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## Faculty Senate Minutes - April 3, 2009

USM Faculty Senate

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## **Faculty Senate Meeting of April 3, 2009 Minutes**

**Attendance.** The following Senators were present (proxies in parentheses): Anderson, Annulis, Beckett, Blackwell (Rachal), Brannock, Bristol, Buchanan, Burgess, Burnett (Keltoum Rowland) Davis, Davis, Evans, Fisher, Goggin, Gould, Green, Greene, Hannon, Hauer, Judd, Kyriakoudes, Lunsford, McCormick, McGuire, Meyer (Hauer), Oshrin, Pandey, Piazza, Rachal, Rakocinski, Redalje, Rehner, Rushing, Scurfield (Annulis) Smithka, Spencer (Diane Ross) Tingstrom, Young.

The following Senators were absent: Bass, Campbell, Harbaugh, Klinedinst.

President Oshrin convened the Senate to order at 2:00, in room 216 of the Thad Cochran Center on Friday, April 3, 2009. Both the agenda and the minutes were approved without modification.

President Oshrin introduced the **President of the University**, Dr. Martha Saunders, who apportioned her remarks according to the division under her leadership.

From Administrative Affairs: The institution must still prepare for a 10% budget cut next year, but construction—which is funded differently and not from the general fund—will continue. A new parking garage, for example, will be bid out on April 28.

From External Affairs: The legislature has approved \$4.7 million of bonding authority for Southern Miss to use on the Hattiesburg campus for repair and renovation of current buildings and the completion of ongoing campus project. In a similar vein, one million dollars were appropriated to begin construction at Cross Creek; this is the first time real funds have been dedicated to this project. We should expect at least some additional funding, both from the state (which will reconsider a significant tobacco tax later this month) and from the stimulus money distributed by the federal Department of Education.

Athletics: We will host the Conference USA Baseball Championship during May 20-24. A female basketball player, Pauline Love, won the Cellular South Fan Award, determined by a state-wide cellphone vote.

Student Affairs: Police Chief Hopkins has learned that the University Police have received full national accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies. We are only one of two university police departments in Mississippi to be so recognized.

Finally, we have enrolled ten National Merit Finalists, the most we have ever had at this university.

There were questions about the rerouting of traffic on campus streets; President Saunders promised to refer the matter to her cabinet and will report at our next meeting.

Senator Beckett queried the President about the revival of the Faculty Activity Report (FAR); Pres. Saunders deflected the matter to the **Provost**, who stepped to the lectern.

His first point was the Academic Planning Group and its continued purpose, now that work on the budgeting process is essentially complete. They will look at academic programs “for the purpose of greater efficiency.” Then will follow non-academic programs. Deans have been asked to identify their top 25% of programs, the 50% of middle-level programs, and 25% of programs potentially in need of improvement. (At the conclusion of the Provost’s remarks, there were several questions about the nature of these “identifications.” He hoped that these reviews would be entirely positive, though he admitted that negative evaluation of certain programs might result in elimination of the unit and termination of its faculty. His light-hearted example was “psychoceramics,” a term safe enough to leave all departments comfortable—save, of course, the faculty in the Department of Psychoceramics.)

At this point the Provost returned to Senator Beckett’s question about the FAR. The Provost emphasized the need to have an efficient instrument to gather essential data often requested. He acknowledged that such processes must not be duplicative, as was a problem in the past. He is examining several software systems for user-friendliness and efficiency ([Digital Measures](#), [TK20](#), and several others). “The reality is that we have to have some way to capture this data.”

The university has entered into an agreement with [Blackboard](#) to enhance our online offerings. The increasing revenues of online registration should cover all the costs ensuing. This is to be a “coast-centered” effort, strengthening online efforts on the Gulf Coast campuses.

The Provost has hired the former chair (and associate dean of the College of Health) from the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences, Brett Kemker, as an assistant provost to oversee recruitment and retention. He is being paid with his former salary augmented by Student Affairs; no monies from Academic Affairs went into this position.

The Board of Trustees have approved the creation (or re-creation) of the Graduate School; endorsed also were several name changes and reorganizations within the College of Education and Psychology and the College of Business: namely, the Department of Marketing and Fashion Merchandising, the Department of Finance, Real Estate, and Business Law, and the Department of Educational Studies and Research at the University of Southern Mississippi. (Documentation is [here](#).)

The search for the dean of the College of Education and Psychology is stymied; the committee is looking for new options.

The Department of History is piloting a program of certifying faculty credentials. The attempt is to satisfy the increasingly stringent policies of SACS on qualifications. No longer, for example, will a degree in history certify a professor to teach any courses in that field. The new

accreditation statutes will link the instructor's *curriculum vitae* with his course offerings.

