Faculty Senate Minutes - December 9, 2005

USM Faculty Senate

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1.0 Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 2:05pm

2.0 Approval of November 11, 2005 meeting minutes- Delayed until next regular meeting in January. The Provost was unable to come to our meeting today; he will come to the January meeting.

3.0 Approval of Agenda- The agenda was accepted.

4.0 Officers' Reports

   6.1 President

       6.1.1 SACS- Bill Powell expressed appreciation to faculty for extraordinary efforts made to remove USM from SACS Probation. He explained that Dr. Thames acknowledged the importance of the faculty in removing probation in the media. He also updated the Senate about the response of Dr.Wheelan to the letter sent to her expressing disappointment at faculty not being invited to meet with her during her visit to USM. Dr. Wheelan’s letter stated that the visit was not official.

       6.1.2 External funding and T&P- College of Health Dean Fos retracted a Tenure and Promotion document that was contradictory to the policy in the Faculty Handbook. It set T&P policy for all departments in the COH, and required external funding for promotion and tenure. Provost Grimes stated to Bill Powell that acquisition of external funding was not a stand-alone requirement for T&P by the University. Bill will request that statement in writing.

       6.1.3 Outsourcing of physical plant- Myron Henry and Bill Powell reported that outsourcing was not discussed at University Budget Committee Meetings, and there was no mention of it in General Cabinet Meetings in fall 2005 prior to the announcement. They will monitor the situation and report back. See 6.2, President-elect report.

       6.1.4 College Technology Officers – Bill Powell reported that the College Technology Officers and iTech are engaged in reorganization. Past iTech strategic plans called for de-centralization of Technology Officers to College Levels to provide planning and implementation to particular college units. Now Deans have been asked to substantiate their technology needs, and it appears that the CTOs will be re-centralized into iTech. Senators expressed concern that the previous strategic plan appeared to meet College and Faculty needs, and questioned why it was
discarded. Senators had concerns that services may not be as good as they are now. A senator reported that he believed that there was a money and power struggle going on between the Deans/CTOs and iTech.

6.1.5 Communications with IHL staff - The right of the faculty to contact IHL staff members for information was discussed. A request for information to the IHL staff by the USM Academic Council about the 124 hour degree program resulted in censure by the Provost. The USM AC voted to request information from the Provost and then the IHL. The Provost sent a memo to the AC telling the AC not to correspond with the IHL without his permission. The Provost expressed a desire to speak to the IHL with “one voice”. A senator explained that the AC had asked the Provost for information, without response. One senator reported that she had contacted IHL without censure when she was working on Post-Tenure Review Document for the Faculty Senate. Discussion ensued about the difference between information seeking and lobbying the IHL. There was agreement by several senators that there have been many instances when clarification and information was not forthcoming from the Provost Office and interfered with efficient faculty group work. Senators wondered if the University did not want to call attention to how it was complying with the 124 hour degree rule. The Council of Chairs will speak to the University Attorney about whether faculty groups have the right to contact the IHL. One senator wanted to know if all communications with IHL required permission. Another senator asked if individual rights as a taxpayer were violated by forbidding communication. The difference between rights as an individual and as a faculty was discussed. Bill Powell stated that a discussion with Mr. Lee Gore might be helpful. Another senator expressed that there was a difference between forbidding faculty conversation with the IHL versus explaining to faculty that a matter was delicate, or under discussion and asks them to clear the contact with the Provost Office first. The latter approach is usually preferred.

6.1.6 Gulf Coast Status – Two senators from the Gulf Coast reported that recently they found out that FEMA required separate applications for Stennis campus and the Gulf Park Campus. Equipment losses are being documented by owners. It was unclear at present how to value lost intellectual property and data. They reported that housing was better in places, with trailers and some apartments open. Portable classrooms at Gulf Park and Stennis for classes, meeting space have been established. A senator asked if those faculty affected by Hurricane Katrina would be held to the same Tenure and Promotion requirements, or if provisions were going to be made for them. Bill Powell said that the matter had been brought to the attention of the Provost repeatedly. While there has not been a formal response to this issue, the President and Provost both have an understanding of this issue. There is the possibility of an option to delay tenure and promotion on a case by case basis, and Provost Grimes was going to talk to the Deans about this matter. Small group format meetings at coast campuses are being worked on to discuss issues that still need to be addressed.
6.1.7  **Memo from Dr. Grimes on raises**- Bill Powell explained that the Senate Executive Committee met with President Thames in November about the summer 2005 raise process. Chairs were not aware of raises, and the raises did not follow normal personnel procedures for Departments. Dr. Thames said that this surprised him and that he would inform the Deans of the problem. Shortly thereafter the Provost sent a memo to the Deans stating that normal personnel procedure will be followed. Discussion about the disparity in raise procedures for the last 2-3 years ensued.

