

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
2005-06 FACULTY SENATE

FEBRUARY 6, 2006

MINUTES SUMMARY

I. Roll – The following senators were absent: Burger, Ferber, Frankel, Kallianpur, Kenefick, Lugalla, Macieski, Morgan, Smith and Vangundy. Robertson was excused. Guests were Wanda Mitchell, Lee Seidel, Joanne Curran-Celentano, Cliff Brown and Michele Holt-Shannon.

II. Remarks by and questions to the chair – The senate chair said that nominations for university-wide faculty awards are due by February 10 to faculty.awards@unh.edu and should include a letter of nomination, two letters of reference and a curriculum vitae. The senate chair said that he has received a formal response from the president and the provost, to the shared governance motion that the senate passed on 12/12/05. The president and provost expressed their appreciation to the Agenda Committee and the Faculty Senate for the strong and clear reaffirmation of the principles of shared governance. The president and provost agreed with the intent and language of the motion and pledged to continue to work closely with the senate on those matters in which they have shared interests and responsibilities relative to teaching, learning, research, artistry, and outreach. The letter said that, in some matters referenced in the motion such as faculty status, the Collective Bargaining Agreement also plays an important role and that the bargaining representatives of the faculty are a part of the university's shared governance structure. The president and provost said that they look forward to continued collaboration with the senate.

A professor wrote to the senate chair asking whether a faculty member may exclude a student from a course without penalty, if the professor decides after the drop date that the student does not have the functional ability to do the required level of quantitative reasoning. The Agenda Committee will tell the professor that the committee believes that, if the student has complied with any prerequisites the course may have and if the course does not require enrollment by permission of the instructor, then the instructor may not exclude the student from the course without penalty on the grounds that the student does not have the ability to do the work. However, the professor could give an early diagnostic test and warn students who do poorly on that test to drop the course during the drop/add period. How instructors, departments and colleges handle such things as prerequisites and diagnostics is, in the Agenda Committee's view, an intra-departmental matter and not subject to the Faculty Senate's jurisdiction.

The Central Budget Committee is holding final discussions on the recommendations from the RCM review. The past senate chair asked senators to review the executive summary on the web and to pay special attention to the hold-harmless issue, the intent to count research faculty as half of a tenure-track faculty member when distributing state funds, and the indirect-cost return to principal investigators. Faculty should send feedback to Mimi Becker, Dan Reid or Curt Givan before February 20.

III. Minutes – The senate unanimously approved the minutes of the last Faculty Senate meeting.

IV. Request to put student evaluations on the web – Mark Rubinstein has forwarded to the senate chair a request from the chair of the Student Senate's Academic Affairs Committee asking whether the student evaluations of teaching could be posted on the web. Currently those

evaluations are available to students in the UNH library for three years. Lee Seidel, who is the director of the Teaching Excellence Center, distributed a handout to the senators, quoting an article in the Journal of Educational Psychology saying that faculty do not get higher than average evaluations by offering easier courses and higher grades. However, students rate different academic fields differently; and thus the statistics for faculty in one field cannot be compared with the data for faculty in another academic area. Because of the high field effect and also the standard deviation, correct interpretation of the data is difficult.

Now students can look up a professor online on websites such as pickaprof.com and find out what percentage the professor gives of As, Bs, Cs, etc. The Student Senate wanted to provide more appropriate information than the raw grade data or hearsay, in a format that would be easy for students to access. However, faculty are concerned about the prospect of putting the evaluations on the web, because there is no context for how to read or understand these evaluations. The evaluation questions were designed for faculty development and for use in the promotion and tenure process and were not designed for helping students pick a course. A professor said that, if we change the purpose, we should revisit the evaluation questions to make sure that they are designed correctly for the new purpose. Is it legal or ethical to make public such a mechanism for evaluating faculty?

A professor said that, if the university is releasing data about grades, especially specific instructors' grades, to some other entity such as the website mentioned above, that is a serious problem. The senate chair said that the Agenda Committee will discuss that issue with the provost. Faculty did not approve such dissemination. There is no evaluation question about how much the students learned. Moreover, courses offered early in the morning may receive poorer evaluations than the same course later in the morning. Better evaluations often come from good students and poor evaluations from poor students.

V. Climate study – Wanda Mitchell, who is the vice provost for diversity, said that the university is working on a campus climate study to look at the commitment to diversity and the institutional characteristics. A planning committee will give direction and guidance for the climate study, which will include a survey; and Wanda Mitchell asked for two faculty members who are experts in social science methods to help develop the survey. Bill Stine said that the Psychology Department has several faculty with expertise in survey design and that he will forward their names to Wanda Mitchell and the senate chair and program coordinator.

VI. Discovery Program implementation – Joanne Curran-Celentano, who co-directs the UNH Discovery Program along with Cliff Brown, said that a call for course proposals was made to faculty this fall for the INQ 444 first-year inquiry courses. She handed out a copy of this request and the list of new inquiry courses recently proposed, along with the guidelines for those courses and their course proposal form. A \$2500 course development grant will be provided to the department for faculty members whose INQ 444 course proposals are accepted. During the RCM review, an RCM subcommittee recommended a reallocation of resources to remove the disincentive for offering inquiry courses, which have a cap of twenty-five students. If accepted, starting with the year of implementation, the inquiry courses would receive as an RCM premium a credit-hour weighting which would be determined with data gathered from the pilot program years.