Several questions ensued about the FAR. The discomfort of some Senators with the return of this instrument was palpable and the discussion was prolonged, but the Provost emphasized the absolute necessity of having a university-wide reporting system of faculty activity. He confessed to some inability to understand the "paranoia" of certain faculty with the former FAR. Nevertheless, he considers the maintenance of a FAR a "reasonable request." A suggestion—at first proposed jocularly—to use a different nomenclature for the instrument was well received by the Senate.

Senator Beckett raised the issue of the relative paucity of sabbaticals being improved this year: only four out of 21 applications. The current sabbaticals committee studied the applications and ranked them, asserted both the Provost and Senator Davis, a member of that body. The Provost conceded that the number was reduced from 6 to 4 due to financial exigencies. He also favored applications from faculty who had never received a sabbatical before. Senator Rehner voiced the issue that a sabbatical might well be a right, not a competition. "I can't disagree more," responded the Provost; "I really resist the idea that this is a privilege." He continued, "I think you've earned eligibility, that's all."

For the first time in months, the Provost was excused in less than an hour—though not by much.

The **Report of the Senate President** ensued. He reminded Senators that the election of officers will take place at the June meeting. The executive committee will not offer a slate of nominees this year, so Senators are encouraged to discuss among themselves appropriate nominees to bring to the floor.

President Oshrin addressed the methodology of the Academic Planning Group alluded to by the Provost. He emphasized the complex nature of the scrutiny of programs, noting that all programs have merits and justifications. President Oshrin also returned to the issue of the FAR, which the executive committee had discussed earlier with the Provost. The Provost was advised by the excom that the duplication and improper use of the data are matters stringently to be avoided, and the Provost seemed to comprehend and agree. President Oshrin concluded that he thought a new FAR would ultimately be in the faculty's best interests.

President Oshrin then brought renewed attention the matter of sabbaticals. Senator Scurfield had sent a long letter to the Senate about his concerns and problems with the current sabbatical system. In turn President Oshrin proposes the creation of an *ad hoc* committee on sabbaticals, with Senator Scurfield chairing it. Senator Piazza noted that while Southern Miss is awarding four sabbaticals, Mississippi State is awarding fourteen and the University of Mississippi perhaps as many as thirty-three. (He later furnished the Secretary with full data verifying the statement.) All Senators were agreed that these were serious disparities indeed. Since the Provost was not available at the time to be questioned about the disproportion, perhaps the Senate will see fit to raise the issue again at the May meeting.

President Oshrin reminded the Senate that the May meeting will be on the Gulf Coast. We have hired a van holding fifteen passengers. Senators are asked to sign up in advance, by [contacting](#) the Secretary.

As there were no reports from the other officers, **Committee reports** ensued.

*Academics and Governance.* Senator Redalje queried the use of “collegiality” in tenure and promotion deliberations. How does one define such a term? Can collegiality be objectively evaluated? Associate Provost Powell said the university had held a workshop for chairs on this issue, and he will share with the Academics and Governance committee the information imparted there.

*Administration and Faculty Evaluations.* The forms are being processed in the data center and will be available soon.

*Constitution and Bylaws.* Committee chair Buchanan raised the constitutional change introduced at the last meeting. The amendment, as itself further amended, read as follows:

Article 1, Section 190. The Senate shall meet in nine regular sessions, once each month during the year except for the months of July and August. The Senate shall meet once over the span of January and February. Special sessions of the Senate may be called as required by the president of the Senate or at the request of a majority of its voting members.

This amendment will be enrolled into the Faculty Senate constitution.

*Elections.* Senator Goggin reported that the first round balloting has been completed and counted. The second and final ballot is being prepared now. Return rates from the faculty and colleges are highly variable, with 46% the College of Business voting, 44% of the College of Health, 36% of the College of Arts and Letters and College of Education and Psychology. Senator Goggin declined to cite the percentages from the College of Science and Technology and the USM Gulf Coast, remarking only that they were too embarrassing to state aloud.

*Faculty Welfare.* The committee asked for endorsement of its resolution presented last time:

WHEREAS, the Faculty Senate recognizes the complexity and ever-evolving nature of a comprehensive research university driven by a mission to continually improve practices, policies, and procedures that impact the cultivation of intellectual development and creativity through the generation, dissemination, application, and preservation of knowledge,

and WHEREAS, a comparison of the 2007 and 2008 Faculty Satisfaction Surveys revealed no change in organizational satisfaction, a construct known to be related to organizational performance, with the continued level of faculty satisfaction (55.8%) indicating a non maximal capacity for research and learning productivity,

LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT The University of Southern Mississippi establish a standing advisory

committee specifically charged to continually review best practices and budgetary planning for the enterprise of research and learning, guided by the higher levels of satisfaction and productivity evidenced in the Colleges of Health and Science and Technology, and research in organizational learning.

