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Faculty Senate Minutes

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February 26, 2010 Minutes

SWOSU Faculty Senate

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Southwestern Oklahoma State University
Faculty Senate Meeting
February 26, 2010, 2:00 pm, EDU 201
Approved Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

- I. CALL TO ORDER:** The February 26, 2010, meeting of the Faculty Senate was called to order at 2:00 PM in Education 201 with FS President Scott Long presiding.
- II. ESTABLISH QUORUM:** The following members were present: Warren Akers, Lisa Appeddu, John Bradshaw, Stephen Burgess, Kevin Collins, Tommye Davis (Sayre), David Esjornson, Vicky Gilliland, Terry Goforth, Rita Hays, Todd Helton, Sophia Lee, Joe London, Jim Long, Scott Long, Ralph May, Anil Pereira for Warren Moseley, Edna Patatanian, Les Ramos, Ann Russell, Lisa Schroeder, Jeff Short, Muatasem Ubeidat, Dennis Widen, Kathy Wolff, Jonathon Woltz, and Tyler Rogers (SGA Rep).
- III. CERTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES:** Anil Pereira for Warren Moseley.
- IV. PRESENTATION OF VISITORS:** None.
- V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Minutes of the January 29, 2010, meeting (rescheduled to February 5) were approved by voice vote.
- VI. ANNOUNCEMENTS:**
 - A. From FS President Scott Long:**
 1. From the February Executive Council Meeting: The meeting this month focused on budgetary issues. Administration is still seeking and accepting additional ideas and action plans from Deans, Faculty Senate, and individual faculty members. Administration plans to publish/distribute to campus a document outlining an *un-prioritized* list of actions, adjustments, and cuts with their savings amount which are being considered and used to formulate a contingency plan, based upon various scenarios that seem likely or possible.
 2. From the February Provost Meeting:
 - a. Referring to the Administrative Council Meeting, the Provost indicated that one of the reasons the University Administration has been unable to make definite adjustments in coming budgets is that no information concerning future budgets is available from the legislature on their budget and higher education within the State Budget. Until that information is released, there are too many “unknowns” to make definitive University decisions.
 - b. The State Council on Instruction (Chief Academic Officers of all Higher Education Institutions) is currently examining “low productivity” programs across the state. These are programs that typically have fewer than five graduates/year and(or) fewer than 20 students as declared majors. Considerations include potential closures or mergers of such programs. SWOSU currently has no programs classed as “low productivity”. It is also considering making the Council on Instruction mandated five-year reviews to reflect an HLC-type report.

3. From the Minutes of the January (February 5) Meeting:

- a.** Charge to the FS President – “The Faculty Senate President is charged with determining the fate of the \$20 per credit hour fee which was added to web-based courses.” – The Provost indicated that these monies are applied to the \$1000.00 stipend which is paid to faculty when they develop a web-based course.
 - b.** Weather/Cancellation Announcements – The SWOSU alert system which normally would be used for such announcements has some “kinks” in it at the present time. This is why that particular system was not used to notify cancellation.
- 4. President Hays Retirement Gift:** On behalf of the Faculty Senate and all Faculty of SWOSU, President Hays was presented with two gifts at his retirement banquet as held on February 13, 2010. He was presented with an Adams Speedline Drive and a golf cap in his family Hay tartan (Please refer to Supplement 1 at the end of the minutes), which came to a total of \$240.60. Donations are welcome.

B. FS Secretary/Treasurer Lisa Appeddu:

1. Roll Sheet – please sign.

2. Treasurer’s Report:

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| a. BancFirst Checking account (No change): | \$2098.86 |
| b. University account balance (No change): | \$130.00 |

C. FS President-elect Muatasem Ubeidat: Nothing to report.

D. FS Past President Les Ramos: Nothing to report.

E. FS Student Government Representative Tyler Rogers: Nothing to report.

VII. REPORTS FROM STANDING AND AD HOC COMMITTEES:

- A. Faculty Senate Continuance Procedures *Ad Hoc* Committee:** Chair Les Ramos read into the record a more detailed and updated summary based on additional feedback brought forth by Senators and their constituents, entitled “A Summary of Concerns and Issues Reported by Senators and Their Department.” This can be found in Supplement 2 at the end of the minutes.

The following motion was moved and seconded:

FS Motion 2010-2-01:

A motion is made to forward the report to the University Policies Committee, to work with the members of the Continuance Procedures *Ad Hoc* Committee on reviewing and potentially revising the current Continuance Policy.

