Representative Senate Meeting  
November 9, 2011  
Minutes

Attendance:

Representative Senators and Officers: 59  
Ex officio: 1  
Faculty, Administrators and Guests: 24  
Total Attendance: 84

1. Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 1:47 PM.

2. Approval of the Minutes:

The minutes for the October 11, Representative Faculty Senate meeting were approved with corrections.

3. President’s Report:

President LaFollette reported that the Faculty Senate Steering Committee (FSSC) met in its annual retreat with the Provost. The topic was potential restructuring of schools and colleges within the University. The Provost is in the process of preparing a white paper on the topic. It is rumored that a draft of the white paper has been circulated among Deans, but none has been distributed as yet to the Senate or the FSSC.

LaFollette reported on a recent experience he had greeting and answering some questions for a group of prospective students he happened to encounter during their tour of the campus. He observed that the Admissions Office welcomes faculty members, when they encounter such groups, to stop and say hello to the prospective students if they are so inclined.

LaFollette reported that the Presidential Search Committee has been formed, and its two faculty representatives are himself and Professor Luis Gonzalez del Valle (CLA). They are both present at this meeting to hear from faculty members on the qualifications they should consider in searching for a new University President. At this point LaFollette yielded the chair to Vice President Shapiro, so that he and Professor Gonzalez del Valle could attend to faculty comments.

4. Factors to consider in the Search for Temple University’s next President:

Vice President Shapiro invited faculty members present to address the qualities and characteristics that the Presidential Search Committee should be looking for in a new University President. She noted that a summary of remarks (without specific attribution) will be prepared and sent to the faculty representatives on the Search Committee. Several faculty members offered their views. The points raised included the following:

• Search committee members need to be able to find out about candidates from individuals at the institutions with which the candidates have previously been associated. This checking needs to occur early enough in the process to have a meaningful impact on the selections of finalists for the position. Waiting until the end of the process could be harmful because it will cut off potentially important sources of information until it is too late to make good use of them.

• Committee members need to be wary of search firms, which have a vested interest in pushing candidates that appear to prove the search firm’s value and justify their fees, regardless of whether those candidates truly fit the needs of the institution.

• Committee members should be wary of secrecy, which if done too strictly can cut off valuable sources of critical information.

• There should be no advance agreement to make the final vote unanimous. Such an agreement can be used to silence genuine differences of opinion on the committee.
• The search committee is not constituted in a way that will reflect or support shared governance, so there will be an extra burden on the faculty representatives to push for giving that issue sufficient prominence in the search process.

• There are arguments going both ways as to whether the next University President should come from an academic background or from some other institutional setting. If a candidate is not from academia, it will be important to know what his/her past connections with higher education have been, as well as the candidate’s attitudes toward the role of higher education in society. If the candidate is from an academic setting, we need to know how open the candidate has been to faculty voices on matters of significance to the university.

• Given our eroding public support, we need someone who will be effective lobbying Harrisburg and Washington for support. Perhaps a prominent politician with strong state and national connections could be an effective choice at this juncture.

• Higher education is in the process of becoming an academic industry. That change has brought a strong trend toward top-down management. This can have a negative impact on the university’s mission. We need a leader who understands the difference between collegial and hierarchical administration and is prepared to implement the former. One key indicator will be how the candidate views governance within the university.

• A candidate’s view toward organizational development will also be important. If the university is an academic industry, its product is purely intellectual in nature. Highly structured hierarchical approaches to organization and management do not work well in such a setting. A candidate’s philosophy toward organizational development could be very revealing regarding his or her management style and how it will play out.

• A candidate’s potential longevity as president should be a factor. After two relatively short presidencies, we need someone who can make a long term commitment to Temple that will facilitate meaningful long term planning and development.

• We need to know the candidate’s vision for the relationship of the university to its surrounding community.

• The candidate’s articulated vision for Temple needs to move past generalities about the university as a whole to a specific vision concerning the future development of schools, colleges, and specific academic programs.

• We need to know the candidate’s views toward faculty shared governance. Will s/he commit to support it and take it seriously?

• The candidate’s views on faculty hiring are important, including views regarding the hiring and roles of tenure-track (TT), non-tenure-track (NTT) and adjunct faculty. How the candidate has related to faculty in various ranks in the past is also important.

• We also need to know the candidate’s disposition toward “academic space,” both physical (offices, labs, etc.) and intellectual (academic integrity, academic freedom, etc.).

