

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST
OFFICE OF THE FACULTY SENATE

Acting Presiding Officer Ernest May called the 659th Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate to order on February 15, 2007 at 3:30 p.m. in Herter Hall, Room 227.

A. ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. The Secretary of the Faculty Senate

Secretary Ernest May stated that he was filling in for Presiding Officer Robert Wilson. Some of our senators and a number of central administrators were in Boston today also, so they could not be with us. We do have Chief Information Officer John Dubach, who will answer questions, but he does not have any formal comments to make. Therefore, we will move on to the report of the Secretary of the Faculty Senate.

Secretary May provided an update on some of the issues that are currently being deliberated in Councils and Committees. There are many things that are going on behind the scenes that do not get to the Faculty Senate floor until there is a finished product, and sometimes that takes months or years, but it is interesting to note what is in progress.

In the Academic Matters Council, in addition to the regular program and course approvals, they are considering the proposal to revise the 2009-2010 academic calendar to start two weeks earlier in the second semester and end two weeks earlier in the second semester, approximately. That, obviously, is a very complicated proposal which involves the entire campus, and, at the last meeting, the Academic Matters Council voted that the Faculty Senate Office should conduct a survey of the campus community to see what the opinion was and what the problems were. We have sent out our survey from the Faculty Senate Office, and it has been presented to the various unions on campus and has gone to the faculty, administrators, and staff. We will be compiling the results of this, which is no small task. We thank Tara for working on this. We will be reporting it back through the Academic Matters Council and eventually back to the Faculty Senate. We are also going to commission a survey of students through SAREO, a random sample of a little less than 10% of the student body to see what the opinion of students is. Of course, the need to align this with the Five Colleges is also out there, so it is a very complicated project.

The General Education Council is considering the larger picture within which general education operates. The Chancellor tells us that there is a possible mandate coming down for exit testing in some of the general education areas, such as critical thinking and mathematics, so that this will, perhaps unfortunately, result in a need to look at the general education curriculum in a different way than we have been looking at it before.

The International Studies Council has been considering the role of the System Office. We have a System Office which is now much more actively engaged in international education than previously. Our former Interim Chancellor Marcie Williams is the Academic Vice President, and very interested in this area, as is President Jack Wilson. This creates opportunities, but also some potential conflict of roles.

The Program and Budget Council is considering the capital budget, and the tradeoff between spending in the capital area and the UMA 250 Plan. They expect to have a report for us for the March 15 Faculty Senate meeting.

The Research Council is considering a procedure for reviewing centers and institutes. Trustee policy mandates that we review centers and institutes, but no procedure has ever been set up. They are coming to the conclusion that it might be a good idea to set one up.

The Student Affairs and University Life Council met Monday, and that session was devoted to the campus response to what is nationally termed "celebratory rioting." We are not alone in this area, and Ohio State did a big report on this in the academic year 2003-2004, in response to a much worse riot than anything we have experienced, when they won the national football championship. It resulted in their thinking through this problem with the Columbus, Ohio community in great depth. The UMass administration has been using the results of that report, but it does not get us to the end of this problem by any means. Secretary May suspects that the Chancellor and many people in the administration are very seriously focused on this issue right now.

The Outreach Council has been working on a document defining the Scholarship of Engagement for quite a while now, and we are hoping that sometime this semester they will come to the Faculty Senate and discuss this document. It has been sent out to departments, especially to personnel committees. It is the best thing Secretary May has seen on the subject since he has been here.

At its last meeting, the Campus Physical Planning Committee, of which Secretary May is the acting chair, heard about an emergency plan for \$80 million in critical needs projects, and we are going to hear a report about that at the Faculty Senate meeting on March 15. This consists of \$40 million that gets generated out of the UMA 250 money this year, \$10 million coming out of the operating budget, and \$30 million of new money that has been allocated by the state for health and safety. Of course, we could do ten times that amount or probably one hundred times that amount fairly easily. We will have no problem spending the money, but, in terms of spending it on the most critical projects, the choices are difficult. It has also been reported that the plans for the new auditorium have been dropped because the project came in way over initial budget projections, and the money for that is being combined with the money for a couple of other projects. A combination office/classroom building and academic swing space is being planned. Associate Provost Bryan Harvey is working on that and will give us an update at the March 15 meeting also. The idea is to replace the idea of the new auditorium with a variety of academic spaces that perhaps will serve the actual needs of academic affairs more completely than one large auditorium.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Student Plagiarism has received draft revised procedures from the Academic Honesty Office, and they are now being deliberated there. These are procedures for dealing with students when there has been an allegation by the professor that plagiarism has occurred. The campus currently has a set of documents, and this would be an update of those documents.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Online Learning produced its first result last fall when the Senate reclassified all of the courses in SPIRE according to the degree of online contact, ranging from completely face-to-face courses with no online content to completely online courses, and then three gradations of “blended” in between. Since the Faculty Senate last met, Secretary May attended two conferences. One was the assessment conference sponsored by Associate Provost Harvey and his associates in OIR; the other one that was sponsored by the Sloan Foundation in Shrewsbury. It seems clear from those presentations that the future really is “blended,” not to the exclusion of face-to-face or online, but more and more, our teaching is going to rely to some degree on learning management systems. That presents quite a challenge to the campus. For example, in the capital plan, zero dollars are allocated to the purpose of creating space or resources of various kinds that will be needed if the entire campus is going to engage in blended learning. The issues related to online learning are so central to the work of the Faculty Senate, and it may be worth having a Committee of the Whole discussion of this later in this semester, so the Rules Committee is thinking about that.

