

Vanderbilt University
Faculty Senate Meeting
April 14, 2005
4:10 p.m.
140 Frist Hall

Call to Order

Approval of Minutes of March 17, 2005

Report of the Executive Committee
Robert Thompson, Chair of the Faculty Senate

Standing Committee Reports

1. Faculty Life committee (Dieter Sevin, chair)
Report from Faculty Manual task force (Bob Covington, chair)
2. Senate Affairs committee (Mark Ellingham, chair)
Report on Reapportionment
3. Senate Affairs committee (Mark Ellingham, chair)
Report on meeting times survey

Update from University Benefits Committee (Kent Syverud, chair)

Old Business

Motion regarding honorary degrees (Senator Jacek Hawiger)

New Business

Good of the Senate

Adjournment

Voting Members present: Adams, Anderson, Conklin, Ellingham, Flake, Fleetwood, Foster, Griffin, Hawiger, Heyneman, Hodges, Lachs, Levine, McCarthy, Morrow, Peebles, Pettepher, Sevin, Thompson, Washington.

Voting Members absent: Barnett, Barz, Benbow (regrets), Booth, Campbell (regrets), Casagrande, Conway-Welch, Cummings (regrets), Eigen, Fuchs (regrets), Gabbe, Galloway, Goldfarb (regrets), Greene (regrets), Haglund, Heflinger (regrets), Hoffman, Hudnut-Beumler (regrets), Kay, LeBoeuf (regrets), Link (regrets), Masulis, McGill, Neff,

Perkins (regrets), Porter (regrets), Schmidt, Shyr, Smrekar (regrets), Tarpley (regrets), Tellinghuisen (regrets), Tolk, Wait.

Ex Officio Members present: Gherman, Gotterer, Hall, McNamara, Ramsey, Schoenfeld, Zeppos.

Ex Officio Members absent: Balsler, Barge, Brisky (regrets), Chalkley, Farran, Gee (regrets), Jacobson, Kovalcheck, Outlaw, Perfetto, Spitz, Williams.

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The meeting was called to order at 4:10 p.m. by Chair Robert Thompson. Minutes from 3/17/05 meeting were reviewed and a motion was made to approve them. Motion passed unanimously.

Next Item on the Agenda - Report of the Executive Committee

Chair Thompson began by passing along regrets from Chancellor Gee for missing the meeting today. He then reminded senators of the upcoming Senate forum on the Living Wage, Wednesday, April 20 at 12:30 p.m. in 140 Frist Hall. He urged all senators to attend to find out more about this issue.

Chair Thompson said that he is interested in convening conversation groups concerning next year's agenda. An email was sent out today about these groups. He reminded senators that the executive committee holds a retreat each August to set the agenda for the coming year, and he wants to solicit broader involvement in that process.

He also said that the Senate Nominating Committee will be meeting the following week to discuss nominations for Senate officers for next year. He asked everyone to pass along any suggestions to the committee.

And, finally, he reminded everyone that the last Senate meeting of the year will take place on Monday, May 9 with a reception to follow. He then asked for any questions or comments. Hearing none, he turned the floor over to Senator Mark Ellingham, chair of the Senate Affairs committee.

Next Item on the Agenda – Standing Committee Reports (Senate Affairs)

Senator Ellingham presented the Senate Affairs committee report and recommendation on reapportionment of the Senate (see report here: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/facultysenate/files/reapp05.pdf>). He asked for any questions or comments.

Provost Zeppos asked about the data that was used in the report and where it came from. Senator Ellingham responded that it came from the University Registrar's web page.

Senator Barnett asked how graduate students were counted in the Medical School. Senator Ellingham responded that he used the figures on the University Registrar's website. Provost Zeppos clarified how students are counted to arrive at the figures on the University Registrar's website. Senator Ellingham also expanded on how faculty members were counted in the formula. Immediate Past Chair Ramsey clarified that no school can have more than 1/3 of the total number of senators. There was more discussion about how faculty members are classified in the Medical School.

Chair Thompson then called for a vote by secret ballot. The motion passed.

Next, Senator Ellingham presented the results of the meeting time survey conducted by the Senate Affairs committee (see presentation here: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/facultysenate/files/mtgtime.ppt>). The results of the survey indicated that there was no consensus about changing the day or time of the Senate meetings. He asked for questions or comments. Hearing none, he turned the floor back over to Chair Thompson.

Next Item on the Agenda – Standing Committee Reports (Faculty Life)

Chair Thompson then introduced Bob Covington, chair of the Faculty Manual task force of the Faculty Life committee. Professor Covington presented the report and recommendation from the Faculty Manual task force on the procedure for updating the Faculty Manual (see recommendation here: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/facultysenate/files/FacultyManualMotion41205.pdf> and report here: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/facultysenate/files/FacManreport0405.pdf>). He explained that the task force focused on the procedure for changing the manual and did not get into other details of the Faculty Manual. He asked for any questions or comments.

