

## WKU UNIVERSITY SENATE MINUTES

April 17, 2008

### I. **Call to Order**

The regular meeting of the WKU University Senate was called to order Thursday, April 17, 2008, at 3:45 P.M. in the Garrett Ballroom by Chair Julie Shadoan. A quorum was present.

#### **The following members were present:**

Nedra Atwell, Johnathon F. Boles, Scott Bonham, Barbara Brindle, Barbara Burch, Eddy Cuisinier, Jerry Daday, Judy Davidson, Uma Doraiswamy, Constance Edwards, Niko Endres, Tim Evans, Mark A. Doggett, Douglas Fugate, Andrea Grapko, R. Reagan Gilley, Denise Gravitt, Kim Green, Anthony Harkins, Michelle Hollis, Roy Howsen, Kate Hudepohl, Skyler Jordan, Kaveh Khatir, Joan Krenzin, Scott Lasley, Yanmei Li, Sherry Lovan, Karen Mason, Andrew McMichael, Richard C. Miller, Patricia Minter, Timothy Mullin, Roger Murphy, Sharon Mutter, Dan Myers, Steve Nagy, Holly Payne, Ken Payne, Heidi Pintner, Matt Pruitt, Julie Shadoan, Vernon Sheeley, Kayla Shelton, Shane Spiller, Sandra Starks, Louis Strolger, Luella Teuton, Samanta Thapa, Michelle Trawick, Stacy Wade, Christopher Wagner, Richard Weigel, and Zhonghang Xia.

**Alternates present were:** Yvonne Petkus for Kristina Arnold, Mary Wolinski for Michele Fiala, Paula Trapton for Jim Fulkerson, Nathan Eaton for Kathleen Hennessey, Kelly Burch-Ragan for Aaron Kindsvatter, Larry Snyder for David Lee, Paul Markham for Jane Olmstead, Bella Mukonyora for Jeff Samuels, Francesca Sunkin for Carol Stowe-Byrd, Kathleen Matthew for Rico Tyler, and Judy Walker for Jacqueline Wofford.

#### **The following members were absent:**

Cathy Abell, Mostafa Atici, Mike Binder, John Bonaguro, Richard Bowker, Stuart Burris, Jeff Butterfield, Janice Chadha, Walter Collett, Terry Dean, Sam Evans, Blaine Ferrell, James Gary, Jens Harlander, Heather Johnson, Mary Kovar, Debbie Kreitzer, Dominic Lanphier, Jim Lindsey, Nathan Love, Thanh Lan Nguyen, Katharine Pettit, Park Pickard, Keith Philips, Sherry Powers, Gary Ransdell, Sherry Reid, Angela Robertson, Tammie Stenger-Ramsie, Don Swoboda, William Tallon, Carol Watwood, and Paul Woosley.

#### **The following newly-elected at-large members for 2008-2009 were present:**

Janet Applin (CEBS), Melanie Autin (OCSE), Mark Berry (PCAL), Kim Botner (CHHS), Thea Browder (PCAL), Kelly M. Burch-Ragan (CEBS), Mark Doggett (OCSE), Molly Dunkum (OCSE), Daun Garrett (CHHS), Yvonne Petkus (PCAL), Beth Plummer (PCAL), Kelly Reames (PCAL), Francesca Sunkin (BGCC), Ken Whitley (CHHS), David Zimmer (GFCB)

## **II. Minutes**

The Minutes of the March 20, 2008 meeting were approved as read with no additions or corrections.

## **III. Reports**

### **a. Chair**

Julie Shadoan, Chair of the Senate, had no report.

### **b. Vice Chair**

The Vice-Chair, Denise Gravitt, stated that the list of new at-large senators for 2008-2009 was sent out on an email list. She announced the names of the alternate senators in the meeting. The new at-large senators do not need to attend the May meeting, but they do need to stay for committee assignments today.

### **c. Faculty Regent**

The Faculty Regent, Patricia Minter, invited Senate members to attend the Board of Regents meeting on April 24 at 9:00 AM. She urged the University Senate to read the agenda carefully.

