

Draft for consideration by Senate at Fall 2015 semester meeting (8/24/2015)
Please note this is not a verbatim transcript. Senators may email James Mokhiber regarding any concerns or changes: jmokhibe@uno.edu Any proposed changes signaled in advance will also be announced at the meeting.

UNO FACULTY SENATE MEETING

May 13, 2015

MINUTES

Attending: Brian McDonald, Joy Ballard, Dinah Payne, Christy Corey, Cherie Trumbach, James Logan, Tarun Mukherjee, Richard Speaker, Ting Wang, Christine Ikeda, Nancy Easterlin, Renia Ehrenfeucht,, Laszlo Fulop, David Beriss, Peter Schock, Steve Striffler, Beth Blankenship, Vern Baxter, Bobby Dupont, Juliana Starr, Steve Rick, Wendy Schluchter, Greg Seab, Joel Andrew Webb, Connie Phelps, Marie Morgan, Kenneth Holladay, Vassil Roussev (Vice President), Jim Mokhiber

Not Attending: Mark Reid, Lena Nuccio-Lee, Ivan Gill, Matt Lyons, Edit Bourgeois, Dimitrios Cheralampidis, Jeffrey Ehrenreich, Chris Day, Pam Jenkins, Nicola Anthony, Shengru Tu, Elliot Beaton

UNO Faculty Senate President Cherie Trumbach welcomed the Senators.

Trumbach asked for **corrections to the minutes** from the April 23 meeting. A Senator noted that the Minutes should be amended to note that the Vice Presidential elections vote on page 9 should be recorded as passing by majority vote. The correction noted, a motion to accept the minutes was raised, seconded and voted unanimously.

Trumbach then offered several initial announcements:

- The **Faculty Senate will use Moodle** in 2015-2016 to disseminate information and expedite the Senate's work wherever possible. The shell "c_Faculty Senate" should appear in each Senator's course list. Given the current crisis we may need to call a meeting over the summer and will use the Moodle shell if necessary to share information ahead of time.
- Secretary Jim Mokhiber will be **recording the audio** of our regular Senate meetings to assist with minutes.
- We've had some victories in the state legislature. We still need **to create some kind of a viral campaign for UNO**, to encourage people to keep the ball rolling. For example, we could encourage UNO degree holders to use social media to show where they got their degrees, and to tag their legislators so the information shows up in all of their feeds.

Trumbach invited Wendy Schluchter to discuss the **University Budget Committee (UBC)** and its report. Schluchter noted that the UBC has been meeting at 9:30 on Wednesdays, and is starting to wrap up its work. The UBC was charged with:

- Examining cost and revenue over the past 3 years
- Coming up with budget principles

The UBC has deliberated and put together its recommendations in these areas, and these were discussed in the Faculty Governance Committee in the meeting held immediately before this one. Recommendations will also be made available for the Senate to review.

The UBC's charge was to come up with a budget process, to be more transparent, and have more people weigh in on decisions that are made. The UBC report assesses parts of the university that hadn't been evaluated during the academic review process that took place last semester. Edit Bourgeois is the head of that subcommittee, and other members include Warren Davis, Pam Jenkins, Brian McDonald, Pat Lynn, Dale O'Neill, and Bill Sharpton. There is broad representation of both faculty and staff members.

The UBC requested narratives from each unit. It received 36 of them, though some are still missing. The committee then created a rubric, not to rank any non-academic unit but so as to judge how important the functions of those units are for the mission of the university, particularly in terms of growth. It looked at staffing, costs associated with that unit, and how effective and efficient each unit is. The committee sought to include benchmarking where it could, using some information from UL-Monroe and LA-Tech, and to include some specific recommendations for each unit.

A key goal was identifying things that could be accomplished soon to save money and yield the greatest savings. The UBC worked to secure consensus, while understanding that some of the people on the UBC committee represent the areas of the university under evaluation. The UBC tried to foster consensus, but all of its recommendations were not unanimously supported. The UBC did not seek to compute exact savings. The UBC might, for example, identify an area as administratively top heavy, but generally did not wish to be in the position of determining specific staffing cuts.

