Faculty Senate Steering Committee  
Tuesday, January 31, 2012  
Minutes

Present: Paul S. LaFollette (Pres.), Joan Shapiro (V. Pres.), Mark C. Rahdert (Secy), Karen Turner (Past President), Nora Alter (SCT), Mark Anderson (Law), Adam Davey (CHPSW), Joan Delalic (Engr.) [teleconferenced], Jeffrey Draine (SSW), Deborah Howe (SED), Forrest Huffman (FSBM), Michael Jackson (STHM), Michael Jacobs (Phar), Tricia S. Jones (Edu.) [teleconferenced], Charles Jungreis (Med.), Stephanie Knopp (Tyler), Jim Korsh (CST), Laurie MacPhail (Dent.), Jeffrey Solow (BCMD), David Waldstreicher (Fac. Herald), Cheryl Mack (Coord.)

Absent: Joseph Schwartz (CLA)

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the January 24, 2012 meeting were approved.

3. Vice President’s Report

Vice President Shapiro reported that a draft listing of all committee vacancies has been circulated to all committee chairs, who have been asked to check it for accuracy. Committee chairs have also been asked to prepare and submit reports on their committee’s activities. Shapiro reminded FSSC members that she needs their assistance in filling vacancies. Members should speak to collegial assembly chairs, Faculty Senate representatives and others to identify potentially interested faculty, and then they should recruit those faculty directly.

The Committee on the Status of Women now has a convener: Nilgun Anadolu-Okur (CLA). The Committee, however, is still in need of additional members, including men.

Vice President Shapiro reported that a problem has emerged with respect to the Research Programs and Policies Committee (RPPC). Two committee members, Marina Angel (Law) and Dennis Silage (Engr.) are completing their second terms on the committee, and it is customary for members to go off a committee after two full terms. It has recently emerged that there is a difference of opinion between Angel and Silage regarding the direction the committee’s work should take. Part of the dispute concerns whether the RPPC should devote most of its energies to providing seed grant funding for research projects, or should devote more of its attention to policy and program review. Angel (who is the committee chair but is teaching this semester in Japan) has asked the Faculty Senate officers to get involved. President LaFollette has discussed some of the issues with Provost Englert and will attempt to arrange a conference among the various interested parties, including Angel and Silage, to work out any differences.

4. President’s Report

In his report President LaFollette followed up on several issues raised at the last FSSC meeting, as well as some new ones:
**Library Search.** LaFollette reported that the Committee on Administrative and Trustee Appointments (CATA) has submitted three candidates for the search committee for the Director of Libraries. They are: Cynthia Folio (Boyer), Kenneth Finkel (CLA) and Dennis Silage (Engineering). After a review of their curricula vitae, a motion to put forward these three candidates was approved.

**Travel Policy.** LaFollette reported on his recent meeting with the Provost. He raised the concerns about the University travel policy that were expressed at the last FSSC meeting. It turns out that Associate Vice President and Controller Frank Annunziato has formed a “focus group” of faculty and administrators that is working on revising the University travel policies, in connection with renegotiation of the university contract with its designated travel agency. There was some discussion about whether this group, which is quite large, is actually working on travel policies or has a broader agenda of which the travel policy is a relatively small part. It was suggested that perhaps Annunziato should be invited to meet with the FSSC to hear some of our concerns.

**Special Senate Meeting to Discuss Reorganization.** LaFollette reported that his survey of FSSC members to find an appropriate date and time for the Special Faculty Senate meeting to discuss reorganization show that Wednesday, February 8, 2012 looks like the best day, with a fairly even division of sentiment between scheduling a morning or afternoon session. After some discussion, there was consensus that scheduling a meeting from 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. might accommodate the largest potential group of faculty members. LaFollette will confirm a location for that date and time and send out an announcement promptly.

**SFF’s.** LaFollette reported that in his meeting with Provost Englert he raised the faculty’s continuing deep concern over on-line administration of SFFs. LaFollette stressed faculty concern over low response rate; questions about the effect that could have on reliability; concern over use of online SFFs in tenure, promotion, contract renewal and merit determinations; and reservations about the lack of strong incentives for students to complete the forms. He has also argued that without strong faculty commitment, the project will be prone to fail. His efforts have met substantial resistance, particularly to any suggestion that completion of SFFs should be tied in some way to the timing for release of student grades. Provost Englert has also stated that further delay in moving to online administration would offend members of the committee who have worked hard on this project. LaFollette will try to arrange a meeting between faculty and administration to see whether there is some room for compromise.

Some FSSC members observed the apparent inconsistency in the University’s resistance to linking completion of SFF’s to the timing of receipt of grades, given the measures it uses on faculty to secure their timely completion of on-line merit reports.

