

## Senate News

I have twenty minutes before my next advisee comes in so please excuse the fact that these minutes are brief but ever so important.

The Senate met on Thursday, October 21. I asked all Senators to sign-up for a subcommittee. Most people had already done this but a few had forgotten. We feel it is important for people to be on committees so that they can lend some expertise or have a preference.

John White read his resolution:

**Whereas the first two weeks of the term are often filled with meetings, final course preparations, schedule changes and other demands on faculty; and**

**Whereas many faculty are on a nine-month contract and may be dealing with tasks that have accumulated over the summer;**

**Be it resolved by the Faculty Senate that the first two weeks of every term be free of administrative tasks not related to the preparation or meeting of classes.**

Discussion: Everyone understood the general meaning. The resolution is basically designed to send a message to the administration that unnecessary tasks, or tasks that have unrealistic deadlines, can potentially impact preparation for classes. There was discussion about how do you define administrative tasks and is this resolution really enforceable. After discussion, the vote was:

**Yes: 15 No: 13 Result: The motion carried**

Report on the Diversity Question.

Due to a lack of time, John Bruni looked into this question. Basically, Dr. Burch asked us for a question that could be included on the student evaluation forms that would focus on concern for diversity. John looked at all the items that were available from the current cafeteria items and narrowed the selection to:

**My instructor deals fairly with me without regard to race, age, sex, religion, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation.**

This item is similar to the one used by ROTC except he dropped the word "color" and put in the "sexual orientation" part. Actually, disability was added after some discussion. The advantage of this item is that it only asks the student to comment about his/her own experience, not some sweeping observation about everyone in the class. Also, John tested this item on 23 students and found no correlation between student's feeling about the instructor (good or bad) and how they answered this item.

There was considerably discussion about wording. We dropped the word "impartially" (it formerly said fairly and impartially) with the recognition that it was possible to be fair without being impartial. Impartial connoted equal to some people. Also, it is a multiple item question. Even if a student indicates there is a problem, one is not sure which part of item that is being referred to (race, sex, and/or age, etc.). Nevertheless, the question answers IF there is a problem rather than HOW. In order to answer HOW we would have needed seven separate questions. There was also a feeling that this question should be linked to the comments section (please clarify your answer) but then every question should be linked to the comments section. Finally, the big question is how this item is going to be used by administration. Hopefully, we are trying to find a pattern of behavior and not just acting because of one response by one student on one question. This issue was not resolved but faculty would like some clarification on the use of this item. After much discussion, the faculty voted:

**Unanimously to accept the item and submit it to Dr. Burch.**

**New Business:**

A motion was made to refer the new schedule to the Academic Affairs Committee. There are concerns that the faculty was only given one option to look at (50 minute MWF, 1 hr. 50 classes TTh). It is difficult to do experiential classes in 50 minute time slots. What is happening to 5-day a-week classes? Why can't we keep the same schedule we have now and put the flip-Fridays as an exception on the bottom? Also, there has been no general discussion on the

schedule. The faculty Senate could hold a Forum. Since the schedule impacts not only the students but also the faculty who teach the courses, **the motion was referred to the Academic Affairs Committee for a report at the next Senate meeting.**

## The University Governance Document

Arvin Vos, Chair of the Task Force that put together the university governance document, presented a historic overview of how the document came into being. Beginning with the university's founding in the 60's, Arvin philosophized how WKU governance had arrived at the state it is today. It was an amazing retrospective but to save time, let me highlight some of the points.

The Academic Council came first. It tried to combine its function of curriculum committee and faculty affairs committee. However, it never really represented the faculty because it got too tied up in curriculum affairs and there were too many administrators on the committee.

The 70's came, Arvin grew his hair long, there was agitation for faculty voice. By 76, the Faculty Senate was formed. The important point was that there were no administrators on the Senate and Ex Officio members did not vote.

Moving to present times, the Fischer report indicated a need to examine **faculty governance**. A task force was formed. Although Arvin was head of the Senate at the time, the Senate was never part of putting this document together. The same thing can be said for the Academic Council which is also impacted by the document.

When the task force was formed, they could have decided to correct some of the deficiencies in the Academic Council and/or Senate or proceed to putting together a new document. Arvin stated that they "quickly" moved to working on a new document. They felt that a single body would be more efficient.

The proposal calls for a University Senate that has faculty, department heads, deans, the provost, students, and poodles (just kidding). Arvin argued that the new University Senate would speed up the process of course approval, have representation for everyone, eliminate task forces (ironic given this document comes from a task force), and has checks and balances.

This task force predicted the university governance document would be approved by November, 1999.

After Arvin's presentation, a motion was made to:

**Move the Faculty Senate begin a review of the proposed charter for a new University Senate. The initial stage of this review will be conducted by the Senate's Faculty Status and Welfare Committee. This committee will review the proposal, solicit further faculty opinion, suggest revisions, and suggest a formal mechanism by which the Faculty Senate will consult the entire faculty on any proposed change to Western Kentucky University's system of faculty governance. The committee will present its recommendations to the full Faculty Senate at its February 2000 meeting.**

Discussion: Though thorough, Arvin's presentation left no time for the Faculty to debate the merits of the proposal. In fact, the Senate has never had an open forum on the proposal. There were college-wide meetings last Spring but no one had the real benefit of hearing the full discussion. The new proposal eliminates the Faculty Senate – the one body that allows for the faculty opinion to be heard. The University Senate includes members of the administration. This could prove intimidating to many faculty. Granted the Senate has not been very active in recent years but in years past it has helped faculty in terms of salary, benefits, and governance. The present task force made a start at improving the document but now it is time that the Senate, which represents the faculty, to take the document and make recommendations. Since this document impacts both the Senate and the Academic Council, a similar resolution will be made at the next Council meeting.

**Vote: Unanimously to accept the motion. The University Senate document will be sent to the Faculty Status and Concerns Committee.**