

Minutes of the Senate October 11, 2004

Present: Senators Anton, Beardsley (Senate Chair), Cunningham (Student Senator), DeMarais, Dougharty (Acting Dean of Students), Edgoose, Foster, Haltom, Holland, Maxwell, Orlin, Tinsley

Called to order by Chair Beardsley at 4:05pm.

1) Approval of Minutes

The minutes for September 27th were approved with one amendment substituting the following for the first paragraph of “Special Orders” on page 2:

Senator Holland reported that UPS was second in the nation in indebtedness per student. She wanted the Senate to send a resolution to the trustees voicing faculty and student concerns about the issue. Cunningham discussed using a rating scale for students’ evaluations of faculty teaching.

2) Chair’s Report

Beardsley

- Reported that he had asked Associate Dean Finney for an update on the relative lengths of UPS semesters as opposed to those at peer institutions.
- Distributed copies of notes from Dean Bartanen from the special workshop discussions.
- Distributed a memo from David Balaam describing “doubts” about the tenure process.

3) Special Orders

Haltom read out the final paragraph of the PSC minutes of 9/30/04. He expressed his hope that the paragraph means that the PSC will report *how* they are doing things and not just *what* they are doing. **Foster** agreed.

Foster reported that the Faculty Salary Committee (FSC) has put together a report for the Budget Task Force (BTF) to correct the erosions of salary scale that have taken place during the past decade from an earlier Trustees’ goal of maintaining our place in the top quartile. She hoped she could present it to the Senate before the BTF meeting. **Haltom** asked whether the 75th percentile level wasn’t a Trustee goal and **Foster** confirmed that it was.

4) ASUPS Proposal Regarding Web-Based Review of Courses

Cunningham circulated a handout detailing possible formats for such a review system. He said he wanted us to have a discussion of options and did not have a firm proposal, and expressed the wish that this would celebrate the positives of our institution and not be a forum for gripes.

Beardsley noted that this technology would not take time from classes as the evaluations would be completed on students’ own time. He asked whether comments could be limited to those in the class. **Cunningham** replied that that might be possible with more

reworking but that currently all registered students could post comments as authentication is done via the Academia server.

Maxwell asked whether the system identifies the students who make the comments.

Cunningham replied that the comments could be posted anonymously but that ASUPS could keep a record of contributors' names.

Dougharty noted that on RateMyProfessor there are many students posting comments for courses taken two or more years earlier, thus limiting the currency of the information.

Cunningham reported that their aim was the formalization of the scuttlebutt that already operates among students.

Foster asked whether there would be censorship of content. **Cunningham** replied that all postings would be monitored and comments could be withheld if deemed inappropriate.

Holland commented that having faculty assessment comments appear in a public forum such as the Internet made faculty especially vulnerable. She suggested that it might be fair to have student names visible, as well as faculty names. **Orlin** suggested that the "Professor Review" category in the Berkeley system could be removed for this reason.

Beardsley and **Edgoose** expressed the hope that those from outside the University would be barred from access to this database. **DeMarais** noted that, with classes changing from year to year the information could do a disservice to students by suggesting that one year might more closely resemble prior years. **Tinsley** commented that, if the system is not mandatory it will tend to attract students with a grudge. He also worried that it might enhance a view he works against: the view of professors as the enemy or as dehumanized.

Holland wondered whether this suggestion wasn't being driven by technology. Just because we can do something does not mean we should do it. She asked what is wrong with an unofficial system of scuttlebutt. **Orlin** commented that the campuses where this has been developed are large ones, and that we might not need such a system at UPS.

Beardsley noted that we are unusual in not having an underground system in place.

Haltom agreed with Holland on the vulnerability of faculty but noted that, as a full professor, reviews for him involve no more than "steaming a mirror." At other institutions, he noted, faculty have resigned as a result of scathing comments.

Edgoose asked whether we couldn't find some way to combine these evaluations with the official student evaluations, perhaps negotiating questions of interest to all parties and revealing appropriate information (such as the numerical analysis) publicly. **Beardsley** suggested that we could go in the other direction and have an official understanding that these reviews have no official standing.

