

Fall 10-3-2014

Faculty Senate Minutes - October 3, 2014

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**The University of Southern Mississippi
Faculty Senate Meeting
Cook Library 123
October 3, 2014**

Members Present and Represented (by proxy): M. Alford, J. Anderson, T. Barry, A. Beck, D. Booth (D. Fletcher), S. Cloud, K. Davis, D. Fletcher, K. Goodwin, D. Griffin, R. Griffitt, A. Haley (B. LaPierre), O. Harvey, B. Hayden, F. Heitmuller, D. Holt (F. Heitmuller), S. Hrostowski, L. Iglesias (J. Anderson), J. Lambers, M. Leonard, H. Lyn, M. Lux, C. Meyers, C. Miller (M. Van Norden), E. Molaison, L. Neelis, W. Odom, J. Olmi, R. Press (L. Story), P. Price, L. Rackoff, S. Reischman-Fletcher, T. Roberson (T. Welsh), S. Rouse (T. Welsh), K. Shelley, C. Sirola, L. Story, C. Tardy, M. Van Norden, T. Welsh, J. White, K. Zantow.

Members Absent: R. Buchanan, L. Nored,

Business Meeting – 2:00 PM

1.0 Call to order by Pres-Elect Story, 2:02 PM

2.0 Approval of agenda

On motion by Sen. Fletcher, the agenda was revised to begin with Item #5 (Administration), second by Sen. Buchanan and unanimously approved.

3.0 Remarks from Administration

3.1. Provost Denis Wiesenburg

Provost Wiesenburg invited questions and stated that he and the deans are working on the Academic Affairs budget with Dr. Vinzant to refine the process. They are trying to determine real loss revenue, how much tuition was paid in 2013 and how much has been billed in 2014, rather than utilizing parametric measures to plan.

Sen. Zantow inquired about enrollment of international students.

Dr. Daniel Norton was present and was invited by the Provost with the approval of the senate executive committee to speak. Dr. Norton has a draft plan on internationalizing the University and recruiting international students. Plans to have an international recruitment officer and international enrollment center, a focus that is new to the university.

3.2. Dr. Daniel Norton, Associate Vice-President, The Center for International Education

Dr. Norton stated he has spent the past six months putting together a plan for recruiting. Now we have an office for international student services and recruitment. We want to separate those, remove SAT/ACT requirements for undergrads, and move from a paper to an online enrollment form. We have international graduate students still waiting to be admitted who applied for Fall 2013. Support services are needed for international students, including international housing that provides housing during school breaks. Representatives from the university will be in China in November to recruit. The goal is to have 600 international students by academic year 2016-2017.

Sen. Zantow asked if faculty could help.

Dr. Norton said they are working with some faculty, but they need trained international recruiters to work out agreements such as 2/2 undergrad agreement (2 years at Chinese university, 2 years at USM) or dual degrees and other cooperative agreements. They are working on building relationships with departments who need to review and approve international applications as well as working to identify credible agencies to work with internationally. First, we need to build infrastructure. One problem is that there are no dorms open during school breaks

Sen. Fletcher asked if students could bear the cost of housing during breaks.

Dr. Norton replied that other universities provide housing so that should be part of support services. There is a cost to bringing international students to campus; there is less cost in bringing graduate students than international undergraduates.

Sen. Lux asked what type of infrastructure is needed for the English language requirement. Their students have to be able to interact with patients and that has been a problem in the past.

Dr. Norton replied that our English language requirements are higher than other universities such as South Alabama, but we do want to have tutors and services to help them.

Sen. Lux replied that she would love to have someplace to refer students who need to improve their English skills.

Dr. Norton replied that all areas of services across campus have to be coordinated, but the benefits are great.

Sen. Van Norden inquired whether Dr. Norton is aware of difficulties regarding the presence of international students at Stennis Space Center to which Dr. Norton confirmed that he is aware of both the issues and the difficulties they pose in recruiting students to the Department of Marine Science.

Dr. Norton replied yes indeed interest is really ratcheting up for China.

Sen. Harvey said that as an international he is happy to hear of this initiative and asked if he had spoken to department chairs about it. He was told that we do not recruit west of the Mississippi or internationally.

