

WKU UNIVERSITY SENATE MINUTES

February 15, 2007

I. **Call to Order**

The regular meeting of the WKU University Senate was called to order Thursday, February 15, 2007, at 3:50 P.M. in the Garrett Ballroom by Chair Michelle Hollis. A quorum was present.

The following members were present: Johnathon Boles, Scott Bonham, Charles Borders, Tim Brotherton, Stuart Burris, Mike Carini, Jerry Daday, Robert Dietle, Richard Dressler, Freda Embry, Janice Ferguson, Tim Gilbert, Deana Groves, Anthony Harkins, Joe Hardin, Kathleen Hennessey, Michelle Hollis, Kate Hudepohl, Kaveh Khatir, Debbie Kreitzer, Dominic Lanphier, Scott Lasley, John Long, Sherry Lovan, Cynthia Mason, Karen Mason, Laura McGee, Andrew McMichael, Patricia Minter, Richard C. Miller, Roger Murphy, Dan Myers, Thanh Lan Ngugen, Johnston Njoku, Laurin Notheisen, Holly Payne, Katharine Pettit, Keith Phillips, Krist Schell, Peter Sepanski, Julie Shadoan, Vernon Sheeley, Nevil Speer, Carol Stowe-Byrd, Samanta Thapa, Tom Tutino, Judy Walker, Carol Watwood, Jeff Willis, Jacqueline Wofford, and Mary Wolinski.

Alternates present were: Steve Kenworthy for John All, Denise Gravitt for Greg Arbuckle, Ahmed Emam for Mustafa Atici, Cindy Houston for Marty Boman, Richard C. Miller for Barbara Burch, Ray Blankenship for Jeff Butterfield, Daniel Carter for Terry Dean, Andrew Ernest for Blaine Ferrell, Jeanne Fiene for Bud Schlinker, Tammie Stenger-Ramsey for Peter St. Pierre.

The following members were absent: Mike Binder, John Bonaguro, Robert Bowker, Janice Chadha, Walter Collett, Eddy Cuisinier, Judy Davison, Nancy English, Sam Evans, James Gary, Jerry Gotlieb, Jens Harlander, Heather Johnson, David Lee, Terrence McCain, Timothy Mullin, John Musalia, Katrina Phelps, Heidi Pintner, Gary Ransdell, Eric Reed, Sherry Reid, Angela Robertson, Jeffrey Samuels, Sandra Starks, Don Swoboda, William J. Tallon, Michelle Trawick, and Stacy Wade.

II. **Minutes**

The Minutes of the January 18, 2007 meeting were approved as read with no additions or corrections.

III. **Reports**

a. **Chair**

Michelle Hollis, Chair of the Senate, reported that The KTRS Resolution that passed Senate was taken to the Coalition of Senate Faculty and Leadership. It is comprised of Faculty Senate Chairs and Past Chairs from around the state along with regents. We sent out a proposal to them and several of the schools around the state have used our resolution as a template to create their own resolutions. KCTCS and Kentucky

State have already passed similar ones. EKU and Murray State are working on their resolutions this week. These resolutions will be sent to the Governor once all of the schools' resolutions have been completed.

As an informational item, there is presidential search for the CPE president; if anyone is interested, send Michelle Hollis an email and she will send you a link that will guide you to all of the information that is needed.

In the Executive Committee meeting, we discussed the possibility of having electronic votes for the faculty regents' election this year, so this will probably happen.

Dr. Burch also expressed an interest in having Senate availability during the summer months. The Executive Committee discussed having a representative group like the Executive Committee to vote on anything that may happen to come through in the summer that needs approval. They also discussed the possibility of voting electronically during the summer if something comes up in the summer that we feel we should have access to before it is just passed without any faculty input.

Senators are still needed on the Faculty Handbook Committee from Ogden College and Gordon Ford College of Business. Nevil Speer has volunteered to be a Senate Representative on this committee from his college. However, once these revisions to the handbook are made, they will be passed on to the Faculty Welfare and Professional Responsibilities Committee, of which he is the chair. Michelle Hollis is hoping that another Senator from Ogden will step forth. The committee will happen regardless of whether these colleges are represented. The committee as is stands is comprised of Julie Shadoan and Francesca Sunkin from the Community College, Timothy Mullin and Roxanne Spencer from the Library, Patricia Minter and Elizabeth Winkler from Potter, Janice Ferguson and Sam McFarland from the College of Education, Sherry Lovan and Beverly Siegrist from the College of Health and Human Services, Cate Webb from Ogden, John Wassom from College of Business. The administrators will be Dennis George and Retta Poe. Adjunct will be Wren Mills, and Jim Fulkerson from the University College.

