

Faculty Senate Meeting of January 30, 2009 Minutes

Attendance. All Senators were in attendance or represented by proxies, which were as follows Anderson (Rod Posey), Bristol (Scurfield), Davis (David Walker), Fisher (Rachal), Redalje (Rakocinski), Rehner (Kathy Yadrick), Rushing (Gould), Spencer (Brannock).

Faculty Senate President Stephen Oshrin called the Senate to order at 2:01 p.m. on the afternoon of Friday, January 30, 2009 in room 216 of the Thad Cochran Center. A slight change in the agenda was proposed and approved; likewise the minutes were approved without dissent.

Senator Beckett (chair of the Senate Awards Committee), President Oshrin, and Provost Lyman came forward to present faculty awards. These were the winners of last year's Faculty Senate-Office of the President Awards, the committee for which was compelled to carry out its work quite late in the year. Senator Beckett delivered a set of remarks on the history of these awards, dating from his Presidency of the Senate. He presented the winners as follows:

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| Professor Alina Gearba | Mentoring Award | Department of Physics and Astronomy |
| Professor Fujun Lai | Junior Faculty Research Award | Department of Management and Information Systems |
| Professor Morgan Rempel | Junior Faculty Teaching Award | Department of Philosophy and Religion |
| Professor Julia Johnson | Junior Faculty Creative Award | Department of English |
| Professor Mary Coyne (represented by Bonnie Harbaugh) | Community Service Award | School of Nursing |

Remarks of the Provost. The President sent her regrets at being unable to attend; she was representing the university at the inauguration of a State Supreme Court Justice.

The Provost began by stating that last fall the university was notified of a 2% reduction to the university's state-appropriated budget. This cut was accomplished without "too much fuss," though he was "not comfortable" at the mandate. Unfortunately almost immediately after the Christmas Break, we were informed of an additional 3% cut that would be imposed. This amount was soon increased to a total of 6%, or \$6 million (out of a total university budget of roughly \$250 million; i.e., one million dollars per working day). The cabinet issued an immediate freeze on open positions, travel, and the like. After hearing considerable discontent with this across-the-board approach, the Provost reconsidered that a more "tailored" approach to budget reduction would be in order. Especially the "tax" on grants was considered excessive, notably in the College of Science and Technology.

73% of the university's budget is in personnel, making personnel cuts inevitable. The focus, of course, will be on vacant positions. The hiring freeze is not absolute; a dozen hires have been approved in areas deemed essential. The Provost is "discouraged" that the \$6 million will not be found without extraordinary measures, as some budget areas are overspent already. The Provost summed up: "This is a lousy situation . . . one that none of us planned for."

This year's 6% cut is surely one of several years' budget reductions, with possibly 10 to 12% reductions (\$10 - 12 million) that might be expected next year. Preparing for next year's cuts will be more expansive than this year. The Academic Planning Group—an existing body assembled to work with the Noel Levitz consulting firm on strategic planning—will be called immediately into planning for the budget shortfall. They meet on Tuesday, February 3, with their previous agenda suspended for a month while they consider next year's budget situation. Primary among their charges is the search process for faculty. More than 80% of the Academic Affairs budget is personnel; and as many as 85 faculty searches were proposed for this year. We must assess our ongoing searches and see which can be suspended, deferred, or eliminated; in this manner we can protect personnel already on the campus payroll.

We cannot eliminate tenured faculty without a state of "financial exigency" or elimination of departments or programs. This action will require a year's notice—and is thus of no help in the immediate situation. "Furloughs" have been suggested for staff (e.g., not coming to work one day a month, and thus saving a day's wages), but what would this mean for faculty? Would it simply mean "a pay cut"? Teaching loads might be increased; but there again that is of value mostly in decreasing the need for adjunct and part-time faculty. Other states have the same problems. "I don't know if it's much solace," the Provost concluded, "but we don't have it the worst."

Any method "ethical, legal, and productive" should be on the table for discussion. The Provost read the names of the Academic Planning Group and promised to establish an e-mail address to communicate with them. The roster of membership is as follows:

| Member | Affiliation |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Allyson Easterwood | Controller |
| Ann Billings | Gulf Coast |
| Bill Powell | Interim Associate Provost |
| Bob Bateman | COST |
| Bob Lyman | Provost |
| Brett Kemker | COH |
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| Denise Von Herrmann | COAL |
| Ernie King | COB |
| Jeff Evans | Faculty Senate |
| Joe Morgan | CFO |
| Joe Paul | Student Affairs |
| Kristi Motter | Enrollment Services |
| Liz Haynes | Academic Council |
| Lynn Smith | Budget Office |
| Mandy Nace | Staff Council |
| Melissa Cirino | Student Government |
| Michelle Arrington | Institutional Research |
| Russ Willis | Human Resources |
| David Walker | Academic Council |
| Sabine Heinhorst | Graduate Council |
| Steve Oshrin | Faculty Senate |
| Tom Lansford | Gulf Coast |
| Rusty Anderson | Staff Council |

