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Faculty Senate Minutes - November 7, 2008

USM Faculty Senate

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The University of Southern Mississippi
Faculty Senate
Minutes for the Meeting of November 7, 2008
216 Thad Cochran Center

Members Present: J. Bass, D. Beckett, J. Brannock, D. Bristol, R. Buchanan, B. Burgess, J. Burnett, C. Campbell, A. Davis, J. Evans, D. Fisher, C. Goggin, T. Gould, K. Greene, B. Harbaugh, S. Judd, M. Klinedinst, C. McCormick, J. McGuire, J. Meyer, S. Oshrin, R. Pandey, G. Pate, B. Piazza, J. Rachal, C. Rakocinski, D. Redalje, K. Rushing, R. Scurfield, B. Spencer, D. Tingstrom, A. Young,

Members Represented by Proxy: H. Annulis (Scurfield), A. Blackwell (Fisher), E. Green (Babu George), J. Hannon (Pandey), L. Kyriakoudes (Brian Lapierre), T. Rehner (Rushing), P. Smithka (Goggin),

Members Absent: D. Daves, S. Hauer, K. Zantow

1.0 Call to order

Faculty Senate President Oshrin called the meeting to order at 2:06 pm.

2.0 Approval of the agenda

Senator Young moved and Senator Greene seconded approval of the agenda for the day. Passed unanimously.

3.0 Approval of the minutes

Sen. Judd moved approval of the previous month's minutes; Sen. Young seconded. Sen. Redalje noted the minutes as formatted on the web came through with strange symbols, like an "≡" instead of an apostrophe. Pres. Oshrin said he would speak to the "webmaster" about the problem. Two corrections were suggested: strike "USM's newest administrator" referring to Larry Lee, as he has been around USM for years, and spell HEADWAE correctly when mentioning that award. Minutes approved unanimously with corrections.

4.0 Remarks from the administration

4.1 President Saunders

Pres. Oshrin noted how fortunate it is that Faculty Senate now has people that want to come address us, and introduced **President Martha Saunders**.

Pres. Saunders noted she could not imagine people not wanting to come; "it's always been fun for me." She apologized for having to cancel some meetings; she had been on "grandbaby watch," and now she is here—Lucy Elaine Saunders is doing well "and I'm back."

Pres. Saunders asked for cooperation with state auditors on campus for the equipment audit. If they cannot find equipment, someone must pay for it.

Shannon Woodward has been selected as Director of Development for the College of Business, coming south from the U. of Miss. A search is underway for a Director of Web Services to address the frustrations with USM's Web presence, and following up on suggestions from the USM Web Task Force Dr. Saunders had appointed. Another suggestion was to develop a Web Services Group to work with all constituencies on campus.

Pres. Saunders will host a President's Retention Summit on campus Nov. 20 and 21. Consultants and campus representatives will discuss and explore ways to promote student success. We need to hold on to the students we get, as enrollment is one key to funding. It doesn't count if they don't graduate. Freshmen are the most expensive students on campus. We cannot afford to let one out of three leave. Incentives could be created for programs, so everybody is concerned, not just the Student Affairs area. Faculty will be invited to several open sessions.

The University Centennial is drawing near; just over one year away. Expect to hear more about multiple events, Pres. Saunders noted.

Sen. Beckett asked about an article regarding the USM research park in the Hattiesburg *American* noting a new group, Veritas, and other “secrets” about development there. Pres. Saunders said it was a secret to her until recently as well. There were some surprises for all of us in the past few weeks, she noted. She supports the Research Park, and the attempts to bring in companies attracted to the knowledge center being built there. Veritas is the first to build, perhaps 100,000 square feet. Details of such negotiations are necessarily kept confidential, as other communities are competing to get the same organizations to locate there. Pres. Saunders has asked for regular updates on progress. Sen. Beckett suggested briefings for the campus community to avoid the sense of secrecy.

Sen. Greene asked about charges against young women on campus. Why were the sororities not shut down as the fraternity involved was? Pres. Saunders responded that the sororities themselves may discipline their members as well, but sororities had not hosted the event while the fraternity had. She believes a fair process for dealing with such events is in place. President Saunders described this as a sad event for the university.

4.2 Provost Lyman

Provost Robert Lyman was introduced, noting that he also appeared before Faculty Senate eagerly rather than grudgingly. He introduced the issue of taking 9 months of pay over 12 months, and introduced Human Resources Director **Russ Willis** to discuss the issue.

