting to order and asked for action on the minutes of the February meeting. Motion by Dr. Mirkovic, seconded by Dr. Willmering, to approve the minutes as distributed. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS:
TECHNOLOGY
ISSUES

President Bishop stated that Dr. Underwood, Mr. Stoker, and representatives from Computer Services were present to answer questions concerning technology issues. Mr. Futterer questioned whether the calendar function on OneTech will soon be working and whether the Witherspoon Auditorium (i.e., music) calendar would once again be made available to the public. Mr. Wester noted that the OneTech upgrade which had resulted in the calendars no longer functioning correctly was a Sungard issue and that they had been waiting for Sungard for almost a year to correct the problem. He stated that the calendar function is now working in the test system and they hope to bring it back online shortly. Dr. Underwood stated that the calendar specific to the music program can then be placed on the external website for viewing by the public. Mr. Stoker noted that the link on the music department website would need to be updated with the new URL once the calendar was once again working correctly.

Dr. Morell asked why a “work around” solution had not been implemented by Computer Services during the year that the calendar was not functioning. Dr. Underwood noted that “in hindsight, we should have done that.” Mr. Wester stated each week Sungard had promised the issue would be resolved.

Dr. Richards questioned whether the university would one day be able to go to “gmail” (i.e., Google email). Dr. Underwood replied that this was considered at one time but the university had decided not to implement for various reasons.

Dr. Baker questioned the status of the Technology Committee. Dr. Underwood reported that the committee had met one time already with another meeting to be scheduled soon and stated his intention is for this committee to meet monthly. He commented that the first meeting was spent on getting the committee up to date; he had asked the committee members to bring technology issues experienced in their departments to the meetings for

discussion. The committee will also provide feedback on proposed technology upgrades and implementations. Dr. Baker stated that, due to a change in status of a faculty member, McEver may no longer have a representative on the committee; Dr. Underwood replied that, if so, he would rectify the situation.

Dr. Baker noted an issue from last summer where course materials for one of her classes were online and, due to a website change she was unaware of, students had not been able to access the materials they needed to review for the final exam. She asked Mr. Stoker how he was communicating website address changes to the departments. Mr. Stoker stated that this particular change (i.e., changing “school” names to “college” names) had “been in the works since earlier that spring” and stated he had been notifying constituents by emails that changes would be made effective July 1 when the new college names took effect. He acknowledged “some hiccups” and stated it has been a continuing concern for him on how best to reach everyone affected by an upcoming change. Dr. Morell suggested that no changes be made during finals week or on the last day of classes and those responsible for implementing changes to the website in general should “watch the calendar.” Mr. Wester responded that Computer Services does try to check the calendar when scheduling network upgrades and encouraged faculty to let Computer Services know if they have a special testing period that could be negatively impacted by network changes. He noted a network upgrade scheduled for March 22, the first day of spring break.

Dr. Helms questioned whether the website change noted above had been communicated to the deans. Mr. Stoker responded that the college name changes had been set for implementation on July 1 for some time. Mr. Wester stated he understands there may be failures of communication and they try to send out timely announcements about upgrades. Dr. Morell suggested a calendar be created on which outages and upgrades can be posted with email notifications to faculty. Mr. Carnahan stated he has considered setting up a blog to which faculty could subscribe. It was also suggested that global changes to the website be communicated to both the deans and faculty by email. Mr. Stoker was encouraged to emphasize to the deans and department heads that notifications sent only to them have not been sent to faculty.

Dr. Morell questioned what designates a website as an “official” Tech site. Mr. Stoker stated that this issue “needs to be further defined.” At this time, all “university” webpages are official. Student organizations and club pages, along with faculty personal pages, are not part of the official website even though there are policies governing the content of those sites. He noted that templates had been created in LCMS (i.e., Luminis Content Management System) for guidance in creating official webpages. Dr. Morell questioned why updates in LCMS do not take effect immediately. Mr. Stoker stated that work is done on the LCMS server and a job runs which publishes changes to the web server. At this time there is a ten minute lag, which may not be able to be changed as it takes almost ten minutes for most processes to run.