Several Department Heads expressed concern about not being represented on the Faculty Handbook Committee. They are faculty, so they can be represented. She reminded departmental senators to report back to their department (including department chairs) what is happening in the senate meetings. This committee was first presented at the December executive committee meeting and then at the January Senate meeting. Some department heads were not aware of this committee, so this means that not all senators are reporting on the Senate meetings to their department.

People who are appointed to university-wide committees are supposed to give reports from their meetings to Michelle Hollis. She failed to get a report from the benefits committee and from the athletics committee representatives. However, the representative to the budget council did give a report. Dr. Ransdell's strategic

priorities for funding included libraries expansion in Owensboro and Elizabethtown, the EDD Leadership Doctoral Program, Honors Program, Study Abroad, Nursing, and permanent funding for the clinical education complex, an associate vice president for economic development, a rural mobile health unit, and environmental health and safety unit. Other unavoidable funding commitments such as maintenance and operating costs for opening new facility rate increases and faculty promotions will be funded in addition to the projected amount for the minimum wage increases. One of the biggest decisions for the budget council this year was to ask that every budget cycle include an increase for operating costs. This would be a new policy and would mean that operating costs increases would become a recurring budget item. This year the council proposed that each division receive a one-percent pool for operating expenses. The staff regent requested that additional staff positions be added to the budget. The total required to fund all positions requested was large and needs to be addressed in several different budget cycles. However, there will be an amount in the new budget to address those needs. Dr. Ransdell is supporting the budget council's recommendation of a four-percent pool for faculty salary increases. This includes both cost of living and merit considerations. The pool is generated or filled in vacant budgeted positions and an increase in the part-time faculty pool and graduate assistant pool.

b. Vice Chair

The Vice-Chair, John All, was not present. There was no report.

c. Faculty Regent

The Faculty Regent, Robert Dietle, stated that there was no report.

d. Provost

The Provost, Barbara Burch, was not present. Richard C. Miller reported in her place.

During the January SACS (Southern Association for Colleges and Schools) Meeting, there was a vote taken to revise SACS guidelines for faculty credentials. There are 7-8 guidelines on this list that institutions must follow to credential faculty to teach at the institutions that are accredited. All of these guidelines have been removed. The Provost has not had an opportunity to sit down with department heads and deans to talk about how we at WKU will take a look at this. Until such time, WKU will continue to follow the guidelines that SACS indicated prior to the indicated change, along with some flexibility. There are no more stringent guidelines that are mandated by SACS; their preference is that all teaching individuals have a terminal degree and they leave it up to the institutions to determine any alternative criteria.

IV. Standing Committee Reports

a. University Curriculum Committee

Julie Shadoan, Chair of the University Curriculum Committee, moved for approval of the January consent agenda. The course proposals passed unanimously as presented without discussion.

b. General Education

Patricia Minter, Chair of the General Education Committee, reported that there was one agenda item that was passed. There is one amendment. The agenda item was passed on the January 29th meeting. She moved for approval on this item and it passed unanimously without discussion.

c. Faculty Welfare and Professional Responsibilities

Nevil Speer, Chair of the Faculty Welfare and Professional Responsibilities Committee, reported that Bob Cobb's Office, Institutional Research, has been working for the past months on the annualized faculty workload report, which our department heads are supposed to be taking care of. The original email went out to them on November 20. The system is still open and will be closed sometime this week. Nevil Speer reiterated the importance of that because it is a new process to look at workload from an annualized standpoint instead of a one-semester snapshot issue. He urged the senators to go back and talk to department chairs about what is your workload and what are you accountable for. In a month or two, there should be an assessment of what that looks like across campus. Workload is not just teaching load; it is all of the other things that you are doing there. There are 25 different categories set up by Bob's office to attribute your time.

d. Committee on Academic Quality

The Chair of the Committee on Academic Quality, Andrew McMichael, stated that there is no formal agenda, but there are several reports under new business.

e. Graduate Council

Tim Gilbert, the Chair of the Graduate Council, reminded graduate faculty and those who work with graduate students on a regular basis that nomination packets for the John D. Minton Award, as well as the Outstanding Graduate Student Award, have been emailed. Please fill those out if you feel that you have either a graduating senior or graduate student who should be honored this spring or someone who graduated last fall. They would like as many nominations as possible.

He then made a motion for support and approval of the Graduate Council agenda items for University Senate consideration. The consent agenda passed unanimously with no discussion on the items.

V. Old Business

There was no old business.

VI. New Business

The Plus/Minus Grading report that was put out by Bob Cobb and Institutional Research was not an item to be voted on; it was an information only item.

