Faculty Senate Minutes - October 20, 2000

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Faculty Senate Minutes

October 20, 2000


Members Represented by Proxy: D. Cabana (J. Rachal), D. Dunn (M. Lux), T. Green (D. Duhon), E. Harrison (A. Brock), S. Hubble (M. Nettles), A. Jaffe (D. Hunt), J. Palmer (J. Rachal), G. Rayborn (J. Whitehead), R. Smith (D. Duhon).


Visitors: M. Henry, Provost; M. Sumrall, Staff Council.

Forum Speaker: Jayne Perkins, University Registrar. In opening, Dr. Perkins stressed her desire to maintain good communications with faculty. Her principal remarks addressed the Senate’s Course Prerequisites Resolution [passed May 5, 2000; accessible at courseprereqresol00.html], which calls upon the Registrar to track course prerequisites and notify students of any course registration that conflicts with prerequisite requirements.

The first provision poses no problem, as PeopleSoft will allow the identification of course requisites, prerequisites, and co-requisites. Such information will be entered into the system in May or June of 2001.

Dr. Perkins believes, however, that individual academic departments, rather than the Registrar, should notify students of prerequisite issues, as the departments, not the Registrar, hold curricular authority. Dr. Perkins suggested that she work with a smaller Senate group to develop a workable arrangement on this matter.

Dr. Perkins further spoke to a number of PeopleSoft implementation topics, including:

Schedules. The Summer 2001 schedule is the last that will be entered in the
current Bull system; this entry will be completed by personnel in the Registrar’s office. All further schedules will be entered in PeopleSoft.

Registration. Full Web-based registration will be implemented by Fall 2001; the telephone registration will be dropped.

Academic history. Academic history must be converted. The first efforts will be focused on the Fall 2001 semester.

Prerequisite checking. A general review of the process of prerequisite checking will be conducted. A hierarchy of check "levels" will be needed to avoid crashing the system.

Advisement. Dr. Perkins highlighted and asked for faculty input on this issue. Unlike the current PIN code, the student password, once issued, will be under the student’s control. As a result, the password will be separated from the advisement process. How then can student registration in the web environment be controlled? A variety of options are possible. All students could be "flagged"; unless the advisor checks off on registration, the student may not register via the web. Alternatively, flagging may be selective, by college, academic department or program. The Registrar needs to know what will best address advisement needs across campus.

In response to questions and comments from Senators, Dr. Perkins indicated the following:

PACE will continue to operate until full implementation of PeopleSoft.

PeopleSoft is capable of warning a registrant of the existence of a course prerequisite; it remains unclear, however, whether or not the system will be able to name the prerequisite for the registrant.

The current registration "window" could be extended, with fewer students registering at any one time, but such a change would have a significant negative impact on overall performance of the system.

The switch to a wholly web-based form of registration does involve computer access issues. Research suggests, however, that virtually all students will have relatively easy access. The greatest concern at present is for computer access of those students on campus "after hours."

About 350 universities have by now implemented at least major modules of PeopleSoft with good results. Research suggests that those institutions experiencing major problems either tried to implement too quickly or were unable
to handle system upgrades. There have been lawsuits filed against PeopleSoft, but most have come from the corporate sector. USM is reaping the benefits of continual improvement.

Pres. Laughlin requested that senators come to the November meeting prepared to discuss the password/advisement issue.

1. **Call to Order.** The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.
2. **Approval of Agenda.** The agenda was approved as presented.
3. **Minutes Approval.** Minutes of the September meeting were approved as distributed.

4. **Executive Committee Reports**

4.1 **President’s Report.** Pres. Laughlin offered the following report:

**IHL Board:**

President-Elect S. Hubble and I attended the IHL Board meeting in Jackson yesterday. While there is no firm word on our financial situation, the assumption is that IHL will have to give back 5% of the current year’s budget; this amounts to a $3.8 million cut for USM. We will likely get some official word by mid-November. The Legislature, by law, may not appropriate more than 98% of projected revenue—which gives us a 2% cushion if revenues come in under projections. During this year, revenues have been about $20 million per month short of projections, and this shortfall puts us over that cushion. State law requires the Governor to make mid-year cuts if revenues are short to the extent that the state cannot make its budget. The law also says that he cannot cut any one agency more than 5% until all have been cut by that amount. The 5% cut has already been levied on executive agencies. IHL is vulnerable because we have such a large part of the state budget. The Governor has so far exempted K-12 and some smaller agencies.

