Faculty Senate Minutes - December 15, 2004

USM Faculty Senate

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1.0 Call to Order 5:05pm

2.0 Approval of Agenda

3.0 Joan Exline speaking on SACS Probation:

Dave Beckett began the meeting with an opening statement. He explained that this special meeting of the Faculty Senate (FS) was called in order to allow Dr. Joan Exline to speak to senators regarding the SACS Probation. He said that he wanted to go on record with a statement first regarding the comments made by Dr.'s Exline and Thames printed in the newspaper last week. In a newspaper article, Dr. Exline was quoted as saying that Dave B. refused to allow her to speak to the senate and the president followed that statement saying that it was hard to communicate when the senate refused to communicate with him. Dave B. said that he wanted to clarify the record. He said that on the afternoon of Dec. 9th at 2:30, a meeting was held with Dr. Thames, Dr. Exline, the deans, provost, head of council of chairs and academic council, and the faculty senate president to discuss the SACS probation. Participants were asked not to disclose the timeline discussed in the meeting. Dave B. said that Dr. Exline asked after the 2:30 meeting if any faculty groups would be meeting soon. Dave B. said that the faculty senate was meeting that afternoon and Amy Young said that academic council would also be meeting soon. Dr. Exline asked Dave B. if she could speak to the faculty senate at their meeting that evening. Dave said that the FS meeting was a special meeting called to address two pressing issues (Gulf Coast resolution and the Post Tenure Policy). He said that since much of what had been discussed at this 2:30 meeting could not be shared and since the actual SACS report would not be released until January, he thought that it would be better if Dr. Exline attend the January FS meeting. She agreed. Dave B. stated that the faculty senate has been extremely communicative with the president and that the president’s statement to the press was disappointing. Dave B. also stated that if he had known that all the information discussed at the 2:30 meeting would be printed in the paper within the next couple of days, he would have been more inclined to have Dr. Exline speak to the senate or he would have been more forthcoming with information to the senate himself.
Dr. Exline then spoke. She stated that the reason the information had been published in the newspaper was that a newspaper reporter had access to notes from the meeting which he intended to publish. Since he had the notes and intended to publish the information anyhow, the administration gave him the timeline information used at the meeting to ensure accuracy.

Dr. Exline then gave an overview of events. She said that she was appointed to her position as special assistant to the president for accreditation, planning, and articulation in July of 2004 to oversee the SACS reaffirmation process that begins in 2005. In Sept. 2003 and 2004, progress reports were due to SACS regarding their 1995 visit. She said that under the current review, the university was lax in 3 areas: 1) Strategic Planning, 2) Institutional Effectiveness and 3) Continuing Education (distance learning). She said that while Myron Henry had been provost, the university had completed a strategic plan and that was taken off the list. But apparently, the university had not successfully met the other two areas. Dr. Exline said that she had not been hired to take on the past SACS requirements but to oversee the 2005 process. But due to a resignation in Sept. 2004, she took it on. She said that she found out that information sent in Sept. 2004 was determined inadequate at the SACS board meeting in December 2004. She said SACS would be sending its official letter explaining the details around January 10th, 2005.

Dr. Exline then opened the floor for questions.

4.0 Questions and Answers

Faculty senate president and president-elect, Dave B. and Bill P. had asked faculty earlier in the day to send them questions via email. Dave and Bill would ask the questions so that anonymity could be maintained. They came prepared with a list of questions and faculty were allowed to ask questions too in response to Dr. Exline’s statements.

Q: The university, during the past administration, had developed a very thorough strategic plan. The Hattiesburg American story today mentioned that a new strategic plan has been developed. When was it developed? Who developed it and were faculty involved?

A: A new plan was developed with faculty input. The new strategic plan is on the web page of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Brad Bond initiated focus groups of faculty last Nov. 2003 to develop the plan. [This drew a big murmur from all senators. Dave B. stated that he had been at a focus group meeting last Nov. but had no idea that it was to develop a strategic plan. Other senators concurred and said that they, too, had been at a focus group meeting but that the group had only met once and that nothing discussed by their group is reflected in the 5 goals on the web page. One senator reflected that she was in a focus group and the main topic of conversation was the lack of communication between administration and faculty. No senators at the meeting were aware of the current strategic plan.] The strategic priorities also were reviewed with chairs at their annual chair meeting in September and with the President’s Community Advisory Council. The deans were asked to distribute the draft plan to faculty and get input on the strategic goals and 2005 tactics.
Q: Dr. Thames met with a SACS officer, Mr. Rodgers, 2 years ago when Brad Bond informed the president that USM was out of SACS compliance. What did they discuss?

A: Dr. Exline wasn’t there and didn’t know.

Q: The administration says that we are addressing the SACS concerns. Why will this cost us $500,000 to address and is it a one time/one year cost?

A: The $500,000 will be used for salaries, to build an infrastructure to meet SACS requirements now and in the future, and to fund the potential Quality Enhancement Plan intervention. It probably won’t be a one time expense.

Q: You (Dr. Exline) announced the hiring of Joy Hamilton as the director of assessment. Was the position advertised nationally or posted internally? Were there other people interviewed? Is it true that Joy Hamilton is a formal student of Dr. Exline’s? What are her qualifications and does she have past experience dealing with SACS?