5.0 Faculty Senate Forum: Russell H. Willis, Director of Human Resources

Mr. Willis presented three options that could be considered: First, one could take faculty gross salary and divide by 12. The problem here becomes a bookkeeping nightmare, however, as some faculty would be paid over two fiscal years rather than one. USM financial statements become more complex, and an Internal Revenue Service rule (409A) becomes invoked that restricts deferring pay. Also, private retirement plans would receive delayed contributions, as they would be made over 12 months rather than 9. Second, one could pay gross salary over nine months, and after taking all deductions for taxes and other payouts deduct an amount each month to be held by the university and paid in summer, which could be in addition to summer pay. A drawback is that no interest would be earned on dollars held by the university for this purpose. Third, the credit union could hold the dollars, deducted from nine paychecks by the faculty member for payout during the summer. Of course, then faculty members could go get that money any time, potentially, unless saved in a maturing CD. The second two options are the most do-able, with the third option being welcomed by the credit union any time.

Sen. Tingstrom noted that, in the past, the second option had been used. Sen. Burnett stressed the need for faculty choice in the matter. Sen. Davis noted the need to protect ourselves from ourselves if using the third option, perhaps by placing the money in maturing CDs. Mr. Willis noted that both Ole Miss and MS State use option 2, and whatever option a faculty member chose could not be altered mid-year. Mr. Willis intends to survey faculty after informing them of the implications of each option to decide on a procedure.

Mr. Willis noted that PeopleAdmin had been purchased and is currently being used as an employment application management tool. Application materials are submitted online, and search committee members may log in and look over materials on any computer at their convenience. Many other universities, including Ole Miss and MS State, are using the system. The key benefit of the system was preserving documents about candidates not selected, which was very difficult with decentralized job searches and in hurricane aftermath. The Department of Labor audit cited USM for lack of record-keeping, and this program solves that problem. So far, things seem to be going well, and Mr. Willis offered to address groups or sit with someone at their computer to guide them through it if necessary.

4.2 Provost Lyman

Provost Lyman reported that the President had approved the new reporting arrangement for iTech; it now reports to the Provost's office rather than to Executive Cabinet. After only two weeks, Provost Lyman indicated that conversations were happening that might have been harder to accomplish before.

Chairs Council and the provost are discussing a plan involving regular terms and evaluations for department chairs. There was a 1999 policy that had been approved up to the Provost level but never implemented. This makes chair succession more regular and less traumatic every five years, but is not meant to be a term limit—if a department and chair are both happy, the chair may continue. A question was asked if such terms would apply to deans as well. Provost Lyman said that Deans must focus more on their careers as administrators, so fixed terms might not apply as readily to them, but certainly a regular system of evaluation could be discussed.

Provost Lyman stressed that a hiring freeze has been initiated effective November 1. Positions already posted and advertised are not affected, nor are temporary and adjunct positions. The cuts were triggered at the IHL Board level, but this is USM's strategy to cope with 2% cuts this fiscal year and possible 4 % cuts next year. Because 85 % of the budget goes to personnel, savings must be effected this way. This is a real freeze, and though an appeal process is possible, as we do not know how long economic troubles continue, appeals must be considered unusual. Discussion followed about how permanent the freeze would be and if it would lead to reallocation of resources. Professor Lyman noted that, ideally, any vacancy should lead to discussions of whether reallocation should be considered—for instance if a department was showing dramatically lower enrollment. The longer the freeze, he noted, the more likely some reallocation issues would come up. The freeze was not intended for that, however; it is a short term response to budget difficulties now.

5.1 Announcement from Kathleen Hayman, Director of the Campus Barnes and Noble Bookstore

Kathy Hayman, Manager of Barnes and Noble bookstore, presented senators with a list of courses across campus still lacking updated book orders. Early book orders often allow purchase of less expensive used books. Ms. Hayman also noted that adopting books that students can buy back results in great savings for them; the bookstore anticipates giving back \$600,000 this year to students.

Provost Lyman noted that the university is responding to a freedom of information request from a media source regarding custom textbooks. He has found that departments use them at USM to package sets of articles or chapters from various venues, not to make a profit. Most do not cost much more than standard textbooks, The largest royalties go to the history department which edited its own book. No professor at USM is slapping the name and photo on a book and dramatically raising its price, as the negative story goes. Still, Provost Lyman noted that faculty should consider the ability of the student to sell the book back when considering text options. Loose-leaf or tear-out books cannot be bought back.