The motion passed by voice vote.

B. University Policies Committee: Nothing to Report.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

IX. NEW BUSINESS: None

X. ADJOURNMENT: 2:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Scott Long, FS President

Lisa Appeddu, FS Secretary

**Next Faculty Senate Meeting:
Friday, March 26, 2010, at 2:00 p.m. in EDU 201**

Supplement 1: Faculty-Faculty Senate Retirement Gifts for President Hays

Adams Speedline Driver



County “golf” Cap



But in the “Hay” Tartan



Supplement 2: Faculty Senate Continuance Procedures *Ad Hoc* Committee
A Summary of Concerns and Issues Reported by Senators and Their Departments
February 2010

Issues Related to the Purpose and Consistent Application of the Continuance Policy

It is important to articulate the purpose of the continuance policy in terms of the goals of the individual faculty member, department, and university. Having a clear understanding of what the policy should accomplish should make it easier to identify points of concern and place them into context.

The continuance policy should protect the job security of the individual faculty member by providing feedback on performance and expectations in a timely manner and by placing this feedback from the department in multiple levels of administrative review. The policy should also outline the peer review process and define how feedback will be delivered. The continuance candidate should be reviewed on stated performance and expectations mainly, but departmental fit is an issue for evaluation as well. The continuance policy should protect the work environment of other departmental faculty by providing a voice for multiple members of the department (chair and others). Furthermore, the continuance policy should protect the image and mission of the university.

The current policy needs to be streamlined and should be consistently applied as stated in the Faculty Handbook. What mechanism can we use to ensure that continuance is being done according to the Faculty Handbook? Training for chairs on how to apply the policy should be mandated. The administration needs to make sure the policy is followed and all forms completed and stored in the appropriate place.

There clearly needs to be uniform administration of the continuance policy in all departments. There is absolutely no consistency in the way in which continuance is handled across departments. This is part of a larger problem in that department chairs receive absolutely no training or mentoring as new chairs and are totally left on their own to learn the job and to seek support wherever they can find it. Often new chairs just emulate what they have observed or have experienced, which, in many cases, may not be adequate or appropriate. The Faculty Handbook clearly states that the continuance committee “shall meet.” As with the continuance process in general, this certainly is not happening uniformly across departments. Has the Faculty Senate looked at what other universities do in respect to continuance?

Issues Related to the Continuance Process in Small Departments

The problems associated with the continuance process are magnified in a small department where as few as two faculty members can create a political power block. This is especially true if there is a difference in opinion between the dean and department chair regarding the faculty member, which, in some cases, the chair’s authority is neutralized and the faculty member is empowered in the group. The potential difficulty in a small department, particularly a department without tenured faculty, is compounded by the ability of non-tenured faculty members undergoing continuance to participate in voting for or against a more senior non-tenured faculty member undergoing continuance.

Consider the following example of a department consisting of four faculty members (one of which is the chair and another is a new first-year faculty member). The chair is a non-recommending member of the continuance committee and of course the faculty member undergoing continuance cannot vote. As a result, one

member with political power may pressure the other to vote against the faculty member undergoing continuance. In addition, the dean may or may not value the opinion of the chair and go with the so-called majority of two.

A continuance committee should have a minimum of 6 members. If six is not possible in a small department, then the remaining number should be made up of senior faculty members from other departments in the University (perhaps selected by the Senate). Obviously, these non-departmental faculty would have to go about the process differently, but this might be a mixed blessing: if the non-departmental faculty considered only student evaluations, peer observations, chair evaluations, records of scholarly achievements, and other “objective” data (as well as perhaps an interview with the candidate), they could balance any subjective feelings that might be inspired in department colleagues.

However, there may be concerns when involving faculty outside of the department. Continuance has traditionally been an internal matter handled by the individual departments and some departments may not be comfortable with outside interference in the process. Currently, all that is required for the continuance process is the vitae and a one year summary of teaching evaluations. Is this enough information for someone outside the field to evaluate a candidate for continuance? If there is some sort of personal agenda being implemented within the department, for example, an outside member may not be able to detect it. Granted that there may be some problems in some departments, but there is concern about attempts to change university policies to “fix” purely local problems that should be handled within the department or the college.

If it is strongly felt that an outside member must be present on the continuance committee, it should be an option that is not implemented automatically. If a candidate for continuance feels that there is a potential problem then the candidate can formally ask for an outside member to be present. If a continuance candidate feels there has been unfair treatment, the candidate should use the grievance procedure. If that is inadequate, then perhaps the grievance procedure should be re-examined.

