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Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes – October 2008

Faculty Senators

University of South Alabama

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October 15, 2008
Library Auditorium
3:00 pm

Minutes

Approved by voice vote at the November 19 meeting.

Present: Aliabadi, Aucoin, Baggett, Bru, Burnham, Byrne, Campbell, Carr, Carter, Connors, Doran, Estis, Engin, Falkos, Fantoni, Fresne, Hamilton, Keasler, I. Khan, King, Lemley, Loomis, Major, Meyer, Morris, Nowlin, Perry, Prendergast, Romey, Rowell, Sachs, Tate, Toelken, Turnipseed, Vrettos, Woodford, Tony Wright.

Excused: Estrada, Haywick, Irion, Johnsten, A. Kahn, McCormick, McCready, McNair, Omar, Prescott, Summerlin, Teplick, Tootie Wright.

Unexcused: Allison, Ambrose, Kinniburgh, Moore, Pacheco, Patterson, Pérez Pineda, Quereshi,

1. Call to order

The Senate Chair, John Sachs, called the meeting to order at 3:03 with a quorum present.

2. Approval of minutes from the September meeting.

The assembly approved by the minutes by voice vote.

3. Chair's report.

The chair provided a written report to the Senators. He moved then to the conflict of interest issue (see below). Updating the VP search, correct the written report by noting that there will be 11 candidates for VP position interviewed by video. He also added that there are internal and external candidates and that the process seems to be going smoothly. Sachs also described his recent meeting with the representative of the Higher Education Partnership and other faculty senate leaders. HEP, he pointed out, is trying to get support for Amendment 1 to increase funding from the state trust fund to help soften the blow of proration. HEP is the only organization talking on behalf of the faculty and students. Next month an HEP representative will come speak to the Senate. Sachs also noted that it is possible to give some money from monthly pay to HEP's PAC. Sachs also noted a recent meeting between the executive committee and Scott Weldon regarding the USA Foundation. He noted some increase funding to the university and the high administrative costs. He concluded noting the need to work with the administration to get the USA Foundation to provide more to the institution. Summarizing the written report, Sachs noted the president's position on the pre-existing condition exclusion, the problem of new hires beginning work prior to their effective date of employment, and the new policy proposal from the Deans Council to allow faculty with terminal Masters degree be hired at the rank of assistant professor. He also noted the President's willingness to reconvene a committee to look at procedures on equity adjustment.

Fantoni asked about new policy proposal from the Deans. Sachs clarified that it would only apply in areas where the master's is the terminal degree.

4. Old Business

- Conflict of Interest/Conflict of Commitment revision to the Handbook.
Sachs briefly highlighted the history of the proposal and introduced Russ Lea, VP for Research, who was available to answer any questions on the matter. Sachs also further clarified the matter noting the appeals procedure: that if a chair denies an activity as a conflict of interest or commitment, the faculty member can appeal to a committee composed of 15 to evaluate whether the chair's decision is valid. Lea mentioned that perhaps within a few years the federal government may set a more standard policy, noting the current climate and Senator Grasly's legislative reaction to recent problems in the area. Christian Fantoni moved, Vicki Tate seconded and the motion to change the handbook was passed voice vote.
- Resolution on non-reappointment of tenure track faculty.
Sachs presented the background of the revised proposal. Tate clarified that you can only grieve after mid-tenure review and that that the chair will be required to draft a formal evaluation not just the annual evaluation. Sachs emphasized that the new policy will force chairs to put it in writing as to progress. Sachs explained waiting until after mid-tenure because it gives the faculty committee some say. The resolution was formally introduced and will be slated for a vote in the November meeting.
- Resolution on revision to Faculty Handbook on workload expectations for instructors.
Sachs noted that this Senate Resolution was accepted by the Deans council so it will be incorporated into the handbook.
- VPAA Search.
Sachs provided an update in his written report.
- Town Hall meetings.
Sachs noted the success of the Town Hall meetings. He noted that a report will be produced and that he will be sharing the ideas and concerns raised by faculty with President Moulton.

5. New Business

- Awards Presentation.
Postponed because the representatives were not present.
- Chang Humanitarian Award (need 3 members for the committee).
The following Senators volunteered to serve: Vicki Tate (Lib), Jim Connors (A&S), Trey Lemley (COM)
- Parking committee – need 1 senator
Ann Keasler (Nurs) volunteered to serve.

