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Faculty Senate Minutes - October 3, 2008

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Faculty Senate Meeting of October 3, 2008

Minutes

Attendance. The following Senators were present (proxies in parentheses): Annulis (Jennifer Walker), Bass, Beckett, Blackwell (Fisher), Brannock, Bristol, Buchanan, Burgess, Campbell, Daves, Davis, Evans, Fisher, Goggin, Gould (Rushing), Green, Greene, Hannon, Harbough, Hauer, Judd, Kyriakouides, McCormick, McGuire, Meyer, Oshrin, Pandey, Pate, Piazza, Rachal (Thomas Lipscomb), Rakocinski, Redalje, Rehner (Rushing), Scurfield (Bristol), Smithka, Spencer (Brannock) Young.

Absent were Senators Burnett, Klinedinst, and Tingstrom.

Faculty Senate President Stephen Oshrin called the meeting to order at 2:05 on the afternoon of Friday, October 3, in room 216 of the Thad Cochran Center of the Hattiesburg campus. The agenda (slightly modified) and the minutes for the previous meeting were approved.

Report from President Saunders. The University President addressed the Senate. (1) Next week is the annual opportunity for faculty to make changes in their health insurance; new faculty especially are advised to take advantage of this review. (2) The President regretted that the phrase "sexual orientation" was accidentally omitted from the non-discrimination policy of the institution; this omission will be corrected. (3) Again the President stressed fund-raising as an institutional priority. Only now such efforts must be directed more to the local, collegiate level. Units are encouraged to determine the nature of their needs and goals in fund-raising. However unlikely the possibility might seem now, we must be able to take immediate advantage of an unexpected gift. (4) For the third year in a row the university received the Halbrook Award from the IHL; this award recognizes the state institution with the highest percentage of graduating athletes. Details are here. (5) The President acknowledged that there was an altercation in the residence hall of the football team last week. A fight between some team members and a Coastal gang ensued. She assured the Senate that appropriate disciplinary measures are being taken. (6) The President thanked the Senate for participation in the Heart Walk, which raised \$7,300. (7) Southern Miss has a reputation for being open and friendly to community college transfers; indeed, such students make up 50-60% of all undergraduates here. The President's assistant, Mrs. Mary Dayne Gregg, is heading an effort to make such transfers easier, including consideration of a common course numbering system. (8) President Saunders stressed that the University Club will be built and voiced her strong support of the endeavor. She sees it in consort with the Strategic Plan, a section of which promotes Apeople places, @ common gathering spots where town and gown can meet. There were no questions for the President.

Report of Provost Lyman. (1) A four-day course week is planned as an experiment on the Gulf Coast campuses next semester. The Provost emphasized that this is not a four-day work week. Offices will be staffed on Fridays, and the day will be given over to office hours, tutorials, specialized classes, laboratories, and committee meetings. Classes will begin early, at 7:30 a.m. He feels that this experiment is appropriate for USMGC, where the student population is largely commuters; such a schedule will not be implemented

on the Hattiesburg campus. (2) He announced the recreation of a Graduate School, with the present Director of Graduate Admissions serving interim as dean until a search can be performed. The Provost considers the Graduate School a symbolic movement forward for the university. The new school requires IHL approval and thus will not be effected until next summer. (3) Increases in graduate stipends are a high priority with the Provost. He raised the possibility of expanding some well-funded graduate programs to enable more graduate students in smaller programs to pay fully for graduate health insurance, which is now only partially funded.

In response to a question from Senator Judd, the Provost addressed the problem of funding for the Cross Creek campus. We look in multiple directions, he answered, including federal and state funding. Public-private partnerships are becoming increasingly common in higher education. Indeed, only recently Alcorn University built a dormitory with such intermingling of funds. The Provost feels that this is our decade on the Gulf Coast and that we must move with dispatch. Senator Redalje asked about putting graduate student tuition into grant requests, as often occurs in the sciences. The Provost encourages such practice in disciplines where the requests are large enough to merit the request.

ABig Event. Kasey Mitchell from the Student Government Association presented a proposal for a community service project to be known as the ABig Event. This project is a nation-wide effort to engage students in civic affairs, with some eighty institutions taking part. The date proposed for the event is March 25, 2009. On this day students would volunteer for local cleanup and assistance projects and would receive a voucher to miss class for their efforts. Though supporting the event, Senator Young noted that the meeting schedules of certain classes would pose problems with the voucher system.

Senate Forum: Larry Lee, Chief Sustainability Officer. President Oshrin introduced the head of the new sustainability office. Mr. Larry Lee addressed the Senate in remarks hallmarked by commitment and passion. His PowerPoint presentation is linked here.

Mr. Lee began by defining his function at the university. Sustainability meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It must coordinate social, economic, and environmental factors equally, with the first of these the most difficult. A green environment is our responsibility as educators and a community. His vision statement is optimistic:

The University of Southern Mississippi will strive to become the model of sustainable thought and practice within our state and region. Through development of ideas and programs, we will encourage healthy dialogue, forward thinking, and behaviors that instill a collective awareness and concern of how our impact affects future generations.