6.1.7.1  **A motion** was made by Amy Young to invite the Deans to discuss summer raises. The motion was seconded and passed. An invitation will be extended. Discussion ensued.

**Comments:** It was pointed out that only one dean was involved in the raises; Other deans were not informed. Why didn’t the other Colleges have the opportunity to give raises?; This is the third year in a row that stealth raises have been given without following faculty handbook policies, so it was not clear why the President found the last raises “surprising”.

6.1.8  **FAR due date**- The FAR was due on December 8, 2005, but has been moved to January 5, 2006. The Provost was asked if the date could be pushed later, but the reply by the Provost and Dr. Exline was “I really need to stick with January 5”. The explanation is that they need the data for accreditation reports that are due in January and February. One senator noted that while faculty were asked to be flexible and tolerant towards students, staff and peers due to the Hurricane, the administrations attitude toward faculty was rigid. Another senator asked if the administration had made an effort to negotiate deadlines with accreditation agencies because of the faculty workload and unique situation created by Katrina. Bill Powell will keep working on extensions due to the extraordinary fall semester, particularly for the Gulf Coast Faculty.

6.1.9  **Katrina Relief Fund**- There was a call for clarification on the amount collected and available for Student, Faculty and Staff assistance. Bill Powell stated that $144,000 was collected. Approximately $40,000 was allocated for Faculty & Staff needs, and $104,000 for Student needs.

6.1.10  **Cabinet meetings, meeting with Dr. Thames**- Bill Powell reported CFO Lassen has predicted flat funding, and rising expenses. Further, enrollment is down on both campuses. There are many uncertainties related to the budget and funding at present. Funding for sabbaticals and summer grants has not yet been ruled out by administration. One senator strongly recommended that administration fund grants, sabbaticals and awards. A senator asked if there was mention of a process to reduce the size of the USM faculty. Bill Powell replied “No”. He said that there were AAUP guidelines for financial exigencies, but said that reduction of faculty was not on the horizon according to cabinet information. There may, according to CFO Lassen, a need to slow hiring. Discussion about
pro-actively researching processes for layoffs ensued. It was cautioned by a senator that there were significant pitfalls with the Faculty Senate taking the lead in processes to reduce the workforce. A senator commented that it is difficult to fill the many open positions. Each position has to be vetted 2-3 times just to advertise. Several senators agreed that the hiring process was difficult and frustrating. Bill Powell said that Provost Grimes has gone ahead with permission to advertise at present. Another senator commented that the AAUP met with Dr. Meredith and discussed USM’s academic budget difficulties, both with Katrina and the last 3 years. It was speculated that the IHL may agree to give USM a grace period for funding considerations. Bill Powell replied that on the positive side, the State Economist was projecting a better economy due to increase in tax revenue from Katrina, and that there may be Federal relief monies available in the future.

6.1.11  **Mini-session courses**- On November 11, 2005, the Academic and Graduate Councils were asked to look at alternative delivery and which courses are subject to Council level review. Discussion about the new mini-courses ensued, with some expressing frustration in the design of the classes, and others questioning how mini-session courses and their instructors are selected, and by whom.

6.1.12  **Online Evaluations of Teaching**-Online evaluation is in place for fall 2005. Some improvements have been made to allow grades to be viewed more easily, and there is an incentive for students to perform evaluations because they may view final grades earlier. Another senator explained that extra credit could be given to improve return rates. Arguments against providing the early grade incentive was discussed; are grades really being given early versus are other students just receiving the grades later? A senator explained that the incentive for earlier grades had worked well at Ole Miss and State.

6.1.13  **Other**- An Anniversary card for Dr. and Mrs. Lucas was circulated.

