

CONCLUDING REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT OF FACULTY SENATE
June 5, 2005

Last year, there were a number of things I and the executive committee set forth as goals. In order to be relatively comprehensive in my final report to you and yet not to use too much of our time at Friday's meeting I want to review those things in this message. I do intend to give a few brief remarks at the senate meeting to supplement this report.

Last year the senate executive committee set goals to:

1. Strengthen governance by strengthening the language in constitution, bylaws, handbooks and website.

Result: We have continued the work of strengthening governance by passing adjustments of language in constitution and bylaws.

The Handbook Committee, under the leadership of David Beckett, has continued its important work of improving the Faculty Handbook and correcting some of the deficits. This is a living document and changes will be ongoing as we continue to discover inadequacies in the current handbook or we react to external changes that affect handbook policy.

The web page has been updated and important reports have been regularly posted.

2. Set a stronger foundation for the future senate by letting new faculty know early about university governance and its importance for their work.

- Stan Hauer put together a brochure for new faculty for 2007-08.
- We continued to improve our role in the New Faculty Orientation in August and will do so again this year.
- We strongly encouraged the President to resurrect the practice of inviting new faculty to the President's house as part of the orientation practice, which she has done. The reception for new faculty this year will be on Sunday August 17.
- We secured from the Interim Provost a pledge to continue the Senate and President's Junior Faculty Excellence Awards and are currently working with the Associate Provost's Office to improve and clarify all faculty awards.

3. Actively work to strengthen communication with our constituents.

The primary areas of focus were:

- "Orphan adoptions" (a suggestion initiated by Senator Bob Press)
- Encouraging senators to send brief summaries to your constituents.

I think this is an important and ongoing activity which we must continue to improve at doing. Communication is the most important aspect of the work we do.

4. Continue to examine and make clear policies regarding evaluation, tenure, and promotion.

There have been significant efforts in this area as strategic planning takes place. The handbook committee has significantly improved and clarified areas of concern in pre-tenure, tenure and promotion procedures. These have been approved by the Interim Provost and the President.

In the period of transition in which we have been engaged, the executive committee worked with the President in the spring of 2007 and with Provost and President in the spring of 2008 to mitigate negative decisions on third year reviews, promotion and tenure decisions that seemed to result from process problems. I am please to report that these conversations were positive and we emerged with a renewed intent to improve these processes.

I am convinced that the new administration and faculty share a common interest in processes that are clear, fair, impartial, and rigorous.

In a related area, the President has indicated that she looks to faculty senate to provide leadership in developing goals for achieving measurable growth in faculty pay over the next period of years. We have been asked to develop suggestions about comparison groups that will help us set our goals in this area.

5. Eliminate or simplify the FAR.

The President eliminated the FAR.

However, I look for the administration and the next executive committee and senate to work with the new administration to develop an improved mechanism for reporting data on faculty activity in a way that will be informative and will do exactly what the FAR purported to achieve – to show to the IHL Board, the legislature and the taxpayers of the state of Mississippi the quality and volume of faculty output in order to help the administration make its case for support and recognition for our mission.

6. Achieve greater involvement in budgeting and planning and more transparency in the budget process.

This has been a year of transition, and although we have not been more directly involved in budget planning for this year, the President has pledged that faculty will be well represented in this process in the future.

We have been actively involved in the buildup to a strategic plan at all levels -- this will determine the process for planning and budgeting. Steve Oshrin and I have attended (and will continue to attend) workshops on strategic planning and budgeting initiated by Joe Morgan. This is an area in which our patience but practical involvement should help produce the development of a budgeting model that is transparent, that establishes priorities that are in line with strategic planning and in which faculty presence is significant.

7. Achieve active involvement and input on administrative searches.

This has been an area in which we have been very active. We worked with Vice President for Students Joe Paul to develop a process for the Provost search. Faculty were the numerically major element of that search and were a strong factor in that successful search.

