Meeting called to order at 3:10 p.m. August 26, 2013

MINUTES SUMMARY

I. Roll – The following senators were absent: Bromberg, Caron, Guo, Harkless, Kalinowski, Morgan, Onosko, Scherr, Shore, Simos, Tenczar. A guest was Lisa MacFarlane.

II. Remarks by and questions to the provost – The provost welcomed the senators and wished them all a year of optimism and possibility. She shared some ideas on the university’s Strategic Plan, beginning with reference to the 1862 Morrill Act, which assumed that a broadly, liberally educated population will be more civically engaged. This continuing philosophy shapes the research mission, the teaching mission, and the engagement mission of this university. The new initiatives from the provost’s office this year will be on the following items currently of great importance to the university president: advancement, research and commercialization, stabilizing enrollments, commitment to double STEM graduates by 2020 and then double again by 2025, and becoming “The University of Choice.”

The provost indicated that Deborah Dutton Cox may be reaching out to colleges for information regarding advancement, and expressed the hope that Mark Rubenstein would be able to come before the senate at some point this year to discuss stabilizing enrollments. In the North Atlantic area, where UNH draws 90% of its enrollments, enrollments are down across the board. In regards to STEM graduates, the provost is choosing to take a hopeful, although less literal, position on the doubling of enrollments, recognizing that the charge is system-wide, and depends greatly on the definition of STEM graduates. She suggests the construction and implementation of toolboxes for non-STEM majors to prepare them to work in STEM fields after graduation, citing the creation of scientifically literate students as an attainable goal. To become the “University of Choice” will require the creating of an academic ecosystem that is effective for a wide range of students, including core, residential students as well as pre-college, non-traditional, and online students. The provost emphasized that higher education is about service and a commitment to the common good.

A senator asked the provost if the government would be increasing funding to support the education and graduation of twice as many STEM graduates by 2020. The provost responded that part of the implementation of this idea lies in the definition of STEM. There is a work-force definition, a political definition, and an educational definition. As the public research institution in the state, UNH serves a different function than other educational institutions. She feels it’s important for UNH to come up with a sensible plan consistent with our mission. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has a very narrow definition of STEM subjects, limited nearly just engineering. The National Science Foundation (NSF) has a very broad definition, including many fields usually falling within the range of Humanities. The U.S. Immigration and
Customs Enforcement (ICE) uses a more moderate definition which includes employment areas in which the government believes there will be long-term needs. The question is, does the ICE definition fit with the mission of UNH and support the requirements of the state of NH on our institution? A senator asked how this relates to the humanities. The provost answered that her concept of toolboxes for humanities students will allow those students to follow their passions while giving them exposure and confidence in fields that will help them have professional success in the current world market.

III. Remarks by and questions to the chair – The senate chair began his remarks by introducing his report on Senate accomplishments in the previous year. This report will go out to senators from the 2012-13 academic year as well as this year’s senators following this meeting.

The chair said that as faculty, we are unique: we have academic responsibilities, and our rights flow from our responsibilities. We are officers of the institution, central to the mission of the university, not just consultants, and part of this deliberative body. Shared governance is a challenge of the university, not just ours, and is least effective as a rubber stamp or broad options. The challenge is in the quality and intent of the conversation more than simply to whom we are speaking, being aware that it is essential to listen to the people who may disagree with us, whether faculty or administration. The chair asserted that while higher education is changing, the senate has remained unchanged for over 10 years, and he asked if the senate should undergo a review. Is the senate meeting needs as it was designed to do? Is there flexibility in its organization, and is that organization structured to give voice to all faculty? Are departmental elections still the best method of selecting members of this body?

IV. Minutes – The minutes of the last senate meeting were approved with all ayes except for two abstentions, after two friendly corrections.

V. Orientation – The senate chair expressed a desire to help members of the senate feel that they have an equal voice, not in a mechanical, operative way but in a cultural sense; that the senate should foster an atmosphere in which every member feels safe and secure in expressing an opinion. He asked how he might help the culture of our senate to be more open and diverse, providing a chance for all ideas and voices to be expressed and received.