6.0 Officers' reports

6.1 President

President Oshrin noted that his experience with PeopleAdmin as a search committee member had been a good one; it had been easy to use and any search committee member could log on and read application materials at their convenience.

Chair terms had been developed by the Council of Chairs when Pres. Oshrin was a member; it made it more possible for a chair to step away if desired; yet also provided for longevity if a chair and department were happy. Sen. Redalje asked about a job description for chairs; Pres. Oshrin noted that one had been developed listing 64 things chairs were expected to do. He will circulate the job description and proposed policy to all senators for their consideration.

Electronic voting for faculty senators is possible this coming spring. Itech is working on a voting software package for students; a faculty version could be very similar. This would eliminate the need for paper ballots sent through campus mail and multiple rounds of hand counting those ballots.

6.1.1 Strategic Enrollment Planning

Meetings of the strategic enrollment planning committee suggest that consultants have found some great methods for going after “low hanging fruits” with simple things that could boost retention anywhere from 3 to 10 percent. More information will be forthcoming related to the retention summit later in the month.

6.2 President-Elect -- No report

6.3 Secretary – No report

6.4 Secretary-Elect -- Senator Meyer asked all members to report proxies held at the meeting.

7.0 Committee reports

7.1 Academic and Governance (Redalje)

Sen. Redalje reported the committee was considering a review of USM governance structure along with considering more effective models; USM has been dominantly top-down; perhaps we can find some effective combination with a “bottom-up” governance structure as well. Also, the role of the faculty in decisions about reallocation of resources is crucial. Provost Lyman noted that over the summer a consultant had suggested means to link fiscal planning with the strategic plan, and a committee has been assembled to work on this and will meet later in the month. Denise Von Hermann and Bill Smith co-chair the committee. Our dollars are mostly in people, so any reallocation necessarily involves positions.

7.2 Administration and Faculty Evaluations (Oshrin)

We look forward to evaluating the administrators this coming spring.

7.3 Awards (Beckett)

Sen. Beckett reported the committee’s work on systemizing faculty awards at the university. The faculty senate currently awards five faculty awards: Community Service, Mentoring, and outstanding Junior Faculty Research, Teaching, and Service. The spring 2008 recipients will be honored at an upcoming Faculty Senate meeting.

The university also presents six other awards through various offices:

The Grand Marshall Distinguished Professor will honor long service to the university through teaching, research, and service with an all-faculty selection committee (11 or 12 members rather than last year’s 19). Previously, this award went to the longest-serving faculty member, but more thoughtful selection was desired.

The HEADWAE Award was established by the Mississippi legislature, for selection of one “outstanding faculty member” with no more clearly defined criteria. Clearer guidelines for teaching, research, and service have been outlined and a \$500 honorarium included. Only one per university is awarded per year so this award should be meaningful.

Summer Grants for the Improvement of Instruction now may include proposals for any type of innovative teaching techniques (including distance learning). The posted nomination deadline of October 22 has already passed, but the new system will take hold by next year.

The Excellence in University Teaching award and The Excellence in University Service award will open up nominations campus-wide. No longer must one win a college award to be considered by the university for these.

Sabbaticals will be placed in separate pools of applicants for associate/assistant/deans and faculty members. In the past, the provost chose the selection committee members; now seven will be appointed by the provost in consultation with the faculty senate president, and the remaining members will be appointed by the faculty senate. Sabbatical recipients must present results of their research the following year, perhaps at Letters Day.

Discussion ensued about representation of Gulf Coast faculty on awards committees and as award recipients. Sen. Beckett noted clear efforts recently to make sure a coast member would be on selection committees, and Sen. Piazza noted that anyone could sign up for the Faculty Senate awards committee, including coast members. Some award recipients have been from the coast. Sen. Judd felt strongly that even good intentions cannot overcome the distance of coast faculty; fewer work projects together or professional encounters on the same campus could cause neglect of coast faculty being considered for awards.

Pres. Oshrin thanked Sen. Beckett and the committee for taking on the confusing dispersion and processes for giving awards and working to make sense of them.

