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## Faculty Senate Minutes - March 5, 2010

USM Faculty Senate

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**The University of Southern Mississippi**  
**Faculty Senate**  
**Minutes for the Meeting of March 5, 2010**  
**216 Thad Cochran Center**

Members Present and Represented (by proxy): H. Annulis (Jennifer Vonk), J. Bass, D. Beckett, J. Brannock, B. Burgess, J. Burnett, D. Daves, A. Davis, J. Evans, D. Fletcher, B. George, C. Goggin, T. Gould, A. Haley, S. Hauer, N. Howell, S. Howell, M. Klinedinst, T. Lipscomb, D. Lunsford (Klindedinst), M. Lux, C. McCormick (Evans), J. McGuire, J. Meyer, C. Meyers (Hauer), S. Oshrin (Hauer), R. Pandey, C. Rakocinski, D. Redalje, T. Rehner, S. Reischman, S. Rouse, K. Rushing, J. H. Shin (Burnett), B. Spencer (Brannock), D. Tingstrom, T. Welsh, J. Wolfe, A. Young

Members Absent: D. Bristol, D. Davis, R. Scurfield

1.0 Call to order

Pres. Evans called the meeting to order at 2:04 pm.

2.0 Approval of the agenda

The agenda was approved by voice vote.

3.0 Approval of the minutes

Minutes for the meeting of January 29, 2010 were approved by voice vote.

Pres. Evans noted that Charles Brent, first president of the USM faculty senate and instrumental in its establishment working with University President Aubrey Lucas, had passed away earlier in the week. A memorial service was planned for Saturday at 3:00 at Parkway Heights United Methodist Church.

4.0 Remarks from the administration

4.1 President Saunders

Pres. Saunders said there had been a meeting earlier in the day of the Committee on Committees, which has been designed to help organize the university committee structure. All need to have chairs appointed and charters in place, and will be listed on a Website.

The Trent Lott National Center for Economic Development and Entrepreneurship would be dedicated Friday evening at 5:30. It will have several classrooms and be available for campus use. The management of the Cochran Center will manage the building for community use. It is a great building, the president said, though it outshines all others on campus dramatically.

University Advancement has been busy planning Centennial activities. Key events occur on Founder's Day, March 30, including a campus-wide convocation. Dr. Bo Morgan will talk about USM's 100 years of history.

Interviews have been completed with three candidates for the Vice President for Research position. The president said she would visit with one candidate that she had not yet met in person and plans to have made the appointment by the end of the month. Dr. Saunders said she still welcomes feedback about the candidates via email.

Some questions were sent in advance to her by senators that assume we know how things from the University Priorities Committee will end up. The administration is committed to the UPC process, and we are at the front end of that. As far as anything that might be "protected," Pres. Saunders said the proposal establishing the UPC outlined potential criteria, and she hoped those would be invoked. But now, "everything is on the table." As far as what may be considered for efficiencies and budget cuts, "it all is being considered." Dr. Saunders said she continues to hear comments like "Mississippi State will not have as many cuts as we will." On the IHL Website is a January 21, 2010, Discussion of Multi-Year Business Plans for dealing with Budget Reductions and Multi-Year Tuition Recommendation. Their projected net change in the number of filled positions MSU is planning for is 110 total reductions as compared to Southern Miss' 100. Of course, these numbers can change, but that's the

ballpark.

One question asked if we had met with our congressional delegation to tell them of our dire straits. Yes, Pres. Saunders said, we have communicated with them. She will be going to talk with each over the next week, and they know we will underscore what dire straits we are in. We are trying for earmarks that are limited to two years or so of research. We received \$200,000 for Blackboard instruction, and we are seeking more. USM received \$500,000 for retention efforts, she said, and part of our meeting with our Washington delegation will involve asking for millions more.

Sen. Rehner asked if the IHL Board would place any restrictions on cuts. Dr. Saunders said they would likely opposed cutting out a program that is the only one like it in the state. The Teacher Education program was an example—but Dr. Saunders said the IHL had not asked us to protect anything yet.

Sen. Rushing asked about cutting program duplications, and Dr. Saunders noted that idea may sound good but when investigated we really do not have a lot of overlaps in the state. For instance, say there are three engineering programs in the state, but all three have high numbers and productivity. Practically, little would be gained by pushing to close two of them. A question was shared about budget effects on tenure and promotion, and Pres. Saunders said that some universities had limited the number of promotions granted, but she could not imagine such an impact here.

Pres. Evans asked, what should faculty be doing now? Pres. Saunders said they could provide information as fast as possible for the UPC effort when asked, but also to teach classes, do research, “do what we do,” and be as transparent as we can be. Classes should not be affected by potential budget cuts, she said. The students should have the faculty’s full attention.

