

Minutes of
THE FACULTY SENATE
OF
ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

The Faculty Senate met Tuesday, February 14, 2006, at 4 p.m. in Room 300 south of the Ross Pendergraft Library and Technology Center. The following members were present:

Ms. Peggy Lee	Dr. Richard Knight
Dr. Carey Roberts	Mr. Rick Ihde
Dr. Jeff Robertson	Dr. Sid Womack
Dr. Jeff Mitchell	Dr. Trey Philpotts
Dr. Carl Greco	Ms. Marti Wilkerson
Dr. Scott Kirkconnell	Ms. Sarah Robison
Dr. Brenda Montgomery	Dr. Joe Moore
Dr. Robert Fithen	

Dr. Shelia Jackson was absent. Dr. Jack Hamm, Dr. Theresa Herrick, and Dr. Bob Allen were visitors.

CALL TO ORDER
APPROVAL OF
MINUTES

President Wilkerson called the meeting to order and asked for action on the January 17, 2006, minutes. Motion by Dr. Knight, seconded by Dr. Moore, to dispense with the reading of the minutes. Motion carried. There being no amendments or corrections, motion by Dr. Greco, seconded by Ms. Lee, to approve the minutes as distributed. Motion carried.

REPORT BY VICE
PRESIDENT FOR
ACADEMIC
AFFAIRS

President Wilkerson welcomed Dr. Hamm to the meeting and asked for his comments. Dr. Hamm noted that he had a number of items to discuss and began with addressing the issue of the course evaluation form and the recommendation from the Senate that a “not applicable” response be added to each of the ten questions on the form. Dr. Hamm reported that he had spoken with the deans concerning this issue and pointed out that, for some of the questions, a response of “not applicable” would not be appropriate. He noted that some of the questions could be modified to indicate that if the question did not apply for the student’s course to leave the item blank. Dr. Hamm stated that state law requires asking about English fluency and noted that for web courses, English fluency could refer to written communication in English. Dr. Roberts noted that this particular form surveys the student’s satisfaction with the instructor, not whether the learning objectives of the course were met, and commented that some departments use additional forms for this purpose. He stated his concern that evaluation of faculty by department heads includes the student evaluation form and questioned whether it should also include departmental course evaluation forms when used. After discussion, motion by Mr. Ihde, seconded by Dr. Philpotts, to include a statement at the beginning of the student evaluation form that reads “If the question is not applicable to your course, please leave blank”; include this statement in the instructions to be read to students when the forms are distributed; modify question no. 8 to read as follows: “The textbook required in the course was valuable”; and modify question no. 9 to read as follows: “The instructional aids were beneficial.” Motion carried.

Dr. Hamm announced that Arkansas Tech University’s Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) rating had officially changed from a four-year, category 5 to a four-year, category 4 institution. This reclassification was due to the number of master’s degree programs and graduates from those programs over the past three years. He noted that Henderson State University is also now a 4; University of Arkansas at Monticello is now a 5; the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith is moving towards a level 6; and Pulaski Technical Institute is

moving towards a two-year, level 1 institution. Dr. Hamm stated that, with the current level of master's degree programs and graduates, the institution should be able to move up to a four-year, level 3 category within the next few years. He also stated his hope that the Arkansas Department of Higher Education would recognize this new SREB category when making recommendations for funding for the next biennium.

Dr. Hamm announced the formation of an ad hoc retention taskforce which will be a campus-wide committee to look at retention and retention efforts. He stated that the committee would consist of personnel from Student Services, Finance, and Academics. He asked that the Senate name three faculty members from three different schools; he will then appoint three more from two of the remaining schools and one to represent both the Graduate School and the School of Community Education.

Dr. Hamm noted that, due to the failure of the bond issue, funding for the classroom building/advising center has become problematic. He stated that planning for the project is ongoing due to a \$500,000 grant from the Sturgis Foundation and that possible additional funding methods are being investigated. Dr. Hamm reported that the building is desperately needed as both faculty office and classroom shortages for fall, 2006, are already foreseen in planning for the fall schedule of courses. Dr. Hamm commented that plans are fairly complete to construct both Baswell Hall by the football stadium and the women's athletic complex.

