

University of South Alabama

JagWorks@USA

Minutes 1997-1998

Faculty Senate Minutes

5-1997

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes - May 1997

Faculty Senators

University of South Alabama

Follow this and additional works at: https://jagworks.southalabama.edu/minutes_ninetyseven

Recommended Citation

Senators, Faculty, "Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes - May 1997" (1997). *Minutes 1997-1998*. 9. https://jagworks.southalabama.edu/minutes_ninetyseven/9

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Senate Minutes at JagWorks@USA. It has been accepted for inclusion in Minutes 1997-1998 by an authorized administrator of JagWorks@USA. For more information, please contact jherrmann@southalabama.edu.



Approved Minutes 14 May, 1997

1 and 2. Call to Order and of Roll

The meeting was called to order by Victoria Rivizzigno, Chair, at 3:05 p.m. in the Library, Room 5. The Secretary called the roll: Present: Allison, Arata, Ardell, Aucoin, Brandon, Broadus, Chrysllee, Cromwell, Daughenbaugh, Davidson-Shivers, Donovan, Engebretson, Evans, Foster, Frederick, Fruh, Haywick, Labbe, Lally, Langan, LeDoux, Martin, McGill, McIver, Mitchell, Moak, Mulekar, Rodgers, Sauer, Simpson, Sweet, Swint, Sylvestre, Thurston, Tucker, Van Haneghan, Vetrosky, Vinson, C. Wilson, G. Wilson, Zhang. Absent (excused): Ballard, Dilsaver, Hamm, Krueger, Kulkarni, Matthews, McAfee, Parker. Absent (unexcused!): Bell, Dorman, Douglass, Hain, Honkanen, Izenberg, Moore, Weston, Yeoman.

3. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the regular meeting of 12 March, 1997 and regular meeting of 9 April, 1997 were approved for distribution to University Faculty.

4. Report from the Chair

Dr. Rivizzigno reported that the State Higher Education Budget had not yet passed in the State Legislature. The last day of the regular session is May 19, 1997. If the budget is not passed by 5/19/97 a special session will have to be called. Senators were encouraged to call or fax State senators and representatives to support the 2% increase in higher education budget and funding for the USA Stroke Center. Since the State Budget has not yet passed, the University of South Alabama Budget has not been finalized. When Dr. Whiddon met with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee last week he was confident that there would be money for raises. Moreover, some money will be set aside to address salary inequities. Both the Faculty Senate and FAST had recommended that faculty receive a 10% increase in salary when promoted from assistant professor to associate and from associate to full. However, Dr. Sylvester has recommended that there be dollar amount increments (\$2000 for promotion from assistant to associate and \$4000 for promotion from associate to full this year) and that these increments increase by \$1000 in 1999 and 2001 so that they eventually are set at \$4000 for promotion from assistant to associate and \$6000 for promotion from associate to full professor. Dr. Rivizzigno reminded senators that there would be a Faculty Fringe Benefits Workshop on 23 May 1997 in HUMB 170 from 10:00 am until 12:00.

5. Reports from Standing Chairs

Faculty Salaries/Benefits:

Ms. Fruh reported that during the 1996-97 the Committee had studied the following issues;

Insurance-Long Term Care Insurance.

Long term care insurance is presently offered at the University of South Alabama as an option through TIAA/CREF in an individual plan (not a group plan). Mr. Gattis had reported to the Committee that no

other Alabama university has long term care coverage paid by the university. Mr. Mike Ryan with TIAA/CREF had reported that group plans were being formulated for the University of Michigan and Washington University. The value of having this insurance is difficult to calculate due to individual care needs, inflation, interest rates, future laws, etc.; however, it would now seem wise to have it.

Salary/Parity Plan Study.

A subcommittee of the Committee evaluated faculty salary data supplied by the Office of Institutional Research. These data compared faculty salaries at this university with national norms using NASULGC (National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges) and AASCU (American Association of State Colleges and Universities) national surveys from 1995-96. Based on these data, one can see that this university has made significant progress in closing the average salary differentials between itself and the national norms. While we still lag behind on the NASULGC averages, especially at the full professor rank, we have closed the gap completely on the AASCU averages.