A senator asked about faculty attendance at spring commencement, and Pres. Saunders said she would love to see the whole faculty there. It is a once-in-100-years event. We are awaiting word on a big-name speaker. Sen. Rehner noted that some students on the coast did not feel very positive about the single ceremony. Pres. Saunders said some students on the coast heard the bad news before the good news. No reservation was made on the coast for a commencement, so there is no place to hold one there.

Sen. Beckett asked about campus groups to be engaged when the administration makes budget cut decisions based on UPC recommendations. Pres. Saunders noted the proposals suggested provisions for refining decisions, with plenty of input from campus groups.

Sen. Rehner asked about Aramark requiring food purchases by events desiring food on campus, as well as the signs blocking sidewalks and crossings on campus as a hazard to visually impaired. Pres. Saunders said the contract had not changed, and Aramark had given campus credits for departments to use for student retention and development efforts. She said she would talk to VP Joe Paul about campus safety issues relating to advertising signs.

Sen. Haley suggested the dilemma that desired student enrollment and retention increases would require new faculty and facilities. Pres. Saunders said they are trying for a clearer picture of enrollment situations early on. Tuition increases planned will help some. We have had two record freshman classes, and it will be a problem if no faculty remain here to teach them.

Pres. Saunders concluded by saying she hoped to see all at the Trent Lott Center that evening.

#### 4.2 Provost Lyman

Prov. Lyman said he had received many questions about the UPC process. He reiterated that “everything is on the table”—no, not all will be endorsed by the administration, but every proposal will be considered. This round of budget cuts is strongly faculty driven. Discussions should be occurring at the UPC meetings, which members are known. Prov. Lyman said he has no preconceived notions about the way things will go. One question asked whether administrative structure could be cut by one third. It will be cut, but not necessarily by one third. Prov. Lyman reviewed the approximately \$7 million cut from the academic side for this summer, and, though subjective, \$3.2 million was “administrative—over 40 percent of the total cut. That trend probably will continue—many cuts come from what could be termed administrative overhead. Tremendous hits have been taken, and whether one third or not the pain will be shared by the administrative side and the academic side.

Prov. Lyman anticipated no effect at all by the budget cuts on the tenure and promotion process. A report has been received from the university advisory committee, and cases are being considered on the merits, not on budgetary considerations.

One question asked what should faculty do? Prov. Lyman said anything to improve retention and recruitment for the sake of enrollment growth would be crucial. We need to develop a user-friendly

approach to students. Studies involving competent students—not those with obvious deficiencies or on probation—show that students discontinue or do not come because of a negative message from staff members. Improving our USM image in the community could help, too. Some have a very skewed, inaccurate view of faculty. We don't really work a 9-hour week. We seek more community support. Dr. Lyman said there is a paradox with instructors relating to budget cuts—they are the easiest to cut in time of fiscal constraint, especially adjunct instructors, but they are the most efficient way to teach credit hours. So the total load of cuts cannot be placed on adjuncts. Sen. Young said that adjuncts do not have a vested interest in the university in ways including advising of students and involvement on campus. If MS State will not be cutting 100 faculty, she said, this negatively affects our public relations with the community and getting and keeping students. Prov. Lyman said selective cuts in some areas can preserve or enhance other areas. We have areas that are simply not profit centers for us. If we can cut 10% of programs but keep 99% of our students, shouldn't we consider it? Sen. Young said that cuts should be made on academic as well as economic grounds—it is necessary to keep some departments to be a comprehensive university. This could be a radically different institution after such cuts, she said. The provost agreed that they could have catastrophic impact. Last year, many thought the process was too directive and top-down, so this year more faculty involvement is being pushed by the UPC process. Sen. Young said she would like to see more leadership exercised regarding the mission of the university. Prov. Lyman said the UPC is looking at questions of what the students want and what society needs—not everything we do makes it on those criteria. Take a department that does not have a lot of majors, has a large building and staff, but is not well-thought-of by peers in that field. How can we keep it in such times? Prov. Lyman noted that there was a difference between not having a program and not teaching about the field at all. He summed up by saying these are important debates to be having and they should be going on in the UPC.

