

MINUTES

Faculty Senate Executive Committee

March 13, 2006

Members present: Deseriee Kennedy, Carolyn Hodges, Catherine Luther, Nancy Howell, Sally McMillan, India Lane, Candace White, David Patterson, Bruce MacLennan, Stefanie Ohnesorg, George Dodds, Beauvais Lyons, Kula Misra, Laura Jolly, and Denise Barlow

Guest: Jan Simek

I. CALL TO ORDER

D. Kennedy called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting of February 20, 2006, were approved with the following change under old business, faculty affairs committee after the 4th sentence: "B. Lyons noted the inclusion of means in department head evaluations was requested by the Faculty Affairs Committee." (requested by Lyons).

III. REPORTS

President's Report (D. Kennedy)

Kennedy will be attending the Board of Trustee's meeting in Memphis this week. Other campuses are still discussing the proposed tenure policy changes on the agenda for the Trustee's meeting. There is discomfort among some faculty regarding the manner in which these changes were made and brought to light.

Kennedy said the proposal for an UT Faculty Council will be finalized when UT campus Senate presidents meet in Memphis during the Trustee's meeting. The proposal will then be sent to President Petersen with a cover letter. Candace White is working with the Senate Nominating Committee to develop a process for nominating members to the Council. It is anticipated this will be in place by the end of the current semester.

White asked J. Simek to convey to Chancellor Crabtree and Tom Milligan, Vice Chancellor for communications, the lack of consideration of not informing the faculty that the Chancellor was a finalist for a position at another university. Faculty leaders contacted by the media to comment on this last Friday were at a disadvantage because they learned about it from a reporter. The communication process created a situation where faculty learned the news only because it was reported in the media. J. Simek will reiterate that concern, noting that an e-mail was distributed today (Mar. 13) to the Chancellor's Council about the search.

B. Lyons asked what action the University was taking concerning any loss of Geier funds. Barlow said CFO Gary Rogers, along with Sylvia Davis, Susan Martin and Theotis Robinson were all involved to address this issue. The Governor has \$19 million in his presented budget to meet commitments made with Geier funds; talking with local legislators may emphasize to them the importance of this funding. Barlow said the campus will honor its commitments (scholarships and other commitments) made with Geier funds and will find one-time funds to do so, if necessary. Lyons said the University may backslide if the level of financial support declines. Kennedy said it is uncertain whether the consent decree will be lifted or when that decision may be made. Susan Martin chairs the Knoxville campus Geier committee and will update the Senate at its Apr. 3 meeting.

Luther provided an overview of a draft proposal from the Student Concerns Committee proposing a Graduate Student Resource Center. Although there are numerous resources for graduate students, there is no centralized resource center to assist graduate students in locating assistantships, fellowships, scholarships or other internal or external funding. At the very least, a web site coordinating this information would be helpful, she said. This not only would provide information for current graduate students, but would benefit recruitment efforts. Patterson asked what level of Community of Science access was available for graduate students. There was also discussion concerning preparing graduate students in seeking positions upon graduation; although the University has a role in such preparation, such mentoring may be at the departmental level. Ohnesorg asked if there is a "best practices" in research programs that may be helpful. Lyons mentioned a list of graduate assistantships developed several years ago by a faculty member, including those not specifically associated with a department.

The Faculty Affairs Committee presented an update on the department heads evaluation form and implementation. Dr. Julie Little, Executive Director of ITC, suggested an interactive PDF or use of the Blackboard site be used to implement evaluations. It was suggested by Patterson that perhaps ITC could develop a demonstration of this and ask the Chancellor to permit a presentation for UT deans.

A 2nd draft of the Best Practice for Assessment and Evaluation of Faculty Teaching was discussed. The Teaching Council reviewed the document, along with other faculty who provided input. Changes included:

page 1, line 36--"image" changed to "status;"

page 2, lines 32-33-- "department bylaws will address whether full professors have peer assessment of teaching." There was considerable discussion of this point; Misra pointed out that attaining full professor level may cause some professors not to concentrate on teaching improvement. Howell pointed out that several factors may contribute to full professors needing reviews to improve teaching, including complacency, a need to retool teaching methods to address changes, changes in subject matter and other factors. She said it is a fallacy to assume that teaching effectiveness only increases as faculty progress through their careers. Lyons said the committee did not want to place an unnecessary burden on departments to conduct peer assessments at all levels. It was agreed that departmental bylaws should address this issue.

page 3 lines 10-18--the term assessment has been changed to review

page 3, lines 15-17—a sentence was added: "The faculty member may chose to include a summary of open-ended comments as part of their promotion and tenure dossier or as part of a self-assessment of teaching."

Page 3, lines 35-38—text restored that states "The assessment results—particularly the peer assessment—must be given considerable weight in this evaluation because students do not always have the best perspective for evaluation of the first two criteria. The standards for the evaluation of those criteria are to be constructed by each department." There was a request to delete "because students do not always have the best perspective for evaluation of the first two criteria" because it degraded the contribution of students in the process.

Lane mentioned training of those conducting peer assessment would be helpful. An outline of the process was noted by Lyons. Lane pointed out that learning how to conduct an effective peer assessment would also provide the reviewers with helpful insight into improving their own teaching. Lyons suggested developing such training become a charge to next year's Teaching Council.

Patterson discussed the Faculty Evaluation Manual's requirement that peer review be conducted at least two times before a faculty member is considered for tenure and at least one time before a faculty member is considered for promotion to full professor. Portfolios not containing these peer assessment documents will not be reviewed. Page 2 line 30 suggests this is a recommendation, not a requirement. Other language questions involving "should" or "must" were mentioned by Kennedy. Lyons will review to make certain these statements are consistent, in addition to clarifying language referring to annual reviews by department heads, annual reviews by departments or RPT (retain, promotion, tenure progress committees) and peer reviews.

A concern by Norma Cook was raised by Lyons. She inquired if the Senate Executive Committee had the authority to change the Manual for Faculty Evaluation without the full Senate voting on such changes. The intent of a resolution (1999) was to allow changes in the manual through the Faculty Affairs Committee. It was noted by Patterson that the fluid exchange of ideas with the UT administration has been a positive result of this procedure. A suggestion was made that the incoming Faculty Senate review bylaws to determine if any changes need to be made regarding methods of updating the Faculty Evaluation Manual. For this year's Senate, a member of the Faculty Affairs Committee will present these drafted changes to the full Senate.

Lane reported on activities of the Teaching Council, which has largely been involved in redeveloping the teaching awards selection process. November nominations resulted in 35 teaching nominations and six advising nominations. This year's process included a first cut of nominees before conducting classroom visits. This improved the efficiency of the council. A web-based system was used for members to schedule class visits, which was also effective. Next year, the council plans to have on-line submissions of nomination materials. The council also plans to include in its goals developing a peer review process guideline and training, reviewing the process used in student evaluations of faculty and reviewing the early alert grading system.

Kennedy thanked Lane for chairing this committee and streamlining the process for teaching awards. She also mentioned the Senate has a new part-time secretary, Judy Adams, who begins next week. She also encouraged committees to send minutes of meetings to be posted on the Senate web site.

Meeting adjourned at 5 p.m.