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*The Spirit Makes the Master*

April 1, 2008

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Dr. Julie Shadoan  
Chair University Senate

**FROM:** Barbara Burch  
Provost and Vice President  
For Academic Affairs

**SUBJECT:** March 20, 2008 University Senate Minutes

I endorse without exception the actions of the University Senate at its March 20, 2008 meeting.

/lsw

*Approved  
4/2/08*

WKU UNIVERSITY SENATE MINUTES  
March 20, 2008

**I. Call to Order**

The regular meeting of the WKU University Senate was called to order Thursday, March 20, 2008, at 3:45 P.M. in the Garrett Ballroom by Chair Julie Shadoan. A quorum was present.

**The following members were present:**

Kristina Arnold, Nedra Atwell, Johnathon Boles, Scott Bonham, Jeff Butterfield, Walter Collett, Eddy Cuisinier, Jerry Daday, Constance Edwards, Niko Endres, Douglas Fugate, Jim Fulkerson, Andrea Grapko, Denise Gravitt, Kim Green, Michelle Hollis, Roy Howsen, Kate Hudepohl, Skylar Jordan, Joan Krenzin, Scott Lasley, Yanmei Li, Nathan Love, Sherry Lovan, Karen Mason, Andrew McMichael, Roger Murphy, Thanh Lan Nguyen, Jane Olmsted, Holly Payne, Mark Pickard, Heidi Pintner, Sherry Powers, Matt Pruitt, Jeff Samuels, Julie Shadoan, Vernon Sheeley, Kayla Shelton, Carol Stowe-Byrd, Heather Strode, Louis Strolger, Luella Teuton, Rico Tyler, Stacy Wade, Christopher Wagner, Carol Watwood, Richard Weigel, Jacqueline Wofford.

**Alternates present were:**

Hasan Palandoken for Stuart Burris, Beth Plummer for Anthony Harkins, Nathan Eaton for Kathleen Hennessey.

**The following members were absent:**

Cathy Abell, Mostafa Atici, Mike Binder, John Bonaguro, Richard Bowker, Barbara Brindle, Barbara Burch, Janice Chadha, Judy Davidson, Terry Dean, Uma Doraiswamy, Sam Evans, Tim Evans, Blaine Ferrell, Michele Fiala, James Gary, R. Reagan Gilley, Jens Harlander, Heather Johnson, Kaveh Khatir, Aaron Kindsvatter, Mary Kovar, Debbie Kreitzer, Dominic Lanphier, David Lee, Jim Lindsey, Richard C. Miller, Patricia Minter, Timothy Mullin, Sharon Mutter, Steve Nagy, Ken Payne, Katharine Pettit, Keith Phillips, Gary Ransdell, Sherry Reid, Angela Robertson, Shane Spiller, Sandra Starks, Tammie Stenger-Ramsey, Don Swoboda, William Tallon, Samanta Thapa, Paul Woosley, and Zhonghang Xia.

**II. Minutes**

The Minutes of the March 4, 2008 meeting were approved as read with no additions or corrections.

**III. Reports**

**a. Chair**

Julie Shadoan, Chair of the Senate, reported that the Workload Committee still needs to be filled. Potter College, the Community College, and the

College of Education and Behavioral Sciences have representative. Everyone else still needs a representative. Forward nominations to Julie Shadoan; otherwise she will have the Deans of each college make appointments. Shadoan anticipates that the Committee will entail at least a year-long effort. She does not know anything about workload reduction for service on this committee but thinks it will require a considerable amount of research and time. When the committee first convenes, Julie will take a list to Dr. Burch and see what can be worked out.

**b. Vice Chair**

The Vice-Chair, Denise Gravitt, reported that we may not need a senator at-large election because there is only one part that has enough people to actually require an election. Eligible positions for at large are as follows: Ogden (9), Potter (8), CEBS (4), Gordon Ford (0), Community College (2), CHHS (4). This is based on a 10% representation of eligible faculty (full time instructor, assistant, associate, and full professors. The only college that will need to hold an election is the Community College.

If these positions do not get filled, the standing Senators will be the ones who will have to fill the standing positions on the committees that need representation. Recruiting to get as many at-large senators as possible will help to make the work load of the Senate more manageable.

Andrew McMichael asked about rounding up to the nearest number for the Community College so that they can have at least one at-large senator and make the representation more inclusive.

March 31 is the suggested election date so that the newly-elected senators can attend the April meeting.

**c. Faculty Regent**

The Faculty Regent, Patricia Minter, was not present. No report was presented.

**d. Provost**

The Provost, Barbara Burch, was not present. No report was presented.

**Standing Committee Reports**

**a. University Curriculum Committee**

Andrew McMichael, Chair of the University Curriculum Committee, made a motion for support and approval of the University Curriculum Committee agenda items for University Senate consideration. The consent agenda passed unanimously with no discussion on the items.

**b. General Education**

Richard Weigel, Chair of the General Education Committee, made a motion for support and approval of the General Education Committee agenda items for University Senate consideration. There was a reminder by Julie Shadoan that the items need to have dates. There was no discussion on the items. The consent agenda passed unanimously with this minor amendment.