Efforts will be made to expand classroom use and space, Dr. Lyman noted. Facility expansions are planned as the Honors College moves to the Honors House where the USM Foundation was (it is now in the Trent Lott Center). A new business building is planned, largely with private support, and a new nursing building will eventually leave a lot more “swing space”—flexible space for classrooms and offices. In the meantime, we will have to use classrooms more efficiently—avoiding having classes with 60 students scheduled in auditoriums for 300. Larger classes should be permitted in such a space before smaller ones. This may mean some faculty need to walk to another building to teach. There are enough seats for classes; they are often not distributed effectively. The popular times from 10 am to 2 pm may also not be times we can all teach in. The Space Utilization and Allocation Committee has proposed a policy for a more efficient use of space. Right now, space on campus is rather like the Oklahoma land rush, Dr. Lyman said. Whoever gets into a space gets to keep it. This is disorganized to the point that it hurts our university mission, as we cannot keep up with space or plan for using it. Pres. Saunders said the policy had been approved by the executive cabinet on first reading, but is now up for comments by governance groups.

Dr. Lyman looked up the snack policy in response to a question—he had not known of it before. Meetings on campus may provide their own snack foods if they do not exceed \$100 in cost. With more than that amount, orders should be made through Aramark. Small bake sales and charity fundraising are OK. They have listened to our feedback, and if there are questions about quality we may need to ask if this arrangement is harming our ability to do business—is what we get worth it? We get food credits from Aramark every year; we have used them for retention and enrollment growth activities. Assoc. Prov. Kemker has allocated about \$40,000. Sen. Rehner said he could purchase food from off campus for scheduled events last semester, but not this semester. Prov. Lyman said there had not been any changes to the Aramark contract, but maybe it is being enforced more. Sen. Hauer noted that Barnes and Noble might consider becoming an advanced trade bookstore, but Aramark will not let them build a coffee shop. Aramark is, after all, interested in making a profit so there are limits to its cooperation, Prov. Lyman said.

The IHL Board has approved a new textbook policy, including the requirement for an annual report on textbook use and a campus textbook coordinator. John Meyer was drafted for this post. The policy is clear but there are also possibilities for allowances for adjustments based on new knowledge or new faculty teaching a course. One element is that if a faculty member does not choose a textbook by the deadline, the department chair is expected to do so. Sometimes we may not know who is teaching a fall course, for instance, by an April 1 deadline. The policy is intended to ease the burden on students—some are crippled by textbook costs, going over \$500 a semester. Some senators noted that textbook rental policies at other universities and in years past at USM were more restrictive and “terrible.” Prov. Lyman said that a rental

policy had been sent to board members but they did not endorse that. Pres. Saunders noted that our average textbook cost per FTE was \$260, which would be a reasonable benchmark to start with. Senators noted that use of used textbooks and e-books through the library could help reduce student costs. Prov. Lyman had found that e-books were not really cheaper than printed books as one would expect them to be.

Prov. Lyman said that the centennial graduation ceremony in May will have graduates walking across the stage, their names will be read, and they will get a medallion. It will be a big, but personal, ceremony.

#### 4.3 Assoc. Provost Kemker

Assoc. Prov. Kemker addressed the issue of midterm grades. These have been discussed for a year and a half, and were a major topic at an administrative retreat with department chairs in August. There is evidence that having midterm grades on record can enhance retention—which is crucial for us as 100 students retained means about \$1 million more in the budget.

Midterm grades may be posted for all students from March 4 to 14. This may have been extended to March 24 due to the university closing for spring break.

This year, advising and registration will begin at the same time. Graduate students may enroll starting at 8 am March 29, seniors at 9 am the same day, juniors at 8 am March 30, sophomores at 8 am March 31, and freshmen at 8 am April 1. This way, students can enroll right after their advisement time. Students and advisors can also plan for and enroll in summer and fall terms at the same time. Technology development has made possible this quicker enrollment, Dr. Kemker said.

Sen. Lux pointed out that a freshman who was advised early, before April 1, could not be quickly enrolled. Departments should be able to override the date. Sen. Tingstrom asked if advisement and registration were later than usual this year. Dr. Kemker said the goal was to insure that midterm grades were posted for all students before advising week, so that information could be well used. Departments can then pull up student grades, and especially take note of Ds, Fs, Ws, or NAs.

Sen. Rehner pointed out that many policy changes regarding retention are announced to departments with only a few days noted of the change. The streamlined approval process for students withdrawing from the university was announced as it was happening. This semester, faculty suddenly are asked to input all midterm grades instead of only freshmen. What is the process for discussing these changes? What about the faculty senate, academic council, or e-mail discussions? Dr. Kemker said that it is difficult to reel in all the initiatives that are going on. They are in their infancy, and we need to get united on these things. The midterm grades were one of 16 initiatives that came out of the August presidential summit with chairs, deans, and provost. It took several meetings; there was a lot to it. In November, the Provost asked for a motion that was passed unanimously by the deans. Dr. Kemker sent an email to faculty in January warning that this was coming, and another email explaining the new procedure in March. Senators suggested earlier discussions at faculty senate or academic council about changes. Sen. Hauer pointed out that preview advising dates and times need to be set early so that faculty can be available around planned summer course times.