There has been much talk about the Rainy Day Fund. This fund was set up to assure those who guarantee our state bonds that the state is fiscally sound. There is about $50 million in the Rainy Day Fund that can be tapped without having to pay it back. If we use anything beyond this $50 million, it will have to be paid back next year, plus the state will have to come up with the money to pay for whatever we use the Rainy Day Fund money for this year. There is some pressure on the Governor to use this fund to mitigate our immediate financial problems.

In the IHL meeting yesterday, each of the Presidents was asked to tell how they were going to handle this 5% cut. The answers were: hiring freezes, reductions in part time faculty, larger class sizes, downsizing, closing programs, interruptable
power, limiting equipment and supply purchases, limiting travel. Dr. Fleming said that he wants to preserve faculty positions and programs. He also made a very strong statement about the effect these cuts would have on our local economy and about the need for an immediate tuition increase in January. He was the only president who spoke up on these issues.

The President will be meeting with the Executive Committees of the Faculty Senate, the Staff Council, the Student Government Association, and the Graduate Student Association on Tuesday, October 24th, to discuss strategies for managing any cut we may receive. It is very important that you discuss your ideas with the Executive Committee (all committee chairs and officers).

Every year, we ask that the Senate college delegations arrange a meeting with your dean to discuss any issues that your colleagues want discussed. I think this is as good a time as any to get that process started. I strongly urge each delegation to schedule a meeting with your dean within the next few weeks in order to talk about how the process of dealing with cuts will be managed in your college.

**President’s Cabinet:**

**Technology issues (John McGowan):** 107 buildings will be networked by February; by July the Honeywell Bull will be moved out—this should save $500,000 per year in maintenance costs. We need to look at governance issues for technology. A letter has been sent to all colleges regarding an advisory committee for technology.

**Parking issues:** No decision has been made yet on an increase in parking decals, although this is being discussed in the Transportation Committee. It is probably inevitable that parking fees will have to go up in order to pay for a garage. Royce Pierce is now the Interim Director of the Transportation Department.

**Benefits:** President Fleming said we will look at additional university benefits that can be provided to employees. Vice President Gilbert is looking at the issue of allowing faculty and staff to make on-campus charges.

**Academic Calendar:** A proposed academic calendar through Spring 2003 was distributed, with a full discussion to take place at the next Cabinet meeting. All IHL institutions operate within the same general parameters. I checked the Ole Miss and Mississippi State academic calendars on their web sites. Ole Miss has a one day fall break, but they have Saturday exams in December. Mississippi State has no fall break. The calendars for the three institutions are substantially the same.

**Department of Marine Science Site Plan/Stennis Space Center:** A proposed
site master plan for the Department of Marine Science at Stennis Space Center was distributed. This is a long range plan whose purpose is to reserve space for future development. One building is currently being renovated for use of the USM faculty and staff who work there.

**Internal Communications Study Group:** President Fleming has formed a group to study communication issues within the University. Dr. Terrell Tisdale, retired President of Jones County Junior College, is chairing this group. Members include the Presidents of the Faculty Senate, the Staff Council, and Graduate Student Government Association, and a representative from the Student Government Association. The Senate Executive Committee discussed this at length last week.

**Deans Council:**

**September 27th:** Dr. Fleming attended this Deans Council. In the wake of the biweekly pay issue, he discussed the need for deans to keep faculty and staff informed. On the issue of technology, he indicated that Deans need to be full players and that he will not support technology at the expense of programs. He may retain 50% of the lapsed salary funds next year for emergencies.

**October 11th:** Jim Borsig discussed the need for the University community to become more aggressive in bringing elected officials to campus. Susan Malone made a presentation about the PT3 grant program on preparing teachers to use technology. A technology competency test is being discussed for students entering our teacher education program, and there is concern that there need to be strategies in place to ensure that our teacher education faculty have these competencies as well.

**Web Presence Council:** I have appointed Dean Dunn to be the Faculty Senate representative to the Web Presence Council, with Toby Graham as his backup.

**President’s Council on Diversity:** Janie Butts has expressed a wish to retire as the Senate representative to this group. Sybil Harrison has agreed to serve in that capacity.

**Comments/discussion/actions related to President Laughlin’s report:**

Most discussion focused on the budget situation, followed by consideration of a motion regarding the communications study committee established by Pres. Fleming.

K. Austin noted that several years ago university personnel in Louisiana had to work for some time with no or reduced pay, and asked whether the same might occur in Mississippi. Pres. Laughlin responded that we indeed have a "financial
exigencies" clause in our contracts, but pay reductions would clearly be a last resort.