7.4 Constitution and Bylaws (Buchanan) – No report.

7.5 Elections (Goggin) – No report.

7.6 Faculty Welfare (Davis)

An online survey is about to be done of the faculty; the same one as one year ago. Sen. Davis reported that it is easy to take and does not take long, and the questions have correlated with faculty success. An open area for comments needs to be added. Questions were raised about how to get the word out for faculty to take the survey; Sen. Greene suggested a university email out to all faculty members.

7.7 Government Relations (Beckett) – No report.

7.8 Research and Grants (McCormick)

Sen. Redalje reported the committee will look at the impact of formula funding by limiting graduate tuition waivers to 12 hours per semester. Questions involve how that policy started and what its implications may be.

7.9 Technology (Spencer) – No report.

7.10 Other committee and liaison reports

7.10.1 Faculty Handbook Committee

Sen. Beckett reported the latest issue taken up by this committee involves who may sit on third-year-review, tenure, and promotion committees. The handbook is clear that administrators may not sit on those committees, but what about associate deans or associate provosts? They may be active in research and their department and be a most useful vote, or they may have grown distant from their department and thus may be an inappropriate vote, or may bring undue pressure on other members of the committee to vote a certain way. Comments are welcome and Sen. Beckett noted that this issue must be resolved.

7.10.2 Gulf Coast Faculty Council

Sen. Scurfield reported that the Coast Faculty Council had elected a President-Elect, Heather Annulis (who also sits on Faculty Senate) and a Secretary-Elect, Marlene Anacombe. An ad hoc transition team is planning for future relocations from Gulfport to the Gulf Park campus once more buildings reopen. One tentative plan will have College of Education and Psychology offices, university club, student center, and administrative offices in Hardy Hall, and Arts and Letters offices in Elizabeth Hall.

The Honors College is establishing Senior Honors on the coast, with a coast coordinator. Also, Ken Zantow was named assistant dean of the college of Business on the coast, and graduate coordinator, and will need to resign from the Faculty Senate to carry out these duties. Pres. Oshrin asked for recommendations for a coast member to appoint to serve his term.

7.10.3 Academic/Graduate Council – No report.

7.10.4 AAUP

Sen. Young suggested that an active chapter was good for USM, but people do not want to pay the membership dues. With the dramatic shift going on for universities away from public funding, the process should be monitored. Yet, some are saying, “You do it.”

8.0 Old Business

None.

9.0 New Business

9.1 Senator Greene: full funding for the Honors Forum

Sen. Greene introduced a resolution calling for dramatic increase in funding for the Honors forum, suggesting that higher quality speakers could be obtained (as in the past) with a richer budget. The resolution will be voted on at next month's senate meeting.

Whereas the University Forum was once able to bring in renowned speakers such as Stephen J. Gould, Gloria Steinem, Russell Means, Susan Sontag, Kurt Vonnegut and E.O. Wilson, Antonin Scalia, and Carl Bernstein:

Whereas the University Forum today has less than \$600 per speaker and is unable to bring in such high quality speakers;

Whereas the value of bringing in such speakers is much greater in terms of knowledge and learning than the money actually spent on the speakers;

Whereas the University Honors Forum is valuable not only to the campus community but to the Hattiesburg and Pine Belt communities;

Be it resolved, the Faculty Senate encourages the University administration to restore full funding (\$40-50,000) or more to the Honors forum budget. Although this amount may no longer fund speakers of the high caliber as those listed above, it will allow the program to bring more and better speakers than have been available over the last few years.

9.2 Senator Bristol: the role of the University Librarian in collection development

Sen. Bristol explored elements of a new planned library approval plan for book purchases. For the sake of collection development, the new dean of libraries would enter an agreement where the university will receive automatic shipments of books each week, and books would be added to the collection or returned based on reviews by each department. Books would be ordered based on a department profile involving courses taught. Concerns were raised by senators about faculty input into initiating such a plan, ordering books for research purposes rather than for a course, as well as the logistics of who would approve purchases weekly for each department. Some department members might not be knowledgeable about desired books for other areas of their own department. The Dean of Libraries is scheduled to address next month's senate meeting; it was decided to discuss such issues with her.

9.3 Senator Fisher: forthcoming survey from the University Assessment Committee

Sen. Fisher asked members to fill out a survey the committee will use to assess the work Culture at our university. Associate Provost Bill Powell suggested that faculty members could access data related to retention and graduation rates at www.usm.edu/IR.

10.0 Adjournment

Faculty Senate adjourned at 4:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
John Meyer
Faculty Senate Secretary-Elect