The resolution will be transmitted to the Provost by the Senate Secretary, as directed.

**Committee Liaison Reports** followed, dominated of course by the continuing deliberations of the *Faculty Handbook Committee*. Senator Beckett raised six issues:

1. Voting at the level of the College Advisory Committee (*Faculty Handbook* Section 2.11.2) has become a matter of some concern. Certain members of the College Advisory Committee (CAC) are refraining from voting in their own Departmental Personnel Committees (DPC) in order to cast a ballot at the higher level. To deter this practice, the committee proposes the following new text for the handbook:

(b) a member of a College Advisory Committee reviewing any departmental personnel evaluation or recommendation from his/her own department may not vote at the College Advisory Committee level regarding those evaluations or recommendations.
2. The meaning of the term “staff members” in the handbook section 8.3.2. The committee proposes the common-sense solution of replacing “staff” with the more pellucid “faculty.”
3. In the same section of the handbook there is some uncertainty about the clause “[faculty] with a fractional FTE are ineligible” to serve on DPC’s. The committee proposes revised language: “Faculty members employed with a greater than (>) 0.50 FTE are eligible to act in personnel actions within that department.”
4. At present the handbook leaves policies on sabbaticals largely unaddressed. After considerable deliberation, the committee proposes the following new text to be entered into the handbook, within section 6.2.5(d):
  - (1) In order to avoid possible conflicts of interest, faculty members above the level of department chair who are applying for sabbaticals should be considered in a separate pool from other applicants.
  - (2) Chairs applying for a sabbatical will receive their departmental recommendation from the Departmental Personnel Committee. If the existing Departmental Personnel Option is three-persons including the chair, the two non-chairs will write the recommendation. If the existing Departmental Personnel Option is chair alone then the departmental recommendation (for the chair) will be written by a committee made up of the three highest-ranking members of the department. In this case rank is first determined by professorial rank, then time of service to the university.
  - (3) Faculty members below the level of department chair will receive their letter of recommendation from the department chair or (at the option of the academic department) from the Departmental Personnel Committee.
  - (4) The sabbatical review committee, which makes recommendations to the Provost concerning the awarding of sabbaticals, will consist of nine members. Seven of these members will be selected by the Provost in consultation with the President of the Faculty Senate – one from each of the five colleges, one from the library, and one member from the Gulf Coast. The representative from each of the five colleges may be from

any of the university's campuses. The remaining two members of the committee will be appointed by the Faculty Senate; these two individuals may or may not be members of the Faculty Senate. It is recommended that some of the individuals selected for the sabbatical review committee be members of recent sabbatical review committees (including the previous year's committee).

(5) The sabbatical review committee will pick its chair.

(6) The sabbatical review committee will determine a procedure for ranking proposals. The overall committee ranking could then be used to make recommendations to the Provost.

(7) Recipients of a sabbatical leave will present the results of their sabbatical at the annual Letters Day or another public dissemination of the results of the sabbatical following their return (from sabbatical) to the University of Southern Mississippi.

5. Now smaller than it used to be before reorganization and the reduction of the number of colleges, the UAC is now too tiny to effect its business properly. (In some instances the UAC consists of as few as three committee members on certain personnel actions.) A possible solution is for each College Advisory Committee to send two (not one) members to the UAC., with the exception of the Library, which will retain only one. This recommendation would increase the size of the UAC to eleven members.

Further discussion emphasized the wisdom of electing full professors to CACs, since associate professors cannot vote on the fates of full professors.

6. The question of whether associate/assistant deans and provosts should vote in departmental personnel committees was broached. Arguments could be made on both sides, and the Faculty Handbook Committee debated the subject at length but failed to come to a consensus. Senator Beckett suggested a sampling of the Senate's opinion on whether such lower-level administrators should be forbidden from service on departmental personnel committees. A straw vote resulted with 12 in favor, 7 against, and 4 undecided.

Thus concluded Senator Beckett's remarks on behalf of the Faculty Handbook Committee. Prior to adjournment a few other matters were discussed briefly.

A potential resolution regarding health facilities on the Gulf Coast was voiced. This issue had been raised by Senator Scurfield at the last meeting. The Senate should consider the matter at its next meeting.

A question was posed about the change of evaluation procedures in the University Libraries as instituted by the new Dean of Libraries. President Oshrin answered that he had consulted with the Provost on the problem and suggested some solutions. He will keep the Senate informed as the issue develops.

Senator Rehner asked whether the possibility of twelve month salaries had been addressed since Mr. Willis' s presentation several months ago. President Oshrin promised to check into the matter.

President Oshrin adjourned the Senate at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by  
Stanley Hauer  
Secretary to the Senate

Approved by  
Stephen Oshrin  
Senate President

April 5, 2009

(posted 4-9-09)