In addition, we worked closely with the Interim Provost Middlebrooks to develop a plan for Dean searches (including a search for a new Dean of Libraries) in which faculty represented the major component in each search. The search committees were selected through discussion between the Interim Provost and executive committee. Because of the unique circumstances of our recent past, it was important to reestablish trust between administration and faculty. This meant that the search committees were large as a concession to the need to achieve both transparency and the visibly comprehensive representation of all units.

I hope that, having proven that the administration and faculty can work constructively together to achieve the goals of the university, future search committees can be less cumbersome

8. Building trust and good communication between the Senate and the President and her administration.

Institutionally, the President and Provost, at their own request, have regularly reported to the Senate.

The President has consulted with the executive committee in advance on many key decisions, and has informed it in a timely way on key decisions that were administrative in nature but important for the executive committee to know. There has been more meaningful involvement of executive committee, senators, and faculty at large on nearly all significant committees at the university than in the recent past.

The President's direct involvement in many of these processes has meant more direct engagement with the President and key administrators in councils in which ideas and policies are discussed and debated. Our advice has been given freely as well as solicited.

The sheer immensity of change over the last year and the time involved to achieve it has been incredible. This has affected the amount of face to face meetings between the executive committee and the President, but not negatively so. However, I expect that as we begin to move away from many of the ad hoc planning committees, as we look to be more efficient in our use of time, and as our strategic plan begins to take shape, it will be increasingly important for the future senate president and executive committee to meet regularly with the president and provost.

The President should be commended by the Senate for her many administrative appointments, particularly in the Fall of 2007. Although there were many key appointments, few ring so powerfully as the appointment of Interim Provost Bobby Middlebrooks, Dr. Bill Powell as Associate Provost, and Dr. Mary Dayne Gregg as special advisor to the President. Each of these individuals have given proven faculty service to the university and each has served on Faculty Senate in key positions. These and other actions by the President have done a great deal to set faculty concerns at rest and to highlight the President's confidence concerning the faculty's role in the university.

9. Make a modest start to reestablish the communication among the state senates and counsels with an eye to strengthening ties among institutions.

This was a modest hope that we simply have not had time to address this year. I continue to believe that it is a missing critical component to giving faculty in the state a stronger voice at the Board level and I hope we can address this in the future.

10. Enhance and improve our relationship with the Gulf Coast campus at the administrative and faculty levels.

We have worked with closely with Associate Provost Pat Joachim on numerous areas of mutual concern. Pat has been very helpful and supportive of the senate's enhanced relationship to the Gulf Coast at every turn through both word and action.

We have supported the need for a chief academic officer on the Gulf Coast Campus and have worked with the Interim Provost, President, and the GCFC to develop some ideas what organizational model this might follow. We look forward to working with Provost Lyman, Associate Provost Joachim and the Gulf Coast Faculty Council to put an appropriate model in place.

Similarly we have embraced and continue to both support and receive support from the Gulf Coast Faculty Council as it has reorganized itself this year into a more formal organization that is an elective body with its own constitution and bylaws. We have seen the GCFC successfully structure itself to represent Gulf Coast faculty interests and perspectives. The GCFC has institutionalized a

relationship between the Senate and itself in its constitution, and I hope that we may, in the future, address possible adjustments in the Senate Constitution to reflect our recognition of, and respect for, the role the Gulf Coast Faculty Council plays.

We have exchanged ideas, lobbied the administration on many joint issues (and the Senate, through your executive committee, has also worked to support initiatives from the GCFC that were clearly important to constituents on that campus).

Ray Scurfield's leadership of the GCFC has been inspiring to me, and I have learned a lot in working with him. We are very fortunate to have him and other members of the Council on the Senate this next year.

This is a brief recitation of only a few of the ways in which the executive committee has worked to fulfill its obligation to represent all of our faculty constituents, regardless of campus location.

I will thank my colleagues on the executive committee at the meeting but I do want to take a moment to recognize Amy Young, Steve Oshrin, and Stan Hauer for their extraordinary work this year. The Senate will truly be in good hands with the incoming officers.

It has been an honor to serve in this important moment in our university's history. I look forward to returning to my seat in the Senate and to supporting the future work of the Senate and the new executive committee.

Stephen Judd, Faculty Senate President (for only twenty four more hours!)