At this point, the Provost stopped for questions. Senator Young objected to the fact that the letter cutting the budget came not from Academic Affairs but from the budgeting office (Mr. Morgan). Senator Rakocinski queried about teaching loads; the Provost was unable to add much to his previous remarks, viz., that increased teaching loads reduce adjunct faculty. The Provost noted that traditionally in hard economic times college enrollment goes up; there is evidence that this trend is already underway in the Graduate School. He suggested that a tuition increase is unlikely, at least a significant one. Senator Greene inquired about the non-academic units of the university, specifically whether outsourced agencies like Aramark are increasing revenue as much as expected. The Provost answered that indeed the non-academic side has been harder hit than Academic Affairs. At first the Provost argued that the cut levied to Academic Affairs be reduced to one percent; but then he realized that since A.A. is 80% of the university budget, his proposal would double, if not quadruple, the cut outside of his unit. Across the board cuts of 12% next year are not likely; instead, we must reduce departments, units—"and people."

Senator Beckett remarked that a (nameless) department reportedly had “lost” several positions; were these permanent cuts or merely temporary reductions? The Provost’s “last understanding” was that the budget line would be retained in the department and the positions not be lost.

Professor Kathy Yadrick (proxy for Senator Rehner) objected to the reformulation of the Academic Planning Group being “hijacked” (quoting the Provost’s own term) into another purpose of cutting the budget. She suggested that “other individuals might have more expertise” in budget reduction. The Provost responded that time was of the essence, as departments are spending funds now, including \$20 million of scholarships, a fund often overspent. The Provost believes that this committee is an appropriate venue to oversee budget cuts.

Senator Campbell noted that our sister institutions were drawing upon “rainy day funds” far more than we are. The rainy day fund of the university is \$1.7 million; we have “some minor capability” to dip into that. Drawing further into those funds affects our bond rating and many other factors. Both UM and MSU have “deeper pockets” than we in such funds.

Prompted by President Oshrin to discuss summer school, the Provost found the issue “essentially a wash” whether it was a budget producer or detriment. The Provost noted that a Senate report of 2006 requested significant summer-school pay increases; however, the budget “simply does not allow” summer salaries that high in this budget year. He noted also that mini-session pay may be too high, damaging summer school enrollment. He suggested that the university decrease mini-session pay—for both pedagogical and financial reasons—and add to the summer pay scale. Indeed the proposed new summer pay scale is slightly higher than in the past:

| Rank | Dollars per Credit Hour |
|-------------|--------------------------------|
| Professor | 1,400 |
| Associate | 1,200 |
| Assistant | 1,100 |
| Instructor | 900 |

Senator Tingstrom regretted the decrease of mini-session salary, especially in its impact on junior faculty.

Senator Beckett asked if athletics was part of the budget reduction process. Yes, responded the Provost, but noted that the larger portion of their revenues are self-generated and thus of little use in the university’s plight. The Provost agreed with Senator Beckett that the problem must be university-wide, and shared by all. “I think it would be very powerful if this committee met and issued a statement to that effect.”

Senator Judd encouraged meetings between the Provost and the colleges, even the departments. The Provost consented to such a proposal.

Senator Piazza asked about “permanent instructors” in certain departments. “They are not currently protected,” answered the Provost.

After a long hour at the lectern, the Provost concluded his remarks.

Forum Speaker: Kristi Motter, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Services. President Oshrin introduced Vice President Motter to the Senate. “I’ve heard horror stories about the Faculty Senate,” joked Ms. Motter. As the reader will see, we were kind.

Ms. Motter reports directly to Vice President Joe Paul. Her six areas are as follows:

1. Admissions (including administering the Ayres Settlement).
2. Recruiting, with a new focus on specific, targeted audiences of students instead of all students, including those who might or might not be interested in attending here.
3. Student Records, i.e., the registrar’s office. (We now participate in electronic transcripts.)
4. Financial Aid: federal, state, and institutional aid. (72% of USM’s student population receives some sort of financial aid.)
5. First Year Experience. This office now identifies areas of potential weakness or risk in entering students, prior to their enrollment. As evidence of this renewed interest in the welfare of the individual student, the university will return to some two-day Preview sessions this summer.
6. Lucky Day Scholars. This much-lauded program now boasts a 90% retention rate and an 80% graduation rate. “Absolutely outstanding!” summarized Ms. Motter.

One of Vice President Motter’s *ad hoc* responsibilities is Strategic Enrollment Planning. This is a large-scale umbrella program to improve university retention. “It is cheaper to keep them than to recruit them,” Ms. Motter remarked.

The Mississippi high school population is diminishing. We must “strategically” focus our scholarship amounts to recruit students in productive populations—students that will do well here. A 2% increase in undergraduate numbers is a likely prospect. As for out-of-state funds, the majority of such students already receive a discount and/or a waiver of out-of-state tuition. The next area of focus, that in the graduate plan, begins in two weeks.

