

Minutes of Faculty Senate (FS) Meeting
Thursday, November 19, 2009
Admin Rm 2-91, ULM Campus
12:30-2:10 p.m.

Senators Present: J. Anderson, M. Bontty, W. Campbell, Y. Dupre, J. Feldhaus, C. Grinnell, A. Hill, C. Hutto, M. Lowe, M. Matusiak, L. Nicholson, J. Pankey, L. Reid, D. Rhorer, C. Steckline, P. Sylvester, B. Walker. H. Wilson

Senators Absent: D. Chandler*, K. Kervin*, M. Parker, S. Owens, W. Brown (resigned)

Call to Order and Roll Call: President Walker called the meeting to order and Secretary Reid called the roll.

Approval of minutes: The minutes of the Oct 15, 2009 were reviewed and accepted with corrections (Steckline/Rhorer).

Committee Reports:

Executive Board: On November 12, 2009, the FS Executive Board met with Dr. Richters and the Deans to discuss ideas and interests related to faculty. President Walker indicated that the following major points were brought up during the meeting:

- 1) The Provost and Deans are against continuing the “plus-one” course load;
- 2) The Provost and Deans are aware that faculty are exhausted; and
- 3) Because of the situation that the University is in (e.g., the workings of the Tucker Commission, looming budget cuts, and faculty and staff shortages), ULM is having to operate in a tactical rather than a strategic mode. Dr. Richters indicated that this is a three year cyclical event and not the preferred mode of operation. With changes that likely will be imposed from the Board of Regents, the Board of Supervisors, and the Governor’s office, the University does not know how to address the possible impact on ULM. President Walker reported that Administration feels that after one more year of major budget cuts, we will be back in a strategic mode.

Senator Anderson posed a concern that ULM may have to re-develop its Strategic Plan. Senator Sylvester, who is a member of the Strategic Plan Committee, remarked that adjustments will have to be made. Senator Rhorer expressed concern that workload policies would be difficult to implement.

Faculty Welfare Committee: Senator Steckline reported that the Faculty Friends gatherings were held on Wednesday, October 28th from 2-4 pm and on Thursday, October 29th from 11-1 pm. Four of the 7 new faculty members were in attendance. Communication breakdowns leading up to the Faculty Friends gathering were discussed.

Faculty Handbook: Senator Reid reported that the Provost and Julia Barnhill are working on approving the changes made to the Faculty Handbook in April 2008 and April 2009 and these changes are forthcoming.

Faculty Advisory Council (FAC): Senator Rhorer reported that the FAC met in Baton Rouge on October 23, 2009. The group agrees with and supports universities in the System which have passed resolutions opposing reduction to ORP, and it supports LSU in its leadership role on this issue. A document coming out of FAC will note this. The next meeting of FAC will be on December 4th. At that meeting, Chair Rhorer will have the body consider the issues of changes to Group Benefits. More information on this will follow.

Tucker Commission Report: President Walker reported on the following motions that were made by the Tucker Commission meetings that were held in Baton Rouge on November 16 & 17, 2009:

- 1) Require the Board of Regents (BOR), the state's higher education oversight body, to review the role, scope and mission of colleges to eliminate or minimize "mission creep". This "mission creep" involves colleges going beyond their basic missions, resulting in the offering of programs that were implemented in an opportunistic manner as opposed to a strategic manner.
- 2) Require the BOR and college management boards to review and eliminate duplicate academic programs and to reduce "excess hours" required to graduate in academic programs (one of our ULM ad hoc committees is currently doing this).
- 3) Require the BOR to consider program quality, state workforce needs, completion rates, and other factors in program reviews. The motion also would make the BOR complete an annual update report for the Governor and legislative leaders.

