

**SUMMARY
of the
SPECIAL EXECUTIVE SESSION
of the
FACULTY SENATE**

October 9, 2003

Prior to the meeting, the Executive Committee solicited suggestions for the agenda from the standing Senate committees, the school caucuses within the Senate, individual Senators, and the University faculty at large. Of the 48 elected Senators, 39 attended the meeting. The proceedings opened with a farewell to Danielle Mezera and a welcome to Andrea Hewitt. After their departure, the Senators moved into special executive session and began a wide-ranging discussion of the issues that had emerged from the invitation to the Senators and faculty to express their concerns. The Secretary of the Senate took notes but did not record the names of individual speakers.

The faculty Senators approved no formal motions that would require a vote by the full Senate at the November meeting. Several recommendations, in which the Executive Committee concurs, received very broad support:

- The Executive Committee should continue to invite suggestions from all Senators and the faculty at large when formulating the Senate's agenda for every meeting, not just special executive sessions.*
- The Executive Committee should redouble its efforts to improve communication between the administration and the Senate and Senate committees.*

And more specifically:

- The Executive Committee should consult with the full Senate membership before drafting its response to the Chancellor on the report of the Committee on Committees. The Executive Committee agreed and set a deadline of October 22 for comments.*
- That the APS Committee should be charged with examining the work of the Institutional Review Board, particularly the appropriateness of the standards used by its Behavioral Sciences Committee.*
- The Executive Committee and the Faculty Life Committee should explore the possibility of establishing a special Senate task force, including non-Senators with relevant expertise, and with adequate staff support, to study gender inequities on campus.*

The following is a distillation of the discussion, based on the notes taken by the Secretary of the Senate. Except as indicated above, the positions described should not be taken as a formal sense of the meeting or a recommendation for action.

- 1. Issues of Equity:** The discussion focused primarily on issues of salary equity between the sexes and across schools and colleges. Senators believe that inequity exists but that it has been difficult to document. Another key issue is gender equity in faculty ranks. Much progress has been made in the past few years at the junior level, but very little progress is evident at the senior level. There are still very few women full professors.

Senators were aware of previous attempts to study inequalities of salary and rank, which led to much disagreement about the data used and the conclusions reached. There were strong admonitions to pursue this issue carefully and with the proper support. A Senate committee would not itself have enough time, staff and expertise to do an adequate job. The suggestion was made that a task force be set up to examine the issue, taking several years if needed. We believe that we have the expertise among faculty to carry out the study with existing faculty, e.g., in Owen and Peabody.

- 2. Creating a Stronger, Proactive Role for Faculty and the Faculty Senate:** The discussion focused on how to create a more proactive role for the Faculty Senate. The canvassing of faculty that happened in preparation for this Executive session could happen before each Senate meeting. Senators could be canvassed before the Faculty Executive Committee meets with the Chancellor to help determine the issues he addresses in his remarks to the Faculty Senate. The involvement of the Senate with issues of campus-wide concern would announce to the university community a different and stronger role for the Senate.
- 3. Respecting and Responding to Faculty Effort:** There were many components to this discussion.
 - Senators expressed great disappointment and unhappiness about faculty work that is then seemingly ignored by the administration. Several committees were mentioned which worked long and hard and produced a report with specific recommendations, only to hear nothing in response. Other instances were mentioned in which the faculty report did not fit what the administration expected or wanted, and the response was to create a different committee. At other times, the response suggested that the University was simply carrying out a predetermined policy with no consideration of faculty recommendations. Silence and lack of response even occurs with recommendations from PEAFF involving faculty

grievances.

- Senators believe strongly that we should develop a system that would insure that the administration will respond in a timely fashion to faculty suggestions. Lack of response was characterized as “mismanagement,” with a devastating effect on morale. The Senate and Executive Committee should work with key administrators to provide continuing communication after faculty reports are submitted.
- Senators expressed concern that the administration looks on faculty service on committees as a “free good.” When faculty are asked to serve on committees, there should be a clear time frame, expectations of a specific product, staff-level support, and a clear signal that the administration intends to give serious consideration to the conclusions of the faculty committee, as well as some expression of appreciation at the end.
- Concern was expressed that the administration is out of touch with the demands on faculty time. This year’s Conflicts Disclosure Form, IRB regulations, and multiple forms completed by Medical School faculty are all examples of piling on requirements for faculty without taking into account how much they already have to do. When a new form is proposed, it should be reviewed to determine its relationship to other requirements and its effect on the total burden of paperwork.
- Specific suggestion: make the report from the Committee on Committees available to all Senators for comment. It was agreed that the report would be posted on the Senate’s Web site, and that the Senators would have until October 22 to submit comments to the Executive Committee.
- A related issue discussed by Senators was a concern that administrators have overturned faculty decisions about promotion and tenure even when the faculty decision was unanimous within a department. This sort of behavior “quenches morale” and is reported around the country, making recruitment and retention more difficult.

4. The University’s Guiding Philosophy and Perceptions among Faculty and Community: Some Senators expressed concern that the current guiding philosophy of the university is simply “competition.” Senators argued that there ought to be other principles guiding the decisions the administration makes. The University needs to work harder at becoming a community.

5. Specific Suggestions

- Add health insurance for retirees to the charge of the Faculty Life

Committee [this question is part of the Committee's current charge, and can be raise in the course of discussions just beginning with HR]

- The Executive Committee should ask the administration to respond to the report of the Task Force on Graduate Education, and to the APS committee's comments on the Task Force report. In addition, the Executive Committee should ask the administration to keep the APS committee and Senate informed of new developments in the area of graduate education. For example, is there a search committee for an Associate Provost for Graduate Education?
- The APS Committee should be charged with examining the work of the Institutional Review Board, particularly the appropriateness of the standards used by its Behavioral Sciences Committee.
- A Senator reported that a letter concerning the issue of diversity, free speech, and tolerance will be presented to the Senate at its next meeting.

6. Decision to Meet Again in Special Executive Session

The Senators agreed to meet again in special executive session in January, when no meeting of the full Senate is scheduled. [The Executive Committee tentatively plans to schedule such a session on January 22, 2004.]