W. Scarborough asked whether anyone has explained the grossly inaccurate revenue projections. Pres. Laughlin responded that discussion has emphasized expenditures rather than revenue, notably large continuing obligations for prisons, mental health, and schools. There is speculation that a temporary "casino bubble" helped create overly optimistic revenue projections.

M. Dearmey related hearing that a hiring freeze had already been imposed by the administration. Provost Henry stated that in fact no freeze had been imposed. Several permissions-to-advertise vacant positions had been granted and searches were expected to go forward in the usual way. At a later date permissions to interview would be evaluated in light of the evolving budget situation.

J. Butts noted in response to Provost Henry’s remarks an emerging critical situation in nursing due to retirements. Provost Henry agreed that some positions are essential to preserving programs; permissions to interview will nonetheless be assessed at the appropriate time in the context of financial constraints.

M. Dearmey commented that at the administration-faculty forum on Sept. 25, Pres. Fleming denied that the 17 faculty positions used to address the recent budget shortfall were "lost." Deans speaking to the point, however, have said that the positions will not be restored, that they are indeed lost for good. Provost Henry stated that without money for it in the budget book, no position may be filled.

J. Smith pleaded the plight of junior faculty already facing severe financial exigencies in light of deteriorating health benefits. The issue poses a critical morale problem.

M. Dearmey recommended that the University consult the guidelines on exigencies of the American Association of University Professors. Those guidelines call for cutting programs, not salaries.

Pres. Laughlin reminded the Senate that the executive committee will meet with Pres. Fleming on Tuesday. The administration is serious about engaging the University community in the budget discussion. The prospect is for extended bad times, though it is too early to project any reliable numbers.

Provost Henry commented that we must first deal with the immediate challenge of making a 5% reduction. In the process we should all become lobbyists for the University.

M. Dearmey asked about funding commitments for technology. Pres. Fleming
stated on WDAM-TV that the University would spend $4.5 million a year for the next 4-5 years for technology development. How can such expenditures be managed in face of major cuts? Provost Henry responded that no part of University operations is sacred, though clearly we must move ahead with technology development.

Pres. Laughlin recommended that Senate college delegations set up meetings with their respective deans to discuss the impending cuts, and encouraged attendance at the November 10 legislative forum.

J. Rachal introduced the following resolution on the hiring of an organizational communication consultant:

RESOLUTION ON HIRING AN ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION CONSULTANT

WHEREAS:

There is an identified need for better communication among administrators and faculty and staff;

The President has also recognized a need for improving communication by setting up a Communications Committee to work on solutions to the problem;

It has been the recent practice of the University to bring in professional consultants when a critical need is identified, e.g., technology consultant, master planning consultant, landscape consultant, and parking consultant;

The identification of communication problems and the need for improved communication between faculty, staff, and administrators are so critical that it is the firm belief of the faculty that professional expertise is needed to examine problems and to present lasting solutions;

THEREFORE:

The Faculty Senate recommends that the University contract with a consultant with expertise in organizational communication to do a study that would be included in the Communications Committee's final report to the President.

[END OF RESOLUTION]

J Rachal moved and J Smith seconded a motion to suspend the rules to vote on the resolution today. Motion Carried. J. Rachal then moved to adopt the resolution. S. Nielsen seconded the motion.
Discussion on the resolution ensued:

M. Dearmey expressed opposition to spending money on a consultant given the budget situation. J. Rachal responded that hiring a consultant is a critical issue justified by the severity of the campus communication problem.

M. Miller urged resistance to the implication that everything is a communication problem; substantive disagreements are not communication problems. J. Rachal reflected the Senate executive committee view that communication must be two-way, and not simply a matter of information distribution by the administration.

M. Dearmey identified a governance dimension to the issue. AAUP guidelines state that faculty should be elected rather than appointed to committees. The Senate should have been consulted on composition of the communications committee. Pres. Laughlin noted that Pres. Fleming appointed the committee chair, Dr. Terrell Tisdale, only; other members of the committee are elected representatives of faculty, staff and student organizations.

J. Smith questioned the selection of Dr. Tisdale’s as chair, given that his experience is with the junior college system, which is quite different than the university system in many respects.

D. Alford stated that while many faculty have expertise in the communications arena, feelings are strong and neutrality is impossible. An external consultant is advisable and should be a priority concern.

Pres. Laughlin indicated that Pres. Fleming has said he will not support an external consultant given the financial crisis.

J. Smith asked whether the communications group would make inquiries on the Gulf Park campus. Pres. Laughlin responded that it would.