Dr. Hamm thanked the Senate for their time and excused himself from the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS: REPORT FROM ELECTION SUB- COMMITTEE

President Wilkerson asked Dr. Greco to give a report from the standing committee election sub-committee. Dr. Greco thanked the other members of the sub-committee for their work and asked Dr. Robertson to report on the status of the online ballot. Dr. Robertson reported that many of the problems with the online ballot had been corrected due to the use of a Web Surveyor survey within the Blackboard format. After discussion, Dr. Robertson asked the Senators to give him a few days to finalize the ballot format and then to "try it out" and let him know of any difficulties.

APPOINTMENT TO ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

President Wilkerson asked Dr. Roberts, who serves as the current Assessment Committee chair, to begin the discussion. Dr. Roberts reported that he had taken the motion of the Faculty Senate to have a representative on the Assessment Committee to the committee members and stated that the members did not believe it is within their purview to change the composition of the committee as the current members are all appointed. He stated that both Dr. Underwood and Dr. Hamm were in favor of the Senate appointment. President Wilkerson then distributed a memo she received from Dr. Underwood outlining the expectations of the appointee (i.e., one-year term with appointment by either Chair or Senate as a whole; no consecutive terms; voting member; full-time faculty member; and must attend the meetings and fulfill same responsibilities as other members). Motion by Dr. Philpotts, seconded by Dr. Mitchell, to accept the expectations as outlined with the clarification that the full-time faculty member must have more than a fifty percent teaching load. Motion carried. Motion by Dr. Kirkconnell, seconded by Dr. Montgomery, for the Senate as a whole to make the appointment. Motion carried. Dr. Montgomery volunteered to serve as the Senate appointment on the Assessment Committee. Motion by Dr. Greco, seconded by Ms. Lee, to accept Dr. Montgomery as the Senate's appointment. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS: REPORT FROM WEBMASTER	President Wilkerson asked Dr. Roberts for an update. He noted that he now has the capability to post items to the Senate website. He stated that he will continue to post the Senate minutes as they are approved. Dr. Roberts reported that the minutes for the Assessment Committee are hosted on the Institutional Research/Assessment website with a link to the Senate website. President Wilkerson stated that she had heard from some of the committee chairs who had not yet met with their committees and reported that several will be having meetings soon.
ADMINISTRATORS ON ELECTED STANDING COMMITTEES	President Wilkerson asked Dr. Mitchell to speak to this issue. Dr. Mitchell noted that this issue had arisen at last month's meeting and expressed his concern for department heads serving on elected standing committees. He commented that department heads generally have a fifty percent teaching responsibility and serve at the pleasure of the administration. Dr. Mitchell stated that their serving on the Senate or another committee where controversial issues may arise puts the department head in an awkward position. President Wilkerson noted that this topic has been discussed by the Senate in the past and suggested that the appointment of a sub-committee to look at the issue in depth might be advisable. Dr. Allen stated that to change the Constitution of the Senate to disallow department heads from serving on elected standing committees would require a supermajority of votes in the Senate, approval by the general faculty, and approval by the Administration and Board of Trustees. Several senators expressed the desire to study and reflect on this issue; President Wilkerson stated that the issue would be discussed at next month's meeting.
FACULTY TEACHING LOAD	President Wilkerson asked Dr. Montgomery for her comments. Dr. Montgomery stated it had been brought to her attention by several faculty members that teaching loads appear to vary across campus. She noted that she had been told that some new faculty members were being hired with the promise of reduced teaching loads, and stated that a reduced teaching load for faculty would not only encourage better qualified faculty to apply for positions on campus but would also allow faculty more time for research. She distributed a list of "talking points" for discussion of a reduced teaching load (i.e., nine-hour load for faculty who do more research/service; current faculty already receiving reduced loads due to service; research important for tenure and promotion; research dollars; reduced loads for graduate courses; and varying teaching loads/overload compensation across campus). Dr. Philpotts reminded the Senators that there is now a sabbatical option available for tenured faculty on campus for research/scholarship efforts. Dr. Mitchell asked that the Vice President for Academic Affairs be asked to give a "snapshot" of the teaching load situation across campus. President Wilkerson noted that Dr. Hamm and Dr. Brown will attend the Senate meeting in April to discuss the campus free speech area; she will ask them to address this subject also.
OPEN FORUM	President Wilkerson asked for any comments. Dr. Mitchell touched on several issues related to denial of tenure to a faculty member. Dr. Mitchell explained that the faculty member in question had no deficiencies in his/her portfolio and received favorable support from the department head, dean, and Promotion and Tenure Committee. However, according to the faculty member, the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the President offered no reasons as to why they refused to support the application for tenure and promotion. Dr. Mitchell and Dr. Philpotts agreed that the <i>Faculty Handbook</i> is contradictory and confusing with regard to the promotion and tenure process and claimed the American Association of University Professor's guidelines were not adequately followed despite the <i>Handbook's</i> clause that the University conforms to AAUP standards. Drs. Mitchell and Philpotts proposed that the Faculty Welfare Committee failed to offer said professor a fair hearing because untenured faculty and department heads sit on the committee. Concerns were that such members can be easily intimidated due to their standing and status in the