Tamela Smith, the Staff Regent, and Patricia Minter will be meeting with Dr. Ransdell about the Health Insurance Reserve Resolution that was passed by the University Senate (money generated from our reserve plan will not be used for anything except health insurance). There is an oral agreement regarding protection of the health insurance fund from Dr. Ransdell and Minter hopes to get this agreement in writing soon.

Minter met with Dr. Ransdell on Tuesday about budgetary issues but some things have changed since this meeting. She is pleased that Dr. Ransdell is taking concerns about salary compression seriously. Michael Dale in Academic Affairs generated a document that says a very rough estimate of the compression impact would be about \$900,000 for additional salary and benefits costs for those promoted before Fall 2005. This has to be solved before other compression issues can be addressed. The President told Minter that he will commit to \$300,000 per year to alleviate that aspect of salary compression.

Minter stated that she sees the \$500 raise as a problematic compromise for many, if not most faculty, especially those nearing retirement.

Those with points to make regarding budget cuts should do so before the Board of Regents meeting on Thursday.

Minter will ask Dr. Burch for a list of departments that have lost faculty lines so she can tell the Regents; she wants to let them know what the cuts are.

Minter expressed concern about how building construction will be causing debt for future years.

She closed by reminding the University Senate that the Board of Regents depends on the Faculty/Staff/Student Regents to know what is going on "on the ground".

**d. Provost**

Provost Barbara Burch stated that the committee met this week to select winners of the University Faculty Awards and the winners will be announced at commencement. She congratulated the many outstanding faculty on this campus.

The administration has been working on the 2008-2009 budget since January. The budget for the upcoming year has changed four times in the last two days but they should know by Monday if the plan has been accepted. Dr. Burch is trying to protect academic areas. There will be some faculty and staff positions lost, but no occupied tenured/tenure track positions are being cut. Some of the lost positions are vacancies, and retirements. Some budget cuts will be consolidations. Some programs will not be enhanced or started as planned this year. There were some minor cuts in student worker positions, graduate assistantships, and in some part-time lines. Attempts have been made to protect professional development money. The administration is hoping to make cuts in a way that won't destroy what WKU has been trying to build.

NKU was asked to cut 12% centrally and wait and see what they will get back. At WKU, President Ransdell insists on no unilateral cuts, which will be less than 6%. The cuts will not be available for distribution until they are sure it is the final version.

A decision on how to address compression will be made on Monday; this budget has to be done quickly and there is no way that decisions and distributions on the first leg of compression money can be done quickly. There needs to be a lot more involvement and discussion on how to do this first round and it will have to be done more carefully.

Dr. Burch said she will answer any questions that people have.

**IV. Standing Committee Reports**

**a. University Curriculum Committee**

Andrew McMichael, Chair of the University Curriculum Committee, moved for approval of the consent agenda with five pulled items (Communication

Disorders 201, 301, 401, 402, 403, and a minor in Sign Language). The course proposals passed unanimously as presented without discussion.

**b. General Education**

No report was presented.

**c. Faculty Welfare and Professional Responsibilities**

Nedra Atwell, Chair of the Faculty Welfare and Professional Responsibilities Committee, stated that the committee has the handbook and is meeting next week. She added that the process is moving slowly. She urged anyone with issues to please email her.

**d. Committee on Academic Quality**

No report was presented.

**e. Graduate Council**

Nedra Atwell, reporting for 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.

**V. Old Business**

***2007-2008 Plus/Minus Resolution Discussion and Vote***

The plus/minus resolution for the 2007-2008 Academic Year had its second reading and vote. Jeanne Johnson, the SGA President and Student Regent, presented the University Senate with a Power Point presentation and asked the faculty to keep an open mind. Johnson stated that the SGA approached the issue with protests in previous years but this year they approached it differently by putting the proposal online and asking students through an online referendum how familiar they were with it and whether they would support or not support it. The reported results were that 82% of students in the referendum did not support it. The SGA looked at historical data, benchmark information, and took a faculty survey. Johnson presented the results of the SGA faculty survey, though she admitted the survey had many flaws. Johnson questioned how plus/minus grading would affect student motivation. When comparing WKU to Harvard, Johnson stated, "...here at Western, we carry everything from an A to an F. It is not necessary for us to obtain this level of academic quality. We don't have to have plus/minus grading." Regarding fairness of grading, Johnson mentioned that it is not equitable for one teacher to grade one way (ie., using plus/minus) and another teacher to grade differently (ie. not using plus/minus). She also stated that some grading is done subjectively and measurement error needs to be accounted for (ie. the difference between a 93 and a 92. Johnson argued that the plus/minus system will not work unless it is used by all faculty in all