Fringe Benefits Information Forum.

The Faculty Senate is sponsoring a Fringe Benefits Information Forum on ' Friday, May 23, 1997. Mr. Gerald Gattis, from Personnel, and representatives from the Teacher's Retirement System and from TIAA/CREF will present an overview of our employee programs. Ms. Fruh reported that the 1997-98 Salary and Fringe Benefits Committee may need to consider the Salary/Parity Plan (all data necessary for study was not complete) and the increase from 3% to 5% matching for TIAA/CREF. A resolution calling for this increase was approved at the January 1996 meeting.

Policy and Handbook:

Dr. Louise Hermanson reported that the Policy and Handbook Committee had considered at least five important issues during the academic year;

Committee on Committees.

Several senators strongly favored a committee on committees, where the senate would recommend faculty for all university-wide committees. However, the Senate voted down a resolution calling for such a committee.

Undergraduate Grade Grievance Policy.

The Committee recommended that a standing grade grievance committee be established in the faculty senate to serve as the final arbiter of undergraduate grade grievances. The senate approved the committee's proposal. This approval, however, requires ratification by the general faculty and the administration before it can be put into effect.

Faculty Grievance Policy.

The Committee should continue to look at weaknesses in this policy and work to clarify confidentiality issues surrounding the existing policy.

Tenure and Promotion Policies.

A subcommittee of the University Academic Affairs Committee is reviewing these policies. Hence promotion and tenure policies should be an on-going concern for the senate's Policy and Handbook Committee.

The Committee is concerned about changes in the Handbook made under the guise of editing. Of concern are things such as dropping collegiality as a criterion for tenure and some of the procedures for hiring faculty. The Committee should continue to be vigilant concerning each editorial revision of the Handbook.

Planning/Development. Dr. Paul Dagenais reported that the Planning and Development Committee had discussed the following topics during the 1996-97 academic year.

Grading System.

Discussion was undertaken about adding C+ and B+ grading to the current system. Dr. Culpepper provided information from previous faculty surveys which showed conclusively that the faculty is not interested in changing the grading system. The topic was not pursued further.

Honors Program.

By a general vote, the Senate supported recommending that the University Academic Affairs Committee study the feasibility of creating an Honors Program. Unfilled Positions. Because of the uncertainty about

the imminent changes to be made with the semester system and, the possibility of having teaching assistants, this issue was tabled until after the semester change.

Campus Beautification.

It was reported to the Committee that various changes were being made around campus (e.g., Univ. Library, Administration Building). Because of other, more pressing budgetary concerns, this issue was tabled for the time being.

Public Radio.

Through information obtained by Jan Sauer, it was determined that the current public radio station was not interested in any input from the University of South Alabama. James Aucoin reported that the Department of Communication was working to start a student campus radio station; input/support from the Faculty Senate was not needed at this time.

Day Care.

A vote by the entire Senate was positive to pursue Day Care at all sites. The matter was presented to FAST for consideration. FAST was in concurrence with the Senate that the University is not in the Day Care business, but could possibly provide facilities and contract with an outside firm.

Preregistration.

The Committee noted that pre-registration might alleviate the problems with course availability, especially for general studies. With the change to the semester system, pre-registration would be possible. A question about pre-registration was added to the 1996-97 Faculty Survey. Dr. Dagenais reported that Day Care, Pre-registration and the Wetlands are issues that the 1997/98 Committee should pursue.

Evaluation:

No report since Dr. Culpepper was not present.

6. Pending Business

Election of Officers.

Frank Donovan, Chair of the Nominating Committee, conducted the election of officers.

Tim Lally (English) and Suzanne McGill (Mathematics/Statistics) were nominated for Chair of the Senate. By a vote of 29 to 9, Suzanne McGill was elected Chair of the Faculty Senate.

Jan Sauer (Univ. Library) and Richard Vinson (Mathematics/ Statistics) were nominated for Vice-Chair of the Senate. By a vote of 20 to 16, Jan Sauer was elected Vice-Chair of the Senate.

