ACADEMIC SENATE MEETING
June 18, 2003


VISITORS: Priscilla Beadle, Lee Bulla, Ryan Davidson, Steve Goodman, Lynn Melton, Larry Terry

1. CALL TO ORDER, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Dr. Jenifer called the meeting to order and brought the Senate members up to date with the budget for 2003-2004. It looks like we will be okay, but will take a shortfall of $3M. The increase in tuition will have to go through a specific process including talking to the members of the faculty, several student organizations and having a strategic tuition plan in place which will be discussed at the meetings. The Chancellor is allowing us to increase fees that are already in place to make up for some of the budget deficits.

One of the options being discussed is a flat tuition rate. That one seems to have the greatest amount of support.

In this version of the budget is a 2% merit based increase for faculty and staff. Dr. Jenifer stated that he felt that a merit based increase is important. Since we now have control over the tuition, they are looking at employees being able to attend tuition free. The challenges of these decisions are huge and nothing has been finalized on any of this.

We are looking at ways to repair the cut in TA/RA benefits. There is also a freeze on all staff and faculty hiring.

A question was asked about faculty benefits and Dr. Nelsen responded that the faculty would not be “taking a hit” this year. The prescription model is the only major change in
that there will be a $50 deductible. The 90 days proviso for new employees may be creating some problems, because they will not be eligible for insurance.

The status of the NSM building was discussed briefly. There was nothing new to report about this at the present time.

We’ve already lost some people who are retiring prior to the change in the eligibility criteria for retirement.

A question was asked about the travel freeze. Dr. Jenifer said that travel still needs to go through the Provost for approval, but the “freeze” has essentially gone away.

The hiring freeze has not gone away. It is still in place.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of April 16, 2003. The motion carried.

3. SPEAKER’S REPORT

For the most part, this is a progress report on what is happening in governance but that does not require Senate action, although all such actions are subject to review at the Senate’s pleasure.

Senate items are:

- Progress on peer review for senior lecturers
- Recommendations from the Library Committee
- Posting of syllabi
- Arranging the priorities for next year
- Policy on centers and institutes
- From the FAC: Simplification of accountability, Satisfaction Survey, Proposed Changes to Regents Rules, report on final state of budget crisis.

A. Peer Review. The committee has met and is in very substantial agreement on a final draft. We will meet on June 20th to produce what should be a document we can circulate to Deans and others concerned for comment and reaction. We continue to expect to have a final document to present the Senate by the end of the summer.
B. Recommendations from the Library Committee. The Academic Council has received a set of recommendations from the Library Committee regarding categories of faculty and students who now are not eligible for library privileges, but who in their opinion should be eligible. These include, for example, students admitted to candidacy for a Ph.D. but not currently registered, early-arriving visiting professors and visiting scholars, Master’s students conducting original research but not currently registered, students with incompletes but not currently registered, and beginning McDermott and Clark scholars not yet registered. The recommendations included the administrative actions that would be required to issue such persons Comet cards.

Since the Comet Card office views this as a matter for the Director of Libraries to decide, and since the Director is RUO to the library committee and the committee is a substantial working group of faculty representatives and library staff, the Council saw these recommendations as entirely within the scope of the Library Committee, and not requiring Senate approval.

C. Posting of Syllabi. The Council was advised by Richard Huckaba that this continues to be a problem. It was the Council’s view that since the Senate has in effect assigned the problem to the Schools, it is up to the school deans to enforce. The administration will do what it can to raise the deans’ awareness.

D. Priorities for the coming year. The Senate caucus ended with a long list of priorities that were themselves in need of being arranged into some set of priorities. As the caucus was ending, Professor Scotch suggested that this could be done by the Council. The Council agrees. The members will bring their recommendations and arguments to the July meeting and work out a list.

E. Policy on Centers and Institutes. The recent creations of the Nanotech Institute as well the creation of the Institute for Biotechnology have raised the question of our policy on institutes, beginning with whether we had such a policy or not. Mainly in response to concerns among the Biology faculty about the Institute for Biotechnology, I circulated a memorandum to the concerned parties to the effect that we do have such a policy—that is our policy on centers. When we wrote that policy, in 1979, we considered whether to have a distinction between centers and institutes and could find no consistent basis for such a distinction in other institutions across the country. We therefore decided to use only the one title. The basic idea of the policy was, and is, that such bodies should be primarily aimed at supporting research, should not offer courses, and should not be funded out of academic budgets. My question was whether there was now substantial interest in changing this policy. I discussed the email with concerned faculty in the School
of Natural Sciences and Mathematics and with the administration, and the consensus appears to be clear that there is no such interest. We can work within the basic policy.