departments. Johnson said that inequities will be created if the plus/minus grading is not mandatory for all faculty and that "no faculty member with academic freedom will want you to tell them they have to use plus/minus". She asked if the benefits outweigh the costs and asked what the proof of the benefits are.

Yvonne Petkus (Art) stated that the SGA survey went out without a deadline and went to a strange email list that did not include all of the faculty in the art department and did go out to some who were not staff and not faculty, but who were models for the art department who are not even students here. She stated that the results were skewed, especially without an April 17<sup>th</sup> deadline.

Other faculty members stated that their departments were not even contacted.

Skyler Jordan (SGA), stated that although the SGA survey was less than perfect, the survey that was done by the Committee on Academic Quality also had some problems. Both surveys represent opposing viewpoints and he feels that there is some bias in both.

Sharon Mutter (Psychology) stated that the argument about different grading scales across classes and colleges could be a reasonable argument and asked if a member of the committee could address this issue.

Anthony Harkins (Chair of the Academic Quality Committee) responded that there is not current standard criteria for what performance constitutes what grade and the current standards have variation in how grades are determined, as well. It is the nature of academic freedom of faculty to determine what grades are appropriate for their classes and their disciplines.

Johnathon Boles (SGA) stated that he feels that both surveys provided information that could either be used or discredited when voting and suggested that this be put aside. Boles suggested looking at the key argument that signed grading is a useful tool that can increase student motivation. Motivation can come from grades, but Boles feels that the best way to be motivated is intrinsically. Grades are not meant to provide motivation and sometimes educators provide motivation with grades. With plus/minus grading, Boles feels that this extrinsic motivation (grades) could sometimes happen with students. He feels that we need to look at the core reason why plus/minus needs to happen or not happen.

Sharon Mutter (Psychology) returned to the issue of variability in grading and stated that if variability is already occurring in grading, that it does not seem reasonable to add additional variability by adding another layer of distinction within a grading system. She stated that the "all or none" approach seems to be more reasonable than letting some do it and some not. She stated that

although academic freedom is an important issue, she sees this as being problematic.

Lou Strolger (Academic Quality Committee) followed up that the current system has very large bins of what a grade can be assigned as, and by making those bins smaller, you are not forced to choose one or the other. It is one of the advantages of the new system because there are not such gross changes in the grade, but there are more subtle changes in the GPA.

Syler Jordon said that he agrees with Sharon Mutter that not uniformly using plus/minus is a problem. He used the University of Louisville as an example. He then added that students need to be treated fairly regardless of the program that they are in.

Matt Pruitt (Sociology) asked how common it is for schools to use mandatory plus/minus grading versus voluntary. He also stated that if some professors use a 4.3 and some use a 4.0 that this could be an inequity and asked someone to address this.

Anthony Harkins (Chair of the Academic Quality Committee) stated that the data on this is sketchy and the committee did not come across any evidence of how mandatory the plus/minus is in schools that use it and what percentage of faculty use it. He knows there was a recent study at North Carolina Asheville and it showed that the majority of faculty used it and the number went up from the first year to the next. One of the concerns from last year's senate was that it would not allow for a 4.0. The whole idea of the 4.3 was that if you got less than a 4.0 in one class, you could still end up with a 4.0 overall average. Harkins stated that he would be concerned about the kind of grading criteria that was being used if a student got more than a 4.0 in all of their classes. Harkins stated that there would probably only be a tiny number of students who were graduating with more than a 4.0. He asked the SGA what the result of the question on how familiar the students who participated in the survey were with the current proposal. Jeanne Johnson stated that TopNet did not allow a numerical response, but that the majority of the students indicated a "yes" that they were familiar with it.