Haltom noted that these systems would probably be open for comment throughout the semester and could engender collusion in the official evaluations. In response, **Orlin** suggested that these evaluations could only be opened up after the official evaluations for the semester are completed.

Holland asked Cunningham what the problem was that this system seeks to solve.

Cunningham replied that there wasn't one as such, but that they wished to offer a service to students to complement the current system of scuttlebutt, peer advisors and faculty advisors. **Holland** responded that she thought that this *was* technology-driven.

Dougharty noted that the ASUPS imprimatur regulates it in contrast to an underground system. **Beardsley** seconded a desire for a more systematic approach.

Tinsley focused the Senate on the importance of detailed attention to process. He asked what would happen if the information posted was incorrect and urged ASUPS to humanize the process. He also asked for more information about the controls at Berkeley. **Orlin** asked what **Cunningham** wanted from the Senate. **Cunningham** replied that he would go back with our comments in mind and return with one or two proposals to discuss further with us. He also noted that we could test some formats and withdraw them if they do not work.

5) Student Evaluations of Teaching

Beardsley expressed a hope that we could redo evaluation forms in minor ways, and specifically introduce special forms for team-taught courses. **Edgoose** repeated the possibility of a tie-in with the prior topic.

Holland asked what had happened to the report from the 1998 Senate ad hoc subcommittee on which current Senator Maxwell sat. **Maxwell** reported that it was referred to the PSC but died there. **Beardsley** added that five years earlier the PSC had made suggestions for a radical redesign but these suggestions were ignored by the Senate. **Orlin** praised one suggestion from the 98 report: clarifying whether the evaluations are for feedback or appraisal. **Beardsley** noted that the PSC recently clarified the instructions given to students by those administering evaluations, and noted that these instructions could also be amended.

Holland asked why we were not open to larger changes. She made four suggestions:

- 1) That the Senate take the 98 Report findings to a full faculty meeting for discussion
- 2) That new forms be test-driven by faculty in off years.
- 3) That we consider crunching the numbers
- 4) That we consider streamlining the questionnaire.

Orlin agreed that doing something with the numbers would make sense, particularly reporting to faculty the range of scores received by other professors. **Holland** suggested that the numerical summary could go to students. **Haltom** reported that the FAC is full of non-statisticians who *do* try to crunch the numbers.

Beardsley noted that the last round of changes to the form was largely proposed by students. **Cunningham** opined that fewer questions would be better and noted that the forms are confusing for many.

Holland repeated her suggestion that this be discussed by the full faculty. **Haltom** agreed but noted that many veterans on the faculty would claim *déjà vu*, although it would be worth it if a few insights emerged. **Tinsley** added his support.

Edgoose asked how much information we might want to present to faculty beforehand. He suggested we also distribute copies of evaluation forms from other institutions.

Holland: “Move that the Faculty Senate undertake a process of assessment and possible revision of the instructor evaluation forms this academic year.” **Haltom** confirmed that the goal of this motion is to ensure that the Senate not let this issue drop. **MSP**

Haltom suggested that we append the 98 Report and Holland’s four recommendations to the agenda for the next full faculty meeting on October 25th and nominated Senator **Holland** to present this to the faculty. **Orlin** agreed to help, and **Maxwell** agreed to be there to answer questions about the report. **Cunningham** asked whether he could be present to give students’ perspectives. **Haltom** explained the procedure.

Orlin asked who is legally responsible for the evaluation forms. **Beardsley** replied that it is our document but that he supported presenting it to the full faculty.

Two other minor issues were addressed at the end of the meeting:

- **Cunningham** asked whether there are mechanisms for the evaluation of faculty advisors for student organizations. When told that there were not he opined that it would be good to have such mechanisms to report faculty who do not show up as well as to recognize those who put in many hours of work (Professor Cannon was named as a faculty adviser who put in many hours of work).
- **Holland** asked what the status is of the suggestion to not have the President chair faculty meetings. **Haltom** asked whether Chair Beardsley could discuss it with the President. **Beardsley** admitted that he would vote to maintain the President in this role so the issue should be discussed at a future meeting.

The Senate adjourned at 5:30pm.

Submitted respectfully,

Julian Edgoose