

Final faculty meeting senate chair report

May 15, 2008

It is my pleasure and honor to give the report of the May 1 Senate meeting. My term on the senate is about to expire, so the incoming senate chair will be offering these reports next year. I would like to thank the Provost for suggesting that reports from the Faculty Senate Chair should be a regular part of every university faculty meeting.

First, thanks to all who ran for the senate this year—several of the elections were contested—I believe that this was very important, and I hope will continue. I am also happy to report that we had no electoral ties of the type that our parliamentarian feared.

The senate for next year will be comprised of the following individuals:

Christine Bishop (new) Heller; William Flesch, English; Seth Fraden, Physics; Deborah Garnick, (new) Heller ; Jody Gittell, Heller; Judith Herzfeld (new) Chemistry; Eric Hill, Theater Arts; David Jacobson, Anthropology; Harry Mairson, Computer Science; Catherine Mann, IBS; Robert Moody, THA; Bradley Morrison (new) IBS; David Rakowski, Music; Dawn Skorczewski (new) English; Govin Sreenivasan, History; Ilan Troen, NEJS; Sabine Von Mering (new) GRALL, Watson, Malcolm, Pscyh.

Please join me in welcoming the new senate, which will take office, and elect a new council and chair in late August—the current council will continue to function as needed until then.

Here are some other observations from the May 1 meeting—more details in the minutes:

I reported that the campus-wide event on free speech and the classroom, tentatively planned for 1 May, has been postponed until the fall semester—there are still many details to be worked out between the administration and the Senate Council concerning this event.

Robert Moody, a member of the Firearms Policy Committee, reported on the work of the Committee.

The Council has met twice with the Provost since the last general faculty meeting, and has discussed with her appointing faculty members for membership on various university committees, as well ongoing issues related to faculty governance.

The Senate discussed at length the current stalemate between the CFRR and the administration. We approved, with 12 voting for, and one abstaining, the following resolution:

The Faculty Senate supports, as a matter of principle, the recent judgment of the Committee on Rights and Responsibilities, which found serious violations of the Faculty Handbook in a grievance case concerning Professor Donald Hindley. We are especially concerned by the Provost's rejection of the committee's claim to jurisdiction in that case, and ask her to join us in reaffirming that jurisdiction, along with other points of interpretation contained in the committee's memorandum of December 19.

The Faculty Senate accepts, based on the facts as we know them, the judgment that the Provost's actions have violated Professor Hindley's faculty rights, including the right to academic freedom and the right to be treated fairly under University policies.

The Faculty Senate affirms the Handbook provision that authorizes the Committee on Faculty Rights and Responsibilities to interpret the Faculty Handbook on behalf of the faculty. We recognize that unanticipated situations may arise where the Provost must contravene the Faculty Handbook. Nevertheless, in such cases the contravention must be

acknowledged as such and cannot be based on a claim to an alternate interpretation of the Handbook.. We note that the Provost, as chief academic officer of the University, is responsible for ensuring that the Handbook is observed.

We regret that this recent case has damaged the collegiality of our University, its academic and intellectual function, its faculty governance procedures, and its public reputation.

In relation to the Senate's discussion of these matters, I have begun discussion with the University's council about whether Senate members may be privy to the administration's legal justification concerning various matters of this past year.

On another matter, the following motion passed unanimously:

The Senate should have a representative at all meetings discussing the Integrated Plan.

I would like to report that I have corresponded with President Reinharz on this issue, and he has told me that he will consider the request and get back to me soon.

On another matter: for a variety of reasons, the faculty senate is again looking into the issue of university contributions to the Health Benefits or retired faculty meetings.

I reported that he had been told by Scott Bemis, Vice President of Human Resources, that in no case are health benefits paid to retired faculty members after the age of 65. The Senate will consider gathering data from other universities on this subject. Subsequently, in a meeting with the provost, she said she would discuss this matter with provosts at other universities, and would help gather information about what other universities do. I noted that I felt that even though paying this contribution would be expensive, it is a

social justice issue, and if we have social justice as one of our pillars, we should be proactive here.

The Dean of Arts and Sciences Adam Jaffe and General Counsel Judith Sizer attended part of the Senate meeting to discuss the use of Turnitin software for plagiarism detection. After a long discussion, the following motion passed 12 for, 1 abstention:

That the Committee on the Support of Teaching and the University Curriculum Committee be convened to consult broadly with faculty and students and to make a recommendation to the Dean.

After the meeting, I was informed that Jana Draper, who has served as the administrator for the Senate, will be retiring. I would like to formally thank her for her many years of devoted and discreet service to the Senate and the University, and to wish her all the best.

And finally, I would like to thank all of you for the support that you have shown to the Senate and its activities this year. This has not been the easiest year to chair the senate. We did not have an opportunity to examine many issues that I had hoped to tackle, in large part because much of our time since December has been consumed with a single issue that has taken up an inordinate amount of time, even though I believe it could have been settled quite quickly and equitably. Yet, I do believe that in the very important role the senate has played in assuring that the faculty role in governance is not eroded, and that the Handbook Rights of faculty members, and faculty committees are upheld.

Finally, I would like to thank all of those who have offered me help and encouragement, especially the members of the Senate, who has been very collegial and supportive even

when disagreeing with me, and most especially the Senate Council comprised of Cathy Mann, Seth Fraden, and Rick Parmentier—they put in many more hours than expected, and all worked selflessly and very thoughtfully for the good of the University.