Dr. Norton stated that he had identified several departments that seek international students. He has talked to the deans and several chairs, and they are working to coordinate and expand their efforts. It's an ongoing program-by-program capacity.

Sen. Fletcher said given our budget situation what cost will we have to bear related to infrastructure.

Dr. Norton replied that there would be some costs, but the results will be great. If enrollment is down locally, then we should shift some of the local recruitment resources to recruit internationally. I think, moving forward, there must be a significant number of international

students. It's a favorable cost/benefit ratio, but we need to make a commitment to support infrastructure.

3.3. Provost Denis Wiesenburg

Sen. Tardy asked if the Provost could tell us how the budget will affect Academic Affairs.

Provost Wiesenburg replied that Academic Affairs is the largest part of the budget and the 4.5% cut is being addressed by the deans for this year and next. This coming year is manageable, but the problem will be the following year. The deans are meeting with Dr. Vinzant to work things out. They are trying to refine the numbers for tuition collected in 2013 and 2014.

Sen. Zantow commented that we had a problem with football and fired the coach – we now have a problem with enrollment/recruitment so will someone be held responsible? Do we need to bring in an expert?

Provost Wiesenburg stated that they have re-energized the Recruitment and Retention Task Force. We just had a consultant here and are trying to implement the recommendations as quickly as possible; there has been about \$1.8 million investment in retention and recruitment, so those things should be taking effect.

Sen. Zantow added that a consultant was different than having someone here.

Sen. Fletcher asked if this was the person who put together an analysis that shows growth in Mississippi but is contradictory to Miss. Department of Education analysis.

Provost Wiesenburg replied that his model was the Dell Computer model that thrived despite a downturn in the market for computers. We need to look at not only high school students but also graduate students, international students – we hope to gain a bigger market share.

3.4. Dr. Douglas Vinzant, Vice-President for Finance and Administration

Dr. Vinzant presented a discussion of the required reduction of the budget. A total of \$6,789,469 is required to balance the budget.

Sen. Sirola asked how much we had in reserves.

Dr. Vinzant replied there are two types of reserves:

- \$400,000 for Gulf Park and Hattiesburg campus (most of this is Gulf Park)
- \$10,000,000 one-time money.

The \$10 million is equal to 18 days of operation, but we should have at 90 days or about \$50 million so reserves are relatively almost nonexistent. We need to increase our reserves, so we need about \$1.7 million in recurring reserves. Reduced spending for next year could be one-time, but we need to keep those lower limits for the following year and make this permanent.

Sen. Tardy asked why we are being told about this now.

Dr. Vinzant stated that last year, he was trying to assess the financial situation and trying to determine whether enrollment was going to stabilize or decline. It is now clear we need to change the process related to recruitment and enrollment. These new investments were just approved this summer. It was thought we would get some bump in enrollment this year so we did not plan for budget reduction.

Sen. Tardy inquired about waiting to increase reserves.

Dr. Vinzant stated that we have to reduce how much we are spending and at the same time we cannot create a downward spiral. We have to create a climate of supporting needed initiatives.

Sen. Fletcher mentioned that last year a salary plan was discussed and asked for the status.

Dr. Vinzant replied that in order to fund salary increases, we would have to re-allocate. So, the plan is on hold for now.

Sen. Lux asked if their enrollment increases, would programs be able to count on some help with funding later.

Dr. Vinzant replied that part of the reason to cut expenses is that if a program grows we can provide additional services. Part of the initiative to increase reserves is to support programs that grow. The only way to be successful is to support programs that show growth in SCH (student credit hours).

Pres-Elect Story stated that the concern was that once faculty lines were lost, it was challenging to get them back.

Dr. Vinzant said that was an important concern and will involve the deans and the Provost. If a department is growing, it makes sense to add a position and support programs that are growing.

Sen. Rackoff stated that there is no context about how we got here or how this happened.

Provost Wiesenburg stepped in to address this and noted this is a 3-year problem. Cumulatively, enrollment is down 1352 students. This year with a new president and new CFO we now have a handle on this. We used reserves last year, but we are dealing with it now.

Sen. Rackoff stated that he was referring to a longer range of 10-12 years.