Luella Teuton (Special Instructional Programs) said that the SGA did an excellent presentation and that data cannot be perfect and it can be shaped the way you want it on any survey. She pointed out that the students have come to us with a concern and stated that many faculty are not in favor of a plus/minus system, and nor will they be in favor of being forced to use a system. She stated that she would rather that her students be motivated by going out in the community and doing community service rather than worry about whether they were going to get an A- or an A+ on a test.

Lou Strolger (Academic Quality Committee) stated that the concerns of the students and the concerns of the faculty seem to be different in opinion and this is what comes across the opinionated survey that was presented "what do you 'feel' about plus/minus grading" rather than a numerical value. What comes across is the students dislike it because they are afraid of the impact on their grade and the faculty do not like it because they are not certain about how they are going to do this grading, or whether or not they can implement it, or whether or not they want to use a new system. A lot of the confusion on both sides lies with not really having a firm grasp on what it is that we are trying to implement. We do not want to get to the point where we dictate what professors are grading, but we do want to provide a finer resolution in the grades that you are able to get. Not everyone needs to adhere to it to make it functional. We have already seen evidence that different professors grade differently and students are well aware of that and they know which classes to take and which not to take. The confusion is this is new. As for motivation, he would be very happy if students would take physics for physics sake. This is not the case; the common question at the end of the term is "what do I need to earn on the final to earn a certain grade?" and the professor has to tell them an infinite score. For many, it is impossible for them to move up a letter grade based on a final exam; however, the option of moving up slightly is possible. This is how Strolger sees motivation as a factor for students.

Heidi Pintner (Music) stated that her understanding of grading was that we are supposed to accurately reflect the performance of students. She stated that the plus/minus system is a more accurate way of reporting grades.

Roy Howsen stated that there is a significant difference in the grading of the same exam by different people and stated that measurement error is large factor in grading. Unless the answer of measurement error is answered, he feels it would be difficult to move to a plus/minus system.

Andrew McMichael responded that of course people grade differently because different people have different knowledge expectations. He does not think that the argument that plus/minus is not precise is a reason to argue against it, and keep a system that is even less precise. McMichael then told a story of a student who got an 89 and asked for a B+ on a test. McMichael told the student that an 89 was a B. The student said it was not fair, and McMichael told him that it is true, but this is the system we have here. If we had plus/minus, you could get a B+ and at the end of the semester, have a hope that it could get bumped up to an A-, whereas if the A/B/C/D/F system is used, that same student would not get an A out of many faculty members with an 89. He also pointed out in terms of subjectivity from college to college that there are some colleges on campus where 80% of the grades that are handed out are A's and B's.

Jerry Daday (Sociology) stated that a student who gets an 89 versus a student who gets a 91 has a 1.0 difference in grade point average. With the plus/minus system, more precision in measurement is offered. The plus/minus system is more precise.

Skyler Jordan (SGA) asked why more minuses are awarded than pluses in terms of student motivation.

Jerry Daday (Sociology) recommended as a social scientist that we stop talking about the surveys because they are all availability samples. We have no generalized piece of information about what will happen if this system is implemented.

Denise Gravitt (Ogden) called for the question because we are just rehashing old arguments and not bringing up new information. Gravitt's motion was seconded.

An immediate vote on voting immediately without further discussion passed. The majority of faculty voted to vote immediately; 3 faculty voted in opposition of voting immediately.

The two-page resolution was read to the University Senate by Shadoan. The University Senate voted by paper ballot, 27 votes of "yes in favor of the resolution as written" and 31 votes of "no". The plus/minus resolution did not pass as presented.

### ***SITE Evaluation Report***

Sharon Mutter began a discussion on revising the student evaluations of faculty members. She had some questions about validity and reliability on page one of the report. When the "yes" under the table in validity means that only the instrument in question has been tested for validity, it does not necessarily mean that it is definitively a valid test. There is very little way to determine definitively whether an instrument is in fact valid, and the same is true for reliability. If anyone wants her to go over this, she will be happy to do so.