The following officers were elected by acclamation:

Secretary - Tim Lally (English)

Chair, Salary/Benefits Committee - Phillip Bell (Emergency Medicine)

Chair, Policy/Handbook Committee - Richard Daughenbaugh (Behavior Studies/Educational Technology)

Chair, Planning/Development Committee - Doug Haywick (Geology/Geography)

Chair, Evaluation - Tom Hain (Computer and Information Sciences)

Appreciation.

The Senate unanimously passed a resolution thanking the outgoing officers for their hard work. Dr. Victoria Rivizzigno was commended for her outstanding leadership of the Senate during her two terms as Senate Chair.

Viability Law.

It was moved and seconded that the Senate suspend the rules and consider the statement from the University of North Alabama on the Viability Law. The motion to suspend the rules passed unanimously. The Faculty Senate voted unanimously to join with other institutions of higher education in the State to rescind or amend this Law and to adopt the statement written by the University of North Alabama Faculty Senate Legislative Liaison Committee as rationale for this decision.

Statement on the "Viability Law," Act 96-557

When the Legislature passed Act 96-557 it gave the Alabama Commission on Higher Education the discretionary authority to close programs based on productivity standards called "viability standards." The

legislation initially says that "productivity standards shall be based primarily, but not exclusively, on the annual average number of degrees conferred during a five year period for senior institutions and a three year period for two-year institutions as verified by the Commission." The phrase "but not exclusively" implies that numbers are not the only criterion for productivity; however, this language is immediately followed by this sentence: "The annual average number of degrees conferred constitutes a productivity standard by which programs shall be deemed viable or non-viable. A single number is effectively made the sole criterion for the decision as to program viability. The phrase "but not exclusively" is either a dead letter or unlimited amount of discretion given to ACHE. All remaining language in the law refers to "the" productivity standard, i.e., 7.5 graduates per year.

The implied intention of Act 96-557, the Viability Law, was to reduce costly duplication in higher education, but the Act does not mention cost or quality. The intention of the Legislature was to lower costs and improve efficiency while maintaining quality and access in higher education. But there are several negative unintended consequences of using a standard of 7.5 graduates per year, and these outweigh the benefits.

Unintended Consequences:

The magic number to judge a program "viable" according to the law is 7.5 graduates per year for baccalaureate programs at 4-year institutions. This number has the following unintended negative consequences:

1. It is imposed upon institutions regardless of size Needless to say, it is much easier for an institution with 20,000 students to meet this number than for an institution of 2,000.
2. The viability law provides that institutions may request waivers of the "non-viability" of programs, and specifies some factors may be taken into consideration by ACHE in granting such waivers. These include the "objectives and requirements of Knight vs. Alabama" which implies pretty clearly that Historically Black Institutions will be buffered against the full impact of these standards. So too, by their very size, will the campuses of the University of Alabama and Auburn University. The two-year colleges have to meet a program standard of 7.5 graduates per year for associate degree programs, but since they have no majors'as such they can lump together into one "program" all A.A. degrees, all A.S. degrees, and so on. so the impact of the law will fall most entirely on the smaller and mid-sized regional four-year institutions.
3. The number 7.5 is arbitrary. There is no study behind the assertion that a program with 7.5 graduates per year is "viable" and one with less is not "viable." Once "viability" is legally defined solely by that number, however, ACHE has the authority to close them as non-viable.
4. Public education K-12 would be adversely affected; but there has been no study of how the elimination of programs graduating fewer than 7.5 students per year would affect schools. Implementation of this "viability standard" would worsen an already existing scarcity of school teachers in many teaching fields. Secondary education majors must major in an academic field as well, and the law does not explain how a program could be retained for education students if the major is abolished.
5. The "viability standard in the law makes no allowance for the service role of many programs in the curriculum of institutions. Few may major in history, economics, physics, or foreign languages, but a complete undergraduate program requires the service courses these areas provide. The number of students graduating with a certain major is not a valid index of the importance of that program to the curriculum of the institution or the student.
6. The strict use of IPEDS for counting majors does not give a true picture of a program Many students double major. Most secondary education majors must have a second major in their academic field. However, only one major will count towards the magic number and "viability." Many students will therefore fulfill all the major requirements of a program but not be counted in the statistics for its "viability."

