

Minutes of the Faculty Senate Meeting
October 7, 2009
Founder's Room, Lovett Hall
12:00 P.M.

Agenda

- I. Call to order
- II. Announcements
- III. Officer and standing committee reports
- IV. Working group reports
- V. Unfinished business—Honor Council Working Group Motions A and B
- VI. New business
 - A. Working group charges
 - B. Additional working groups?
- VII. Executive session

Senators present: Gregory Barnett, Randy Batsell, Steven Cox, Sarah Ellenzweig, Bridget Gorman, Deborah Harter, John Hempel, Tom Killian, Phil Kortum, Mark Kulstad, David Leebron, Gene Levy, Scott McGill, Susan McIntosh, Matteo Pasquali, Albert Pope, Dale Sawyer, Gautami Shah, Robin Sickles, Evan Siemann, John Sparagana, Randy Stevenson, Devika Subramanian, Yizhi Jane Tao, Duane Windsor, Jim Young.

Senators absent: Jane Grande-Allen, Rob Raphael, Brian Rountree, Meredith Skura.

Invited guests: Jim Coleman, Vivian Ho, Don Morrison, Jim Pomerantz, Paula Sanders.

PROCEEDINGS

I. Call to order

Duane Windsor, Speaker, called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.

II. Announcements

- The next Senate meeting will be held Wednesday, November 18, 2009, in the Founder's Room of Lovett Hall.
- President Leebron's "State of the University Address" will be held Thursday, October 22, from 4 – 6 p.m. in McMurtry Auditorium of Duncan Hall.
- A new Convenor for the Faculty Senate is needed.
- Email messages from the Senate will now be sent via SEN-FAC, messages from the President and Provost will be sent via PRES-FAC, while email messages from other departments will be sent via ALL-DEPTS.
- Regarding the Provost Search Committee, the Executive Committee (EC) provided to President Leebron the names of some faculty members for chair of this committee. The names of three Senators were also submitted, of which the President will choose

- one, to represent the Senate. The Provost Search Committee will consist of at least eight faculty members and the chair will be a faculty member.
- The Nominations and Elections Committee (NEC) will be formed soon. The Executive Committee has asked the NEC to review the allocation of seats among the three professional schools and the representation of the non-tenure-track faculty.
 - The Senate is not yet taking action on a document previously submitted by the Graduate Council entitled “The Creating and Changing of Graduate Degree Programs.” Randy Stevenson is currently coordinating this document with a similar document being drafted by the Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum.
 - The Speaker asked for consent to flexibility in forming working groups this year. A revision to Senate Bylaws Section 7 will be developed for Senate approval to this effect. The current requirement is for every working group to include a member of the Executive Committee and for the majority of each working group to be Senators.

III. Officer and standing committee reports—no reports were given

IV. Working group reports—no reports were given

V. Unfinished business—Honor Council Working Group Motions A and B

At the Senate meeting of September 30, 2009, Motions A and B from the Senate’s Working Group on the Honor Council were tabled for one month to allow review by the faculty. Windsor reported that the EC now recommends that Motion A be adopted. Motion A proposes that a separate process be created for handling violations by graduate students from the process used for undergraduate students. Windsor said that he has had discussions with Moshe Vardi, chair of the Graduate Council, concerning whether to continue tabling this motion. (Report from the Working Group on the Honor Council.)

Motion B involves a more complicated situation, Windsor stated. Motion B proposes creating an option for faculty and students to resolve minor violations outside of a formal Honor Council process. Windsor reported that he had received two emails from faculty members: one expressed concern that there should be safeguards against faculty abuse. The other email questioned which entity has authority to make changes in the Honor System. Windsor explained that these issues are not included in Motions A or B; and a study of the history of the Honor System is in order.

Windsor also reported that the EC had met with Professors Evan Siemann, Chair of the Working Group on the Honor Council, and Professor Mike Wolf, Master of Will Rice College. The EC recommended that Motion B be withdrawn and requested that the Working Group expand its study of the Honor Council. Windsor thus moved (on behalf of the EC) that Motion B be withdrawn, and there were no objections.

Windsor moved (on behalf of the EC) that Motion A be approved. There was a short discussion including clarification of the word division (meaning school), and a concern expressed by Matteo Pasquali that different actions might be taken by different schools for similar violations by graduate students; if so, perhaps standard rules should apply

across all schools. It was suggested that this concern be forwarded to Professor Vardi since the Graduate Council will decide such issues. Randy Stevenson recommended that since the Senate has a keen interest in this topic, the Graduate Council should send preliminary reports to the Senate as it proceeds with its study of a separate system for graduate student violations. Windsor said this suggestion was appropriate, and he will request periodic reports from the Graduate Council. The resulting vote was for approval of Motion A with one abstention.