university. Dr. Mitchell indicated that he believes the university may be placing itself in a vulnerable legal position by not providing reasons for dismissal and denial of tenure. Dr. Mitchell concluded by stating his concern that the promotion and tenure process at ATU adversely affects faculty morale and inhibits attracting and retaining quality faculty. No motions were made. President Wilkerson, per Senate members' requests, stated that she would invite the chair of the Faculty Welfare Committee, Dr. Hamm, and someone from the AAUP to the next meeting to give perspectives on this issue.

Dr. Greco brought forward a motion regarding the composition of the Faculty Welfare Committee as described in the *Faculty Handbook*. He distributed a proposed, revised membership for this committee which limited the membership to only tenured, non-administrative faculty (i.e., faculty teaching at least six hours with primary duties in teaching and research who do not concurrently hold an administrative appointment). Motion by Dr. Greco, seconded by Dr. Mitchell, to modify the composition of the Faculty Welfare Committee as per the handout. Dr. Kirkconnell asked that this issue be discussed at the March meeting as part of the discussion of department heads serving on elected standing committees. Dr. Greco agreed to this request and withdrew his motion.

President Wilkerson asked for three volunteers from the Senate to serve on the retention taskforce mentioned earlier by Dr. Hamm. She stated that volunteers should let her know by Friday if they wish to serve; if she does not have enough volunteers by Friday, she will appoint three members to the taskforce from the faculty at large.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/ INFORMATION ITEMS

President Wilkerson noted the Calendar of Events/Appointments for the Faculty Senate that was distributed with the agenda and stated that this was for information and planning purposes.

President Wilkerson announced that the reciprocal luncheon with the SGA will be held April 18 from 12 noon to 1p.m.

President Wilkerson reported that Dr. Smith from the Curriculum Committee had contacted her to let her know that the Curriculum Committee is currently reviewing the general education goals and will most likely bring any recommendations to the Senate in April.

President Wilkerson asked Mr. Ihde if he could report to the Senate in March on an emergency preparedness plan for the campus. He stated that he would if the report is ready for release by that time.

President Wilkerson reported that the Consortium of University Faculty Senate Chairs had met this past Friday with 23 individuals attending. She stated that Senator Argue had attended the meeting and lunch and had given his perspectives about education in Arkansas.

ADJOURNMENT The meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marti Wilkerson". The script is cursive and fluid.

Marti Wilkerson, M.R.C., President

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carey Roberts". The script is cursive and elegant.

Carey Roberts, Ph.D., Secretary