

FACULTY SENATE MINUTES

December 3, 2001

Present: David Behar, David Balaam, Kris Bartanen, Bill Breitenbach, Terry Cooney, John Hanson, Kathleen Hummel-Berry, Martin Jackson, Chris Kline, Juli McGruder, Hans Ostrom (Chair), George Tomlin, Alexa Tullis,

Guests: Bill Haltom, Keith Maxwell, Wayne Rickoll

Ostrom called the meeting to order shortly after 4:00.

There were neither announcements nor special orders.

Ostrom asked Jackson to name the process by which a new senator would be appointed to replace Breitenbach for the spring semester. Martin posed the question to the senators. Two processes were recommended and Martin was asked to use either process to appoint the senator.

Ostrom initiated the general discussion of "The State of the Faculty" by asking senators in turn to discuss the issue that each had brought to the table. Tullis discussed the need to address the ways in which credit was given for faculty work with students on individual research projects. She stated that in Biology units for such work had been cut, although the numbers of students had not declined. Rickoll added that in the past six units had been available for full-time faculty to work with students and that the units had been cut to four and a half.

Breitenbach noted that, while the system for calculating the unit load might be equitable, its inflexibility created obstacles adding that the problem was not limited to the sciences. Hanson said that there was great concern in the Chemistry Department where student research was valued highly yet mechanisms were lacking to support the faculty involved. Cooney noted that it was a challenge to determine an equitable way of dealing with this issue across campus and that some basis was needed for calibrating the equivalence between teaching one-to-one and teaching groups of students. He added that more units were needed which meant hiring more people, an action that was not currently possible. Breitenbach asked if there might be any way that faculty could accumulate credits over time. Hanson inquired about exploring other models, noting that, at Haverford College, faculty who accumulated a certain number of students over time automatically were granted additional sabbatical time. Tomlin described the way in which his department calibrated course units, based on different course factors, to the hundredth of a unit, noting that few would want the spreadsheet involved in the process. Noting that similar concerns existed across the departments with other kinds of advanced individual work with students, Ostrom asked senators to think about possible courses of action which could be discussed at the January 28th meeting.

Hanson raised the concern about an issue related to the work load issue: time. He described the faculty as overworked, or "working to distraction."

Ostrom asked Cooney to discuss the issue of scheduling as previously requested by the Senate. Cooney stated that during the summer John Finney had met with department chairs in the sciences and that they had created models of how faculty could work with the proposed schedule (one and one-half hour blocks on Tuesdays and Thursdays). Hanson, Hummel-Berry, and McGruder discussed the organizational and programmatic difficulties that their departments were facing as a result of the new schedule.

Tomlin raised the issue of our institutional identity or affiliation. He described a feeling of loss regarding the identity of the university and asked how, given realities such as fiscal responsibility and increasing time pressures, we could find time to talk, to collaborate, to weave the fabric of affinity. He asked what a "univers[e]-ity" truly should be in this time. Bartenan spoke of current views of this generation of students for whom affinity and unity may be bounded by more situational views of purpose and time. She raised the question of how we might create community on campus as we consider these tendencies. Hanson added that, for community to prosper, we

needed to keep in mind the ways in which we designed our buildings, providing spaces for interaction and gathering. Several senators agreed with this observation.

Haltom stated that, while it was essential to introduce the student factor in discussions of affinity and community, the very talk was undercutting the concerns about limited faculty time as increased interactions with students, while desirable, took a toll on already overworked faculty. Cooney agreed, stating that what we valued came often at great cost to ourselves, adding that we needed more faculty, as we discussed several years ago, which current fiscal limitations made difficult to achieve. Bartanen also agreed with Haltom, stating that we needed to think about the issue of time pressures on faculty and how the university could effectively communicate to faculty that not everyone needed to do everything all of the time. Bartanen noted that there are cycles in faculty lives citing points where faculty might rightly be primarily involved in establishing family or domestic lives and other points, perhaps later, where more time might be available for campus activity. McGruder added that we needed to attend to the fiscal implications of an overworked faculty (e.g. health issues).

Kline expressed a hope that the faculty, as a whole, would continue to address issues of diversity in forward-looking and imaginative ways.

Jackson raised a concern about reviewing and improving the processes by which the faculty addressed such central tasks as the Core and the Faculty Code. Citing the awkwardness of the processes, and the lack of time to think about ideas raised in the meetings, he expressed hope for ways of letting people think ahead of time about key ideas that were shaping actions. Breitenbach replied that the code discussions were appropriate to the task and inevitable, but added that we might think about how we use adhoc committees, noting that competing offerings may have compromised the process. Cooney stated that, in the case of the Core, we didn't really have a vision about what we were setting out to do as the limited objective of revising the first-year program became expanded to include the Core. Breitenbach stated that Jackson made a very good point and that we ought to think about how we traveled through difficult issues.

Hummel Berry went on record to say that facilities were a major concern for her department even as she recognized that the issue was part of the Goals statement. She also added that faculty in her department were very concerned about benefits.

Breitenbach observed that, when thinking about time and community, two role models in his early years at the university came to mind. They embodied for him the essence of university life: broad intellectual interests, wide reading, significant interests outside of campus life. He emphasized that their lives were not entirely confined to institutional obligations. He urged us to think about how we could work toward embodiment of those ideal characteristics. He also felt that we were unnecessarily preoccupied with assessment issues as framed by learning outcomes. He added that the real assessment resided in the standards we held for grading and that these standards should be re-examined.

Kline suggested that rich assessment issues resided in Breitenbach's comments about standards and asked if we might not also step back and frame useful program assessments that would yield equally valid insights about our programs. Breitenbach replied that such assessment issues were valid but not for the purpose of serving external review teams. Cooney stated that the challenge lay in what ways such assessments could be useful to us.

Ostrom thanked the senators for bringing these issues before the Senate and asked that we continue to think about them and perhaps suggest courses of action at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Kline