

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
2002-03 FACULTY SENATE
MARCH 24, 2003 MINUTES SUMMARY

I. Roll – The following senators were absent: Barcelona, Burger, Elmslie, Frankel, Lugalla, Marx, Niese, Pollard, Quigley, Schlenrich, and Strait. Dillon and Slomba were excused. President Hart, Tom Newkirk and Sally Ward attended part of the meeting.

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

III. Communications with the President – The president said that, due to unavoidable circumstances, the campus interviews for the provost candidates have been rescheduled. Also, there were 190 applicants for the position of Vice President for Communications. Nine semi-finalists will be interviewed by the committee this week, and then on-campus interviews will be scheduled for the finalists. The president remarked that Foster's Daily Democrat recently printed two letters to the editor, supporting the university's capital budget request.

A professor asked who determines the internal priorities of a department, and the president responded that the answer is complex. While the content area experts for curriculum and program characteristics and hiring recommendations come from the department, now under RCM we have a partnership among the department, the dean, the provost, the trustees' Programs and Services Committee, and the Board of Trustees who approve all decisions. When asked if a full-time administrator who is technically a member of an academic department has the right to participate in the decisions of the department, the president said that the collective bargaining agreement governs these circumstances.

A professor said that a student had asked permission in class to pass out a petition about part-time teachers at UNH being let go; and the professor had suggested that the student write a letter to the governor. Another faculty member referred to a student who has left for the Persian Gulf; and the president said that the university provides bridge funding for UNH employees, to make up the difference in salary and benefits during military call up, and that the university will hold the position until the employee can return. The university also works with students so that they can come back to UNH upon their return.

A professor said that he was surprised that COLSA was left out of the institutional effectiveness part of the NEASC accreditation report. The president said that she would pass that concern along, and she commented that RCM units which are in a period of financial decline at the time the model is implemented experience RCM in a very different way than other units do. She encouraged the professor to ask that the NEASC Self Study revisit that part of the report in order to include COLSA. SHHS is also having a difficult time now, and enrollment gears take a long time to shift. The president said that those issues should be on the table as part of the self study. The NEASC Accreditation Steering Committee will hold community forums in late March and April, and it is important that faculty attend those meetings and express their concerns.

IV. English Composition – English 401 is the only course that every student is required to take, except for students who pass out of the course through advanced placement. The NEASC

Subcommittee on the Undergraduate Experience recently reviewed English 401. The subcommittee looked at student evaluations, sample syllabi, and other materials and also interviewed seniors about how English 401 has affected their college career. The subcommittee sent faculty a survey on English 401 and student writing. With the help of outside reviewers from the Council of Writing Program Administrators, the subcommittee prepared a report which is available on the web at www.unh.edu/liberal-arts/PDF/401_Committee_Rep.pdf.

The report expresses concern about consistency across the sections of English 401 and mentoring of the instructors and says it is important to prepare students specifically for critical thinking and research and academic writing, in addition to personal writing. Students should learn to use the library and not just the internet when researching information. Adequate resources are needed for the program. Better communication is recommended between the English 401 staff and the rest of the faculty, about the goals and expectations for the course and how faculty can build on what the course does. The subcommittee did not find a significant change in writing preparedness by students, in spite of faculty perceptions. Computer spell checking may give students a false sense of security but fails to eliminate many types of errors. In English 401, students have regular conferences with the teacher; and there is a focus on revision and editing, as well as learning to aim writing at a specific type of reader. The course evaluation form will be changed to better match the mission statement. A booklet of exemplary writing will be prepared, for use in all sections of English 401; and critical thinking assignments will be used.

Faculty are concerned about errors in student writing, but there are limits to how much English 401 can help students who are severely under prepared. The report suggests that the English 401 teachers could identify those students and encourage them to take an additional one-credit course to learn the basic writing skills. After students successfully pass English 401, they will need more writing practice and reinforcement throughout their college career. Writing-intensive courses are important to build bridges between English 401 and later courses; and better communication is needed between all faculty and the English composition teachers. Also, a student may never have seen an example of a successful academic paper in his major discipline. The major department could take three old papers of varying quality, remove the student's name and faculty comments, and ask the current students to rate the papers and give their reasons. The subcommittee recommends an additional course release for the director and the addition of two associate directors each with a course release.