The following items were identified as other considerations posed by the Tucker Commission or the BOR and were discussed by the FS:

- 1) Have three management groups – one for state institutions (LSU, LA Tech, ULL and Southern), one for regional colleges (the rest of colleges in the state) and one for community colleges.
- 2) Graduate programs for "non-state" universities would have to be able to support how they impact the region (i.e. College of Education and College of Business could justify their existence). President Walker, as an example of the potential impact of this change, if implemented, stated that the College of Business may have one program in jeopardy with 2-3 others at risk.
- 3) The BOR discussed a change in the metric of examining program graduation rates from 5 years down to 3 years (such as examining the percentage of graduates to the number of students enrolled in the program). Senator Sylvester addressed the need to evaluate graduate programs that are in the colleges due to masters programs that have no students enrolled in them. Senator Hill stated that Biology is admitting students to a non-thesis masters program.

The press release from the Tucker Commission can be found by going to the ULM homepage, click on Board of Regents, then on (PERC).

Ad Hoc Committees:

Faculty Productivity and Performance: Senator Nickelson stated that a meeting is scheduled for Friday, November 20, 2009 and that they plan to implement their proposed faculty workload policy initially as a pilot program.

University Planning Council: Senator Steckline reported that at the Ad Hoc Committees Quarterly Report meeting on November 3rd, President Cofer indicated he was considering opening the quarterly UPC meetings to more faculty and staff. All reports indicate the committees are active with the exception of Administration Productivity and Performance. The FS asked President Walker to look into this. Senator Wilson asked how the Administration functions are being evaluated in light of SACS requirements.

Unfinished Business:

ORP Resolution – President Walker presented a revised resolution addressing the ORP cuts in retirement benefits. A suggestion was to add content regarding the inequity of benefits for disability coverage. Senator Hill pointed out that faculty members who have TRSL have additional disability coverage not available to those with ORP. This is referred to as TRSL Part A “disability retirement”. In TRSL faculty can purchase disability insurance as a supplement to that benefit. ORP participants can only purchase disability insurance. The link to the TRSL disability benefits page is <http://trsl.org/active/index.php?page=Disability>. Senator Steckline suggested the ORP resolution be reworded and approved via email vote (to be conducted by President Walker) and to acknowledge LSU for their work.

New Business:

Social Networking Page – Senator Anderson reported that ULM faculty and staff need a means for group discussion and comments and that Facebook or a similar type of social operating system might provide that avenue. The discussion indicated that while this could be positive, there may be too many aspects that are non-secure. Senator Grinnell suggested that a blog area may be more controlled. This topic was tabled to be discussed at the January meeting.

Straw poll on Plus One program – President Walker reminded the FS that a provision of the 2008-2009 resolution regarding teaching one extra course per year (known as the Plus One program) was that the Senate would consider the wishes of the faculty to determine whether or not the program should be voluntarily continued for the 2010-2011 academic year. He stressed that a vote to continue would not mean that the Faculty Senate would recommend a continuation of the program since this strictly would be a straw poll.

Between the end of October and mid-November, 2009, individual Faculty Senators conducted a straw poll of their constituents regarding the Plus One program. The following results were obtained from the 193 respondents:

84 For Continuing

104 Against

5 Neutral

Other: Senator Steckline inquired about campus issues relating to energy conservation and safety. Specific issues noted: it appears the football stadium lights have been left on all the time, that the policy for designated smoking areas has not been implemented, and that littering around campus is a problem. Senator Steckline also asked what recycling efforts were currently in place on campus. Senator Lowe reported that one recycling endeavor was for the recycling of the Hawkeye and old newspapers. In response to the comment that recycling costs money, she responded that ULM had received some money for the newspapers. Senator Grinnell reported that a company in Monroe will pick up recycled goods. President Walker will inquire about this with the Administration.

The next meeting will be January 21, 2010 with President-Elect Anna Hill convening in the absence of President Walker who will be abroad teaching in Hong Kong.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Reid
Faculty Senate Secretary

* indicates excused absence;
Name/Name indicates Moved/Seconded