6.2  **President-Elect**- Myron Henry facilitated a discussion about plans by administration to outsource the physical plant. He presented a letter for discussion. Myron Henry asked for feedback on whether to make an independent statement of our concerns alone, or to combine our statement with staff council responses. He reported that staff are very concerned about this issue. A senator asked if there would be a committee formed to study the idea, as was done for the Bookstore and Food Services. Another senator asked if the decision had already been made, and if so, would a committee just be a “sham”? The differences between outsourcing books and physical plant services were pointed out, including the impact on local suppliers, as well as to whom the costs will be passed off to (Deans and departments versus students). Myron Henry said that a committee was being formed to investigate and do fact-finding and analysis of outsourcing. The committee will include a staff council member, person, faculty senate member, and administrators. A major concern is that it appears that there will be an initial fact-finding committee and a decision
making committee. Bill Powell has asked for representation on both committees. More feedback was provided to Myron Henry, including interest in including the public in the outsourcing decision, including local businesses, and others in the USM community who are stakeholders in the process. A senator expressed concern that the Senate needs to personally deliver the letter, and go over it in person, since the administration has not been forthcoming answering questions the Senate has asked before on this issue. Another senator said that an open letter to Greg Lassen will be made public, and then may get a response. There was concern that the chair of the staff council found out about the outsourcing plans when reporters began calling her about the news. Similarly, two members of the Senate on the University Budget Committee recalled no discussion in Budget Committee meetings in the summer of 2005 or November 15, 2005. A senator noted that it appeared that the outsourcing is a done deal, and all that is needed to be done is to choose who will receive the contract. A motion was made to adopt the draft with formatting adjustments and additions about concern for widespread input, including staff, the community, and local businesses. The motion was seconded and passed. A final version will be circulated and discussed at the next meeting.

6.3. Secretary- No Report

6.4. Secretary-Elect- Mary Beth Applin noted that a digital recorder was being used now for recording the Faculty Senate meeting, and asked if the audio file should be posted on the Faculty Senate website. After discussion, it was decided that audio files would not be posted at this time.

7.0 Committee Reports

7.1 Academic and Governance: Bill Scarborough, chair

7.1.1 A motion: Statement on Shared Governance- Bill Powell stated that the Senate was given a statement produced by the A & G Committee, along with the request sent by Provost Grimes last July asking for the Senate to create a shared governance document for the Faculty Handbook. Bill Powell stated that senators’ comments were received and thanked them. Bill Scarborough thanked his committee for their work and explained that the Committee produced a statement of shared governance that does not necessarily reflect the present state of affairs at the University; instead it is a statement of shared governance for the future. Bill Scarborough explained the document and the origination of each of its sections, which includes the University Mission Statement, and the AAUP Statement on Governance, and the Ole Miss Faculty Handbook. A senator strongly protested the statement as written in the present tense, as unacceptable because it indicates that the present administration believes and adheres to shared governance principles. He recommended that the tense be future or past. Others agreed, stating that the administration could point to the statement as The USM Faculty Senate’s admission that all was well at the University. Bill Scarborough stated that the statement was crafted to carry USM into the future, to be put into the Faculty Handbook and try to get a
commitment from administration for the future. Other suggestions were given by senators, including wording that includes not only faculty responsibilities, but also presidential faculty responsibilities in shared governance. Another suggestion was to find a way to be worded in a different way to avoid the implications stated above. Myron Henry stated that the policy is for the long term, but a cover letter could be included that respectfully states that future improvement by the administration in the area of shared governance is expected. Senators also stated that the document was required for SACS accreditation, and that the Senate may want to table it until we see evidence of shared governance, or after 2 years, when we get a new administration. Changing the wording to reflect a future orientation instead of stating that we presently share governance (which all agreed does not occur) was discussed. The merits of having a policy in place, versus having no policy in place were debated. A two part substitute to the motion was proposed by Stan Hauer. First, that the original motion (committee report) is referred back to the committee for reconsideration of wording, and second, that the vote be deferred until the Provost is able to answer questions when he speaks to the Senate next month. This will also give time to recheck wording. The motion was seconded and approved.

7.2 Administration and Faculty Evaluations: Steve Oshrin, chair

Steve Oshrin reported that the Administrator Evaluations by faculty will be distributed the week of January 15, 2006, to be returned by February 2, 2006. JT Johnson will analyze the data.

7.3 Awards: Mary Lux, chair - No report

7.4 Budget: Myron Henry, chair – No report, covered above

7.5 Constitution and Bylaws: Randy Buchanan, chair

The committee is discussing changes to the election process to make it run smoother; the next meeting is in January, 2006.

7.6 Faculty Welfare: Tim Rehner, chair – He plans on meeting with the Council Of Chairs to discuss several faculty issues.

7.7 Government Relations: Dave Duhon, chair - No Report

7.8 Technology: Barton Spencer, chair

Barton Spencer reported that iT is in the process of revising its Web presence, including improvement of its forward facing access site, an intranet portal, and an extranet portal. The changes would allow the use of one log on process to access SOAR, email, etc. There is no set date for conversion. However, the forward facing phase is to be done first, followed by the intranet, and the extranet. The project will have a huge impact on the University Community. Templates will be used to set up WebPages. Issues were raised concerning the costs of setting this up, the control of viruses and quarantine of email. Another senator asked how the system would interface with other programs. Barton Spencer will keep us informed.