A vote on the motion to adopt the resolution was taken. In favor of the motion: 23. Opposed: 13. Motion carried and the resolution was adopted.

4.2 President-Elect’s Report. No report.

4.3 Secretary’s Report. No report.

4.4 Secretary-Elect’s Report. D. Alford read out the proxies received.

5.0 Committee Reports.

5.1 Academic and Governance. No report.
5.2 Administration and Faculty Evaluations. No report.

5.3 Archives. T. Graham spoke to the resolution introduced at the September meeting (archivesresol00.htm). There was no discussion. The resolution was adopted unanimously.

S. Nielsen noted that the committee will recover Senate records in the possession of J. Palmer and determine which to include in the archives in keeping with the guidelines of the resolution just adopted.

5.4 Athletic Liaison. T. Green was not present.

5.5 Awards. S. Graham-Kresge reported that the committee met this morning to consider candidates for the HEADWAE award. The committee will inform the University community of the winner after the Provost is officially informed.

5.6 Faculty Welfare. J. Rachal brought two resolutions introduced at the September meeting before the Senate.

The resolution on summer pay and responsibilities (summerpayresol00.htm) passed unanimously without discussion.

The resolution on the bi-weekly payroll (biweeklypayresol00.htm) was discussed:

J. Rachal noted that Pres. Fleming is now on record stating that faculty payroll will not go to a bi-weekly schedule.

W. Scarborough suggested that the issue could reemerge at a later point.

D. Duhon offered that a bi-weekly schedule may well be preferable to some faculty, notably incoming faculty. D. Duhon moved to amend the close of the resolution to read, "urge the administration to allow individual faculty to choose the type of pay system they prefer, bi-weekly or monthly."

J. Smith seconded the motion to amend.

The amendment was discussed:

J. Rachal expressed concern over the dilution of the opposition to the bi-weekly schedule. D. Duhon confirmed that the intent of the amendment was to move from opposing bi-weekly to proposing a choice, with bi-weekly as one option.

M. Cobb and M. Dearmey argued in favor of maintaining a stance of opposition, and therefore against the amendment.
Several Senators questioned the feasibility of a choice of options given the administration’s earlier rationale for moving to the bi-weekly schedule in the first place.

W. Scarborough noted that the vast majority of faculty stands in opposition to a bi-weekly payroll. The motion to amend the resolution was voted on: In favor: 7. Opposed: 23. Motion fails.

The original resolution was voted on: In favor: 29. Opposed: 1. The resolution passed.

D. Duhon suggested that the difficult budgetary times may be opportune to suggest to IHL that it reduce the length of the semester. A week was added some time back. J. Smith noted that for younger faculty in particular, an extra week without teaching responsibilities in December and May could be vital to scholarly productivity. Pres. Laughlin directed the Faculty Welfare Committee to conduct research and bring the issue before the Senate for consideration. The issue could then be presented to the Association of Faculty Senates.

5.7 Constitution and Bylaws. R. Smith was not present.

5.8 Elections. No report.

5.9 Environment. D. Conville was not present.

5.10 Faculty Development. No report.

5.11 Government Relations. A. Kaul reported in J. Palmer’s absence. The Committee has identified three priority issues: parity funding for USM; consistent (annual) faculty pay raises with an aim to achieve the SREB salary level; and health insurance. Parity funding is considered the lead issue, and is recommended as the focus of discussion at the November 10 legislative reception. On J. Smith’s suggestion that Senate endorsement of the committee’s agenda might be helpful, A. Kaul moved that faculty focus on the three named priority issues, with emphasis on parity funding, at the November 10 meeting. B. Coates seconded the motion.

Discussion:

M. Dearmey queried the relationship between IHL and the legislature. Can the legislature override IHL on the parity funding issue? Provost Henry explained that the universities make their funding requests to IHL, which in turn presents its request for the entire system to the legislature. IHL is, on the whole, responsible for allocating whatever funds are appropriated by the legislature. The legislature
does have authority to add and delete budgetary line items, as well as to make special appropriations, and listens when there is a strong message from the universities. J. Smith added that IHL, despite its authority in budget matters, is very attentive to any concerns or complaints expressed by the legislature.

A vote on the motion was called. The motion passed unanimously.