Michelle Hollis moved the child-care resolution ahead of the plus-minus grading implementation resolution:

RESOLUTION OF THE UNIVERSITY SENATE OF WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

- **Given that WKU is a growing campus with many young faculty and staff and the number of dependents has grown in recent years, and**
- **Given that a large number traditional and non-traditional students attending WKU are parents and or single parents, and**
- **Given that the cost of childcare is growing yearly and consumes a large percentage of employees salaries, and**
- **Given that the increasing cost of childcare places a financial strain on some of the students of WKU, and**
- **Given that the choices of quality childcare within a reasonable radius of WKU limits the scheduling choices of faculty, staff and students,**

Be it resolved that the University Senate of Western Kentucky University strongly urges the administration of Western Kentucky University to help secure a quality childcare facility on or near campus, and to seek additional funding to increase number of spaces available at the WKU Child Care Center at Jones Jagers Hall

Discussion of the child-care resolution was as follows: Dan Myers reminded the senators that there is child care available on campus. Robert Dietle added that there are not many slots and that it is not WKU-funded, but it is a good start. Michelle Hollis stepped down as chair for a few minutes to comment on this. She stated that she spoke with the enrollment manager from the Jones-Jagers facility. It is a federally funded facility. That means that anyone who is eligible for child-care assistance (low-income individuals) gets first priority in any spots that are available there. Nine years ago, when she was pregnant and expecting her daughter, she went to Jones-Jagers to seek day care. She was placed on a waiting list. Seven months after she applied and after she had her daughter, she was still on the waiting list. Several individuals had gotten in before her because she did not qualify for child-care assistance. While there are spots available for non-qualifiers of that benefit but they are very limited. The resolution that was being brought forth was not meant to be in

competition with Jones-Jaggers. The enrollment director was actually in favor of it if it could be combined in some way with their current facility. If their facility could be expanded in some way to allow more spots for WKU faculty, staff, and students, she was all in favor of it. At the Community College, there is a problem with getting students to class if their children are out of school and they have no choice but to bring their children to class. While Michelle Hollis does not have a problem with students bringing their children to class, many other faculty members do find it disruptive. She would rather that her students do come to class with their child rather than miss a whole lecture if they can't find child care. Also, it puts female students in a bigger predicament than the male students because many of the female students are single parents and do not have anyone else they can rely on. There is also a problem with faculty and staff having to bring their children to work when schools are closed and we are not on break. Many administrators frown upon this, but they would frown on it more largely if people had to take a sick day or not come to work as a result of not finding a place to take their children. Dan Myers clarified that it was a motion proposed by the executive committee and needs a seconded. The motion was seconded by Denise Gravitt. Patricia Minter suggested a friendly amendment to the motion, adding **"...and to seek additional funding to increase number of spaces available at the WKU Child Care Center at Jones Jaggers Hall."** This amendment was unanimously accepted. There was no further discussion of this resolution. The resolution was passed with the friendly amendment.

The following Plus/Minus Grading Implementation Resolution proposed by Andrew McMichael was discussed.

**UNIVERSITY SENATE
FEBRUARY 5, 2007**

In March, 2004, the University Senate voted to implement a system of plus/minus grading at Western Kentucky University. The next month the Senate decided to study the implications surround the implementation of that policy through a trial period. That study has been completed and is presented to the University Senate, along with a "Faculty Grading System Survey" designed to assess the attitudes of faculty toward the plus/minus system of grading.

Given the results of the trial period as well as the faculty survey, the Executive Committee recommends implementing the plus/minus grading system on a "rolling" basis beginning with [new graduate and undergraduate students in] ~~the incoming freshman class in~~ Fall, 2008. A "rolling" basis means [that all incoming students] ~~each incoming class~~ beginning [in] with Fall 2008 would be part of the plus/minus system, while students already enrolled in Fall 2008 would have the option of continuing under the "five grade" system or filling out a new degree audit form and switching to the plus/minus system.

