

Faculty Senate XXI

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Faculty Senate Home Page URL: <http://wkuweb1.wku.edu/Dept/Org/FS/home.htm>
Or, Go to Western Online (<http://www.wku.edu>), then click "People and Departments," then "Campus Organizations," then "Faculty Senate." **Bookmark the Site!**

INTRODUCING THE NEWSLETTER DIGEST

- Jim Flynn

Faculty Senate XXI, like its predecessors, is committed to keeping WKU faculty informed about the Senate's activities as well as providing a forum for faculty to comment on the range of issues confronting us at WKU.

In recent years, the Senate has increasingly relied on its on-line website as its main medium of communication, with both the meeting minutes and newsletter appearing there. While we will continue to use this electronic means of communication, this year we will also periodically issue this one-page Newsletter Digest, containing summaries of articles and information available on the Senate's website. Our hope is that you will read the Digest, find something of interest here, and then seek the complete article or information in the Newsletter on the Faculty Senate website. For example, in this Digest you will find a summary of Arvin Vos's longer article, "The Hearing on Post-Tenure Review." If you would like to read the whole article, you can find it at the Faculty Senate Home Page.

We would also like to hear your thoughts about professional matters at Western and beyond. If you would like to write something for the *Faculty Senate Newsletter*, please contact Rose Davis, the Chair of the Communications Committee, or Jim Flynn, the editor of the Digest. We'd be pleased to include material—anything from brief abstracts to full-blown articles—that would be of interest to the WKU faculty. The easiest way to communicate with us is through e-mail, or you can reach us by snail-mail or telephone in our respective departments: Rose is in Cravens Library 309, x6154; Jim is in the English Department, CH 6A, x5759.

In this issue...

Post-Tenure Review - Arvin Vos

President Hosts Faculty - Rich Weigel
and more!!!!

THE HEARING ON POST-TENURE REVIEW

-Arvin Vos

SUMMARY: On October 2, 1997, Arvin Vos, along with other chairs of Kentucky university and community college faculty senates, testified in Frankfort before the legislative Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education and the Teaching Profession. The Subcommittee was soliciting comment on a bill requiring "a periodic post-tenure evaluation process for all faculty tenured at the institution" (BR 135) and a revised draft (BR 852) which proposed "a comprehensive cumulative review" for "any tenured faculty member who has received a below standard rating for two consecutive regular evaluation periods." The proposed bills, prefiled by Sen. Philpot, may be seen as part of a national trend of instituting accountability checks on tenured faculty, fueled in part by a public perception that tenure is a mere sinecure.

At the hearing, the various faculty representatives explained that (a) there is a system of post-tenure review currently in place at every public university and college, and (b) if the legislature chooses to require post-tenure review, the actual form of that review should be developed by the individual universities and colleges, not the legislature. Two universities, the University of Louisville and the University of Kentucky, have recently instituted reviews of tenured faculty members beyond the normal annual evaluation. At U of L, tenured faculty must be evaluated "comprehensively" every five years. In UK's College of Arts and Sciences, tenured faculty who have received low merit ratings for two successive biennial evaluation periods must undergo an intensive review.

After hearing the faculty's point of view, the Subcommittee voted unanimously to "pass by" the bills, which means no action will be taken at this time. However, they could be resurrected later.

Arvin goes on to suggest that at WKU "we need to broaden our annual evaluations and in some cases need to hold faculty more accountable than we do at present." Even among faculty in various colleges, Arvin finds a fairly consistent perception that there are some

"chronically unproductive" professors at Western. Such faculty members are not merely "an inconvenience or irritant but an obstacle to that department's success." This leads Arvin to suggest that we consider seriously a "system of post-tenure review" that would "respect academic freedom and tenure, but still . . . allow a department to get rid of a faculty member who is disengaged and . . . unproductive." Arvin points out that one possibility for such a system would be to require faculty members to "develop a career plan for the next three to five years, with specific goals for each academic year." Any such system should allow for changing career emphases over time, and should not require everyone to contribute equally in every area of responsibility (teaching, research/creative activity, service) at any one time. Arvin ends his piece by observing that the administration must perform its role well for any evaluation system to be effective.

Note: Arvin is Chair of the Faculty Senate. For the full text of Arvin's report and essay, go to Faculty Senate Home Page. See above for address.

NEW PRESIDENT HOSTS FACULTY SENATE

-Richard Weigel

SUMMARY: Rich Weigel reports on the successive meetings President Gary Ransdell hosted at the President's Home in early October for three faculty groups, including the Faculty Senate membership and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. According to Rich, Gary set an extremely positive tone in both his hospitality and his substantive comments. Pointing out that he cannot succeed as President unless he has faculty working with him, Gary appeared "open, approachable, and understanding of faculty concerns about various issues." Rich calls the meetings "an excellent first step to reopening lines of communication between administration and faculty."

Note: Rich is a member of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. For the full text of Rich's report, go to the Faculty Senate Home Page. See address above.

FACULTY SENATE XXI COMMITTEES AND CURRENT TOPICS

Academic Affairs: Tenure clock and associated issues (e.g., extended illness)

By-laws, Amendments, and Elections: Election of at-large senators

Faculty Status and Welfare: Salary Report; summer stipends; mileage reimbursement

Fiscal Affairs: Part-time faculty issues

Professional Responsibilities and Concerns: Student ratings and teaching evaluations

Senate Communications: Newsletter; the Web Page

Note: For full roster of committee memberships and officers, see Faculty Senate Home Page. See address above. Please feel free to contact any committee member about issues relating to that committee's work.

RESOLUTIONS PASSED BY FACULTY SENATE XX (1996-97)

-Carl Kell

SUMMARY: During the 1996-97 AY, the Senate passed resolutions: (1) to increase summer stipend rate to the benchmark median of 18.36% with no cap; (2) to recommend adding a faculty member to the Council of Higher Education; (3) to add the Faculty Regent as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the Faculty Senate's Executive Committee; (4) to urge the University to engage in no further appeals in the Wieb van der Meer case; (5) to thank Dr. Thomas Meredith for his service as President and to wish him and his family well in his new position.

Note: Carl is the Faculty Senate Vice-Chair; for the full report, see Faculty Senate Home Page. See address above.

FOOTBALL AT NKU

The NKU Board of Regents has voted not to proceed with plans to field a Division II football team after visiting consultants said it would cost \$500,000 to \$800,000 a year to operate a football program. (from *The Louisville Courier-Journal*, 10.30.97)