5.12 Technology. No report.

5.13 Transportation. W. Scarborough reported on an unsatisfactory recent meeting of the Transportation Committee. A request for rezoning due to the loss of 34 parking spaces because of DuBard School construction, presented by D. Thames and S. Oshrin, was denied; instead, two additional handicapped parking spaces were allocated. S. Graham-Kresge recommended pursuing this issue further. Handicapped children who need to access speech and hearing rehabilitative services are involved. How can the University present such programs as centers of excellence but deny transportation access? S. Oshrin acknowledged the complexity of the issue, noting that designating a parking space as handicapped ties it up for the entire day, while underscoring the strongly negative morale impact of the situation. M. Dearmey suggested that pointing out the apparent liability dimension of the problem (parents attempting to access services for handicapped children) might help to overcome existing roadblocks. W. Scarborough stated that the committee did express concern for parents and children coming onto campus, but nonetheless produced a poor and unreasonable response to the problem. In general, W. Scarborough noted that the current committee seems bent on protecting violators. Student members are altogether uncooperative and vocal in disdain for parking regulations.

Other points in Scarborough’s report follow:

R. Pierce has been appointed by Vice-President Gilbert to direct a new transportation organization. It appears that the existing committee has only advisory standing within the new structure, prompting the observation that the administration intends only to disseminate information without consultation.

There has been no movement toward establishing a system of reserved parking spaces.

Parking hang-tags are expected to return soon. Each individual will be allowed up to two tags, with the second twice as costly as the first.

A number of tickets based on increased fines were voided due to a legal requirement that parking rules be repeatedly published prior to implementation.
W. Scarborough has suggested that ticket writers would be more effective if they "blanketed" selective areas on some sort of rotational pattern rather than roaming all over campus, as is current practice.

Resolutions introduced at the September meeting were brought up for discussion and vote:

W. Scarborough moved that the resolution on enforcement of parking regulations (parkingenforceresol00.htm) be adopted. J. Rachal seconded the motion. The motion to adopt passed without discussion and with one vote opposing.

W. Scarborough moved that the resolution opposing higher parking fees (parkingfeeresol00.htm) be adopted. M. Dearmey seconded the motion. **Discussion:** M. Cobb offered a friendly amendment in the form of striking the word "substantially" from the phrase, "The Senate emphatically rejects any proposal to increase substantially parking/transportation fees until such time...." W. Scarborough accepted the friendly amendment to the resolution, which passed unanimously without further discussion.

On request, W. Scarborough read into the minutes the concluding paragraph of an October 11 letter he had written to R. Pierce, Interim Director of the Transportation Department: "Finally, I must say that I found the Transportation Committee meeting of yesterday to be unsatisfactory in every respect. It is clear that the committee has no real authority (as you conceded) and, consequently has no reason for existence. As with everything else under the present administration, decisions are made at the top without consultation with either faculty or staff and then are simply disseminated through committees like our own. It reminds me of France under Napoleon during the period of the Consulate – an appearance of democracy but no substantive input from the people. Apparently the students still have some influence with the administration on parking (as long as they lobby in behalf of the violators), but they do not gain redress through our committee but by going directly to administrators. It is simply appalling that some jailhouse lawyer can persuade the administration to refund parking fines (earned by violators) on the basis of some obscure law enacted years ago, while, at the same time, you and other members of the so-called Transportation Committee reject out of hand the reasonable request of rezoning made yesterday by Professors Oshrin and Thames. So much for accommodating faculty/staff needs and concerns!"

5.14 AAUP Liaison. M. Dearmey made no report, but urged all faculty to join the American Association of University Professors.

5.15 Faculty Handbook Task Force. No report.
**5.16 Association of Faculty Senates.** A. Kaul reported that the Association unanimously endorsed the resolution adopted by the Senate at its September meeting. Copies of the resolution were sent to the governor, lieutenant governor, speakers of the house and senate, Commissioner Layzell, IHL chair Nicholson, and the chairs of the house and senate higher education committees. Thus far the only response has been from Amy Tuck, acknowledging receipt. The Association will be looking for additional ways to draw attention to the salary issue.

A. Kaul reported further that the Association met with Commissioner Layzell on October 9 to receive an update on the budget situation. The commissioner stated that a cost analysis on returning the tuition benefit to 100% (from its current level of 50%) of cost ([tuitionincreaseresol00.html](http://tuitionincreaseresol00.html)) had been completed and a copy of the analysis will be sent to A. Kaul.

A. Kaul indicated that he would raise the issue of semester length [5.6 above] at the next meeting of the Association.

**6.0 Old Business.** There was no old business to consider.

**7.0 New Business.** There was no new business.

**8.0 Announcements.** No announcements were made.

**9.0 Adjournment.** The meeting adjourned at 4:41 p.m.