7. The use of this figure would eliminate or nearly eliminate some fields of study from higher education in the state of Alabama. If physics and foreign languages are held to this number, all but one or two programs in those areas will be phased out as "non-viable." This is an unacceptable result, as it would foreclose access to many students.
8. Ironically, the phasing out of many smaller programs might preserve less efficient programs and destroy the most efficient ones. A program which graduates 4 or 5 students per year with 4 or 5 faculty in the department would be "non-viable"; the same program at a larger institution which graduates 8 or 9 students with 20 or 30 faculty would be "viable."
9. The effort to save programs on individual campuses could easily lower quality rather than raise it. In the case of programs that are on the edge of the viability standards, grade inflation could result. Program requirements might be relaxed in order to gain or retain students. Some highly qualified faculty will leave. Most highly qualified faculty in four-year institutions will not wish to remain at an institution if their major is eliminated, and highly qualified faculty could not be attracted to teach at such institutions. There is nothing in this law that would lift the quality of education and there is much that would lower it.
10. This law will not result in significant savings. The only sanction in the law is the closing down of "programs," which for the four year institutions means the elimination of majors. The same number of faculty will be employed in most departments if the major is dropped. Most courses will continue to be taught as service courses or for education majors. The change would significantly reduce the quality of instruction in higher education without saving any significant amount of money. If the purpose of the legislation is to save taxpayers money, it would make more sense to look at eliminating some two-year institutions or eliminating a few truly costly duplications in high-cost programs like engineering and health-related professions rather than squeezing out all majors in the smaller and regional four-year institutions.
11. When ACHE asked for discretionary authority to close programs at institutions of higher education, the legislature refused to grant it such powers. What ACHE has accomplished this viability law is to obtain from the legislature authority it could obtain directly by disguising discretionary authority to act as "viability." Productivity standards which are based "primarily, but not exclusively, on the annual average number of degrees conferred" and waivers which the Commission may give without accountability provide ACHE with a discretionary authority to close programs as fully as if the legislature had passed a bill with that intent.

In sum, the "Viability Law," 96-557, imposes an arbitrary and baseless standard by which programs are deemed "viable" or "non viable," and gives ACHE a tremendous amount of discretion to eliminate programs on the evidence of a single seriously flawed number. The law will not improve quality of instruction and may well lower that quality. It will not save money for the taxpayers. It will restrict, rather than maintain, access to programs for Alabama's students. The unintended consequences of the "Viability Law" outweigh whatever benefits it was intended to provide the state, and it should be amended or rescinded.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO ACT 96-557

1. Exempt from the viability standards all programs that are part of the general studies or core curriculum.
2. Give full credit to all majors in a student's program, i.e., double count double majors.
3. Create categories of institutions by size with a sliding scale of numbers serving as viability standards; don't use 7.5 for large and small schools alike
4. Require ACHE to conduct an impact study on K-12 teaching before closing any program.
5. Require the ACHE show substantial cost savings before it may close any program.

6. In applying the productivity standard, add a factor representing the efficiency of a program as a ratio of faculty employed to graduates.
7. Specify 1997-98 as the first year for the collection of the graduation figures for the viability of the programs.
8. Provide for appeal to the Legislature for any program closed.

7. Communication from President Whiddon

There were no communications from Dr. Whiddon

8. New Business.

The next two meetings of the Senate are:

July 9, 1997

August 13, 1997

9. Adjournment.

Suzanne McGill adjourned the meeting at 4:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by

Time Lally, Secretary

(Minutes written by Suzanne McGill, 1996-1997 Senate Secretary.)

These minutes were approved at the 9 July 1997 meeting of the Faculty Senate.

[Back to Faculty Senate Homepage](#)

[Back to USA's Homepage](#)

To make comments or suggestions about this webpage, email [Jan Sauer](#)

Last updated: 8/15/97. js