Recommendations are grouped in seven different categories:

1. *Restructuring.* Our structure at UNO is too complex for its current student population. The UBC believes UNO should reduce its current five vice presidents to two. One should be an Executive Vice President for Academics, and the other a Vice President for Administration and Finance that controls the other parts of the University.
2. *Staffing.* Many offices are top heavy. There are too many managers and very few regular staff to be managed. UBC recommendations call for a reduction in the number of managers, a reassigning of duties and a realignment of compensation accordingly.

3. *Consolidation.* The UBC recommends the consolidation of some units. Some currently operate in silos, when they could collaborate more and share services. It calls for the cross-training of staff.
4. *Technology.* Better use of technology may reduce costs and the need for certain staff. UNO is supposed to be updating PeopleSoft this fall. We're recommending that we use PeopleSoft system to drive how we operate in many cases. The UBC is recommending using other technology like Faculty 180 that can be used to better streamline our functions.
5. *Need for self-support of some units.* The UBC recommends that some units no longer receive General Fund support. It recommends that certain other units that do generate funds be charged some overhead costs (e.g. for utilities, insurance) if they are not already. All such units should be charged with maximizing funds for the university.
6. *Improving planning and evaluation.* We're recommending that almost all units would benefit from better planning and evaluation. SACS focused attention on deficiencies regarding UNO's IE plans for the non-academic units, and this needs to be addressed.
7. *Contracting out certain services.* The UBC hopes that, in the event of a budget cut, the UL system could provide a way to share certain contracts that would save money.

Schluchter noted that this is a short version of their findings and presentation. More detail will be included as the report is finalized. The UBC's plan is to release a long report of its findings.

The UBC hopes that its work can guide future efforts in this area. It will recommend to President Fos that a much smaller Budget Committee – perhaps 8 people or less -- be assembled to provide input and oversight . The UBC was unwieldy in that it included approximately thirty members. Precise representation of this reconstituted budget committee is still to be determined, but will include a Faculty Senate representative and others so as to include input from all parts of the university.

Questions:

Q: Regarding the VP recommendation, where do Associate or Assistant Provosts fit into this? Is there any chance that UNO will just say we will make the VPs into Associate Provosts?

Provost positions would be under the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Schluchter noted that her discussions with Bill Sharpton and incoming Provost John Nicklow suggested that such issues will be examined. The UBC's recommendation is that any change in title would entail a change in compensation as well.

Q: Isn't the elimination of a Vice President for Research a drastic change that basically suggests UNO no longer has a research mission? Did the UBC find any examples of

research universities that don't have a VP for research? We need to send a strong message that we aren't abandoning basic research. Will we search internally or nationally for a candidate?

Schluchter responded that she did not believe the UBC was sending such a message. The UBC believes UNO is top heavy, and it is possible to operate without so many top-level administrators. What is important is having the personnel and basic infrastructure necessary to support research. With the departure of Kenneth Sewell we have an opportunity to rethink that office. It might be possible to have a Director who is not a Vice President. Schluchter noted that she believed another UL school had a similar arrangement. President Fos will have to make any final determination.

Q. What about the position of Executive Director of the Graduate School?

We will be making recommendations in that regard as well. We're still seeking agreement internally as we write the report.

Jim Logan, UBC member, reiterated that the budget shows that UNO is top heavy in administration, and that it needs to reduce the number of administrators to a more rational level. Eliminating certain titles does not mean that the functions should simply be eliminated, however.

Q. Is there a "number goal" in terms of the non-academic/academic budgets? I've heard there is a 60/40 split, and is that even accurate?

Schluchter responded that she did not believe so, that faculty salaries were the larger part of the budget. Logan returned to the idea that, within the administration, there were too many people supervising too few. This is a problem with historical roots, and we haven't examined it in a modern organizational sense.

