

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
2000-01 FACULTY SENATE
DECEMBER 4, 2000 MINUTES SUMMARY

I. Roll – The following Faculty Senate members were absent: Bornstein, Christie, Denis, Draper, Halstead, Macieski, Morgan, and VonDamm. Excused were Carr, Gross, Hinson, McCann, and Trowbridge.

II. Communications with the president – The president said that the National Center for Higher Education Policy has issued data comparing higher education in the six New England states and showing that New Hampshire is costly for students. Our state did poorly in the affordability category but very well in completion, fairly well in preparation, and moderately in participation and in benefits to the state. Since state support of higher education is very low in New Hampshire, students have to pick up more of the cost. The residence halls and dining halls are crowded now because many juniors and seniors want to stay in the residence halls which are wired into the university computer system, less expensive than town housing, do not require an automobile, and are associated with dining halls which have fairly good food. New residence and dining hall space may be ready by 2002, and the construction will be paid for by bonds supported by the residence and dining hall fees.

Some academic programs are oversubscribed, and the president said that hopefully the new budget model will be more responsive to the needs of growing programs. She added that this year's budget is a copy of last year's and so does not yet have the responsiveness that is expected in future years. Each college's resources will reflect the college enrollments, on a two-year rolling basis. At the present time, the enrollment at UNH is 600 students smaller and the physical plant slightly bigger than in the 1994/95 academic year. Although freshman enrollments have recently been rising, the graduating classes have also been large; and next year will be the first year the graduating class will not be so big. The university has reduced its support staff a little but not its faculty. Discussion ensued about the difficulty younger faculty have to afford homes in Durham. A professor said that a report had been issued some years ago on a method for helping faculty to purchase homes in the local area. The report included a proposal whereby faculty might purchase homes on university lands, but the land would remain the property of the university. The president later determined that the report of that committee was given to Assistant Vice President for Business Affairs Anthony Zizos who is looking into this situation on behalf of Vice President Corvey.

III. Enrollment management and admissions – Mark Rubinstein suggested the formation of a faculty committee to advise on enrollment management. He said that the admission process at UNH is less mechanical than at many other universities and that each of the 10,000 UNH applications are read individually. The essay is read to see if the student can write well and think cogently. The university gives less weight to test scores, because they are not a good predictor of success at our university or at other institutions. Most important are the student's motivation, persistence, study habits, and congruence with the institution. Seventy-three percent of UNH freshmen graduate from the

university within six years. Incoming freshmen's grade point averages are at or above what they were ten years ago, but the feedback from the UNH faculty is that students are not as well prepared as they were in previous years. A professor suggested that grade inflation might account for some of this discrepancy. Thirty percent of the grades are A or A- now, compared to twenty-four percent in the past.

Another faculty member said that students indicate on faculty evaluation sheets how much time the student had spent on that course, and this data would be very interesting to review. A professor asked how the admissions staff know that the less quantitative criteria predict freshman grade point averages better than test scores do. Mark Rubinstein replied that UNH graduates a greater percentage of its students than is standard for institutions which rely on the test scores as admissions criteria.

UNH now admits seventy-eight percent of the students who apply; and in 1980 we accepted fifty-four percent of the applicants. In 1997, which was a low point, only thirty percent of the students who were offered admission here accepted it. A professor said that students may be as smart now as before but that there is a difference in their attitude towards education and in their approach to the scholarly life. Since college is much less structured than high school, beginning UNH students may need some help learning how to structure their lives. As students become upperclassmen and get into their major courses, grades often improve. Freshmen and sophomores usually do not work a great many hours at outside jobs, but the upperclassmen do much more outside work.

The university does not benefit from frequent publicity in the state about budget cuts. In response to a request, Mark Rubinstein said that he would send to the senators the data which he referred to in this senate meeting. Students apply to more schools than in the past, especially now that they can apply on the web. A professor commented that attendance is the best predictor he has found for the grades in his introduction to physics course. He suggested that the admissions office should check the high school absentee data. Mark Rubinstein agreed and said that also we need to intervene to improve student retention at the university.

IV. Academic planning and the critical issues document – Jim Varn said that the Academic Planning Steering Committee began its work in January and that its members include faculty, staff, administrators, students and trustees. The group has been framing questions and issues about academic planning, rather than making decisions about it. A professor said that the first critical issue in the draft document should come last and that the second issue should be first. Another faculty member said that the order should indicate priority and that item five should be first and item seven should be next. He added that the document does not have a clear direction and is too broad. The draft should talk more clearly about where we are in reality so that we can decide where we need to go. A professor said that the academic planning document will be used for guidance both within the university and across the state. He added that item four, about the role of a significant research university, should come first but that this would not be well accepted across the state. A faculty member said that some phrases with distinct meanings seem to be used as synonyms, such as entrepreneurial/research and

business/public, which is confusing. Also, we should include the value that the university can give to the intellect of the state, far beyond the university.

A professor said that the planning document should recognize that we are part of an international environment and should focus on our place in the world. We must recognize that this is the information age. Are we a university with a mission or a collection of colleges with different goals? Does college reorganization fit into this document, and should the college reorganization come before or after agreement on the academic plan? A professor commented that every year the incoming freshmen arrive with worse math and English skills and that this creates great internal tension and should be mentioned in this document. There do not seem to be specific courses required for admission to UNH.

We need to connect the high goals in this document with implementation. Jim Varn said that a next step will be to divide up the issues in this document and ask governance bodies to work on implementation. Priorities must be clearly articulated. Concern was expressed that this whole planning exercise has been done many times before but that little seems to change, because resources are not made available for change and also because administrators who may be committed to implementing a plan often leave the university. Jim Varn said that the final academic planning document will be public and will indicate the university's academic goals, the person responsible for each goal, when it will be done, and the criteria for measuring its completion.

A professor asked how do we at the university get the state fully vested in the university and find out what programs are giving the people in the state good value. How do we make what we do a reality to the people of the state? The president has been gathering data for a presentation on this issue. A professor said that, to convince people, you must go where they are and take effective action. Jim Varn said that he would return with revisions of the planning document.

V. Minutes – The minutes of the last senate meeting were approved unanimously.

VI. Adjournment – Today's meeting was adjourned.