His office coordinates with the University Climate Commitment Council, a group of seventeen campus leaders. As a recognition of our commitment to a green campus, President Saunders recently signed the American Colleges and Universities Climate Commitment on behalf of the university. Mr. Lee is

committed to initiatives in recycling, eco-friendly construction, and reducing green house emissions. He has established on campus a number of new projects: the EcoEagle program, EcoBikes, a lecture and film series, EcoReps (peer-to-peer knowledge groups), Lug-a-Mug (eco-friendly replacements for bottles), a car pooling system, service projects (e.g., assisting with the clean-up after football games), a farmer=s market, and an EcoHouse (a living and learning community of people who live together in a sustainable lifestyle).

In response to questions, Mr. Lee noted that the main recycling bins were under the Thad Cochran Center but more were coming across campus. He is interested in pursuing federal grants for sustainability projects. He hopes the next research project of the polymer science department will be green. And finally, he stated that glass recycling was not yet available on campus but Awe=re working on it.@ Senator Beckett proposed three recommendations to Mr. Lee: to educate students about recyclable plastics, to widen bike racks, and to put Prof. Michael Davis on the sustainability committee.

Following Mr. Lee=s presentation were the reports of Senate officers.

President Oshrin spoke briefly: (1) Videoconferencing costs have escalated sharply, from \$25,000 to approximately \$90,000. This increase affects the Senate since we had hoped to use the conferencing rooms in the TCC for meetings. Mr. Sid Gonsoulin is investigating whether the university could be a manufacturer company=s model site and thus reduce costs. (2) The Space Allocation Committee and the whole process of such allocation is under review by the Provost, as recently there were some deviations from the previous campus policies. (3) Mississippi Senator Doug Davis recently made a legislative proposal to change the structure of the IHL, reducing the present Board of Trustees to a Board of Governors and allowing separate boards for each institution. (Synopsis of his bill is here.) President Oshrin noted that at least one legislator remarked that the legislation was unlikely to be approved. Considerable discussion within the Senate ensued, with strong support for the legislation from Senator Buchanan. Senator Judd responded that the University of Mississippi and Mississippi State could muster Ablue ribbon@ boards but that Southern Miss could not and would lose in the process. Senator Beckett countered by observing the debatable quality of some previous IHL boards.

President-Elect Evans addressed the Senate about two measures: (1) The Calendar Committee has recommended that next summer classes begin June 1 and end July 31, with final examinations being administered on the last day of class. This schedule would allow teachers to attend summer sessions without missing work. (2) The Assessment Committee has taken charge of the interim SACS report due in three and a half years. They are reviewing software to assist with the many phases of assessment. Senator Campbell raised a sharp objection to the reduplicative efforts in assessment. Associate Provost Powell defended our efforts, stating that the new software is intended to make the assessment process simpler, not more complex. Senator Campbell rejoined that assessment should be faculty-driven, not top-down the way the effectiveness office is trying to do now. Senator Davis concurred: AAassessment should be something we value.@

Secretary-Elect Meyer spoke for the Honorary Degree Committee. So far in its history Southern Miss has awarded only four honorary degrees. When the committee receives a request, it must review the credentials

carefully against the standards established by that committee; the standards themselves should be evaluated regularly. (They will be posted on the Provost's website soon.)

Committee Reports. Senator Beckett, chair of the Awards Committee, spoke at length on problems with university awards, badly handled since the Thames administration, and how we can improve them.

HEADWAE	A cash award should be added to the nominal award.
Grand Marshal Award	Proposed change to ADistinguished Professor@ Award, perhaps in rotation between campuses.
Summer Grants for the Improvement of Instruction	Committee proposed to the Provost a number of changes, with less emphasis on distance learning.
Summer Faculty Research Grants	Should preclude all other summer employment.
Lucas University Excellence Awards	At present each college presents one nominee; the committee recommends that the nomination be opened up university-wide.
Sabbaticals	Administrators above the level of department chair should be placed in a separate applicant pool.

Senator Davis, chair of the Faculty Welfare Committee, presented to the Senate a written (*laus Deo*) report of their deliberations. (1) Concerning the University Club: the Peck House might still be viable as the site is attractive, large, and only used during part of the day. A University Club should also be instituted on the Gulf Coast, possibly in a conference center at Cross Creek or in collaboration with a local restaurant. The university should investigate state alcohol policies so that perhaps beer could be sold in the Power House Restaurant. (2) Faculty compensation concerns: A review of salary levels and their redistribution should be undertaken; a consultant for the state retirement system should be brought to campus for a workshop; and summer salaries should be reconsidered to make them more in line with our sister campuses. (3) The survey of faculty satisfaction might be renewed this year.

The Research and Grants Committee is seeking an appointment with Vice President Burge to discuss tuition costs and student insurance as a part of grants.

The Faculty Handbook Committee has completed its revisions for the previous academic year, and the new version of the handbook is posted on the Provost's website.

Senator Bristol spoke on behalf of the Gulf Coast Faculty Council (the minutes of which were administered to Senators by e-mail last week). In a survey the top request of USMGC students was for more career services; in the same survey (with 26% of all students responding) a majority said they would recommend USMGC to their friends. Concluded Senator Bristol, AWe must be doing something right.@

In New Business, Senator Greene moved that the Senate support the ABig Event@ presented earlier. The Senate overwhelmingly supported the motion, with exact wording to be given to the Secretary later.

President Oshrin adjourned the Senate at 4:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by

Stanley Hauer

Secretary to the Senate

Approved by

Stephen Oshrin

President

Faculty Senate

(approved with corrections 11.7.08)