Finally, the Joint Task Force on Online Learning is taking up “academic standards” and “best practices” in online learning, to see if there is some document that needs to be brought forth for consideration by Councils and Committees, and by the Senate, that will help us shape our journey into this new learning environment. We want to do it, but it needs to be appropriate to a residential campus and it needs to be properly supported and executed. Right now, in half the classrooms on our campus, you cannot even plug in your laptop and do a PowerPoint presentation. To go from where we are right now to a “blended” environment where, not only will you be able to plug in your laptop, but you have got all of these bells and whistles which are made possible through blended learning, that is quite a journey. There are other issues that the MSP will bring up, and, since this is right in the middle of the area of faculty primary responsibility for the courses and the curriculum, the faculty will need to engage in a wider discussion than has occurred so far. The Ad Hoc Committee on Online Learning has done great work in the areas that it has worked in. The Joint Task Force on Online Learning has only been working for a couple of months, but it is producing good work also. Since this topic involves almost the entire academic enterprise, that we need to get the major issues out there, and let people respond and have a full discussion.

2. The Chair of the Rules Committee

Senator Marilyn Billings stated that Secretary May mentioned having a special Committee of the Whole, sometime later on, probably toward the end of March. We are going to want to have a general presentation from the Ad Hoc Committee on Online Learning, and also get input from the Joint Task Force on Online Learning. Also, we might like to broaden it out past online learning to include other issues and concerns that the faculty might have that we need to be addressing in the future.

3. Faculty Delegate to the Board of Trustees

Senator W. Brian O'Connor stated that, because of the weather, he did not make it to the Board of Trustees meetings yesterday, but the Committee on Administration and Finance, according to the paper, did meet and did recommend to increase student fees at about the rate of inflation, which is somewhere around 3.4%. Unfortunately, he could not say anything more other than what he read in the paper. The Trustees have mandated in the last three years that they would like to keep the increases to the cost of living, no less, no more. The full Board will meet on this on March 15.

4. The Representative of the Massachusetts Society of Professors

Senator Steven Brewer reported that the bargaining team has been meeting with the administration. They have met several times now, and both sides have presented their positions. There will be relatively little progress until the Governor's budget comes out. Given that we have a new Governor, it is likely to be the end of the month before we see that budget and know what parameters are going to be available. The MSP will look forward to calling for faculty participation as we move closer to negotiating a final settlement with the administration.

B. QUESTION PERIOD (10 minutes)

Senator W. C. Conner stated that he had a general question that he had hoped to ask of the Provost. We are recruiting new faculty candidates, and an increasing percentage of those have what we call a "two-body" problem. That is that there are two PhDs who are a couple, both looking for positions. Is there any provision, and how is that handled at this University? We are getting no response and we wish we could have one.

Senator Brewer replied that there is a Family Issues Subcommittee that has been doing a separate round of bargaining with the administration and this is one of the issues that has been brought up. He suggested that Senator Conner contact them if he would like to ask what the status is. He could not give a definitive answer, but his recollection of the most recent round of discussions was that the University makes informal provisions for such people, as everyone is aware, because there are these people walking around on the campus, but that there are no formal mechanisms and no formal pool of money in place. The administration has been reluctant to earmark money for that purpose. If it is an important issue, and he thinks it is an important issue for many of us, people might contact the Family Issues Subcommittee of MSP and get involved with the bargaining that they are doing.

Secretary May stated that he knows that this issue has come up and been discussed with the administration before. It is a very difficult issue.

C. ANNUAL REPORTS

1. 2005-2006 Annual Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Online Learning, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 07-021.

The report was received.

Senator Billings, Co-Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Online Learning, stated that she wanted to point out a couple of things with regard to the Annual Report of last year. One of them came out of the Instructional Design Subcommittee, and that was the piece on the new classifications for courses in SPIRE that range from completely in-person to completely online, and the Office of the Registrar incorporated those into the SPIRE upgrade that happened this past fall. That felt like a really good step we made. It is truth in advertising for the students and a time for the faculty members to reflect on what the possible percentages of online or face-to-face time there might be in the classes they are teaching. The other piece that we worked on last year that we are continuing to work on is the Assessment Subcommittee piece with Martha Stassen. What is happening this year, following up on the background work they did last year, is to actually have some faculty members who are teaching both in person and online and doing an assessment of the student learning based on the two different types of classes that are being taught.