Sen. Lux suggested that treating our students like they cannot figure out their own midterm grades speaks badly about them. Sen. Young said that a midterm grade might be based on one test, and is really an early work in progress. Dr. Kemker said they are part of a concentrated, managed effort to retain students. Posting midterm grades is common throughout the country, and then we can advise based on those, and identify earlier students having trouble. That is what drives this. Sen. Burnett asked if we could have lists of D, F, or NA students, since presumably we are not patting A and B students on the back. Also, on SOAR courses may be rolled over from a year earlier that are not actually being offered this year, causing problems with students signing up for nonexistent courses. Sen. Rushing asked why not put midterm grades on the SMART sheet? Dr. Kemker said he would look into those suggestions. Students who have their schedules dropped at the start of the next semester or freshmen who are on probation after taking many 300 or 400 level classes are also situations being examined.

Dr. Kemker said USM is in its infancy on retention initiatives, but we are at a 10-year high for retention rate, at 91.1%.

A ten-minute recess was called at 3:45 pm.

## 5.0 Faculty Senate Forum: University Priorities Committee Update

Bill Powell

Assoc. Prov. Powell said the UPC website is now up and functioning, with updates frequently.

<http://edudev.usm.edu/upc/>

Currently, the academic subcommittee has given university data to the chairs for double checking during this week.

Tim Rehner

Sen. Rehner said he has seen evidence of the president and provost being invested in the UPC process. All the chairs now have the data from Institutional Research that will be crucial to this process. It is not confidential—it is on the IR website. There was a meeting with department chairs on March 4, and they are to give feedback on the data by March 11. They are working on getting at the costs of academic initiatives. How much does it really cost, say, to offer a minor or concentration in something?

Sen. Klinedinst said he appreciated the efforts to work at prioritization. Would there be discussion of other scenarios, however much we do not want them, such as giving a program the option of coping with a 10% cut? Dr. Powell said those discussions had not started yet. They will need to happen, but the committee is working to get information first. Sen. Rehner said they had no word on budget numbers until last week—that's when the \$15 million or so figure was communicated. So budget cut scenarios had not been discussed yet.

Responding to questions, Dr. Powell said a third subcommittee, the academic/administrative subcommittee, would evaluate programs related to academics but based on criteria developed by the administrative services subcommittee, since they did not involve teaching. Chairs are strongly urged to collaborate with faculty on their reports. Faculty must at least sign off on program reports to show that they are aware of their contents. Sen. Daves said he had found the chairs meeting reassuring. Pages of data were provided and chairs get input. It has been a good first step. Sen. Redalje asked just what is a program, anyway? Dr. Powell said that is what the committee would do the next Thursday. Sometimes it is best to collapse several degree plans into one program, but other times it makes sense to treat them separately.

Sen. Hauer said the administrative services subcommittee has finished its first phase, designed a survey instrument for each department, agreed a rubric and rating system. These will be sent out to departments the week of March 8.

Dr. Powell said the academic subcommittee will need to agree on criteria for evaluating programs, and also make room for discussion of restructuring from a lateral perspective—not just examining the university program by program individually. Sen. Young said that issues like how much tuition dollars go to athletics need attention. Sen. Rehner suggested anyone interested or with ideas send them to committee members to trigger thinking and ideas. “We all see different parts of the elephant.” The website has a suggestion box, Dr. Powell added.

## 6.0 Officers' reports

### 6.1 President (Evans)

Sen. Haley has been appointed as the faculty senate's appointment to the university committee on committees, to examine and clarify the university committee structure. The next meeting of the senate will be April 9 at Gulf Park. In the May meeting, assuming elections are finished, we will elect new officers. In June the new senate will meet. Send your ideas to the UPC or the faculty senate executive committee. We meet monthly with the president and provost. Dr. Powell pointed out that the major products of the UPC will probably be produced in July, and thus extra meetings may be needed. We had experience with that last summer, Pres. Evans noted.

### 6.2 President-Elect (Davis)

Sen. Davis attended many meetings of UPC and expanded cabinet, topics of which have been reported earlier.

6.3 Secretary (Meyer) – No report.

6.4 Secretary-Elect (Brannock)

We need officers for the two exciting years coming up. Anyone interested in president-elect or secretary-elect please contact Sens. A. Davis or Brannock.

