

Subject: Senate News
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Senate News
Thursday, Nov. 18, 1999

With visions of stuffed turkeys dancing in our heads, we met for the November meeting of the faculty senate. It was a relatively low key meeting – which I attribute to poor lighting in Garrett Ballroom and end of the semester exhaustion. Nevertheless, we did hear some interesting reports. Below is a summary.

Old Business

Chair's Report – Ed Wolfe met with Dr. Ransdall about faculty concerns with the confidentiality of the administrators' evaluations. Although we do not think that there was any concerted effort to track individual respondents, it turns out that the forms were individually coded. Regardless, both the President and Ed had sent emails urging the faculty to respond. The feeling was some input is better than no input. So far, there have been no actions to changing the current system. (Personally, I hope we can clean up the form and the procedure for next year.)

Also, the President sent a letter to Ed and Dr. Burch urging the faculty to act on the new governance system by Jan. 28 so that the Board of Regents could ratify the decision. Otherwise, the BOR does not meet again until May and the faculty would be gone over the summer. However, the faculty regent, Mary Ellen Miller, did not believe this was a problem because the BOR could always be polled. Actually, the greater danger is to rush into a decision without adequate faculty discussion (remember the PTR problem?). Ed commented that although the governance issue had been going on for some time, the Faculty Senate had never been formally involved in the process. Consequently, the Faculty Status and Concerns Committee and the faculty, as a whole, needed time.

At this point, Dr. Burch indicated that the whole task force had worked on the faculty governance document. It is not just Arvin Vos's document but rather he had been good enough to do the editing. In fact, the committee had just met Tuesday night and had made substantial changes to the document. Those changes will be uploaded onto the Web shortly. (The changes were news to us.) Dr. Burch hopes that we will not have a new document come out of the Faculty Status and Concerns Committee but rather that we would make changes to the Vos document. She felt nothing was to be gained by having two documents.

Ed agreed but said he was confused. He had gotten the impression talking to Arvin that he did not want us to modify the Vos document. Ed reiterated that we felt that Arvin et al. had done a pain-staking task of putting together the first document but now it needed to be looked at by the Faculty Senate.

One senator noted that he had talked to Arvin. (I got the impression that lots of people have talked to Arvin about the faculty governance document.) He stated that Arvin felt that because the Senate was founded independent of the then governing structure (Academic Council), that the new governance document should be decided upon outside the Faculty Senate to avoid conflict of interest. Ed indicated that this might be a bogus argument since Senators are hardly clamoring for the job and Arvin was Faculty Senate Chair when he started working on the document.

In short, we will not vote on a governance document in January.

Academic Affairs Committee – Lynn Miller discussed the new schedule controversy. Basically, the committee wanted to know three things: What is the deadline for a decision? Are there any satisfactory answers as to why we ended up with this problem? Could we “trick” the system?

To find out the answers to her questions, Lynn Miller went to the Banner presentation. She found that it would cost thousands to write new code for the program. This is a relational database management program that is difficult to “trick”. It is client-ware software that uses five different programming languages. They had tried to use Saturday or Sunday but somehow the system encodes the dates and that throws the system off. They are already using Banner for financial assistance so we can't just return the package.

At this point, Dr. Kirchmeyer was asked to explain the system. Remember, he did not order the system. He is just stuck with it. He feels that overall the Banner system offers us many advantages even though it does not adapt to our flip-Friday schedule. Nevertheless, we do have some options. One, have the company fix the system. This would cost thousands. One senator asked if the company was liable since they had indicated originally that it would handle our current schedule. Dr. Burch said she would look into this. (Good Grief – NO one has looked into this question yet?) Second, we could try to fix it ourselves. This is not likely since then we would be liable for any problems. Third, try to “trick” the system. Dr. Kirchmeyer felt that this option might be unwise since we could hurt some of the real advantages built into the system.

Dr. Burch stated that the committee would review all the options. Nevertheless, she felt a status report needed to be made before Thanksgiving so people can work on the Fall schedules.

New Business

Tom Hiles from the Development Office gave us an update on fund-raising efforts. Basically, they took the strategic plan and turned it into a marketing report to solicit funds. They have identified major donors (capable of giving \$50,000 and up). Then they began the cultivation and solicitation process (sounds almost agricultural doesn't it?) Outcomes so far: They have raised \$20.5 million in gifts and commitments, the President's Circle has had a 45% increase, and they currently have 45 active proposals. They have also added two development officers so that every college has its own officer. Tom is optimistic about the efforts so far. He feels the increased resources should be used for faculty salaries and endowed chairs, make tuition affordable, and build up an endowment fund that can be used to leverage other projects (deferred maintenance). There were no questions from the floor. (I know some people have expressed concern that the office's costs have exploded. Moreover, they were suppose to be self-supporting but now are part of the general budget. I do not know enough about that argument and as long as they continue to bring in substantially more than they spend, I would just as soon let them do their own thing.)

A motion was made to ask Dr. Kirchmeyer to address the Senate at our next meeting in January. There is a concern about the discontinuance of home-internet providers. This issue impacts all of us but particularly those people who are running WEB or on-line courses out of their house. Dr. Kirchmeyer will in invited to speak in January.

Meeting adjourned. (I hope you all have a good Thanksgiving holiday. The poodles are being groomed especially for the occasion.)