Faculty Senate Steering Committee
January 24, 2012
Minutes

Present: Paul S. LaFollette (Pres.), Joan Shapiro (V. Pres.), Mark C. Rahdert (Sec’y), Karen Turner (Past President), Nora Alter (SCT), Adam Davey (CHPSW), Joan Delalic (Engr.) [teleconferenced], Deborah Howe (SED) [teleconferenced], Forrest Huffman (FSBM), Michael Jackson (STHM), Michael Jacobs (Phar), Tricia S. Jones (Educ.) [teleconferenced], Charles Jungreis (Med.), Stephanie Knopp (Tyler), Jim Korsh (CST), Joseph Schwartz (CLA), Jeffrey Solow (BCMD), David Waldstreicher (Fac. Herald), Cheryl Mack (Coord.)

Absent: Mark Anderson (Law), Jeffrey Draine (SSW), Laurie MacPhail (Dent.)

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:03 P.M.

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the January 17, 2012 meeting were approved.

3. President’s Report

President LaFollette briefly reported on the January 23, 2012 Representative Senate meeting. Most of meeting involved presentations by Provost Englert and Executive Vice President Anthony Wagner regarding the Commonwealth’s pending $7 million cut in university appropriations. LaFollette also delivered a statement (attached) identifying some of the FSSC’s concerns regarding the process for developing the Provost’s white paper on reorganization, as well as the lack of response to various issues the FSSC has raised. The statement announced plans to call a special Faculty Senate meeting to discuss the potential reorganization of arts programs. Efforts are under way to find an appropriate date and venue. It is important that the date and time work well for faculty members in the most likely affected units, particularly Boyer, Tyler, SCT, and CLA.

LaFollette reported that efforts have been made to establish a liaison committee with the General Education Executive Committee (GEEC), but that there has not yet been any response from GEEC.

LaFollette reviewed some of the issues (besides reorganization and the budget) that need to be addressed this semester. He encouraged other FSSC members to add to the list. The issues needing attention include the following:

• On-line SFF’s. There is continuing faculty concern about the proposal to move to on-line administration of SFF’s. The FSSC and/or Senate may need to make a collective statement on this issue.
Travel. Despite discussions last year with the President and Provost about streamlining and modernizing university requirements for price quotations on travel, the old policies still seem to be in place and are being aggressively enforced. They are causing unnecessary aggravation for affected faculty and are costing the university money. Particularly vexing is the requirement that a price quotation for an identical itinerary must be obtained from a university-authorized travel agent before booking from another source can be authorized. Agents now charge a fee just to give a quote, and in many cases a quote for an identical itinerary is impossible. Even when possible, by the time it is obtained the alternative option is often no longer available. LaFollette will re-raise the issue with the Provost as a first step.

Grade changes. Rules that apply to grade changes effectively require faculty members to seek permission for grade changes from mid-level nonacademic personnel. These rules are dysfunctional and demeaning. They need to be revised.

Collegial Assembly bylaws. We need to revisit the statement drafted by the FSSC last year regarding Collegial Assembly bylaws. After attempts to resolve differences with the Provost and Deans last year, nothing further has happened. Two schools (Boyer and Tyler) have drafted new bylaws and submitted them, but have received no response from the University administration.

Class scheduling matrix. At the recent budget meeting, the President labeled non-conformance with the class scheduling matrix as “capricious” and likely done solely to suit the convenience of the instructor. This is not the case in many units, which have legitimate discipline-based reasons for non-conformance. The Faculty Senate may need to take a position defending the right of certain schools and programs to deviate from the matrix in their scheduling.

Status of MFA students. The University administration persists in treating the MFA as equivalent to the MA in certain respects that have significant negative impact on both MFA students and the programs in which they study.

Summer Sessions. We need to follow up on conversations with the President and Provost over the last couple of years regarding streamlining processes and eliminating barriers for offering courses and enrolling students during the summer.

4. Vice President’s Report

Vice President Shapiro circulated a tentative draft list of existing committee vacancies. She is in the process of sending letters to all committee chairs aimed at getting a more accurate count of existing or arising vacancies. Shapiro emphasized the importance of recruiting qualified candidates, particularly for the University Tenure and Promotion Advisory Committee, the Committee on Administrative and Trustee Appointments (CATA), and the Committee on the Status of Women. She observed that the latter committee really needs almost complete repopulation. Current members are not even willing to convene a meeting of the committee. It was suggested that perhaps the Vice President could convene a first meeting in an attempt to get
the committee restarted. This approach has been used in the past when committees have been unable to meet.

There was some discussion about the workload of the Tenure and Promotion Committee. The workload is not as punishing as it was in the past, but it can still involve a substantial time commitment, especially when committee members serve as “first reader” of a candidate’s scholarship.