Secretary May stated that this is a very complicated issue. The ground has been laid and charges have been given, and we have several groups working on it. The MSP is certainly working on it, the Joint Task Force on Online Learning is working on it, and the Ad Hoc Committee on Online Learning is working on

it. Hopefully, we will not be overlapping or getting in each other's way. There are so many thorny issues to work out in relation to this whole topic; we are generating a lot of light and not too much heat.

2. Annual Report of the University Press Committee for Academic Year 2005-2006, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 07-022.

The report was received.

Professor Gerald McFarland, Co-Chair of the University Press Committee, stated that this was another very successful year for the University Press, thanks to Bruce Wilcox and his outstanding staff. One way that it can be judged is by the last page of the report, the Notable Awards and Honors for academic year 2006. What he always emphasizes about this is the good will and notice this brings to the University. It is not just to the Press itself, but to all of us, and that includes reviews in the New York Times, which many of you know are not that easy to achieve, and the last one, on February 11, *Heavier than Air* by Nona Casper is a UMass Press book. Congratulations to Bruce and his group.

Secretary May stated that this was a very nice unit of the University, which struggles and has had many challenges, but continues to produce outstanding results.

D. CONSTITUTION CHANGES

Special Report of the Rules Committee concerning Amendments to the Constitution of the University of Massachusetts Amherst Faculty Senate, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 07-023 with Motion No. 23-07.

MOVED: That the Faculty Senate approve the Amendments to the Constitution of the University of Massachusetts Amherst Faculty Senate, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 07-023.

A motion to amend Sen. Doc. No. 07-023 was made by Senator Billings.

Secretary May stated that the amendment to the original motion is to substitute under 4(c), after Vice Chancellors, in the shaded area, Deputy Provost, Vice Provosts, and Associate Provosts. That was an oversight. Some administrators had been previously titled Vice Chancellors, and so they have just been renamed. There is also the question of adding the Deputy Provost and the Associate Provost to the regular membership of the Senate, which is being recommended.

An unidentified person stated that they thought there were many Associate Provosts.

Secretary May replied that there are only four: Bryan Harvey, Mary Deane Sorcinelli, Frank Hugus, and Susan Pearson. These are people who are very valuable to the Senate. They do not have voting rights in the Senate, according to our Constitution, unless they hold academic rank. In other words, a person who holds academic rank with an appointment in one of our schools or colleges, such as the Chancellor, is a member of the Senate and can vote. Someone like Susan Pearson, who is an Associate Provost but does not hold academic rank in one of the schools or colleges, would be a member of the Senate, but cannot vote, according to the intricacies of our Constitution.

The motion to amend was adopted.

Secretary May stated that the reason that we need to amend the Constitution, which is a laborious process, including eventual adoption by the Board of Trustees, is because we are reducing the size of the Faculty Senate. In the original document, it is specified that there are 120-140 members. The size of the faculty, overall, has decreased and we have not been able to vote in more than 50-60 members in any of the last five years. It seems a good idea to adjust the size to reality. The second reason has to do with the definition of faculty. Under section 5(b), the rank of lecturer is added. The MSP contract has an even broader definition of faculty than this, but, in any case, the old definition, which limited it to instructors, assistant professors, associate professors, and professors, is outdated. We have many highly contributing members of our Councils and Committees who are lecturers, and they are very valued members of our campus community. It is a reality check to bring them into our definition of membership of qualified voters for the Faculty Senate. Also, under general faculty meetings, we added specification as to who voters are, what a quorum is, and things like that. Just in case we have one of these general meetings again, we will be better structured.

(Inasmuch as this is a change to the Faculty Senate's Constitution, this is the first of two readings of this motion. It will be read again and voted on at the 660th meeting.)

E. NEW BUSINESS

Special Report of the General Education Council concerning A Recommended General Education Designation for MILITARY 290A, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 07-024 with Motion No. 24-07.

MOVED: 24-07 That the Faculty Senate approve the General Education Designation HSG for MILITARY 290A, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 07-024.

Senator Patricia Vittum asked if 290A is a permanent designation, or would that number change?

Secretary May replied that it was an experimental course. What is being voted on is not the course, but the general education designation.

Senator Vittum asked if it was normal to give a general education designation to an experimental course?

Secretary May replied that it has been definitely been done, quite a few times.

The motion was seconded and adopted.

F. OLD BUSINESS

Special Report of the Committee on Committees concerning Nominations to Faculty Senate Councils and Committees, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 07-019A with Motion No. 21-07.

MOVED: 21-07 That the Faculty Senate approve the Nominations to Faculty Senate Councils and Committees, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 07-019A.

The motion was seconded and adopted.

The 659th Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate stood adjourned at 4:07 p.m. on February 15, 2007.

The proceedings of this meeting are available on audiotape in the Faculty Senate Office.

Respectfully submitted,

Ernest D. May
Secretary of the Faculty Senate