**Budget and Capital Spending.** Provost Englert has agreed to arrange a meeting involving himself, Executive Vice President and CFO Anthony Wagner, Associate Vice President Kenneth Kaiser, Professor Philip Yannella (CLA), Professor Rafael Porrata-Doria (Law, Chair of Budget Review Committee), and Faculty Senate officers to discuss budgetary and capital spending issues.

**Workload.** LaFollette reported that the workload task force has submitted its recommendations to the Provost, who is sharing them with the President and will release them after she gives her approval. The FSSC is unlikely to be offered an opportunity to review them in advance of general release. David Waldstreicher noted that the recommendations will come out too late to be included in the forthcoming Faculty Herald issue, but he will try to include an announcement to alert faculty to the impending report.

**Merit for Teaching.** In his meeting with the Provost, LaFollette raised the evident lack of merit raises for teaching that is occurring in some schools and colleges. He stressed that this should be a major issue of concern given Temple’s historic commitment to high quality classroom instruction. LaFollette
suggested that perhaps some statement of “best practices” or guidelines on merit for teaching could be developed. The Provost responded that he is reluctant to limit Deans’ discretion but that the matter needs further discussion. LaFollette does not yet have any information on when or in what format such a dialogue would take place.

Some FSSC members observed that there is an important role here for Collegial Assemblies, which should be engaging in dialogue with their Deans over the role of teaching in merit assessment. CST’s assembly has scheduled such a meeting. There was also discussion about the need for each school or college to develop its own internal merit guidelines. There are supposed to be guidelines in place for each unit. It is probably appropriate to look into what each school or college has done, given that the President’s merit guidelines have now been in place for several years.

**Transfer credits.** President LaFollette reported that there have been some issues recently in CST about how transfer credits are being entered into Banner, and how this is affecting satisfaction of course pre-requisites for transfer students. Transfer students get credit but not a grade for courses completed at their prior institution. For pre-requisite purposes this apparently gets treated by Banner as equivalent to a “C-“ which necessitates overrides for qualifying transfer students in cases where the pre-requisite grade must be C or above. Apparently some schools and colleges provide such overrides as a matter of course, but others do not. It was suggested that the whole issue of how transfer students are treated needs to be addressed, given the large portion to our undergraduate student body that now comes to Temple through transfer.

**5. Guest: Professor Shannon Miller.**

Professor Shannon Miller (CLA) spoke to the FSSC regarding the plan to move to university-wide on-line administration of SFF’s, which she opposes. She argued that the SFF committee white paper, on its own terms, raises serious concerns about the merit of the proposal. She noted that the white paper documents a very low rate of student response, which it says is comparable to results in other universities that have had on-line evaluations for years. This raises serious doubt about the white paper’s contention that response rates can be increased through incentives and/or that they will rise naturally once on-line administration becomes the norm. Neither claim seems to have any empirical foundation. She questioned the white paper’s claim that the drop in response rate does not affect outcomes, because this contention seems to be based on an extremely small sample study, perhaps as little as a single class. Anecdotal evidence from professors who volunteered to try on-line administration suggests a much wider disparity between paper and on-line results. Miller also noted that while the white paper calls for development of other means to assess teaching quality, none of these other means presently exists. This is particularly of concern given the widespread use of SFF results in making tenure, promotion, and contract renewal decisions. Miller also noted the lack of any attention in the white paper to privacy concerns raised by public on-line disclosure of results to students, particularly given the arguable status of SFF’s as personnel documents that are used in making critical personnel decisions. She concluded that in her opinion the white paper has failed to make a case for moving to on-line administration, and that there is no good reason to rush forward. In her view the Faculty Senate needs to register formal opposition to this plan.

Miller’s presentation prompted further discussion of SFF’s. Some members noted the efforts the FSSC has made to slow down implementation because of similar concerns. Others noted that electronic distribution of results to students is likely to have many unintended consequences, since once that information becomes public in an easily transferrable form there is no control over where it will go, or by whom and how it will be used. Several members registered support for the view that the Faculty Senate needs to take a firm position. Other observed that the Provost’s expressed concern about not “offending” SFF committee members ought not to carry any weight in discussion of the merits, and certainly ought
not to outweigh the risks to faculty who might lose tenure, promotion or contract renewal because of artificially low SFF scores.

President LaFollette reiterated his desire to explore with Provost Englert whether there is any room for compromise on this issue. It was suggested that one possible compromise would be to extend on-line SFF administration only to tenured faculty who are not being considered for promotion, together with an assurance that any apparently negative results of the on-line SFFs would not be used in assessing merit. There ought also to be an advance commitment to rigorous empirical study of the results (including comparison with paper SFF’s across a broad sample), plus open-minded reconsideration of the issue of how best to encourage fuller student participation.

6. Old Business

None.

7. New Business

None

8 Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark C. Rahdert
Secretary