Q. My concern is that when you look at a unit and say it is top heavy you also have to look at the number of student workers they have. We have a lot of units on campus that had employees, who have been laid off. Some of those managers that remain are actually managing a lot of people, just not full-time employees doing the jobs.

Schluchter agreed that the UBC would need to consider this.

Q. Did you look at athletics? The position has usually been that athletics have been fully funded by student fees. Is that the case?

Schluchter said the UBC looked at athletics, and indicated that the UBC will have recommendations about athletics in the report. She suggested that the UBC believes athletics are not fully funded by student fees.

Q. Student government has looked at athletics, and plans to propose a student self-assessed fee in the fall. President Fos is not completely incorrect on this. They are

funded through a grant that will be going away, and if they are not put on the General Fund athletics will cease to exist...

Schluchter clarified that it was donation monies and auxiliaries that were at issue. She noted that there are also some positions coming from the General Fund, including at least one that reported directly to the President for Division I reasons and had to come from the General Fund.

Q. It is astonishing how difficult it is to figure out where we stand financially. Do we have a 45% overhead? 60%? In all this process, is there any chance that we will be able to get to a place where we can get simple answers to simple questions in the future?

Schluchter said that was part of the budget process that the UBC was going to propose and discuss in its next meeting. She recognized the importance of identifying overhead for any budget planning process in the future.

Q. When might we expect the report?

Schluchter noted that the UBC was working on drafts and hoped to finish the report within two weeks.

Senators expressed thanks for the Committee's work. [applause]

Trumbach then turned to the issue of the Faculty Evaluation Policy. She noted that many people had questions about the process at the last meeting. Dr. Sharpton has come to the meeting to discuss where we are and how we hope to move forward. She noted that the appropriate Senate committee will be charged with reviewing the policy and recommending some changes to ensure that it is fair and that it can be implemented effectively.

Dr. Bill Sharpton gave an overview of where things stand with Faculty Evaluation Policy. He noted that UNO has three evaluation timelines: one for faculty, one for 12-month and one for civil service employees. He noted the situation was complicated, and observed that the civil service process was dictated by the state. Fiscal employees are on a twelve-month calendar year basis. Faculty are supposed to be on an academic year schedule. Sharpton indicated, as he had in the last Faculty Senate meeting that we were off-cycle because the transfer from the LSU to the UL system occurred in the month of December. LSU had a different policy, and UNO wasn't carrying out annual evaluations for faculty. It was on a different cycle, whereas UL requires evaluations annually. As a result, SACS found us out of compliance with the new UL system policy. UNO thus moved to an annual cycle for faculty, even though that is against our internal policy, so as to meet the SACS requirement. We continued in this way for two years, and this year we sought to catch up by evaluating an 18-month period to get us back to May. Beginning in the fall, we will go to what it ought to be, an academic-year cycle. Sharpton noted that

this was our SACS review year. When SACS was coming to campus we wanted to show we were complying with our internal policy.

So at the beginning of the year we hoped to have our new evaluation process in place. While it didn't get approved, we told departments, via the Deans, that one of three methods could be used. They could use the old form, or they could use the new format from the subcommittee and then input the information into the old form, or, if they had created one, they could use their new departmental process and report it on the old form. Sharpton noted that all was largely on schedule in that regard. Norm Whitley was working to make sure that Faculty 180 could be retooled to create new pathways that would mediate the process.

Questions/Observations:

Q. Carrying out evaluations on an academic year basis doesn't necessarily mean it has to be due in mid-May, before we receive student evaluations for the spring semester and at a time when everything else is crashing down on Chairs. Can that deadline be moved to August, for example? It would still be an annual review, but chairs would be carrying them out with full data in hand under a calendar that is more reasonable.

