

University Senate
Monday, September 24, 2018
2:45 PM – 4:45 PM
CC West Boardroom
James Mower, Senate Chair

MINUTES

Approval of May 7, 2008 Senate Minutes:

Discussion: none

31 in favor; 5 abstentions; 0 opposed

Minutes approved.

Provost report:

Jim Stellar noted that he will be stepping out of the Provost's Office in January. He directed questions about the search for the next Provost to Bruce Szelest, and suggested that any questions about activities before the transition can go to Ann Marie Murray or to him directly.

Stellar highlighted that this has been a good year: 11% increase in the applicant pool (not counting duplicate applications through SUNY program); class was filled in the spring for the first time since 2005; expected 10 point rise in SAT scores; no dip in GPA; maintained diversity in the freshman class; the number of Latino and African American students has risen steadily since at least 2012. He shared that UAlbany moved from 151 to 140 in US News and World Report, and that in a Washington Monthly ranking, which factors in social mobility, UAlbany is 43 in the nation – the top SUNY. He also cited a recent report that placed UAlbany in the top 10 in America for Latino graduation rates.

Stellar described that the changes occurring right now in the budget are to move recurring funds under recurring expenses. The university has been growing too large with the faculty in proportion to the students coming in to support that faculty, and has been using one-time money to bridge the gap. He stated that fixing this now will lead to better long-term financial health, and emphasized that given the growth the University is experiencing this will be resolved over time.

He stated his pleasure at the fact that the University has hired a great cohort of faculty, is performing exceptional research, and shared that he is optimistic about the future of the University based on our recent successes.

Questions:

Q: Please explain what you were referring to in terms of the budget reset. Does this have to do with the new colleges or is this a change in tenure track versus contingency, etc.?

A: (Jim Stellar) We grew salaries by 114% but grew revenue from students by 104% which is not sustainable. This includes everything. Professors are the highest expense, but they are of course also incredibly important. Our goal is to control growth of the budget. The State is not increasing its contribution and we cannot rely on them to cover rising costs due to inflation. There was also a welcome salary raise through union negotiations with no new state money which has to be managed. He shared that he does not expect any of this will affect the upward trajectory of the university. We will continue discussing how we manage these changes and maintain the upward trajectory.

Q: Seeking clarity: we closed the graduate class because we met the number we had planned, but we hired too many faculty?

A: (JS) The faculty/student revenue gap has been splitting since 2013. We have been projecting high and hiring new faculty with those numbers in mind, but we have not hit those numbers and so we ended up with a lasting budget gap. Excelsior helped our growth this year, although it is not clear how much – we were rising before this, so it is hard to know how much is due to which.

Q: What are the Fall 2019 projections?

A: (JS) There is an Optimal Sizing Committee that is looking at facilities, etc. and the belief is that we can get a 6-7% increase in enrollment before having to incur much in the way of facility expenses. 20,000 by 2020 is no longer the plan, but we are growing responsibly and maintaining quality -- growing is the best way to get us out of budget challenges.

Q: What will be the procedure to fill the position of provost, timeline, etc.

A: (Bruce Szelest) There will be announcements coming out shortly, including a search procedure, in which all of this will be made clear.

Members thanked Jim Stellar for the work he has done for the University, and commended him on the annual report with strong markers – it was noted that the annual report is available to the whole community. They stated that Stellar was an exceptionally open provost who has come to every senate meeting.

Chairs report:

Powerpoint presentation – attached.

Other reports:

SUNY Senators: nothing additional to report; the first plenary session will be at Binghamton University in October; there is a new website for the university faculty senate.

Graduate Student Organization: Amanda Akaynian is representing for GSO as a substitute; nothing to report.

Student Association: not present.

CAA: nothing to report.

CAFFECOR: has not met yet; last year was an active year.

CERS: nothing to report.

CoR: held its first meeting; populated all committees and will begin work.

CPCA: nothing to report.

GAC: nothing to report.

GOV: will be populating committees at next meeting.

LISC: first meeting was Sep 4, populated subcommittees, received reports from ITS and University Libraries, will submit to be posted on website; appointment of task force for open access policy, will compile a list of people who should serve and will be moving forward over the academic year.

UAC: most committees are populated, first organization meeting will be Thursday.

ULC: met last Wednesday, two resolutions to the SEC, dialogue around graduation planning, childcare resolution coming forward.

UPPC: finished populating subcommittees – have more members than at first meeting, second meeting this Wednesday; working with administration to have a more effective way of working with those committees, need to have information early to be able to provide recommendations and working on steps for how to facilitate that; report of workforce task force, and optimal size of the university; CPCA last year was increased to 21 members, half were professors; this proved to be difficult because there were not enough full professors; will be legislation coming to make it more flexible.