Dr. McMichael stated that the Plus/Minus System was debated extensively two and a half years ago and it was passed by the Senate in March of 2004. At that time, the Senate voted to institute that change in grading policy. In April 2004, Dr. Burch informed the Senate that she was withholding her approval “because of concerns with implementation”. The concerns that she expressed at the time were about how plus/minus would be implemented; she was not concerned about plus/minus, per se, but how this system would be implemented. The resolution is designed to take care of those concerns. The Ad/Hoc Committee was appointed in May 2004 to develop a pilot program. The Senate never consented to this pilot program. In September of 2004, the Provost stated very strongly that in the eight years she had been at this university, she never failed to support the recommendations that come from the Senate. In October 2004, the Senate voted to put Plus/Minus on TopNet but not count it toward GPA. At the time of that motion, there was no discussion of putting plus/minus on TopNet temporarily. It has since been taken off of TopNet for a variety of technical reasons. These are some reasons behind Andrew McMichael’s motion, and he hopes that it can be a way to implement the plus/minus grading system in a fair way that would work for WKU. After speaking with the registrar’s office, Andrew McMichael proposed a friendly amendment to his own proposal: “Given the results of the trial period of the plus/minus system, as well as the faculty survey, the Executive Committee now recommends implementing the plus/minus grading system on a rolling basis with new graduate students and undergraduate students beginning in Fall 2008. A rolling basis means all incoming students beginning in Fall 2008 would be included.” Andrew McMichael asked that even though it is not required in the charter, that this proposal be given two readings (one in this meeting, and one in the March meeting) prior to voting on it. He wants everyone to have their voice heard and wants to give them time to read the data. Michelle Hollis requested that there be two readings of the document. Denise Gravitt asked if all faculty members had been given a copy of this report to read, and Michelle Hollis said that it was distributed to faculty-all, staff-all, and the senate list-serv. Dan Myers stated that he supports Andrew McMichael’s changes and suggested that we have two readings on this. Dr. Burch also stated earlier to Michelle Hollis that she would like people to have adequate time to be able to analyze the report and to digest the results. She also asked that we would form an ad-hoc committee to further study the report put out by Bob Cobb on Plus/Minus Grading, and Michelle Hollis stated that the Committee on Academic Quality had already done this. Debbie Kreitzer asked if it meant that all new students coming in the Fall of 2008 will be graded differently than current students and Andrew McMichael said that she was correct. Janice Ferguson asked if the faculty as a whole would have a chance to vote on this after the second reading, or will it be strictly a Senate vote. Andrew McMichael stated that the Plus/Minus System had already been voted on two years ago to be implemented; this resolution is about how it will be implemented. Robert Dietle stated that the Senate is a representative governing body and it has the power to set academic policy and curricular matters. It has never been the case for the full faculty to vote on it. Representatives should speak with their at-large senator and departmental representatives and let their feelings be known. Patricia Minter stated that each department at this university is represented in this body, as well as many at

large senators. Denise Gravitt stated that her only concern was that the registrar's office felt that their system would be ready to do both systems at the same time. Andrew McMichael said that plus/minus was already in the system once; here they have 18 months. His hope is that if this resolution passes, a committee will be formed with representation from the UCC and the Senate to handle the technical issues and report any problems to the Senate during these 18 months. He used Northern Kentucky University as a model for implementing it in the Fall of 2008. Frieda Eggleton addressed these implementation issues; the creation of plus/minus grading can be done in TopNet fairly easily; the issue has to do with establishing a cohort of students and making it available to only that group. NKU is implementing a whole new computer system starting with Fall 2008, so that is why they are likely implementing it at that time. She will consult with the registrar there to find out the parameters of their implementation. But from our perspective, the issues will be isolating a specific group of students for whom faculty would record a plus-minus grade and then creating a system where students could opt into the plus/minus so that we could have a smooth implementation. The pilot program did not go on the transcript because it was not a formal change in policy. The plus/minus disappeared after the pilot program ended because that field was used to drop students for non-attendance. Katherine Pettit asked if anyone had a copy of the resolution that was passed in March 2004. Michelle Hollis did not have that specific item and Andrew McMichael told her that it could be found on the March 2004 minutes on the Senate website under "previous senate minutes". Michelle did, however, begin reading the resolution regarding the pilot program:

"Proposal to Recommend Utilization of Plus/Minus Grading System: Whereas grades are an important method of evaluating a student's performance in the class, Whereas the impact of implementing the plus/minus system on faculty, students, and administration at WKU are unknown, Whereas a variety of research provides differing viewpoints on the effectiveness of the plus/minus grading system, Therefore be it resolved that the ad/hoc committee on Academic Quality recommends to University Senate to keep current grading system but place pluses and minuses from A+ to C- on the transcript but not to affect the student grade point average or quality points. Over the next two years, we will collect data for the purpose of assessing the grading system..."

Robert Dietle said that he had a conversation earlier in the week with Dr. Burch with regard to the possible implementation of the policy. He said that she feels very strongly that it is necessary for the University Senate to examine and digest the results of the report based on the pilot program. She also mentioned that she would like the Senate to have two readings. She felt that there had been issues raised in the original debate that needed answering. Her expectation is that this get a thorough bedding and an open discussion and airing within this public forum. He realizes that we have not had this report very long, but he hopes that in the March meeting, those individuals who have objections to the plus/minus system bring their concerns forward based on this report so it can be discussed in terms of the evidence received. She wants to feel

confident that all aspects of this have been thoroughly discussed. There was no further discussion.

There was no other new business.

VII.

VIII. Announcements

There were no announcements.

IX. Adjournment

A motion by Nevil Speer to adjourn the meeting was seconded. The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:35 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Pintner, Secretary