**c. Faculty Welfare and Professional Responsibilities**

No report was presented.

**d. Committee on Academic Quality**

Tony Harkins was not present. Lou Strolger presented the report for the Committee on Academic Quality. He stated that the Committee is putting forth a resolution after reevaluating the plus/minus grading system and that the Committee unanimously recommends use of the plus/minus grading system. The resolution suggests implementing the new system in Fall 2010 with a full range of plus/minus (A+ to F) for all students (including graduate students). The Committee put forth the resolution because they feel it is a useful tool for increasing student motivation and academic performance and will promote fairness in grading. The committee feels it will improve academic quality. A list of rationale was put together for senate review with the goals of (1) implementing fairness and (2) to have more control over grading.

Dan Myers asked what the rationale for a C- carrying the same GPA as a C was. Lou Strolger stated that it would not adversely affect financial aid and scholarships for students who were in the C- range.

Holly Payne asked what the rationale for using this system at the graduate level was. Lou Strolger said that the committee was striving for fairness across the board and that if it is uniform for undergraduates then it would be for graduates as well.

Johnathon Boles (SGA) asked how the Committee can document evidence that this is a better/more accurate grading for faculty and better representation of student performance in academic situations. Lou Strolger stated that it is largely subjective and that academic freedom will still be a large part of grading. Professors will still have their own way of implementing the system. He also added that the backbone of the current grading system will still remain for those who choose not to use it.

Skylar Jordan (SGA) asked how the most recent survey done by the Committee on Academic Quality was executed and what methods were used to assess the results. He wanted to know if it was a scientific study; Lou Strolger stated that it was put forth for those who had voluntary comments on the plus/minus grading system. It was not assessed for statistical significance; individual comments were looked at to see if they seemed to be for or against

the system. There is an amendment in the online packet that quantifies how the survey that Doug Smith did last year was done. This has nothing to do with this year's study.

Michelle Hollis wondered how the A+ being 4.3 would impact the grading scale as a whole. Freida Eggleton responded that the student who might earn multiple A+'s, there is a potential that this student could graduate with more than a 4.0. This would affect the college scholar at the time of graduation; either any student with 4.0 or higher would qualify, or the person with the highest GPA would be chosen (this is yet to be determined).

Matt Pruitt (Sociology) asked how graduate schools and other professional schools deal with transcripts that have higher than a 4.0. Freida Eggleton said she did not know. Michelle Hollis said that most schools capped the GPA at 4.0 but she was not sure.

Julie Shadoan asked what the impact on scholarships would be for students who take classes with teachers who do not use plus-minus grading versus those who do use the system. Strolger stated variance in the grading system among professors is already there. There is some resistance in the faculty about adopting this. He thinks it will influence students to want it because there is a possibility for an even greater GPA.

Skylar Jordan is concerned about grade deflation if plus/minus is not used across the board. Lou Strolger stated that there was uncertainty about the C-being grade inflation. Strolger stated that he understands Skylar Jordan's concern but feels the proposed system has the ability to better evaluate students. Strolger added that this can only work in the student's favor.

Denise Gravitt stated that she currently uses plus/minus in her grading but cannot report it. She feels there is balance in using plus minus and that it is a better monitor of student performance and a better motivator for the students.

Strolger said that one hypothesis about the way the pilot study turned out the way it did was academic freedom versus academic integrity (whether or not one would round up because of points and how close they were to the next grade). He said that the Committee on Academic Quality would prefer a more precise system that will not compromise integrity.

It was also added that it is not appropriate to generalize what the effect of the system would be based on the pilot study done a few years ago because only some faculty members chose to participate and because students knew that this would not count on their GPA, so it cannot be argued that their motivation was increased as a result of that.

Johnathon Boles (SGA) said that it seems like the new system will codify and go against academic freedom if some faculty opt in and some faculty opt out. Stacy Wade (Business) replied that it is not an official opt in or opt out – some professors will grade straight A through F and others will add plus/minus to what is appropriate. She feels that more faculty will use the new system than will not and believes that the faculty want to be fair to students as a whole. She feels that after being on the committee, after reading more about it, and after using it in her classes, she really did like it because she was able to reward the students who warranted it.

Julie Shadoan reminded the Senate that no action will be taken on the plus/minus resolution motion today. It will be voted on in the April meeting.

**e. Graduate Council**

Sherry Powers, the Chair of the Graduate Council, made a motion for support and approval of the Graduate Council agenda items for University Senate consideration. The consent agenda passed unanimously with no discussion on the items.

**IV. Old Business**

There was no old business.

**V. New Business**

Michelle Hollis asked what the last date that someone can have their name added to the ballot for the at-large senator election. Gravitt responded that there is nothing in the handbook that says when these elections are supposed to occur, so it is basically up to each college. Gravitt needs ballot results to her by the morning of Monday, April 7. She also said that names can be added to the ballot at any time leading up to each election as long as they have rank of full-time instructor and above.

**VI. Announcements**

There were no announcements.

**VII. Adjournment**

A motion “that the meeting adjourn” was carried. The meeting adjourned at 4:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Pintner, Secretary