Dr. Vinzant replied that last year the budget formula changed; so in addition to internal challenges, there is now more dependence on enrollment. A number of things have made this more difficult. An increase in 300 students per year would make a tremendous difference.

Sen. Sirola asked if there was a slide that showed enrollment numbers. It looks like an outlier a couple of years ago – perhaps numbers were based on this bump rather than more realistic numbers. Retention really counts, so it will be interesting to see retention numbers.

Sen. Hrostowski asked if there were any “sacred cows” and noted the administration org chart has gotten taller. Would administration be willing to flatten their org chart?

Dr. Vinzant replied that every area is planning to cut 4.5%. They are asking everyone for plans to cut 4.5%, but we will take a close look and choose the best options with least impact. No one is immune. Everyone will be expected to contribute. There are no sacred cows.

Pres-Elect Story noted that she just received notice that the Faculty Senate’s budget will be cut 4.5%. Sec. Anderson agreed to give up her course buy-out.

Sen. Price inquired whether everyone would report what would be cut and the effect of those cuts.

Dr. Vinzant responded that yes. The President could have asked for 4.5% across-the-board cut but wanted to be more strategic. The problem has been communication. The administration has been keeping a close eye on enrollment in hopes the gap would close. It did not, o plans for cutting are needed now.

Sen. White stated that it was reported on NPR that to fully fund the Mississippi Adequate Education Program, the state would need to re-allocate \$300 million. How involved is the University in this?

Dr. Vinzant replied that the total state budget to fund state universities is \$370 million, so the \$300 cannot come from universities.

Sen. Van Norden asked if any programs would be eliminated for Spring 2015 and about extending the deadline for the plan for 4.5% cuts from the deans.

Provost Wiesenburg responded that the only way a program would be eliminated would be by a proposal from the dean. As this is a long-term process, it is not an option now.

Dr. Vinzant added that the deadline issues had been expressed by the deans and the date; therefore, the 2015 FY budget plan was extended until November 14th and FY 2016 as soon as possible so the administration can have time to determine what is best to do.

Sen. Lux said that Dr. Saunders once told her that if a program was eliminated, they would have a year then to finish teaching those courses. Then they would help students find a similar program in another university.

Dr. Vinzant replied that there were specific guidelines for this, and those would be provided to the deans and chairs.

Sen. Rackoff inquired about the feasibility of cutting scholarships.

Dr. Vinzant replied that they would have to look at that but that we are in a competitive marketplace. There may be ways to adjust the mix, so we will look at that.

Sen. Fletcher stated that there was a \$2.3 million shortfall and \$1.7 million to reserves, and asked if we are cutting money from our programs so it can be re-allocated through reserves.

Dr. Vinzant responded that the \$2.3 million is estimated for the shortfall. They will use a finer analysis but do not expect that number to change.

Sen. Fletcher asked if \$2.3 million is making up for this year, so there would be a 1.5% budget cut for next year?

Dr. Vinzant stated that the budget assumes no vacancies, but in reality each year there are vacancies that generate a one-time savings. The new budget reflects an effort to bring the permanent budget in line with permanent revenue. As Dr. Tammy Barry stated in a meeting recently, we are trying to eliminate a dependence on an assumption about turnover.

Sen. Zantow noted that maybe we should have a 5-year view of things instead of a 1-year view.

Dr. Vinzant responded that is why we do not want to depend on reserves. We are working on multi-year effects of re-alignment of resources.

Sen. Tardy asked if there was an effort to reduce fixed costs.

Dr. Vinzant replied that yes, they are making an effort to reduce utilities and have been able to reduce kilowatt hours but this was offset by rate hikes. They have and will continue to look at ways to save on utilities.

We are enrollment-dependent, and the only way we cannot be enrollment-dependent is to build reserves.

Sen Griffiths asked about the likelihood of such.

Dr. Vinzant responded that we need to think about what the University will look like in 5 years, how we relate, what we do in relation to what students want. Do we recruit for strong programs or under-enrolled programs?

Provost Wiesenburg added that in the past few months, they have identified many ways to recruit students such as international students and transfer students along with student success initiatives. We really think these initiatives can turn things around. If we can do that, we will also be able to build reserves. We need a culture on enrollment management that we do not have at Southern Miss. It's an opportunity as well as a challenge.