6. Committee Reports

- Academic Development and Mentoring (Susan McCready). No report.
- Environmental Quality (Smoot Major). Major noted that a small group met briefly. Recycling is the committee's major focus and the committee is talking with SGA about the matter. The committee also wanted to look into the nature trail issue, noting that last year funds were raised and signage will be designed. Major noted there involvement in the 3 mile creek cleanup and campus cleanup. Sachs asked about the

Vanguard article evaluating environmental matters on campus, suggesting that planning and environmental committees should work together to promote environmental efforts on campus. Major noted that there is an organization going around campuses to promote environmental consciousness and that they want to do a roundtable. Major promised to keep everyone informed on that matter. Sachs reminded that the purpose of our committee should not necessarily be to do these things, but encourage the administration to do so.

- Evaluation (Vicki Tate). The committee did not meet this month. The committee is putting some questions to various groups to get feedback. It is looking for new questions on which we want faculty feedback while they are still seeking to streamline old questions. They expect to complete the work by December so as to get the questionnaire over to computer center.
- Planning and Development (Zari Aliabadi). No report. Zilabardi noted that the committee is looking for suggestions on issues to address.
- Policies and Faculty Handbook (Liz Romey). Romey mentioned that committee members should look for an email about the Dean's proposal regarding appointments of terminal Masters.
- Salary and Benefits (Jean Irion). In the absence of the committee chair, Michael Doran reported on the university fringe benefits committee meeting from the prior day. He noted the opening of an Urgent Care center in the Health Services center: a walk-in clinic staffed by a physician assistant. The center should open within a month or so. Flu shots will be provided Oct 21, 23, 24 at various locations. The committee also voted on changes to policy, this included the elimination of the deductible on dental services, and that mental health treatment will now be treated as a normal office visit with a normal co-pay but will be limited to 60 visits per year. The committee also agreed on no changes in premium at this point. Doran also mentioned that a wellness program will be instituted around the first of the year. It will kick off with a survey that comes with a \$50 gift card if completed by the faculty member and another certificate if completed by the spouse. The survey will allow the wellness program to offer personalized feedback to faculty. The program will result in an additional cost of \$300,000, which will be covered by current reserves. Current reserves are around \$14 million. Nowlin asked whether the wellness program is linked to our health insurance. Doran responded that it is, but not in terms of lowering rates for exercises, etc: it is more of a beneficial, counseling approach. The program, he added, is entirely voluntary, designed to help avoid health problems. He further clarified that the information provided in the survey will be confidential.
- Technology Utilization (Tom Meyer). Meyer solicited input from committee members on goals for the committee.

7. Caucus Reports

- Allied Health (Julie Estis). No report.
- Arts and Sciences (Phil Carr). USA's endowment in Hellenic Studies completed fund raising reaching \$450,000, which was matched by the University. A committee was established to oversee the funds with plans to potentially fund a position in Classics next year. A total of 14 requests for faculty positions were submitted for this year of which seven are moving forward. The remaining positions are currently frozen. Departments will see a 5% reduction in their operating budgets this year. Carr concluded by noting that the new PhD program in Psychology is gearing up.

- Continuing Education (Stephen Bru). No report.
- Computer and Information Sciences (Michael Doran). Doran reported that the new Dean has settled in and successfully obtained funding on secure election systems. The division is also conducting a search to replace Simons. Work also continues on the new Engineering building.
- Education (Leah Kinniburgh). No report.
- Engineering (Peter Byrne). No report.
- Library (Amy Prendergast). No report.
- Mitchell College of Business (Greg Prescott). No report .
- Medicine (Sheryl Falkos). Falkos reported that the college is still searching for a chair of surgery. She also noted the construction/expansion of Women's & Children's Hospital.
- Nursing (Tootie Wright). Keasler reported that the College was awarded a half a million dollars Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant to supplement tuition costs for accelerated and Doctoral students. The grant is administered by Dean Debra Davis. She also noted that the College of Nursing Simulation program is providing a demonstration for ACHE on Thursday morning at the Mitchell Cancer Institution. Finally, Keasler noted that preparations and plans are underway for the move to the main campus next May.

Before calling for a move to adjourn, Sachs mentioned the idea of having Alabama senate chairs working together to discuss issues

Romey moved to adjourn; Meyer seconded. The meeting adjourned at 3:56.

Minutes prepared by Stephen Morris, Secretary.