• Attitudes toward the role of tenure are critical, since the tenure system is under fire nationally by those who want to balance university budgets by cutting labor costs. The candidate’s view toward the processes for granting tenure, taking it away, and shifting faculty lines from TT to NTT or adjuncts will be of critical importance.

• A candidate’s view of the proper use of adjunct faculty, and the relationship of adjunct to full-time faculty, is important. Does s/he see adjuncts as means of cutting costs, or does s/he have a mature conception of the educational role(s) that adjunct instructors can most effectively fill?

• Another factor is the candidate’s attitude toward computer-based instruction. Does s/he see it as a method for enhancing the quality of education by supporting or supplementing live instruction, or just as a means of cutting costs?

• Temple’s small endowment relative to its competition is a huge problem. We need someone with a proven track record who knows how and where to raise money, and is able to do it. To do that, the candidate will have to be someone who is
able to resonate effectively with Temple alumni. This may mean that we should look for someone who shares commonalities of background or perspective with our alumni.

• Respect for faculty is a key criterion. Without it morale is sure to suffer. The university will collapse if faculty members lose their sense of investment and ownership in the institution.

• Views on faculty workload are also important. If faculty are overworked and students are underserved, we will lose students to other 4-year institutions, or even to community colleges.

• A candidate must recognize that an effective faculty “walks on three legs”: teaching, research, and service. All three must be valued and rewarded.

• The candidate’s approach to graduate students is important. Ours are seriously overworked, and it negatively affects the quality of graduate students we are able to attract, which in turn hurts the quality and reputation of our programs.

• The candidate needs to be someone with real experience dealing with a large, public, urban university that has a unionized faculty. Lack of effective experience in such a milieu could spell serious problems.

• The health sciences system is facing huge financial issues that could engulf the entire university. The system is already facing serious financial difficulties, and there is a strong prospect that reimbursements for the 1/3 of its patients on Medicare and Medicaid will be curtailed. We need someone with a strong grasp of those issues and a sound plan for addressing them.

• While budget issues are critical to the university’s success and survival right now, it must not always be at the center of the decision making process. Students, faculty and staff need attention. We need a leader who does not ignore the budget, but also keeps the best interests of the students, faculty and staff at the center of his/her decision making.

5. Vice President’s Report

Vice President Shapiro thanked the many individuals who have volunteered to serve on Faculty Senate Committees. Most committees are now either at or near full complement, but there are still 2 vacancies on EPPC and 3 on CATA. These are very important committees and they should be fully staffed. Anyone interested in serving on either committee should send a brief statement of interest and a CV to senate2@temple.edu. Shapiro noted that CATA does not meet often in person, but its work is very important since it is responsible for nominating faculty members to searches.

At this point President LaFollette resumed the chair.

6. Student Feedback Forms

Senior Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies Peter Jones presented a report regarding the status of the Student Feedback Forms (SFF) Committee’s work on student course feedback.

Jones detailed several of the changes that have been made to the forms as a result of the committee’s work. These include: changing the name of the forms to switch emphasis from evaluation to feedback; development of four different forms for different kinds of courses; reducing the number of questions; eliminating questions that produced useless or duplicative information; changing the wording of questions; altering their order; and changing the way data from the forms are processed and reported. He noted that some changes counteract artificial impressions of precision, while others address the problem of “peaking” of responses close to the norm, so that small variations in response potentially produce large variations in scoring. Reports now group overall results for individual course sections into three categories – upper, middle, and lower – and the criteria for each category are structured to reduce the risk of a large swing in outcome from a small number of responses. Jones emphasized that all these changes have been grounded on empirical research.

With these changes in place, the current issue is whether to move to on-line administrations of SFFs. Jones reviewed the experiments with on-line administration that have been conducted over the past academic year. The results show no significant deviations in result (when comparing on-line versus paper administration for the same course sections and instructors), but they do show a drop in student participation. Experience with on-line administration at other universities suggests that the drop in
participation can be partly remedied by providing incentives for students to complete the forms. Jones reviewed the ideas the committee has advanced for encouraging greater participation at Temple, including enlisting support from student government and giving students who fill out SFFs in all their courses on-line access to SFF results. Jones also stressed the important role faculty play in encouraging their students to complete SFFs.

Jones reported that the SFF committee has proposed a two-year experiment with university-wide on-line administration of SFFs in all courses. The committee originally projected implementation this semester. Based on feedback from the EPPC and the Faculty Senate Steering Committee, the committee now proposes that the on-line administration in all courses begin with the Spring 2012 term.