New business:

Jim Mower shared that to reach quorum 50% of members plus 1 need to vote. Hi indicated that this has been an issue because of the way the Senate meeting is organized; reporting at the beginning, action items toward the end, and when ready to vote people need to leave to go

teach which causes challenges. He shared his recommendation, which would be to change the layout of the meeting, which would respect Robert's Rules, the by-laws, and the charter.

Proposal: Change the order of business to put new and old business before council and committee reports. Justification: by doing so, we will be better able to achieve quorum.

Discussion: Karen Kiorpes stated that she thought it was a really good idea; we do this on an ad hoc basis when we have a busy meeting, but this would help us to avoid doing this commonly. She shared that putting it in the middle is good because there are challenges with quorum at both the beginning and at the end.

Vote: 40 in favor; 0 abstained; 0 opposed

Jim Mower shared that the motion passed, will go into effect next meeting.

Presentation about Commencement by Director of University Events, Christy Doyle
Powerpoint attached.

Christy Doyle made a presentation about commencement planning. She shared the history of commencement ceremonies over the past 20 years, including recent changes and their rationale. She introduced some potential changes that may be coming and invited comments, including (copied from Doyle's presentation):

GRADUATE LEVEL

We will maintain separate Doctoral Hooding and Masters/Graduate Certificate degree conferral ceremonies, both in the SEFCU Arena.

Options for consideration:

- Doctoral Ceremony: Thursday evening vs. Sunday afternoon?
- Masters Ceremony: Friday morning vs. Friday evening?

UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL

We will combine schools and colleges for UG recognition ceremonies to be held in the SEFCU Arena, likely with the procession incorporating crossing the stage *prior to* remarks.

Options for consideration:

- Do we continue with u-wide outdoor degree conferral and UG recognition ceremonies?
- If yes, combine that with 5 recognition ceremonies.
- If no, hold up to 7 school/college-based recognition ceremonies that now also become degree conferral ceremonies.

She invited comments and questions until October 1st at:

commencement@albany.edu
518-442-5310

Discussion:

A member shared that the physics department had a small ceremony, every faculty member would come every year, one faculty would speak, meet their families, recruit their siblings, chat with faculty etc. He shared that the physics department was upset because it was a very positive experience for faculty, students, and their families.

Doyle asked whether he felt that this has impacted faculty participation, and he responded that yes, since it was merged with several others, and there is not a chance to meet students, faculty are not as interested to participate.

Several members indicated that their department shared that perspective, including Anthropology; Languages, Literatures and Cultures; Music and Theater; and others.

A representative from ULC indicated that there is a strong chord of concern about the departmental ceremonies being lost, as well as believing that the December ceremony should be brought back. The reason provided was that having December ceremony negatively impacts out of state and international students, as well as NYS students who take jobs outside of the state.

Doyle replied that May ceremonies are offered to December, May, and petitioned summer grads, and that 20% of that population attended in May. She shared that the removal of the December ceremony was controversial among the student population soon after the decision was made, but not so much anymore. She indicated that they still do hear it internally from faculty and staff, but the students' concerns are waning.

A member asked whether anyone has done a study about how the small departmental ceremonies may have boosted alumni donations? Doyle replied that no – the information is only anecdotal, but that she can bring the question to her colleagues in Development.

A member shared that audience decorum has been a problem; he shared his perspective that small ceremonies may help that.

A member shared the perspective that students having their name called isn't everything; other things happen in those small ceremonies, like departmental awards, for example, and there is no time when this can be shared with families. A representative from Music and Theater shared that Music had a performance, and the reception was in the student show in the art building, and families had a chance to see student work and student performance.

Doyle affirmed these considerations, and shared that while these things are important, it is a challenge to fit all of these things in to a finite amount of time. She suggested that some departments have started a new tradition with awards prior to commencement weekend.

A representative from Business suggested that their graduation was always a large, engaged activity, and that many students only attended this. She suggested that students start in large lecture centers, later they meet faculty, meet other students, and proceed to a more intimate in-school environment, and for that reason she suggested that to then turn it back into a large environment for commencement is something we should reconsider.

A representative from University Events stated that most of those we are hearing from are CAS; and reminded that there are other schools and colleges which have departments (like Rockefeller) who were looking to have the same ability to break into departments. This trend would result in us going from 27 ceremonies to many more. He recognized that there is a value to those ceremonies, but indicated a concern that at the same time there are other departments that did not have that opportunity, and would potentially want it, and if we do that it would require many more ceremonies which would be untenable.