4.0 Approval of September minutes

On motion by Sen. Hrostowski, second by Sen. Sirola, the minutes of the September 5, 2014 meeting were unanimously approved.

5.0 Officer Reports

5.1. President (absent)

Pres. Press submitted the following report in absentia:

- Budget cuts. Once again the University faces budget cuts across the campus, in academic and non-academic units. Working collegially, we can get through this. IHL Commissioner Hank Bounds, on a recent visit to campus, pointed out that birth rates and thus primary and secondary school enrollments are declining. Tuition is probably about as high as it can go without outpacing the reach of many families. Dr. Bounds pointed out that ten years ago it used to take a year's wages to pay for a student to attend University; today it takes about 2 ½ years of wages.
- The Senate has before it a resolution on budget cuts recommendations. Not every Senator may agree with every point in the resolution, but the resolution provides an opportunity for the Senate to be heard on this important issue. Because the budget review is already underway, it would be useful to vote on the resolution now.
- Moving beyond budget cuts. The budget cuts give added importance to a coordinated and expanded USM recruitment effort. The current effort, though taking place in times of declining high school enrollments and increased competition from other Universities, is not adequate for the challenges we face. This needs priority attention from the Administration. Some colleges are developing their own recruitment plans that will need faculty support.
- Retention efforts are under way across the campus. Faculty can help and as Senators we should set examples and encourage others to take those extra minutes to help the lagging student. If each department on average adds eight or so students per year (whether from recruitment or fewer dropping out, or a combination), we can begin to emerge from the shadow of budget cuts.
- Sexual Misconduct Policy. The Senate has begun looking at the issue of the USM sexual misconduct policy. Clearly it is extremely important that the University have a way of addressing allegations of sexual misconduct (by faculty, staff, and students). It is also important that a due process be exercised when allegations are made.

5.2. President-Elect Story

- If you have been here at Southern Miss any length of time, you know to expect change. Although all change is not negative, we have become efficient in being flexible, managing crisis, and finding opportunities. The recent years have been no different with several administration transitions, natural disasters, organizational restructuring, inconsistent athletic program success, and unstable financial climates. The university community and particularly the faculty body has always pulled together, done what was necessary, and got us through whatever we faced.
- We have been asked by many administrations to grow enrollment. We have been asked by many administrations to make tough budget cuts. This is not unfamiliar territory. Maybe what is a slightly new caveat is the intense sense of urgency with which we are being asked to accomplish these two things. Certainly, we can all recognize the need to increase student credit hours, improve progression to degree, and other student outcomes. We can also understand when money generated is not adequate for the money spent then identifying

ways to improve revenue and decrease expenditures is critical for the organization to survive. I think what most of us are struggling with is how can we take those difficult steps without negatively affecting our ability to THRIVE.

- In times of change, we have to be careful not to create chaos. When leaders of any organization express and convey a sense of urgency, we tend to embody that urgency. In our efforts to respond to this urgency, we can sometimes communicate misinformation or, at minimum, preliminary information. Doing so can be detrimental to the process and relationships. Last week, information was communicated to faculty senate prematurely in an effort to get ahead of the financial issues we are facing. The specifics of the budget situation were thoughtfully discussed and decided the afternoon before at a cabinet meeting, and it was communicated to our body before the administration (including the deans) had a change to communicate it to the university community. Our current administration has taken great lengths to have an open and transparent relationship with this body. We have to be careful not to negatively affect that relationship. I have apologized to the provost and president on our behalf for not allowing them the opportunity to communicate these decisions first. I know we all want to move forward through these current challenges in a way that we can thrive on the other side of it.

5.3. Secretary No report.

5.4. Secretary-Elect No report.

6.0 Senate Committee Reports/Discussion

6.1. Academic and Governance

Sen. Heitmuller reported that while the Gulf Park campus is considered by USM administration to be a branch campus it does not meet all the SACS guidelines to qualify as a branch campus. The committee is still waiting for an org chart, and they plan to propose a pay and equity resolution in November.

6.2. Awards

Sen. Barry reported that when Dr. Easterling confirms funding for the awards, an announcement will be sent to Faculty Senate listserv.