A: The position was posted internally. Several internal applications were received - one other person was interviewed. Yes, Joy Hamilton is a former student of Dr. Exline’s. No, she doesn’t have specific experience with SACS but she has experience in program evaluation and survey research and had excellent organizational and project management skills.

Q: Were any faculty involved in the search?

A: No.

Q: There are plenty of faculty here on campus with expertise in the area of SACS Accreditation. Why doesn’t the administration tap into these resources and ask these people for help?

A: Dr. Exline welcomes any volunteers who would like to lend assistance.

Q: Dr. Thames has stated in the press that “We’ve addressed most of SACS’ concerns.” What does that mean?

A: We have done a lot of what SACS wanted. We just didn’t get the paperwork to them. Many of the depts. have already done their assessment plans. We just didn’t have them on the web.

Q: Are we on probation because our documentation is not on the web?
A: Our evaluations were not comprehensive enough. Many units have been conducting and reporting assessment results for the last two years, but it needs to be done on a consistent and ongoing basis across the university.

Q: Dr. Thames and yourself have stated to the press that there are “gaps of activity” concerning SACS documentation, specifically between the years 1997-2001.

A: [Myron Henry made it clear that that statement was incorrect and that there was no gap of documentation while he was provost.] Dr. Exline stated that initially, they thought there was a gap because no documentation regarding communications with SACS could be found for that time. It was later determined that no documentation regarding communications with SACS was missing and no “gap” existed between 1997-2001. However, we do not have consistent assessment data before the 2003-04 academic year in the administrative files or in the archives, so there is a void in assessment data before 2003-04 except for those programs accredited by their discipline specific agency. Dr. Exline encouraged anyone who had files on such data to bring them forward.

Q: Will we be able to give SACS enough documentation since we are only beginning to evaluate some of our programs and our core? The wording states “on-going assessment?”

A: Yes, if we start now, we will have enough by next fall. Our goal is to have complete information for two academic years: 2003-04 and 2004-05.

Q: The SACS probation was “For Good Cause.” Did they outline a 2 year monitoring period for us?

A: In May 2002, a 5 year progress report was due. Dr. Lucas was interim president at that time and asked for an extension until Sept. 2002. We submitted a report in Sept. 2002 which was considered inadequate and another report was then due in Sept. 2004. Though the September 2004 report was submitted on time, Dr. Exline found out at the SACS December board meeting that it wasn’t adequate either.

Q: A senator pointed out that SACS looks for evidence of shared governance and university support of things such as library materials. He wondered if USM could really get off probation with the lack of shared governance on campus and the shortage of monies for library materials.

Q: A guest in the audience pointed out that the SACS accreditation was absolutely necessary for nursing accreditation and that even probation could hurt their accreditation.

Q: Another guest in the audience pointed out getting the university off of probation was going to require a lot of extra work by faculty (committee work, etc.). This type of work was considered “service” – something not valued by this administration. The type of work that was valued by the administration was research and grant-writing. That was the type of work that got “excellents” on evaluations and resulted in merit pay. Why should faculty take on even larger loads if that type of work was not valued?
Faculty should be evaluating their own work to determine if they’ve accomplished their goals. Faculty should also help because it’s the right thing for the university. Dr. Exline stated that she didn’t want people working on this for points.

Dr. Exline ended the meeting by telling senators that she and President Thames would be flying the next day to Atlanta to talk with SACS representatives personally to determine what caused the probation and what they could do. She said that she would be glad to come back to the January meeting to elaborate or answer questions since the report would be out before we next met.

7.0 Meeting adjourned at 8:20pm: Before the meeting was officially adjourned, senators discussed the information presented by Dr. Exline and what action, if any, the faculty senate should take. It was decided to postpone further discussion until January’s meeting since all senators were not present at this meeting and since the university would not receive the official letter from SACS until January outlining the specific causes for probation. In the meantime, senators authorized the executive committee to issue a summary statement to the press on behalf of the senate.
Members Present and Those Represented by Proxy (In Parenthesis):

**College of the Arts & Letters**
- Joe Brumbeloe
- Amy Chasteen-Miller
- Phillip Gentile
- Stephen Judd
- Bill Powell
- Bill Scarborough
- Jennifer Torres (Stephen Judd)
- Anne Wallace

**College of Business**
- David Duhon
- Bill Gunther

**College of Education & Psychology**
- Taralynn Hartsell
- Melanie Norton
- Joe Olmi
- Janice Thompson
- Daniel Tingstrom

**College of Health**
Bonnie Harbaugh
Amal Khoury (Margot Hall)
Mary Lux
Mary Frances Nettles
Tim Rehner

**College of Coastal Science**

Don Redalje (Gail Russell)
Chet Rakocinski (Dave Beckett)

**College of Science & Technology**

David Beckett, President
Randy Buchanan
Peter Butko
Raymond Folse
Myron Henry
Gerald Mattson
Gail Russell
Alan Thompson

**University Libraries**

Mary Beth Applin
Jay Barton Spencer
USM-Gulf Coast

J. Pat Smith (Bill Powell)

Members Absent:

College of the Arts & Letters: Kate Greene, John Meyer, Paula Smithka

College of Business: James Crockett, Laurie Babin

College of Education & Psychology:

College of Health: Sue Hubble

College of Coastal Science: College of Science & Technology: Mary Dayne Gregg

University Libraries:

USM-Gulf Coast: Allisa Beck, Wil Watson, Kay Harris