Sharpton agreed that, at least currently, chairs do not have student evaluations in hand in May. The problem with moving the date to August is that annual appointment faculty will already have been appointed by the time they would be evaluated for the previous year. It is not as much of a problem for tenured faculty.

Sharpton noted that student evaluations should begin to change next year, when the process will be Webstar-based, which should also reduce some costs.

Online/distance courses currently work like this. He credited Dan Gonzalez and Merrill Johnson with helping UNO to meet SACS requirements this year regarding distance education by reentering some important data by hand.

Trumbach noted that the appropriate Faculty Senate committee will receive a charge this summer to provide faculty input regarding how student evaluations will be administered.

Sharpton noted that UNO has many legacy procedures and processes that need to be reevaluated, and this is the value of the SACS process. The student evaluation process will happen in the fall, while the electronic faculty evaluation will not happen electronically until the spring.

Q. The Faculty Distance Learning Committee, in perhaps 2009 or 2010, actually did look at our online evaluations and matched those up with the classroom evaluations. It wasn't a matter of us always having done something that way, it was that someone who was sending out the surveys apparently didn't know there was already a different one that had been created.

Sharpton recognized that could be the case.

Q. Regarding faculty evaluations, one of the concerns of faculty in my department is that there is a ranking from "1" to "5." They are not opposed to numerical evaluation per se. Their issue has to do with the wording "needs improvement" and "unacceptable." Just getting ranked three times "needs improvement" could get you fired. There is a lot of subjectivity that's involved. [Crosstalk ensued]

Q. Yes, if you have a Chair that's punitive or biased, and you've got a problem..

Q. Or students who are punitive or biased...

Q. Which of us doesn't need improvement in some way or another?

Q. I think for me it is especially comes out in the teaching categories. Because we don't have that many ways for evaluating quality teaching. Even the criteria seem overly subjective, like "always inspires" or "often inspires" or "sometimes inspires." They're virtually all like that. Some are stronger, but most are almost unmeasurable.

[crosstalk by multiple Senators]

Q. I think this should motivate departments to come up with their own document to do this.

Sharpton noted that universities employ multiple models, some resembling the one the Senate has before it in draft form, in which the descriptions get "thicker" with more expectations from 1 to 5. He noted that other universities use a different format that identifies "sub-elements" within teaching, research and service. Teaching might have sub-elements like content, delivery, technology, and student support. There would be similar elements across research or service. We need to decide which model we want to use.

Sharpton said that the way he understood the proposed process, each departments could have its own tool as long as they came back to a common metric, with all departments using the 1 through 5 or 1 through 4 scale. This is necessary, he said, for reporting purposes. It would be clunky if one department is 1 to 10 and another is 1 through 4.

Sharpton noted that UNO will need to build a framework electronically with the Faculty 180 people, and if Department A wants to use a different set of descriptors than Department B, that's fine, because that information is at the departmental level. To me, that is the discussion that needs to occur over the fall. The idea is though that you have a tool that is ready to be operationalized basically a year from now. The University needs to be able to "pull the trigger" and go through this exercise again in April. He reminded senators that there is a default tool for any department that does not want develop its own.

Q. Was this particular time, this temporal misalignment, where the research period you are being evaluated on was different from the teaching period you were being evaluated on, was that just a one-time thing? [Crosstalk regarding which semesters were subject to evaluation and timing of student evaluations] Next spring, will we be evaluated on Spring 2016?

Sharpton suggested that the new web-based evaluations would ensure that data would be available on time. They are not now because we are using two different systems and because we contract it out, and it is not timely.

Several Senators expressed concern with the timeline. Chairs may receive online evaluations but not have time to consider them fully in a period of one or two weeks before the May 15 deadline.

Sharpton suggested that evaluations might be made due by the end of the fiscal year at the end of June. There would still be time before annual appointments must be made.

Sharpton said that, for next year, both the protocol (format) and process (e.g. timelines) have to be examined. Part of the process is the electronic piece. We are working with the 180 people to get the electronics set up so that whatever protocol we put in can be used.

