

# University at Albany, State University of New York

## Governance Council

R. Michael Range, Chair

September 15, 2008

### Minutes

**Present:** Nan Carroll, Richard Collier, Edward Cupoli, Candace Merbler,  
John Monfasani, R. Michael Range, John Schmidt

The meeting convened at 3:33.

### **Agenda topics:**

#### **Minutes:**

A motion to approve the minutes of the September 5, 2008 meeting was made by Nan Carroll and was unanimously accepted by all present.

#### **Criteria for Restrictions for Chairs of Senate Councils and Committees:**

The discussion focused on the issue of the appearance of conflicts of interest, for example, when a department chair serves as chair of a council or committee, where said department could benefit from the influence in decision making from its chair serving as chair of a particular council or committee. It was argued that in such a situation, the chair, or for that matter, any other member with a potential conflict of interest should recuse themselves and not vote. There was a consensus not to recommend a charter amendment that would restrict eligibility of department chairs. However, it was suggested that the Senate Chair make a statement in the opening remarks to the University Senate, at the beginning of the academic year, that council and committee chairs, as well as any other member of the university recuse themselves when serving in a position where any conflicts, or the appearance of any conflicts could arise, and further hold themselves to the ethical standards as outlined in the Faculty Handbook.

#### **Charter Amendment Proposed by LISC:**

The Governance Council agreed on recommending that a non-elected ex-officio member of a council or committee not chair that committee. GOV will explore adding appropriate language to the charter. The Chair will report to the Executive Committee to obtain broader feedback on the issue, both for and against the recommendation. Any such amendment would not apply to those currently serving on committees.

#### **Guests:**

**John Delano—Update on GOV's May 2008 Recommendations Regarding Middle States Self Study Steering Committee:**

John Delano, last year's chair of GOV, was asked to respond to inquiries from GOV to obtain information on how the recommendations of GOV, made in a letter dated May 12, 2008, were considered, and the response from the administration. John provided two handouts, one showing the status of individuals identified in the May 12 letter and the other showing a historical time-line concerning the Self-Study, beginning on March 27, 2008 through September 8, 2008. In addition to addressing these questions, the time-line shows the effort on the part of GOV to work with the president and co-chair of the Self-Study, offering assistance and advice.

### **Sue Faerman and Steve Messner, Co-Chairs of Middle States Self-Study Steering Committee**

Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, Sue Faerman, reflected on her past involvement with the Middle States Self-Study from ten years ago, her current involvement as co-chair, and on the need to bring experience and leadership to the process. These two characteristics were essential in selecting a co-chair, which she conveyed to the president. Also, the co-chair would be someone who might make a long term commitment. Steve Messner was recommended by Sue to the president because of his experience and leadership background. In proposing the appointment of Professor Messner, she hopes that the experience he gains from this process will be carried forward to teach someone else ten years from now.

The Chair of GOV expressed concerns about the process not moving ahead earlier, prior to the end of the spring semester, even though one of the co-chairs was already put in charge in early summer 2007 by then Officer in Charge Susan Herbst. The Chair further inquired about not having a steering committee in place sooner. Vice Provost Faerman recalled delays due to the new interim president coming on board and whether or not the process would continue due to the ongoing presidential search. The Interim President decided that it should go ahead, but by this time (late March) it was realized that the leadership model involving a "junior" co-chair who would chair the next self study ten years from now, did not attract any candidates. In early April, it was decided that a model involving two equal co-chairs would be more appropriate.

The Chair of GOV thanked John Delano, Sue Faerman, and Steve Messner for coming and for their work on this important matter. Sue added that members of the committees are the ones that should be thanked for all the work they are doing.

The Chair suggested that Council members e-mail each other their thoughts about the process, and that a report should be drafted to be submitted to the Senate Executive Committee, then the Senate. The contents of the report should include recommendations for the future.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 pm.

Recorded and submitted by  
Gail Cameron