Answering a question from Senator Rachal, Vice President Motter said that we were forbidden by state law to have variegated tuition in border counties of neighboring states. (This is despite the fact that several institutions in adjoining states have such a policy with Mississippi counties.) Senator Tingstrom asked about interaction between Ms. Motter’s office(s) and the University Marketing office. “Why are we not more in the public eye, like Jones County Junior

College?” Ms. Motter responded that such marketing efforts were not productive in the past; “it costs a lot . . . we just can’t afford it.”

Senator Beckett remarked that recruitment efforts here “were too blanking late” compared to other institutions. Ms. Motter demurred the charge.

Remarks from the CIO, Homer Coffman. Mr. Coffman spoke about the changeover to a new e-mail system, as a result of the poor performance of the present system. This shift will take place on February 9. The switchover should be seamless. Training is available to those who wish it. Instructions will be sent to faculty and staff explaining how to reconfigure their mailreaders to use the new system. Students will not use this system but instead will be put on Gmail—and this for life, if they wish.

After a short recess, the Senate reconvened at 3:50.

President Oshrin’s Report. President Oshrin spoke of the Strategic Enrollment Planning committee, which is nearing its final deliberations. Initial recommendations will be posted on the university website—though probably under security. Similarly the Strategic Budget Planning group is looking at several planning models, not for this year but for next. The range of such proposals is surprisingly large; the committee will review these plans and make recommendations by the end of the year.

The Senate wishes to use an electronic election system rather than a paper-based one. By the third week in February iTech hopes to have such a system in place. Administrative evaluations have been distributed to the deans, with descending responsibility for evaluations down to the chair’s level. The completed forms will be tabulated and the results disseminated. *Senators should encourage their departments to take part in the evaluation procedure.*

A meeting of Faculty Senates and AAUP chapters will take place in Jackson in order to prepare a group response to the legislature about the budget cuts. AAUP member Michael Forster attended a planning session at Jackson State to pilot such an effort. Professor Forster feels that the faculty voice at USM is much stronger than at many other state institutions. President Oshrin asked for a Senate endorsement to the concept of a state-wise meeting of Faculty Senates and Senators.

Senator Judd inquired about the interactive video that we had hoped would be used for Senate meetings. President Oshrin responded that the projected \$22,000 cost had escalated to over four times that amount. The project is indefinitely suspended.

The **President-Elect** spoke briefly about software for university assessment. He reminded the Senate that the election of new officers will take place in a few months, and Senators are encouraged to nominate qualified candidates.

Blessedly, neither the Secretary nor Secretary-Elect had a report.

Committee reports.

1. Even though the Awards Committee earlier made its presentations, Senator Beckett was not at a loss in offering further remarks and important business for the Senate's consideration. He commented on the singular inappropriateness of the names for the awards. Accordingly Senator Becket recommended that the "Faculty Senate–Office of the President Award" should be renamed the "Faculty Senate–University President Award."

This year's awards are up for nomination. Encourage your colleagues to apply or nominate someone.

2. Constitution and Bylaws. President-Elect Evans spoke on behalf of committee chair Buchanan. Plans are afoot to amend the Constitutional to reflect the new meeting schedule, such as President Oshrin adopted this year. There is also concern about the mis-alignment of the rotation of elections.

3. Elections. Senator Goggin proposed elections for twelve soon-to-be vacant seats this year, plus three special elections to fill incomplete terms. The full roster of elections is [attached](#). Senator Goggin also remarked on the problem of irregularly staggered terms. The Constitution mandates a staggered term and a rota of elections. Because of resignations and extended terms for officers, this process is sometimes out of step.

4. Faculty Welfare. Senator Davis noted that the survey of faculty satisfaction is closed and the results being processed. She hopes to have results by next week. She reports that the university statistician is miserly with releasing some data of interest to these efforts.

5. Research and Grants. Senator McCormick gave the first report from this new committee. His primary goal is to institute a positive attitude toward the issues of his committee. Current interests include a study of the appropriation of tuition and grant funds toward research.

Committee liaisons. Senator Beckett rose again, this time to address his role in the continual editing of the Faculty Handbook. He was asked by the administration to put full policies about sabbaticals into the handbook. His proposal is [here](#). He paraphrased several suggestions that he has received from Senators since this initial draft. Senator Davis shared her experience of serving on the sabbaticals committee.

Senator Scurfield spoke of transactions in the Gulf Coast Faculty Council. Architects have been contracted for reconstructions at Gulf Park and new construction at Cross Creek. He gave examples of how slow civic reconstruction has been.

In the final moments of the meeting, Senator Rachal asked if monies for promotions will be available. Associate Vice President Powell shrugged that there had been "no consideration of the matter either way." Senator Greene wondered if a time limit should be set to speakers and for

meetings of the Senate. Senator Campbell reminded the Senate of the Arthur Kaul Memorial Symposium on February 27; [information](#) is on the Senate listserv.

There being no new business, President Oshrin adjourned the Senate at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Stanley Hauer
Secretary to the Senate

Approved by,
Stephen Oshrin
President

February 3, 2009