7.9 Elections: Paula Smithka, chair

Bill Powell reported that elections (run-offs) are continuing on the Coast for an
empty senate seat.

7.10 **Ad hoc committee** reports and liaison reports

7.10.1 President’s Council- No report, have not met.

7.10.2 American Association of University Professors

Stephen Judd reported that the AAUP executive committee had met with Dr. Meredith in Jackson. Dr. Meredith acknowledged importance of AAUP. Discussion included the upcoming search for the next President of USM, and faculty representation on the IHL Board. Dr. Meredith pointed specifically to the upcoming State (MSU) presidential search as a place to see the process he might use at USM, and he specifically made a commitment to conduct the search in a transparent, honest way in fall 2006. There is a summary of the meeting on the AAUP Website.

7.10.3 Academic/Graduate Council

Jeff Evans reported that work was continuing on the 124 hour degree program review and course proposals. One thing that has slowed them down is that they are still working on the process of documenting a program review process for SACS. One problem is that the timeline for review is condensed, and AC needs the timelines for review and approval changed and voted as such. Jeff Evans reported that Dr. Exline has agreed that part of the timeline may be changed. The AC is also looking at the online programs. One senator stated that the document that went out re: program review process was diligently produced, and adopted last spring semester (2005) by the AC/GC. It then appeared again in November, brought forward by the administration. The senator asked, “Where did it sit all of this time? Instead of pulling it out then, and beginning work using a saner timeline (about a year), we now have an insane timeline.” Concern was expressed that Dr. Exline accused the Councils (in a memo to the Deans) of abdicating their responsibilities for slow processing of course approvals. Jeff Evans stated that the Deans and Dr. Exline are both accusing the AC and GC of abdicating their responsibility, while the AC and GC are working very hard to facilitate getting the work done, and that it was very upsetting. Bill Powell quoted from an email from Dr. Exline to the Deans dated Wed, at 5:15 that I (She) planned on meeting with the Executive Cabinet on Monday about appointing a new committee to get this done by the SACS deadline, April, just in case the AC/GC abdicate, we have to have a Plan B, we cannot go on warning or probation status. We are on shaky ground with assessment as it is due to our short history with program assessment.” Jeff Evans replied that the he had written a memo to Dr. Exline asking for more time in order to do this right and in a quality manner, and in that memo he presented her several options, which may have precipitated the email. Jeff Evans stated that we have now agreed on a new timeframe.
One senator stated that comprising curricular process at our University that is assigned to specific faculty bodies is a clear violation of SACS accrediting policy. Another senator agreed that the Graduate Council reviews also needed more time. There is also grave concern by senators involved that the work may be removed from the faculty in order to meet unrealistic deadlines, despite diligent faculty work. Another senator expressed amazement that important academic reviews by faculty councils may be compromised by administration.

7.10.4 Faculty Leadership Council- No Report

7.10.5 Transportation- Bill Scarborough reported that the Transportation Committee met November 22, 2005. Appeals were rejected. The polymer science lot will be gated next summer. A study reported time required to walk to sites on campus. From Elam Arms to LAB is 6 minutes, Payne Center to LAB, 9 minutes. The committee meets again in January, 2006.

8.0 New Business

8.1 Christmas Break was discussed, with questions about when faculty were officially supposed to report back to offices. This was discussed with Dr. Grimes. Faculty responsibilities begin on January 4, but can occur in a variety of locations and fashions, such as research and class preparation. Bill Powell stated that Provost Grimes was sympathetic with the issue and will take up the matter with the Deans.

9.0 Old Business
9.1 Associate Dean search in College of Education and Psychology- No new information.

10.0 Other
10.1 Bob Press announced that on April 28 and April 29, there is a conference by the Center for Human Rights and Civil Liberties: “Rights and Activism”. Students and faculty are invited to attend, and to present papers.
10.2 Bob Press also wanted to know about whether the Provost had gotten back about having the Faculty Senate President on the Executive Committee (from a discussion during the summer 2005 retreat). Nothing more has been heard on that subject by Bill Powell.

10.3 Steve Oshrin stated that the College of Health faculty has concerns that there may be other legitimate reasons for adjusting the final exam schedule for some students other than football bowl games. Bill Powell is going to talk more with Steve Oshrin about that subject.

11.0 **Adjournment** – moved, seconded and approved.