As a result of this discussion, however, I raised the question of whether we wanted to revisit the Policy Memorandum in question, which had not actually been reviewed since it was written, to adjust the wording to make it more clearly fit current conditions. The Council agreed that we did. I asked Priscilla Beadle to make suggestions. Accordingly, a new draft was circulated at the previous Council meeting. It is not, however, merely an editorial amendment of the older policy but has some significant differences in style. Accordingly, the Council has referred the draft to the Advisory Committee on Research, and asked them to report back for the July meeting.

F. From the FAC: Simplification of accountability, Satisfaction Survey, Proposed Changes to Regents Rules, report on final state of budget crisis. The System Faculty Advisory Council met in Austin June 5 and 6, in a somewhat abbreviated meeting because of funding constraints. The main items were:

As a consequence of the budget negotiations, we will have the ability to raise tuition and there should be a substantial simplification and rationalization of what we have to report to the legislature or legislatively established bodies.

The FAC has been involved in suggesting changes to Regents Rules. The main aim is to make them shorter and allow more devolution of detailed regulation to the campuses. Our suggestions include establishing elected, representative, faculty Senates or Councils on every campus and establishing the FAC itself (neither of which are provided for in the current rules).

The final state of budget crisis is not bad—compared to what it started out to be.

The Academic Dishonesty issue was discussed and it was agreed that Dr. Rachavong be invited to the next meeting to discuss academic integrity.

Dr. Nelsen brought up several other issues from the Faculty Advisory Council. One of the things the Legislature did was pass a bill that would decrease the interest rate for students if their grades meet a certain criteria. The other item had to do with a change in policies for components institutions in their grievance policies that says if we cannot agree with something on a rational basis for a decision because administrators can find a rational basis we are being asked to use the words capricious or arbitrary reasoning.
4. COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES' MEMBERSHIP

A motion was made and seconded to approve the recommended Committee on Committees membership for the next year. The membership will be James Bartlett (BBS), Gail Breen (NSM), B.P.S. Murthi (M), Sheila Amin Guiterrez de Pifñeres (S), Tim Redman (A), D. T. Huynh (E). The motion passed.

5. HEARING TRIBUNAL

A motion was made and seconded that recommendations for the 2003-2004 Faculty Hearing Tribunal Pool be approved. The tribunal consists of: Herve Abdi (BBS), Poras Balsara (E), Rajiv Banker (M), Duane Buhrmeister (BBS), Lloyd Dumas (S), David Edmunds (A), Euel Elliott (S), Andras Farago (E), Donald Gray (N), Robert Marsh (N), George McMechan (N), Simeon Ntafos (E), Karen Prager (G), Stephen Rabe (A), Suresh Radhakrishnan (M), Ram Rao (M), Dean Sherry (N), Marianne Stewart (S), Hal Sudborough (E), Emily Tobey (BBS). The motion passed.

6. MS IN BIOTECHNOLOGY

Speaker Leaf presented the new MS in Biotechnology program proposed by the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. This new program will be administered by the School in conjunction with an interdisciplinary committee. Dr. Lynn Melton and Dr. Goodman answered questions regarding this new program. The discussion included costs, space, student demand, and concurrence by the various faculty participating in the program.

Dr. Yasbin raised concerns that the budget was grossly underestimated, based on his previous experience of having administered such a program, that the program lacked focus and that employers in the biotechnology area had not really been involved in evaluating this proposal. Concerns were also raised by a few members of the Senate concerning the write-up of the proposal (grammatical errors, typos, inconsistencies, etc.).

The other departments were asked for their input. Physics, Math and Geosciences did not respond but Chemistry did vote informally for the program. The Molecular and Cell Biology Department also approved the program by a majority vote. CEP reviewed this new program and approved it.
A motion was made and seconded to approve this new program. The motion passed Yes: 14; no: 8.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The business was concluded and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Goertzen
Academic Governance Secretary