Q. Somebody has got to do something about the online response rate about the students. If you are going to evaluate, out of say 48 students, the 2 that responded, I'm not going to be very happy about that. [Crosstalk]

Trumbach noted that was part of the charge that would go to the Senate committee. How can we increase that rate, and what are other universities doing in this regard.

Senators discussed options including offering extra credit for submitting evaluations or withholding grades from students who do not fill out evaluations. Others noted that students had difficulties receiving the emails that solicited their participation. Others noted that teaching can also be evaluated through methods other than student evaluations.

Trumbach noted that departments can determine their own methods, such as SCHs, innovation, courseloads and such.

Q. Regarding the Senate committee, will they just look at this and tweak it a little bit, or will they be able to change it dramatically, come up with something new?

Trumbach said the committee could make recommendations about anything, but it would then go back to Faculty Governance, and ultimately the decision is up to Academic Affairs.

Q. Will we be getting information about how things will be computed within Faculty 180? What will the multipliers be and such? When our department began creating its own rubric we went to other universities and they told us they felt it was useless to try to “quantify the unquantifiable.”

Sharpton said all that Faculty 180 was doing was holding the information. It will give a report by department, and a report by college, but all it is doing is taking the results and putting them together.

A Senator dismissed this “quantification” concern, and noted that students could also say that we claimed to be able to “quantify” their work through grading. Another Senator from computer science noted that he found Faculty 180 extremely difficult to use, and wondered if there was any faculty input. The present system is onerous. Will any user input go into the process?

Sharpton said he would welcome such participation, and reiterated that the past two years have focused on trying to get up to speed with reporting requirements, and he apologized if Faculty 180 has been difficult to use. But he noted that in the past individual curriculum vitae had to be hand coded, and that was unrealistic.

Q. A point that the Senate needs to confront, because we are going to vote on this evaluation in the fall, is article 2.11 in the document, which provides for removal for cause if a faculty member is rated “needs improvement” two years in a row in just one of the three areas. That means somebody who is deficient in service, that’s grounds for dismissal. We do have biased department chairs grinding axes from time to time...This is a serious concern.

Senators discussed the specific number of years that would trigger such consequences.

Matt Tarr of the Faculty Governance Committee acknowledged senators’ concerns, and suggested that the timeframe could be changed from three years to four years, for example. Regarding “needs improvement,” he said we could consider it like A, B, C, D, and F. In the college of sciences a D in a course is not counted toward graduation, that’s what a 2 is, while a 3 corresponds to the minimum accepted performance. He agreed that we may need to change the language though, with 1 being designated “very unacceptable,” for example.

Another senator noted that perhaps evaluations should not be carried out by a single person, but by committees within departments.

Trumbach noted the charges will go out to the various committees. She expressed the hope that everyone on those committees will address the concerns raised in the meeting today. We would like to vote on the Faculty Evaluation Policy when we

come back in the fall, and can use Moodle to get information out and solicit comment.

Q. Does the Faculty Senate need to vote on it, to give it approval, for it to become a policy? Because my impression was that last time we didn't approve it and the next thing we knew we got an announcement saying we're using a version of that policy...

Trumbach said Senate approval was not required, but Academic Affairs wants input. The Governance Committee came up with the document, so it basically came out of faculty. We want wider input, and this is why it is going through the Senate and its committee. We want something that we can say as a faculty that this is something that we all agree on.

Q. I study curriculum. If you have a curriculum, you have to have an evaluation as some part of it. Since we are charged with curriculum issues, the evaluation of that curriculum is part of our charge. If you think that is too radical an interpretation, then by all means, give the evaluation of our curriculum to someone else. I think the Faculty Senate needs to weigh in long and hard on how the students evaluate the faculty, how the faculty evaluate the students, and how our teaching as faculty members is evaluated.

A Senator responded that a department could make up its own criteria and evaluation process, and thus not be forced to bear something it does not want.