Mr. Stoker reported that there are over 140 websites in LCMS and emphasized that, if a department needs training or help with their website, to be sure to call him. Dr. Underwood asked the Senate to relay to faculty to let him know if they have issues with technology.

Dr. Underwood stated that he is also thinking about forming a committee to assist specifically with issues relating to AREON (i.e., Arkansas Research and Education Optical Network). Mr. Wester reported that Computer Services is looking at various video capture software packages to determine which one might serve the broadest needs of the campus.

President Bishop thanked the gentlemen for attending the meeting. Mr. Wester, Mr. Stoker, Mr. Carnahan, and Dr. Underwood excused themselves at this time.

SUBCOMMITTEE
REPORT ON
REVIEW OF
PROMOTION AND
TENURE POLICY

President Bishop asked Dr. Bean for a report. Dr. Bean stated the subcommittee had met twice but were not yet finished with their review. She indicated she would have a report at a later meeting.

SUBCOMMITTEE
REPORT ON
REVIEW OF
ADJUNCT
FACULTY
BENEFITS AND
PRIVILEGES

President Bishop asked Dr. Baker and Dr. Eshelman for a report. Dr. Eshelman reported Dr. Baker had researched the issue with Academic Affairs and he and she had been communicating with the subcommittee. He distributed wording for a proposed new standing committee as follows:

Committee on Adjunct Support

Membership: 4 full-time faculty members, appointed by the Faculty Senate, and 4 adjunct instructors elected by the adjunct faculty (Visiting Lecturers).

Function: To provide support to adjunct faculty and to enhance the standing of such faculty on campus. To that end, members will meet twice each fall semester---first, to gather information about concerns shared among adjuncts; and, second, to draw up formal recommendations about appropriate ways to address these concerns. The recommendations will then be presented in the spring to the Faculty Senate.

Mr. Futterer questioned how the election would be held. Dr. Eshelman stated that an email list from Academic Affairs might be one possibility and another is to hold the election at the annual adjunct dinner sponsored by Academic Affairs. Dr. Baker stated she had suggested that perhaps one of the four adjuncts should be named by the Senate chair to ensure the appropriate balance of adjuncts across the disciplines, particularly for those disciplines with numerous adjuncts. Dr. Eshelman noted the subcommittee was still discussing this and reported some difficulty in trying to provide a voice for the adjuncts and trying to accomplish a balance in representation. Mr. Futterer questioned why the full-time faculty would be appointed instead of elected; Dr. Eshelman stated the appointments would help ensure the balance previously discussed. Dr. Helms asked how the number of committee members was decided; Dr. Baker stated that they did not want a “cumbersome” number on the committee.

Motion by Dr. Lovely, seconded by Dr. Richards, to form the committee. After a discussion noting that the Senate can only recommend formation of a standing committee, Dr. Lovely amended his motion to recommend the formation of the committee; amendment seconded by Mr. Futterer. President Bishop questioned whether the Senate might want to postpone a vote on the motion until next month so that the April agenda would clearly list the proposed action by the Senate to establish this standing committee. It was noted that if the Senate votes to make this recommendation, that recommendation would go to Dr. Watson for recommendation to the Executive Council and subsequently the Board of Trustees. Motion to postpone the vote by Mr. Futterer, seconded by Dr. Willmering. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS:
ESTABLISH A
PERMANENT
MEETING
DATE/TIME FOR
THE SENATE

President Bishop asked Dr. Bean to address this issue. Dr. Bean noted that for the last several years it has become more difficult to establish a quality time for the Senate to meet. She proposed establishing a permanent time so that anyone elected to the Senate would know that they must arrange their teaching schedule in order to be able to meet at that time. Dr. Morell proposed having the university set aside a time that is excluded from classes to allow committees to meet. Motion by Dr. Bean, seconded by Dr. Morell, to request a two-hour block of allocated time for committees to meet. After extensive discussion concerning

the logistics involved in allocating this time period, Mr. Futterer called for the vote. Motion carried.