Although the call for inquiry course proposals states that approval of an inquiry course “entails the expectation that the course will be offered at least three times during the ensuing three-year period”, Joanne Curran-Celentano said that the course should be offered at least three times but not necessarily in a three-year period. She said that a department’s inquiry courses may change as different professors are available. Cliff Brown pointed out the schedule of events which are part of this year’s university dialogue on globalization. He encouraged faculty to incorporate those events in courses as appropriate. The topic of next year’s university dialogue will be “energy”, and an invitation went out for faculty members to apply as a Discovery Program author for the 2006/07 university dialogue. Faculty will be chosen to represent all schools and colleges, and the selection will be announced by the end of February. The 2007/08 topic will be “democracy”.

In November, the Discovery Program asked each department to name a departmental liaison, to provide a close connection between the departments and the Discovery Program. Some of the ongoing discussions were presented. Usually inquiry courses will be taught by a tenure-track faculty member with the rank of assistant professor or higher. Guidelines for designing and teaching inquiry courses are available on the Discovery Program website. Many general education courses can be modified to become inquiry courses; and a course conversion form, which is now on the website in test form, will soon be available for applying on line. The Discovery Program subcommittee will continue to work on the first-year assessments in mathematics and technology.

A senator asked what is meant, in the “Who teaches in Discovery?” handout, by a clinical or research faculty member with the rank of assistant professor or higher. Another senator said that many of the potential Discovery Program courses are lecture courses taught by multiple instructors, but would those instructors have to teach the same? Cliff Brown replied that the Discovery Program asks for a representative syllabus; but the textbook or number of exams, for example, may change. If there were a big difference among the department faculty in their views of what constitutes core knowledge, that might merit two courses. In academic year 2007, the general education courses would be supplanted by the discovery category courses; and each course would need to be printed in the university catalogue prior to that. The Discovery Program faculty representatives are available to work with other faculty to address any issues of conversion to discovery categories. A senator asked for more context, examples or explicit guidance about what the expectations are. Some science professors say that they have so much necessary course content that they must lecture. Joanne Curran-Celentano replied that, although the course would need a form of active or engaged learning, laboratory classes are engaged learning. She said that outside reading may also be engaged learning and that the Discovery Program does not want to do away with lectures. The Discovery Program Advisory Committee meets with the department chairs, the department liaisons, and the college deans and associate deans to discuss concerns of all kinds. The senate chair said that the senate will discuss these matters again and will vote on proposals later for the various parts of the Discovery Program.

VII. Scholarship guidelines – The chair of the senate’s Finance and Administration Committee said that his committee was charged to review the Faculty Senate motion IX-M8 on scholarship guidelines and to consider the facts and cascading consequences of the change that had been proposed by the administration. Unless a department-controlled scholarship specifies that it is merit based, the university planned to consider the scholarship to be need based. This would

mean that, if a department makes such an award, the amount would be deducted from the student's financial aid package and thus the student would not receive any extra funds. The senate's Finance and Administration Committee has considered the matter and recommends to the senate that any award by departments should be considered to be merit based, because moving those donated funds to the university's general fund would be a contravention of the intent of the donors. The donors intended the aid to be for students and not the university's general fund. The departmental awards are intended to give students incentive, and the awards should not be subtracted from the student's aid package.

A senator said that, since the university's approach to these matters is evolving, the donors could not have perceived that there was a need to specify merit. A professor said that about eight million dollars in aid are distributed by the departments and that about half of that would go into the general fund if the policy proposed by the administration were instituted. A senator suggested that past practice could be considered for each scholarship and that, if it had been offered for merit in the past, the scholarship should be considered merit based, even if that were not stated specifically in the memorandum of understanding. A professor said that a formal senate motion is needed, with a rationale connected to academic and programmatic concerns. These scholarships give students incentive for academic achievement. The senate chair said that the Agenda Committee will consider a possible motion at its next meeting. Another issue is incentive for the donors of the future. If potential donors were worried that their funds might not go to individual students but rather to the university's general fund, that might have a big academic impact.

VIII. Provost survey update – The senate vice chair said that the university president had asked for an evaluation of the performance of the provost before his reappointment. The Agenda Committee developed a survey questionnaire which was available on Blackboard. Faculty and also the faculty senators received emails asking faculty to participate in the survey, but only about ten percent of the faculty responded. That is less than a generalizable sample. The Agenda Committee reported to the president the results of the survey and told her that one cannot reasonably reach conclusions from that sample. The responses to the survey tended to be more positive than negative. The qualitative comments could be useful as an expression of the concerns of some faculty.

IX. Shared governance in CEPS – The senate chair said that the AAUP has asked the Faculty Senate to consider whether there is a possible problem of shared governance in CEPS, regarding the allocation of new space in Kingsbury Hall. The AAUP says that there was an agreement between the faculty and the CEPS dean and that this agreement, which was arrived at by shared governance, was abrogated by the new CEPS dean without shared governance. The senate chair has asked the faculty senators from CEPS to discuss this matter with their departmental colleagues and to report back to the senate.

X. Adjournment – Today's meeting was adjourned, and the discussions on responsible contracting and on university institutes will be postponed to the next senate meeting.