A professor said that students need to learn to write concise and accurate descriptions. A technical writing courses is available. There is a great variability of instructors in English 401. Half are teaching assistants and about half are lecturers, with only a few tenure-track faculty members teaching the course. The report recommends enhanced mentoring of new teachers. There is a large turn-over among teaching assistants, but the lecturers tend to be much more experienced. The more experienced teachers are able to work effectively with both strong and weak writers. If the Discovery Program is implemented, the required writing course may be extended to two semesters, which is how it was thirty years ago. Presently English 401 includes five papers plus short assignments, with an initial draft and one or more revisions.

A professor asked for enhanced emphasis of basic grammar components in English 401. Tom Newkirk suggested that general faculty should pick at least one problem sentence in every paper

and have the student work on it. He added that English 401 is not a grammar course and that the curriculum does not include time to focus on basic grammar. A professor asked that teachers of writing-intensive courses be given a short document explaining the level of writing that should be expected of a student who has taken English 401.

V. Communications with the Chair – The senate chair provided a handout on copyright guidelines and suggested that faculty who have questions about copyright compliance should contact David Rohde, Director of Printing and Mailing Services. The senate chair said that she is on the NEASC Accreditation Steering Committee and also on the Central Budget Committee and asked that faculty email her with issues or concerns for those two groups. The big review of responsibility-center management will come during its five-year evaluation. The update from the Women’s Commission has been rescheduled for the next senate meeting.

VI. Forest Park Housing Priorities – Mimi Becker of the senate’s Campus Planning Committee said that the committee reviewed Forest Park housing and found that the university priority is for housing in Forest Park to be for faculty, visiting research scholars and married students, in that order. There are supposed to be time limits, but exceptions may be granted. More faculty may be in transition now due to divorce or separation, and there is less affordable faculty housing available. Another member of the senate’s Campus Planning Committee said that he had talked with Candace Corvey and Anthony Zizos about affordable housing and felt concern that faculty recommendations from 1991 had been put on the shelf. The administration is considering possible joint ventures with a private developer and perhaps special credit arrangements with a bank.

Affordable faculty housing is an explicit goal in the university’s planning process, and it is important for faculty to contact the planning consultants now about the need for affordable faculty housing. If the loop road plan were completed, the Forest Park housing would be eliminated; but perhaps it could be redeveloped elsewhere. Mimi Becker said that, although the university owns a good deal of land, there is limited land with infrastructure such as roads and electricity. She asked that faculty email her with their concerns about these matters. She added that the senate’s Campus Planning Committee will wait to review the transportation issue until the draft of the transportation master plan is ready.

VII. Professional Standards Committee Report – This fall UNH had forty minority faculty members, and this is about 6.5% of the university faculty. In order to improve faculty diversity, faculty should develop and strengthen within their disciplines networking with more diversified institutions of higher learning. Each search is an opportunity, and support services are available to help faculty find specialized resources within the discipline. Mentoring is very important to enhance retention, and special community support services are available for various minorities. Visiting professors and speakers programs may help UNH be more visible to minorities. A faculty member suggested tapping the pool of Hispanic people in the Manchester area. Professors said that departments often lose minority candidates when sufficient resources are not available for a competitive offer. John Ernest, of the President’s Commission on the Status of People of Color, said that his committee meets with the university president once a month, and he asked faculty to provide him with specifics on this matter.

Updated faculty search guidelines are being developed; and the Professional Standards Committee will postpone reviewing the process of affirmative action by search committees, until those guidelines are available. In consultation with the AAUP, the Professional Standards Committee intends to look at the university's standards for promotion and tenure and also annual evaluations and post-tenure review. The PSC will consider how faculty might have greater flexibility in the balance between teaching, research and service, over the length of the faculty member's university career. The committee will also look at better ways of assessing faculty involvement in outreach and engagement. The PSC chair asked Professor Becker to email to him the details of her concern about faculty work loads and positive mentoring models.

VIII. Grade Inflation – Mark Wrighton, Chair of the senate's Student Affairs Committee, said that the committee has reviewed grade inflation and is presenting to the senate data on this matter, a list of eleven possible causes of the problem, and information on reference materials on grade inflation. Note should be taken of the difference between norm-based grading systems and criterion-based grading. The senate will discuss this matter further at its next meeting.

IX. Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned. The discussion of the academic plan will be postponed until the next senate meeting.