7.0 Committee reports

7.1 Academic and Governance (Redalje) – No report.

7.2 Administration and Faculty Evaluations (Oshrin)

Sen. Hauer reported that evaluations of chairs, deans, provost and president will be tabulated March 8. There have been rumors of spotty compliance, but we did the best that we could to encourage the evaluations.

7.3 Awards (Brannock)

Nominations for the faculty excellence awards were received last week, and winners will be announced next week, and the Grand Marshal award will also be decided next week.

7.4 Constitution and Bylaws (Rehner) – No report.

7.5 Elections (Burgess)

The online election system has been tested and published. The election may begin March 10. Sen. Ray Scurfield from the coast has resigned from the senate, so the Gulf Coast will have a ballot.

7.6 Faculty Welfare (Davis) – No report.

7.7 Research and Grants (McCormick) –No report.

7.8 Technology (Bass) – No report.

7.9 University Direction (Davis) – No report.

## 7.10 Other committee and liaison reports

### 7.10.1 Faculty Handbook Committee (Beckett)

Sen. Beckett reported that perhaps rather like the guy rearranging desk chairs on the *Titanic*, the tenure and promotion process continues. One could get tenured and then get fired shortly thereafter; a real possibility in these times. Pres. Saunders has approved the library personnel annual evaluation changes. They now have three similar options to faculty in other colleges.

The question of whether associate and assistant deans and provosts vote in such deliberations remains unresolved. Sen. Beckett and the president have had lengthy conversations about it. She is bothered about the possibility of disenfranchising people. Sen. Young noted that the initial evaluation is more of a peer review, whereas a higher administrator does not seem like a peer anymore. Sen. Beckett said the Council of Chairs pushed this initially, then the faculty senate and the committee itself agreed that they should not vote, since they are not on a peer level anymore. Sen. Tinstrom noted that an associate dean might need to fill the place of the dean if he or she was out. Everyone has weighed in on this, but changes to the faculty handbook require the approval of the president.

The next issue for the committee will be the confusing wording about personnel committees vs promotion and tenure committees. Substantial changes will not go in effect until the summer, to avoid them during an academic year.

### 7.10.2 Gulf Coast Faculty Council (Annulis) – No report.

### 7.10.3 Academic/Graduate Council (Daves) – No report.

### 7.10.4 AAUP (Klinedinst)

Sen. Klinedinst thanked all for letters and support in promoting education funding and the withdrawal of the shortened termination notices policy proposed by the IHL board. The AAUP and others including advocates for K-12 education have formed a statewide consortium to deal with the legislature. They seek to get \$79 million more for education in the state. The U. S. senate did pass a jobs bill with potential funding. Mississippi Senators Cochran and Wicker supported it. It did not specifically address education but gave some hope. Another bill dealing with education is possible.

### 7.10.5 Space Utilization and Allocation Committee (Gould)

Sen. Gould said the proposed SUAC policy had been approved on first reading, and was now up for feedback. We need to provide feedback, as the policy will stay as it is unless some authority is exercised. The committee would have 19 voting members with 23 total. It remains unclear whether all changes of trading offices, say, will need a committee review. Any change in classroom space to something else would, of course, need approval. If a grant end date is reached that involved space given for that grant, 90 days are now granted (as opposed to 30 in the earlier draft) to vacate that space. Clearly, any major changes of space will involve a semester-length review. SUAC then makes recommendations, and the executive cabinet makes decisions. Pres. Evans noted that his lab is also his classroom. Sen. Redalje noted that some offer letters state the provision of research space.

## 8.0 Old Business

## 9.0 New Business

Sen. Klinedinst offered the following resolution for a vote at next month's meeting. He had discussed this with the president and provost, who said they could not commit to anything so early in the process.

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The Faculty Senate of the University of Southern Mississippi urges the administration to make the commitment that it will terminate no tenured faculty. Failing to do so can only undermine the academic integrity and stability of the university, leading tenure track faculty to see positions at other institutions which have a stronger commitment to the institution of tenure.  
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Sen. Beckett noted a question from the Town Hall meeting earlier in the week. What could we do for faculty who are leaving through no fault of their own? One option might let faculty become uncompensated research professors, providing for consulting or writing for grants while still affiliated with a university. Sen. A. Davis said that issue had been discussed with Pres. Saunders, who suggested that tuition discounts would be continued for staff members let go. Perhaps the Department of Economic Development could set up some systems to help displaced faculty members. The issue was referred to the Faculty Welfare Committee for further discussion.

10.0 Adjournment

Faculty Senate was adjourned at 4:56 pm.

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Respectfully Submitted,  
John Meyer  
Secretary for Faculty Senate

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Approved by  
Jeff Evans  
President of Faculty Senate