[Crosstalk]

Another Senator stressed that the process behind the creation of the Faculty Evaluation Policy proposal had been problematic. It was only because the Faculty Senate had pushed back and refused to approve the proposed evaluation policy in its last meeting that the process had opened up.

Trumbach acknowledged the role played by the Senate in opening up the process, and credited Academic Affairs with yielding to Senators' concerns. She noted that Academic Affairs would start some level of implementation over the summer, but would hold off on the details because they are waiting for our input.

Senators discussed if and how the grievance process might be brought to bear in the evaluation process.

Another senator returned to the question of whether evaluation was a curriculum matter or an administrative matter. Insofar as it is a curriculum matter, we the faculty have authority and not the administration. There is thus a limit to the extent to which the administration can impose evaluation processes. We have authority in curriculum matters according to SACS. One thing the Faculty Governance Committee needs to do is look at the blurring of the boundary and the way that the

Administration is going to fill in any vacuum on making decisions on curriculum issues with or without the faculty.

[Crosstalk and debate]

Trumbach announced the last item on the agenda, regarding Program Review feedback circulated by the Faculty Governance Committee.

Matt Tarr offered an overview of where things stand with regard to Program Review. The FGC has reviewed all degree programs at UNO, placing them in categories. Some actions that were taken subsequently did not completely follow the FGC's recommendations. There are some programs in Category 3 that have been given some further feedback to help them strengthen their position against future cuts. We are hoping to look at Category 1 and 2 programs to help them strengthen and be better protected against being cut. The Category 3 programs are supposed to submit a two-page executive summary on their plan for improvement so that the President, the Deans and the Provost can use that in budget decisions.

Rob Stufflebeam, Chair of Philosophy, again appealed to the FGC to obtain and use accurate enrollment and completion data. He noted several factors that led to underreporting of his department's majors. He voiced concern that the FGC employed absolute (and not relative) numbers of students, forcing academic programs into a kind of "Hunger Games" competition of small programs competing with larger ones. He also noted that the service component of his department, and most College of Liberal Arts programs, was overlooked by the FGC. Up to 90% of the students his department teaches are not majors. Stufflebeam expressed concern that the FGC never responded to specific observations he made along these lines, and has not addressed how their performance measures were biased against small programs. He criticized the FGC for its flawed process and for circulating misleading excerpts and comments about his department and its programs.

A Senator voiced support for Stufflebeam's position, noting it was echoed by most of the College of Liberal Arts.

Tarr noted that the Faculty Governance Committee had followed a two-step process in evaluating programs. The FGC generated numerical scores based on a number of criteria, and he indicated that service to the wider university was taken into consideration. He defended the FGC's process for collecting its data, but acknowledged that there could be a bias against small programs. After this initial phase, FGC members took a vote on each program regarding its placement in a category.

Senators discussed the program evaluation process and their concerns, particularly with regard to criteria and the possible effects of the circulation of reviewers' comments. Tarr noted that the FGC had forwarded verbatim comments, and senators responded that these were not accurately framed or filtered. Trumbach

reminded Senators that the function and charge of the FGC had changed rapidly. The FGC was hoping to help programs by giving them constructive feedback, even if it was in the form of raw comments. She noted that the comments had been sent to department chairs and not the university president.

In response to a senator's question, Tarr noted that deans would receive the two-page executive summaries. He said that the FGC itself would not issue any further report or statement at the moment, as it is primarily concerned with providing programs with an opportunity to defend themselves against cuts.

A senator who sits on the Faculty Governance Committee assured her colleagues that the FGC had fully considered program narratives that had been submitted. FGC members did not believe they were endorsing elimination when they had placed programs in the "restructure, merge or otherwise transform" category (Category 3).

A senator suggested that the FGC could issue a statement to underline this point.

Trumbach opened the floor to any new business. Hearing none, she called for a motion to adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned.