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Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes – September 2010

Faculty Senators

University of South Alabama

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September 15, 2010
3pm -- Library Auditorium

Minutes

Present: Estis, Gubler-Hanna, Spector, Carr, Connors, Dardeau, Fisher, Guzy, Hillman, Lunceford, Marshall, Moore, Roddy, Shaw, Shelly-Tremblay, Summerlin, Toelken, Feinstein, Langan, Kingman Retzlaff-Roberts Campbell, Davidson-Shivers, Norrell, M. Adams, Omar, Finley, Nero, Bosarge, Kahn, Kaulfers, Martinko, Madden, Retzlaff-Roberts, D. Turnipseed, Brown, Herf, Keasler, Meyer, Minchew, Quiett

Excused: E. Adams, Haywick, Hillman, Byrd, P. Turnipseed, Lemley, Rizk

Unexcused: Husain, Powers, Donovan, Green, Grishko, Rachek, Rusyniak

1. Call to order (3:00pm without quorum)
2. Approval of minutes from the July meeting—postponed until quorum was met at 3:03pm.
After reaching quorum, Lunceford moved that the minutes be approved. The motion was seconded by Dardeau, and the Senate unanimously approved the July minutes.
3. Guest presentations
 - a. Dr. David Johnson, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
D. Johnson expressed a desire to speak with the Senate on a regular basis and thanked the Senate for this opportunity. He was present along with Melissa Wold, USA Registrar, to answer questions related to the Academic Calendar. Changes to the calendar were prompted by an initiative by the SGA to add a Fall Break to the calendar. A committee was formed at that time to look at the Fall Break, as well as issues with only two class days after Thanksgiving. Also, the committee looked at starting the Fall semester one week later to address cooling concerns and reduce our risk of closure due to hurricanes. Shifting the semester later also led to concerns with certifying degrees in a timely manner. The committee recommended two calendars. After the committee report, the administration looked at the calendar with an August 23rd start date. With the calendar proposed by the committee, degrees would not be certified in a timely manner. Adjustments were made to accomplish this goal. One such adjustment was the addition of Saturday exams. The approved calendar seemed to meet all of the goals of the committee. There are now 9 class days after the Thanksgiving break. D. Johnson indicated that this is beneficial to achieving learning outcomes. D. Johnson expressed one major regret with this process—that is, there was no time to get together with the Faculty Senate and the SGA prior to publication of the calendar.

B. Lunceford stated that he has been appointed chair of an ad hoc committee of the Senate to address the concerns with the calendar. Concerns that remain from the SGA meeting were presented: childcare for Saturday exams, work obligations, and religious observance. Students indicated that they would prefer a Thanksgiving break. D. Johnson responded that an earlier break was preferred by the students at the initial time of inquiry. D. Johnson indicated that those who need to reschedule exams based on religious observance should contact D. Johnson's office. He stated that he is willing to reevaluate the calendar based on these concerns.

D. Feinstein asked about the actual cost savings. D. Johnson responded that August is the most expensive month for utilities. It was estimated that starting a week later would save approximately \$50,000.

Davidson-Shivers asked for documentation regarding the idea that more time after a holiday is better for learning outcomes. D. Johnson reported that his opinion was based on personal experience. Retzlaff-Roberts presented the argument that the break prior to finals is actually beneficial to students. G. Dardeau asked if there were any feasibility studies, student surveys, or comparison analyses of other universities. P. Carr responded that most of the input came through the SGA and that the committee looked at other institutions. G. Dardeau expressed concerns related to comparing our students to other institutions.

M. Spector expressed concerns from other faculty in the College of Allied Health related to the timing of calendar distribution. He reported that knowing the calendar in advance would help with student clinical placement. Specifically, he stated that developing a calendar to cover a 3 year period would be beneficial. Senators from the College of Nursing reported similar concerns for placing students in clinical slots. T. Meyer expressed continued concerns from the College of Nursing related to job placement with the late degree verification. D. Johnson reported that any changes would be implemented Fall 2012, as the Fall 2011 calendar will be set very soon. D. Johnson indicated that the calendar will be reviewed at the end of the Fall semester and changes will be made if needed.

D. Johnson expressed specific interest in correcting the issue of no “dead day.”

b. Dr. Nicole Carr, Director of Student Academic Success and Retention

N. Carr presented a handout to the Senators which stated objectives of her office, which included improving academic success and retention, improving deep learning outcomes, and providing support to developmental studies program. She presented the idea of living/learning communities within the new residence hall. Existing residence halls may also be included. Students live in the same area and take some of the same courses (at least the freshman experience course and 1 or 2 other courses). The students are linked by common interests and majors. Currently, there are theme-based and profession-based learning communities proposed. A crucial piece of this initiative is the Freshman Seminar/Experience. It will be more centralized from Academic Affairs (e.g., study skills, time management), and add opportunities for faculty to teach on their interests. She announced that a guest will be coming on October 1, 2010 to discuss the learning communities at his institution. Also, there is a PETAL seminar later in September on this topic. Faculty Senators are invited to participate and provide feedback to N. Carr.

G. Dardeau expressed concerns related to faculty compensation for teaching the Freshman Experience courses. She raised the questions, “Is there a commitment from the administration to adequately compensate faculty?” D. Johnson stated that the administration is investigating this issue.