VI. New Business

A. Working group charges

Windsor presented the proposed charge for the working group for the study of “grade inflation” and academic honors: (Chair: Randy Batsell)

To conduct a study into “grade inflation” and how academic honors (summa, magna, and cum laude) are and should be awarded to undergraduates. The group will work with the Dean of Undergraduates, the Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum (CUC), the Registrar, and other relevant parties to establish facts and opinions. The working group will report its findings and recommendations to the Senate when it has concluded its work.

Batsell explained that he is compiling information now on student grades from the past several years, and he thanked the registrar and others for providing this information. It was suggested that GPA information might be used for prior year if detailed data are not available. Evan Siemann volunteered to join the working group. Gautami Shah suggested that the working group obtain the grade analysis report done by former statistics professor Val Johnson (now at The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center). President Leebron asked if the working group chair understood the wording in the first line of the charge to be broader in scope than “grade inflation”. Batsell replied that he did so understand and that he is gathering the data first

Next, Windsor presented the proposed charge for the working group for the Review of Appeals, Grievances, and Hearings Process: (Chair: Randy Stevenson)

To examine the process, precedents, and recordkeeping involved in the appeals, grievances, and hearing authority of the Senate Bylaws (5.5). To study what rights of appeal are and should be accorded to faculty not holding tenure-track appointments. To consider options for an “ombudsman” function. The working group will report its findings and recommendations to the Senate when it has concluded its work.

The draft incorporates a concern received about the desirability of an ombudsman. Windsor stated that Stevenson will ask a former Convener to join this working group, as well as a few more individuals. Deborah Harter and Windsor emphasized the importance of this working group and encouraged Senators to volunteer.

B. Additional working groups?

Windsor reported that discussions are ongoing as to how best to proceed with a possible new working group for CRUP III (Committee for the Rice Undergraduate Program).

Windsor then asked Robin Sickles to report his concern regarding class sizes. Students often cannot take desired courses because the courses are capped. He said that some students are essentially choosing their majors based upon which departments will have an adequate number of faculty. Sickles said that there is additional concern that faculty lines will be reduced due to the possible merger with Baylor College of Medicine. He requested that the Senate look into the matter. Windsor said that he would discuss with the EC the formation of a possible working group on this issue.

Windsor said he had not received any other suggestions for new working groups.

The Senate then moved into executive session.

VII. Executive Session

Published report by the Speaker of the Faculty Senate

The Senate met in executive session on October 7, 2009, to discuss the interim report of the Faculty Merger Review Committee (FMRC), August 28, 2009, and the final report of the Subcommittee on Academic Matters (SAM), September 7, 2009. Minutes are not maintained of executive sessions. FMRC, chaired by Professor Don Morrison, was formed through a Rice faculty resolution approved by faculty-wide vote in spring 2009. FMRC consists entirely of Rice faculty. An FMRC subcommittee, chaired by Professor John Boles, established under the previous Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) process, provided a report on Rice-BCM collaborative opportunities. SAM is a subcommittee of the Rice – BCM Steering Committee, established by the Presidents of the two institutions. SAM consists of both Rice and BCM members, with Rice and BCM co-chairs. The SAM report incorporates reports from its Research and Education subcommittees.

The Senate heard presentations by one Rice member each of SAM, its Research subcommittee, its Education subcommittee, and the Boles (collaboration) subcommittee of FMRC. The Senate expresses its appreciation to the presenters. The Senate had access to the FMRC interim report, the Boles subcommittee report, and SAM report (including its two subcommittee reports). The Senate then had an general discussion of the reports.

The Senate adopted three resolutions:

1. The Senate expresses its thanks to all members of the FMRC for their efforts to date. The Senate is particularly grateful to Professor Donald Morrison for chairing the FMRC. The Senate also expresses its thanks to all other Rice community individuals who participated in various merger study committees / subcommittees.
2. The Senate accepts the findings of the FMRC interim report of August 2009.
3. The Senate resolves to publish the FMRC interim report of August 2009, removing it from confidential status (excluding one or more appendices, which contain confidential material).

The Senate then asked the FMRC to undertake certain additional inquiries and report further.

In accordance with the third resolution adopted by the Senate, the Speaker is providing on the Senate website public access to the FMRC interim report of August 28, 2009. The SAM report (including its two subcommittee reports) and the Boles subcommittee report will also be provided at the Senate website for convenience of public access.

The meeting was adjourned at 2 p.m.