Karl Rethemeyer, Dean of Rockefeller, clarified that they never sought to separate the two departments for commencement, but that they did value the graduate ceremony. He shared that they moved it to a Friday before commencement weekend, and indicated that there is much less engagement now. He shared that for Rockefeller it was part of a broader engagement strategy, and urged that it is important to consider that we have a lesser degree of engagement around commencement, especially for graduate.

Doyle shared that there is data that the majority of our student body is participating; participation has been increasing over the years, and 80-90% are signing up for both the large ceremony and the smaller ceremony, and based on the fact that seats are filling she indicated that people are actually showing up.

Zina Lawrence pointed out that people want to celebrate, so people are not going to stay home just because it isn't the experience that they want it to be; it is great that they are showing up but that does not mean that the takeaway is as great.

A member asked who is making these decisions and to whom their concerns can be directed.

Doyle stated that University Events is part of the conversation, but decisions are made at the institutional senior leadership level. Questions and concerns can go to University

Events and feedback will be collected until October 1: commencement@albany.edu;
518-442-5310

Presentation by Registrar, Karen Chico-Hurst

Chico-Hurst shared that there is a proposal under consideration to amend the calendar so that there would not be classes suspended on holidays other than legal holidays. She shared that this would allow for the production of a 5-year planning calendar.

She assured that students and faculty are still at liberty to observe their religious beliefs, including time off, and faculty and staff can celebrate at their leisure with proper accommodations in place.

This is helpful because it will mean that the calendar would no longer need to be discussed at UPPC every year; there would be a consistent set of contact hours for all classes regardless of meeting day; it would align UAlbany calendars with other institutions; and would ensure that the University meets state, federal, and SUNY guidelines.

Discussion:

A member shared that as a father of two young kids, he felt that the biggest challenge will be for parents with school aged children. They will have to either pay for childcare, bring children, etc.

A member pointed out that in the fall there is October break and Thanksgiving break and it is distributed; suggested that something similar could be done in the spring.

A member shared that students were petitioning for Muslim holidays to be recognized if Jewish holidays are recognized. The member indicated that if we are to be a supportive diverse institution this is the direction that we should be moving in, both for our students and the image we project.

Chico-Hurst shared that it is State law that we cannot penalize a student for recognizing their religious beliefs. She indicated that if we go forward with this plan, we will make strong statements about how students observe and how they notify their faculty, and strong statement to faculty so that if they would like to observe they have a mechanism as well. This is for all holidays. She said that others have suggested (and other universities do this) that we put out a calendar in advance that makes faculty aware of holidays that our students might observe for their general awareness; some schools have asked faculty to not have tests or quizzes on those days.

A member asked how faculty can confirm that it is a legitimate holiday.

Chico-Hurst asked how faculty do it now. She shared that her office looked at 20 schools, 10 aspirational peers, 10 peers, and only one other school still suspends on the holidays. She indicated that most follow the template that we are proposing. She said that they always look at guides for creation of the calendar, including by consulting members of the SUNY Registrar's Association.

A member shared the concern that if students miss a class it is different from having a faculty miss. She pointed out that if you have two or three faculty taking off in a department it is challenging to get it covered, and if class is cancelled all of the students miss that instruction time.

Chico-Hurst replied that most units have given guidance but not dictated what the faculty need to do. She shared that CAS has a policy about faculty who want to observe, or even attend a conference, including alternate assignments, or substitute coverage – we need to give people ideas about how to navigate that if we go forward. She indicated that in listening to students anecdotally, this semester has been particularly disruptive – faculty were asking their Monday/Wednesday/Friday classes to come in on a Tuesday because so many MWF classes were canceled, putting them behind. She shared that other universities say that they have not had trouble implementing it.

Jon Bartow stated that as a parent who helped three children become a generation accumulating debt, he feels that these consumers deserve to get their money's worth and that we have an obligation to provide them an education and not short change students.

A member indicated concerns about discrimination, and asked whether there could there be an office where they could go to request time off and then communicate to faculty.

Chico-Hurst said that she will discuss with VP for Undergraduate Education, Jeanette Altarriba.

One member suggested beginning classes at 6am, indicating that there is another institution that is beginning at 6am. Chico-Hurst responded that the 8:15 timeslot is already the most underutilized time slot on campus and that 6am start time would not likely be popular.

Karen Chico-Hurst closed by inviting comments and questions by October 1st, and assured the group that if this were to go through it would be accompanied by very clear procedures and policies for a smooth implementation.

Chico-Hurst asked that members email kchicohurst@albany.edu or registrar@albany.edu for questions/comments by October 1st.