There is a recommendation for the use of a SIR-II, which is an ETS product. The test has been subjected to fairly extensive tests of reliability and validity. There are a variety of types of information that can be obtained from the report to the instructors off of this test. It is available for a variety of delivery methods, including online methods, paper and pencil methods, and a special version developed for instructors in online courses. It can be adapted for additional custom questions. Within 15 days of receipt, ETS scores and codes the information, and provides coding for the written comments. The instrument administration will cost more than our current SITE costs. The

recommendation is that we don't administer this type of evaluation in every single class across the university. Some of the details of that particular procedure still need to be worked out. The general suggestion is that it will be administered more frequently for those individuals who are pre-tenure and less frequently for post-tenure individuals and professors would have some say in the classes that they would like to have evaluated. There might also be a random selection of classes. She will answer any questions about the report after people have read it.

Denise Gravitt stated that it is not so much that the instrument is invalid, but it is a question of how well the students actually fill them out or answer the questions. We were looking to readdress or reevaluate how to get better results from the actual instrument. Mutter responded that the committee felt that by reducing the number of times these things are administered to students in a semester might make students more motivated to answer them more fully and more accurately.

Dr. Miller asked if this meant that faculty members would not be evaluated every year. All faculty members would be evaluated every year but not in every class that they teach. Dr. Miller said that there might be a SACS issue with periodic assessments.

Skyler Jordan stated that students get sick of filling out the evaluations. He wholeheartedly supports this resolution, stating that he thinks students will find it easier to deal with and that faculty will find it to be more accurate and a more fair way of being evaluated.

Sharon Mutter was asked by Roy Howsen if the committee was unanimous in whether or not this new method was a valid instrument. Mutter said that the issue of validity was not unanimous but that the committee found this instrument to be more valid than the current method. She added that there are three aspects of validity that were addressed in the development of this instrument. The type of validity that Roy is talking about is called criterion validity, and if you want to determine criterion validity, you need to test your results against an external criterion. In the study that Roy is talking about, they used final examination scores for students to see if ratings of teacher effectiveness were related to learning in the course based on the final examination. They found that there was a correlation. The other two types of validity that need to be considered are content validity and construct validity. There is no absolute way to guarantee validity. If it turns out that this instrument is not valid, then we will go somewhere else.

Michelle Hollis (Community College) suggested that in light of the current budget crisis and in light of Dr. Miller's question about SACS accreditation, she thinks we would need to look at this further. She made a motion to table the resolution indefinitely until Fall. Sharon Mutter asked Dr. Burch to address this because if it is tabled until fall, it would be over a year before we

could implement it. She also said she would be surprised if we are required to evaluate every class every semester for SACS. The other issue is that this is a reliable instrument and there would be little change if it was given multiple times. The motion was seconded and the vote to postpone indefinitely did not pass – there were 17 in favor of postponing and 19 in favor of dealing with it today.

Johnathon Boles (SGA) suggested that the SITE committee meet prior to the May University Senate meeting with a second reading and typed resolution that can be brought forth and voted on at that point.

Dr. Burch said she is not sure how many times the SITE evaluations need to be administered. She feels that the SITE could use a lot of improvement, and if it passes, the committee will need to look at the logistics of implementation.

Johnathon Boles made a motion to postpone definitely until the May 2008 meeting. The motion passed to postpone definitely until the May 2008 meeting.

**VI. New Business**

The discussion on conversion to online election process will be postponed.

University Senate Officers for the 2008-2009 Academic Year were elected by acclamation and will remain the same as the 2007-2008 Academic Year: Julie Shadoan (Chair), Denise Gravitt (Vice Chair), Heidi Pintner (Secretary).

A caucus from each college appointed standing committee members for 2008-2009. Results should be submitted to Julie Shadoan.

**VII. Announcements**

There is a May University Senate meeting and we need quorum to get matters addressed.

**VIII. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 5:20 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Pintner, Secretary