It was suggested that an announcement be sent out on the listserv inviting volunteers for the various committees, ideally with links to information about the committees on the faculty senate webpage. Coordinator Cheryl Mack advised that there may be technical difficulties providing links, since the website material is in the process of being migrated to a new website location.

5. Advisers for EPPC

President LaFollette conveyed a request from the members of the Educational Programs and Policies Committee (EPPC) to authorize addition of non-voting members from academic advising and student financial services. The work of the committee often involves issues that impact on advising and financial aid, and it would be helpful to the committee to have assistance with technical details in these areas. A motion to authorize the addition of the two non-voting EPPC members, one from academic advising and one from student financial services, was approved.

6. Collegial Assembly Guiding Principles

President LaFollette asked the FSSC to decide what the next step should be with respect to the development of Collegial Assembly bylaws. The Provost has not taken any action in this area for a year, and the effort last year to come to some consensus with Deans was unsuccessful. It would be very helpful if schools and colleges could put revised bylaws in place before there is a change in top-level University leadership. After considerable discussion, a motion to present the FSSC’s statement of principles for consideration by the Faculty Senate was approved. Secretary Rahdert was directed to review the draft statement of principles and to make any needed grammatical or stylistic changes.

7. Merit Allocations

There was considerable discussion of the methods being used in various schools and colleges to allocate merit. While on one level this is a TAUP union issue, several FSSC members expressed concern that the merit allocations are systematically under-valuing teaching (as well as service) and that this presents a long-term danger to the University’s academic mission. If the implementation of the merit system is negatively affecting the quality of instruction, this may be an issue that the Faculty Senate needs to address. The first step will be to determine and document whether systematic under-valuation of teaching merit is in fact occurring.
8. Workload Committee

FSSC members asked whether there has been any information about the activities of the ad hoc committee on faculty workload the President appointed last term. At the recent meeting on budget issues, the President alluded to the committee and suggested that it would soon issue a set of recommendations. There was some discussion about whether it would be appropriate to ask the faculty members on the committee to meet with the FSSC to discuss workload issues. Karen Turner reported that the FSSC had developed a position paper on faculty workload which it presented to President Hart in 2006. She will circulate copies of that paper to the FSSC. It was agreed that we should inquire about the progress of the workload committee with Provost Englert, and that we should invite him to meet with the FSSC (to discuss issues other than the budget and reorganization) soon.

9. Old Business

None.

10. New Business

None.

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark C. Rahdert
Secretary

Attachment: Provost white paper on restructuring
Statement Read by President Paul LaFollette
At the January 23, 2012 Representative Faculty Senate Meeting

Now that we have had several weeks to consider the "White Paper" about restructuring, I am sure that many of you have had the opportunity to ponder, discuss, and react to this document. The Steering Committee, which has watched this document evolve, spent most of its last meeting discussing it.

While this paper contains some material that is not controversial, the Steering Committee has serious reservations about some of the proposals. In particular, many of us view the proposed creation of a new combined school of the arts and other proposed restructurings with deep concern.

In the course of our ongoing meetings with the Provost we have repeatedly asked for a specific assessment of the cost savings, improvement of student experiences, and other expected results that would justify this new school.

We also asked for an assessment of possible unintended results, such as confusing and annoying the alumnae/i of these schools that would argue against taking this action. We have not yet received any specific information answering these questions.

We have repeatedly expressed our beliefs that there may be other, less extreme means for saving money and enhancing student experiences. We have argued, for instance, that cross-college sharing of some administrative activities without formally merging colleges might be an effective cost saving endeavor. We have suggested that provostial and presidential policies could be created that would encourage deans to work together to facilitate cross-disciplinary undergraduate experiences. At last spring's joint retreat of the deans and the FSSC, we discussed many interesting ideas about revenue generation. We do not feel that such ideas have been given serious consideration prior to proposing the more draconian plan of merging colleges.

For these reasons, many members of the FSSC feel that we should not support the proposals involving the restructuring of Tyler, Boyer, and parts of SCT. However we also do not, at this point, feel comfortable acting as the sole voice of the faculty in matters as important as these. Accordingly, we have voted to call a special meeting of the University Faculty Senate with a single agenda item - the discussion as to whether the Faculty Senate should oppose that portion of the "White Paper" which proposes the above mentioned restructuring of Tyler, Boyer, and SCT. We have chosen to focus this particular meeting on the arts schools, but we have the same concerns, the same desire to understand in detail the intended and unintended consequences, of the other portions of the "White Paper", including the proposed restructuring of other schools and colleges, prior to giving them the support of the faculty.

We are in the process of securing a suitable room, and will announce the date as quickly as we may. We anticipate it will be sometime next week.