Issues Related to the Fairness of the Continuance Process and Lack of Due Process

Each voting member is requested to mention strengths and weakness of the faculty member undergoing continuance. The committee (and more likely the department chair) creates a summary. Voting members may say anything they desire and are not required to give documentation or support for their opinions. These comments may be total fabrications. Faculty members being voted on should have an opportunity to appeal questionable and unsupported statements (there should be some mechanism for *due process*). Department chairs should be required to keep a written record of who contributed which comments to a continuance report. If a candidate has evidence that a comment on a report is false, it should be investigated (perhaps by the dean or a committee) and discussed with the faculty member making the false statement. This would still maintain the relative confidentiality of the process, but it would introduce a degree of professional responsibility that is currently absent from the process.

In some departments, faculty comments on the continuance form simply are typed up and printed verbatim on the document with no filtering by the chair. In other departments, the chair may summarize faculty comments on the form, eliminating redundancies. Still other chairs read what faculty say and revise, edit, delete or add their own comments. Is the intent of the continuance policy as described in the Faculty Handbook? There is concern that candidates for continuance are not adequately receiving communication (factual and accurate) regarding committee comments.

However, there may be difficulties if committee member comments receive greater “transparency”. If it were the case that all continuance committees were composed of people who never breach confidentiality, then it would be possible to suspend certain rules of anonymity in reporting and commenting on candidates' performances. Unfortunately, that is not the case. One possible approach to prevent such breaches would require members of the committee to report comments and their source to the candidates themselves. Another approach is to report comments to the chair in advance of the meeting. The chair then reads them anonymously, and then the committee discusses those comments, and if a comment is erroneous or unfair, the group itself acts as a corrective. All committees should be able to discuss frankly and openly, but it doesn't always happen that way. If we consider allowing candidates to "confront their accusers," as it were, there is no provision on this campus for such communication between committee members and candidates, neither at the continuance level, nor at the tenure and promotion level. Do we really need to change current practice? With continuance, the candidate may be dismissed without cause in the first few years anyway, so I'm not sure how due process might be invoked.

As to support and documentation for committee comments, the only documentation now required of the candidate is a student evaluation summary sheet, no comments offered, and an updated vita. Of necessity, committee members must move on to anecdotal support through observations, conversations, and behavior observed. It does appear that the current two items are insufficient. How about an annual observation made by the chair or his/her designate and the student comments along with the evaluation summary sheet, let's say for the first three years? After that “probationary” period, perhaps the scrutiny could be relaxed to a certain degree.

Issues Related to the Lack of Guidance and Evaluation for First Year Faculty Members and the Overall Quality of the Continuance Process

Should a performance evaluation be required during the first year or at least a mechanism for providing constructive feedback to faculty during their first year? Can we conduct student evaluations of new faculty as soon as the forms are available mid-semester and use this information to discuss strengths and weaknesses? Can we require some type of mentor program, in which new faculty members are assigned to someone who is in a related field and is relatively senior? The idea is to help answer questions, provide guidance, and improve teaching styles early on, instead of having their courses ingrained by the time they receive feedback. Early evaluation may also help to identify a gem or a problem faculty member and possibly correct deficiencies before the formal continuance process. However, one question is how well will the mentoring process be followed and supervised from department to department?

Changes in the continuance process may be needed to ensure a true evaluation of the faculty member, which can lead to more useful feedback for the eventual P and T process. Some suggestions: (1) besides having access to faculty vita and summary scores, the committee should also have access to student comments, (2) as stated above, there should be a mechanism to provide feedback to first year faculty members, along with a continuance vote after the first year (but prior to the start of the second year), (3) continuance evaluations should be done in the summer, so that a non-continuance vote does not affect the department the next year (4) require two classroom visits instead of one (also, have the option of making one of these be an unbiased review from a faculty member outside of the department) and (5) conduct continuance more like P and T (e.g., make the chair separate from the faculty process).

Should the continuance process mirror the P and T process? Should candidates maintain a yearly update of progress in teaching, scholarly activity, and service (abbreviated document), so that by the time the faculty member is eligible for tenure and promotion a document is already substantially completed? However, is a P and T-style book overkill for continuance of faculty in non-tenure-track positions?

Respectfully submitted,

Faculty Senate Continuance Procedures *Ad Hoc* Committee

Warren Akers

Lisa Appeddu

Stephen Burgess

Kevin Collins

Joe London

Warren Mosely

Les Ramos

Muatasem Ubeidat