4. Chair’s report - J. Connors

The Executive Committee has been meeting weekly since our last Senate meeting. The Executive Committee has created a draft version that has been presented to the administration for their review prior to Senate review and approval. We hope to present a draft to the Senate at our October meeting for the full Senate to review. Upon approval of the Senate, it will go to the Faculty for approval. From there it must be approved by the Board of Trustees.

We have been working with the administration to ensure adequate representation on each university committee. We have also clarified that these are voting members of the committee. The following appointment to committees have been made:

Academic Computing—Diane Keasler
Admissions and Records—Sam Fisher
Career Services—Tom Meyer
Research Council—David Turnipseed
Bookstore—Patricia Turnipseed
Career Services—Tom Meyer
Libraries—Doug Marshall
Scholarship and Financial Aid—Phillip Carr
Writing—Kathryn Toelken

Also, we have been privy to financial updates from the President. For now, we are within the budget approved by the Board of Trustees. The Governor has indicated that there will be no proration under his administration; however, the indications are not favorable for future state appropriations. The stimulus money will not be available for the next fiscal year.

J. Connors proposed the creation of an ad hoc committee to explore ways to cut costs across the University without reducing our quality. K. Toelken will chair the committee and will find four or five volunteers to serve.

J. Connors also reported that the University Fringe Benefits Committee indicated that the \$1 million cap on our insurance will be lifted.

5. Old Business

a. Faculty use of Student Recreation Center

Discussion ensued related to faculty use of the Student Recreation Center. The rate was reduced to \$10 for faculty and spouses, as well as reduced rate for family members. Dr. John Smith will report on the Student Recreation Center at our next meeting.

b. Annual Faculty Senate banquet

Faculty Senators and guests, along with administrators and Board of Trustees representatives will be invited. The banquet will be funded by the President's office. The proposed date is May 6th. J. Shelley-Tremblay proposed that we create awards to present at the banquet. The ad hoc Public Relations committee will address awards for the banquet.

c. Homecoming 2010—D. Turnipseed reported that we must rely on donors to fund the event. We will have the same menu, but a larger tent this year. We are going to start at 1:30pm, November 6.

d. Update on Faculty Senate Constitution reform—included in Chair's report.

6. New Business

a. Ad hoc public relations committee— J. Connors proposed that J. Shelly-Tremblay chair this committee and recruit volunteers. P. Carr asked that the committee also work to improve the visibility of the Faculty in the local press.

b. Testing Center— S. Fisher expressed concerns from faculty members with testing large hybrid courses. A University committee is looking at a variety of options for secure testing.

c. Resolution proposal—Given the extensive layoffs at other institutions, J. Connors requested that the Senate consider presenting a resolution to the University administration to commend them on their efforts to manage the financial crisis to date. J. Connors will draft the resolution and present it at the next meeting of the Senate. Some senators expressed that this might be a

premature initiative.

- d. Faculty concern regarding protection of the LGTB population—Tom Shaw proposed that the Faculty Policies and Handbook committee address this concern.

7. Committee Reports

- Academic Development and Mentoring (Phil Carr)—P. Carr reported that the committee is compiling a list of mentoring and development opportunities for faculty. Please forward any development opportunities to P. Carr.
- Environmental Quality (Doug Marshall)—The committee will be meeting soon. They will be joining with SGA, Chris Willis, and housing to reduce energy consumption across campus.
- Evaluation (Patsy Turnipseed)—No report.
- Planning and Development (Jack Shelley-Tremblay)—presented Faculty Senate brochure to recruit Senators. The Planning and Development committee and the Executive Committee are reviewing the document. The document will be published in November. Committee met once and will meet again. The Planning and Development is supposed to be advising the information on campus development, but there is not a direct conduit to the administration. J. Shelly-Tremblay asked that Senators help identify issues for this committee to address.
- Policies and Faculty Handbook (Sam Fisher)—No report.
- Salary and Benefits (Elizabeth Adams)—No report.
- Technology Utilization (Diane Keasler)—Presented handout regarding committee activities. Committee has received information regarding access to wireless access. University committee is exploring modalities for online learning.

7. Caucus Reports

- Allied Health (Mike Spector)— The Dean’s Advisory Council has not met. Replacement of computers and accessories is not being allowed at this time. This is impacting productivity. Speech Pathology and Audiology was reaccredited.
- Arts and Sciences (Thomas Shaw & Laura Moore)—A new program to summarize Faculty Senate meetings and send to faculty in Arts & Sciences has been implemented. The A& S Senators met with their Dean.
- Continuing Education (Amy Kingman)—Continuing Education is searching for a new Dean.
- Computer and Information Sciences (David Langan)—No report.
- Education (Dennis Campbell)—There is currently a search for a new department chair. The COE is engaged in the first semester of new merged curriculum. They are also facing issues with replacement of computers.
- Engineering (Francis Donovan)—No report.
- Library (Vera Finley)—Entered into a contract with NetBooks which can be accessed through SouthCat.
- Mitchell College of Business (Donna Retzlaff-Roberts)—No report.
- Medicine (?)—They are up for accreditation this month. Their site visit scheduled for next week.
- Nursing (Henri Brown)—They are up for accreditation site visit next week, as well.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:35pm following such motion from S. Fisher and 2nd from B. Lunceford.