Senator Fleetwood asked if the Board of Trust would be involved in any changes to the Faculty Manual. Professor Covington said that he assumed the Chancellor would have them involved appropriately on any changes that pertained to them. Chair Thompson clarified that the ultimate decision for any change in rests with the Chancellor in terms of the Faculty Manual. The other three groups (Faculty Senate, Provost, and Vice-Chancellor for Health Affairs) give input and serve an advisory role. Senator Ellingham brought a mistake in the wording of the recommendation to the Senate's attention. Chair Thompson explained that there were changes made after the original proposal came to the Executive Committee. After discussions with the Provost, the term "chair of the Faculty Senate" was changed to "Faculty Senate." He added that he hoped that the Senate will authorize the Executive Committee to make those changes.

Senator Lachs said that he supported this motion, but was concerned that there was no appeals procedure. Chair Thompson replied that any chancellor is accountable, but s/he is the final authority on the Faculty Manual. Senator Conklin said that she believes that this process raises a number of questions for the Senate to address. She stated that she believes a clear set of procedures are needed for proposing changes and informing

senators of these changes, especially between meetings. Chair Thompson responded that this might go into the charge for the Senate Affairs committee next year. Immediate Past Chair Ramsey pointed out to other language in the recommendation that addressed the concerns of Senator Conklin.

Senator Fleetwood asked if this document implied that any change in the Faculty Manual would come to the Senate for approval. Professor Covington said that the Senate will always have to be notified, under this recommendation. He added that the procedures for notification will have to be worked out later. Dean McCarty asked about fulfilling federal government requirements concerning compliance issues with interim changes to the Faculty Manual. Professor Covington said that he hoped that any change would be sufficient. Provost Zeppos explained past practices when it comes to federal regulations.

Chair Thompson called for a vote on this motion by secret ballot. The motion passed unanimously. Chair Thompson thanked the committee and the task force for their hard work on this.

Next Item on the Agenda – Update from University Benefits Committee

Chair Thompson then introduced Dean Kent Syverud, chair of the University Benefits Committee. Dean Syverud gave a report of the Benefits Committee's work over the past year. He stated that the guiding principles of a redesign of the retirement programs would be the recruitment and retention of faculty and staff. He said that the committee looked at the lowest paid employees at Vanderbilt and asked if they were saving enough for retirement? They made recommendations that would help in this area.

Also, they looked at the highest paid employees and wanted to make sure that they were able to put as much as possible into retirement accounts under IRS regulations. The committee also made recommendations concerning waiting periods for benefits and how best to handle this issue. And, finally, they made recommendations for clear and fair rules for early withdrawals. He asked for any questions or comments.

Dean McCarty asked about waiting period and IRS rules. Dean Syverud responded that it is an IRS issue. Hearing no further questions, Chair Thompson thanked Dean Syverud for his presentation.

Next Item on the Agenda – Old Business

Chair Thompson next recognized a motion that was presented under New Business at the last Senate meeting by Senator Jacek Hawiger (read the text of the motion here: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/facultysenate/files/HonoraryDegree0405.pdf>). He turned the floor over to Senator Hawiger to present this motion. After Senator Hawiger presented his motion, Chair Thompson asked for a second. The motion was seconded. Chair Thompson then opened up the floor for discussion.

Senator Fleetwood asked about the current process in the bylaws that provides for honorary degrees. Chair Thompson said that it was there, but by custom, it was not done.

He explained further that the motion was calling for a change in custom. Vice Chancellor Schoenfeld brought up a point of information—three or four years ago, a Commencement Review committee was convened. They made recommendations for changes in commencement. He added that while there was extensive consideration concerning awarding honorary degrees, the decision was made not to change the custom at that time. Senator Summar said that as a Vanderbilt graduate, he was in favor of keeping the custom intact. Dean McCarty said that he is strongly in favor of awarding honorary degrees. Provost Zeppos said, speaking as a faculty members, he is strongly against this practice. He added that he is currently seeking funding for the Chancellor’s Award in order to make this an endowed prize (the recipient would spend time at Vanderbilt, etc.). Senator Barnett stated that he also has a Vanderbilt degree, and he doesn’t feel like this is taking away from his degree. Dean Bradford said that he also has a Vanderbilt degree, and he would err on the side of not awarding honorary degrees. He added that if we do decide to award them, there should be a standard set of criteria. Chair Thompson also identified as a Vanderbilt graduate, and he thinks that Vanderbilt is distinctive in this respect and he would like to keep the custom of not awarding honorary degrees intact.

Senator Lachs asked if this was good publicity for the university. Vice Chancellor Schoenfeld stated that in looking at feedback from parents and students, they say that they are glad that Vanderbilt is unique this way. They like the focus on the students. Senator Levine made a comment that she did not think it was an effective idea to inspire the students by giving honorary degrees. Provost Zeppos made the comment that other awards (such as the Distinguished Alumni award) are not given every year—they are only given in special circumstances. Dean McCarty made a motion to table the motion for further study. This motion was seconded. A show of hands was taken and the motion to table was passed. Senator Hodges asked for the Senate to obtain a copy of the Commencement Review committee. Chair Thompson said that we would get a copy.

Next Item on the Agenda – New Business

Chair Thompson then called for any new business. Hearing none, he moved to the next agenda item.

Next Item on the Agenda – Good of the Senate

Chair Thompson then called for business under Good of the Senate. Hearing none, he called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 5:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marshall Summar,
Secretary