6.3. Finance

Sen. Zantow reported the committee would be presenting a resolution, and they will be meeting monthly with Dr. Vinzant on budget issues.

6.4. Elections

Sen. Anderson noted that the Elections Committee did not have a chair, and Sen. Alford volunteered to chair the committee.

6.5. Research and Scholarship

Sen. Harvey reported that the committee met with Dr. Cannon who assured them that research would not be affected by budget cuts and that proposal development awards are still available. The URC is preparing a resolution to present to Dr. Cannon about the importance of research to USM and the recommendation that research funding not be cut.

Pres-Elect Story added that the new incentive program for grant funding will begin in the spring, and that MIDAS funding is phasing out.

6.6. University Relations

Sen. Van Norden reported that the Gulf Coast Business Council was assessing higher education needs on the Coast.

6.7. University Welfare and Environmental Concerns

Sen. Hrostowski reported concerns about faculty misconduct accusations and due process.

7.0 Old Business – none

8.0 New Business

8.1. Resolution regarding Budgetary Process

A resolution was proposed by the Finance Committee, and after discussion Sen. Fletcher moved to suspend the rules and vote to adopt the resolution with proposed amendments, with a second by Sen. Lambers.

The resolution was approved by a majority vote with one nay and one abstention.

A FACULTY SENATE resolution proposing principles and recommendations for the current budget revision process.

WHEREAS, An enrollment shortfall has resulted in a reduction in projected revenues which threatens the financial viability of the university; and,

WHEREAS, The integrity of the academic offerings of the university is based upon building and maintaining viable programs, and attracting and keeping qualified faculty; and,

WHEREAS, Transparency in budgeting, policy making, and program development, as well as shared governance, are concomitant to the success of the university; and,

WHEREAS, The budget revision process must address the demands of our many academic programs in a timely and fair manner; and,

Therefore to insure an orderly and strategic response to the need, as President Bennett outlined September 24, for USM “to make budget adjustments in order to live within our means when we have a decline in enrollment,” we recommend the following:

1. that faculty input on planned cuts be achieved immediately through a spending reduction planning process that is in line with the President’s desire to make this a ‘transparent’ process;
2. that any program elimination should be carefully vetted by faculty and designed to build effective utilization of scarce resources and maintain the integrity of the university;
3. that vacant lines and attrition be used whenever possible but even only after considering the viability of the targeted programs;
4. that a plan be created for colleges to evaluate existing programs that respects the many ways that program success can be measured which would include, for example, current and future potential, efficiency, outside support/funding, as well as number of students, and contributions to the general education curriculum;
5. that to the extent possible, the cuts be outside of academics, acknowledging the Administration’s plans to impose a 4.5% cut in all budget units (e.g., administration, athletic, and other non-academic area spending);
6. that to the extent possible, programs that maintained or grew enrollment carry less, or none of the burden of the reduced enrollment;
7. that for the 2015-2016 academic year, the Deans and the Administration create two plans: one for no growth in enrollment; and another for possible loss of 350 or so in enrollment. Have both in place by mid Spring;
8. that the Administration mount an expanded recruitment effort to help boost enrollment;
9. and finally that faculty be encouraged to do what they can to support student success and participate to the extent possible in recruitment activities to help boost enrollment.

8.2. Inquiry from University Welfare and Environmental Concerns Committee

Sen. Hrostowski stated that due to concerns about whether faculty are receiving due process after being accused of sexual harassment. Institutional policies are linked to the Provost’s Web page but are not clear so a list of questions have been prepared to submit to Dr. Rebecca Malley and USM compliance director/associate general counsel, Paul Walters.

Pres-Elect Story will invite them to the next Faculty Senate meeting to address those questions and explain University policies related to accusations of faculty misconduct.

8.3. Fill vacant College of Nursing senate seat

Pres-Elect Story related that Sen. Hart had resigned, and that Dr. Hayden had been nominated to serve out her term.

Sen. Barry requested and Pres-Elect Story agreed to nominate someone from the College of Nursing to serve on the Awards Committee to replace Sen. Hart.

9.0 Adjournment

Upon a motion by Sen. Hrostowski and second by Sen. Sirola, the meeting was adjourned at 4:50 PM by unanimous voice vote