After Jones’ report, he was joined by several committee members* in order to respond to faculty questions and comments. The following items were raised.

- Several faculty members asked about whether there should be “sticks” as well as “carrots” to encourage student participation. Some suggested that completion of SFFs should affects timing of when students receive their grades. Committee members responded that actions perceived by students as negative consequences might distort feedback results.

- There were questions about what will happen this semester. With a few exceptions the administration will all be on paper this semester, even for those who in the past had volunteered to try on-line administration.

- The switch to on-line administration across the country is being driven largely by cost considerations. Jones acknowledged that cost was a consideration here, but he also noted that on-line administration will enable more prompt dissemination of results.

- Concerns were raised about the drop in the number of narrative comments faculty receive when feedback goes on-line. Committee members responded that the number of narrative comments may go down, but that overall quality of the narrative comments may actually go up.

- Questions were asked about variations in outcome by college and school, or subunits within a school. Committee members responded that the experiments done so far have been too small to permit such comparisons. They hope a university-wide experiment will allow such comparisons.

- Concerns were raised about potential consequences for evaluation. The Committee has proposed that additional means of teaching evaluation be developed. Faculty responded, however, that in practice the SFFs will be the sole method used.

- There were questions about differences in result for tenure-track versus non-tenure-track and adjunct instructors, as well as difference based on whether the class was large or small, whether instructors had heavy or light loads, and the like. Studies elsewhere have shown such variances. The answer was that there may be such variances and results will have to be contextualized when used to evaluate teacher performance.

- Some faculty members expressed skepticism as to whether decisionmakers will engage in the requisite degree of contextualization. The emphasis will always be on improving overall SFF numerical results.

- One important factor in the success or failure of on-line administration will be what students understand regarding the purpose and use of SFFs. Students need real and not artificial incentives to participate.

- There will be a need for adequate instruction on how to administer and use the SFFs when they go on-line. Committee members responded that there will be instruction sessions in each school and college, and that the Committee members will be available for further discussion with faculty.

* The committee members present were: Pamela Barnett (TLC), James Degnan (P&PA), Joseph DuCette (CLA), Sally Frazee (P&PA), Steven Fleming (CST), Muriel Morisey (Law), and Dolores Zygmont (CHP).
At the conclusion of the discussion, Jones said that the Committee will arrange a time and place later this semester to meet with faculty for further discussion. President LaFollette thanked the Committee for their hard work and for coming to meet with the Senate on this issue.

7. Provost’s Report

Provost Richard Englert began by noting several positive developments: Professor Joseph Schwartz (CLA) received the 2011 David Easton Book Award for his 2009 book, *The Future of Democratic Equality: Restructuring Social Solidarity in a Fragmented America*; Medical School Professor Kamel Khalili received a substantial NIMH grant for his work on neurological diseases associated with AIDS; faculty members from each school and college were honored at the recent University Service Brunch; and FSBM recently held a ceremony honoring several faculty members for outstanding teaching and research.

On a more sober note, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s revenue deficiencies may lead to interim budget cuts for this year, as well as further cuts in next year’s appropriation. There could also be cuts in Commonwealth capital funding. Temple recently hosted a very successful hearing on campus by the Pennsylvania Senate Appropriations committee, but the outlook for support from Harrisburg continues to be bleak.

Englert reported that a faculty-administration task force on workload has been meeting this semester. Its recommendations will be important, particularly in light of the continuing budgetary pressures.

Englert met with the FSSC in an October retreat to discuss issues of reorganization. He will soon be putting forward a white paper on restructuring that will address reorganization issues university-wide, not just limited to particular schools and colleges.

In the response period that followed, the following items were raised:

- Aside from the issue of Commonwealth appropriations the university’s support from donations is extremely low for a university of its size and profile. Improving our numbers in that category should be a high priority.

- The Research Policies and Programs Committee (RPPC) has experienced cuts in funding that have reduced the Committee’s ability to support promising faculty projects with seed money. The RPPC budget was reduced from $75,000 to $60,000 this year, forcing the committee to cancel its fall evaluation of project proposals. Englert responded that annual appropriations for the RPPC have remained constant, but that supplementary funds from the Provost Office were reduced this year. He offered to meet with the RPPC about this situation.

- Englert was asked who is serving on the workload task force. He will send the names of the committee members to President LaFollette for distribution to the faculty over the Faculty Senate listserv.

8. Old Business:

There was no old business.

9. New Business:

There was no new business.

10. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 3:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted.

Mark C. Rahdert
Secretary