GRADING SYSTEM President Bishop asked Dr. Mirkovic to speak on this item. Dr. Mirkovic reported that he had been looking at universities who have switched from ABCD grading systems to those incorporating pluses and minuses (i.e., A-, B+, etc.). He stated that, on the plus side, the system is more fair and reflects student work more accurately. On the negative side, a small drop in the average GPA for the university seems to result, which might make it harder for a student to achieve honor status (i.e., cum laude, magna cum laude, and summa cum laude) since A+ cannot be calculated into the GPA. However, Dr. Mirkovic stated that, even with the negative, he advocates this system.

Dr. Morell noted that students will be more likely to argue about assigned grades under this type of system. He also stated that if the final GPA of a student is within a very small percentage of what it would have been under the present system, then how would this system be more accurate. Dr. Eshelman noted a possible effect on undergraduate scholarships; he stated that this type of grading system might be more suitable for graduate students.

ESTABLISH SUB-COMMITTEE TO ASSIST WITH SALARY EQUITY SURVEY President Bishop asked Dr. Lovely for comments. Dr. Lovely reported that, instead of forming another sub-committee, the Faculty Salary, Benefits, and Awards Committee could be charged in a long term sense to meet with Dr. Watson annually to discuss/review the salary equity survey and serve as an outlet for faculty to bring up issues relating to the survey. He stated he would also like to request that this committee, in the short term, meet with Dr. Stoeckel and Dr. Nupp to address their particular concerns relating to the fisheries and wildlife faculty and the survey and function as an intermediary between them and Dr. Watson in trying to resolve those issues. Motion by Mr. Futterer, seconded by Dr. Eshelman, to so charge the Faculty Salary, Benefits, and Awards Committee. President Bishop questioned whether this action should be postponed to allow time for development of a written statement to go into the function of this committee for the *Faculty Handbook*. Mr. Futterer stated he did not believe this should be a defined duty in the *Handbook*. Motion carried.

Dr. Richards suggested this committee also look at salary calculations across campus, including administrative salaries. After discussion, he did not pursue this request.

ESTABLISH SUB-COMMITTEE TO REVIEW ELECTED STANDING COMMITTEES' MEMBERSHIP President Bishop asked Dr. Lovely to address this agenda item. Motion by Dr. Lovely, seconded by Dr. Helms, to establish a subcommittee to review the membership of the elected standing committees. Motion carried. Dr. Lovely stated he would be glad to serve. Mr. Futterer, Dr. Baker, and Dr. Mirkovic also volunteered.

OPEN FORUM President Bishop asked for items for discussion. Dr. Lovely questioned whether the Senate had received feedback concerning the recommended changes to the hiring guidelines. President Bishop stated that he had not received any comments. Dr. Lovely asked if President Bishop could request feedback.

Dr. Bean reported that she had attended a workshop on assessment and curriculum changes this past Tuesday. One suggestion made at that workshop was to change the process by which "cosmetic" curriculum changes are made in that those changes would not have to go through the committee process but be processed by the Registrar and Academic Affairs. She

stated that this may be a future agenda item once Academic Affairs comes up with a draft list of what would constitute a “cosmetic” change.

Dr. Richards noted that at the March meeting the Senate had endorsed the idea of compulsory mid-term grades for sophomores. He stated that several of his constituents had questioned this, noting this would be an infringement on their academic freedom. He stated that this endorsement appeared to be done by “consensus” instead of a vote. Dr. Richards stated that, if the Senate actually endorsed this idea, a formal vote should have been held. Several senators indicated that they did not endorse the idea but noted that Dr. Watson had stated that mid-term grades for all students were being considered for implementation in the fall semester. The senators stated that, if there had to be additional mid-term grades assigned, they had simply suggested to Dr. Watson that those grades be limited to sophomores rather than be for all students. After extensive discussion, motion by Dr. Mirkovic, seconded by Dr. Willmering, to place this issue on the next agenda. Motion carried.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/
INFORMATION
ITEMS

President Bishop stated that the April meeting will be held in the Ross Pendergraft Library and Technology Center on April 9, 2010.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Glen Bishop, Ph.D., President



Cathy Baker, Ph.D., Secretary