VI. New business – the chair stated that as often as possible the agenda will provide the opportunity to alert the senate to upcoming issues so that senators can gain an understanding of the issues that the committees will be charged with studying. These early discussions allow the senators to have early knowledge of issues and the questions that are raised and the responses of the senators may inform the work of the applicable committees.

Eight-Week Calendar: The concept of an eight-week program schedule was introduced. Patrick Shannon of the Social Work Department was invited to explain how the Master of Social Work program has tried to create a template of four eight-week terms to accommodate their students, particularly non-traditional students who prefer to enroll in shorter terms and take fewer courses at a time. The past senate chair remarked that there is some empirical research indicating that this kind of schedule is more marketable to certain groups of potential students. There followed some discussion of the merits of this type of program and the complications involved in fitting
two eight-week terms into a fifteen-week semester. Patrick Shannon explained that an eight-week term is necessary for academic reasons. The chair of the Academic Affairs Committee raised several questions regarding the charge to his committee regarding this topic. Additional questions were raised regarding the purview of the senate, consultative or deliberative, and why this is being brought to the senate, as it seems to some senators to be a departmental decision. The chair reminded the senate that while programming does not come before the senate for approval, scheduling issues do. This proposed 8-week calendar only applies to the fully online graduate degrees and does not affect individual online or hybrid courses. The MSW is not subject to senate review; it is the registrar’s schedule for totally online graduate degree programs that is subject to review. The chair remanded the study of this issue to the Academic Affairs Committee for review and proposed action.

The short calendar: The Durham community, police officials and UNH officials discussed the disruption caused by students at the end of the spring term between the last day of class and graduation. A concern was voiced that there is a large span of time in which the students have little to do, and the senate has been asked by the provost to examine the current schedule of reading days and exam days to see if that time period should be shortened and the academic calendar adjusted. Senators from various departments indicated that reading and exam days are used in a wide variety of ways, with some departments depending heavily on those days for time for students to complete and present their work. The question was raised as to why there is a different schedule for spring and fall semesters. There was discussion of defining the purpose of the reading days, or the way in which those days are used by students. The chair of the Academic Affairs Committee suggested that this may be too large an issue to deal with entirely by the proposed timeline of October 7, and that his committee would need to consult with many different departments in order to gather sufficient information to determine what should be done. The chair indicated that there is flexibility in the suggested timeline.

Pilot program – common exam time: the past senate chair was asked to explain a suggested proposal to move the common exam time from Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:40 to 2:00 p.m. to another time. [See: Student Rights, Rules and Responsibilities 2012-2013 04.16 Weekly common exam hours. Tuesday and Thursday from 12:40 p.m.–2 p.m. are University “free” hours, which are reserved for convocations or common exams for multi-section courses. Normally, classes and labs are not scheduled during these hours. The Registrar may allow some exceptions to this policy; however, any classes or labs scheduled during these hours must excuse without penalty all students whose attendance is required for common exams. Thursday evening from 7:10 p.m.–9 p.m. is also designated as a common exam time when students must be excused without penalty from their regularly-scheduled classes or labs if a common exam is scheduled at the same time.] This is a space allocation issue, and such a change is an attempt to utilize unused classrooms during high-need time periods, as well as reduce disproportionately heavy traffic in the dining halls during these mid-day hours. A senator questioned the historical reason for the current common time. Another senator pointed out that certain disciplines use the common time more heavily than others. The chair pointed out that this change would be university wide; that a pilot would be developed, tested, and reviewed. There is no current plan by the administration; the charge to the senate’s committee is for a recommendation, which could be that there should be no change as long as the committee has substantiated reasons for that recommendation. A senator asked if a pilot program was instituted, how would success be measured?
VII. **Adjournment** – The meeting was adjourned at 4:57 p.m.