

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 14, 2012
Student Senate Room, LSU Student Union



Attendance

Faculty Senate Executive Committee members present:

1. Kevin L. Cope (President, English)
2. Ken McMillin (Vice-President, Animal Science)
3. Joan King (Member-at-large, Food Science)
4. George Stanley (Secretary, Chemistry)
5. Bill Daly (Past-President, Chemistry)
6. Kenneth Fasching-Varner (New Member-at-large)
7. Larry Rouse (Member-at-Large, Oceanography)

Parliamentarian: Louay Mohammed

Senators present (A = Alternate; P = Proxy):

1	✓	Sibel Ates (Oceanography/C&E)	24	P	Guillermo Ferreyra (Math/Sci)	47	✓	Jeff Nunn (Geology/Sci)
2		Linda Allen (Chemistry/Sci)	25	✓	Kristopher Fletcher (Foreign Lang/HSS)	48		John Nyman (Renew Nat Res/Ag)
3	A	Gabriel Beavers (Music/M&FA)	26	✓	Joseph Francis (Compar BioMed/Vet)	49	✓	Evelyn Orman (Music/Music & DA)
4	✓	Melissa Beck (Psychology/HSS)	27		Juhan Frank (Physics/Sci)	50	P	Rebecca Owens (Curriculum & Instruct/Ed)
5	P	Dana Bickmore (Ed Theory Pol Pract/Ed)	28	✓	Craig Freeman (Mass Comm/MassCom)	51		Rosemary Peters (French/HSS)
6	P	Graham Bodie (Comm Studies/HSS)	29	✓	Stephen Gaunt (Pathobiological Sci/Vet)	52	✓	Suresh Rai (Elect & Comp/Eng)
7		William Boelhower (English/HSS)	30	✓	Wes Harrison (Ag Econ/Ag)	53	✓	Margaret Reams (Environ Studies/C&E)
8	✓	Dorin Boldor (Biol Eng/Ag-Eng)	31	✓	Richard Holben (Drama/Music & DA)	54	✓	Lawrence Rouse (Oceanography/C&E)
9	✓	Stephanie Braunstein (LSU Libraries/Lib)	32	P	Dorothy Jacobsen (Kinesiology/Ed)	55		Gary Sanger (Finance/BA)
10	A	Robb Brumbfield (Bio/Sci)	33	✓	Jennifer Jolly (Ed Theory Pol Pract/Ed)	56	✓	Bhaba Sarker (Const Manage & Ind/Eng)
11		Alvin Burns (Marketing/BA)	34		Carol Jurkiewicz (Public Admin/BA)	57	✓	George Stanley (Chemistry/Sci)
12	P	Russell Carson (Kinesiology/Ed)	35		Rajgopal Kannan (Comp Sci/Sci)	58	✓	Suzanne Stauffer (Lib & Info Sci/SLIS)
13	✓	Paolo Chirumbolo (Foreign Lang/HSS)	36	✓	Joan King (Food Sci/Ag)	59		William Stickle (Biological Sci/Sci)
14		Aaron Clopton (Kinesiology/Ed)	37		Jeff Kuehny (Horticulture/Ag)	60	✓	Padmanabhan Sundar (Math/Sci)
15		Craig Colten (Geog&Antho/HSS)	38	✓	Vince LiCata (Biological Sci/Sci)	61		Gail Sutherland (Phil & Relig/HSS)
16	✓	Kevin Cope (English/HSS)	39	✓	David Lindenfeld (History/HSS)	62	✓	Carol Taylor (Chem/Sci)
17	✓	Larry Crumbley (Accounting/BA)	40	P	Michelle Livermore (Social Work/SW)	63	✓	Dianne Taylor (ELRC/Ed)
18	✓	William Daly (Chemistry/Sci)	41	✓	Mandi Lopez (Vet Clinical Sci/Vet)	64		Phillip Tebbutt (Interior Design/A&D)
19	✓	Jeffrey Davis (Entomology/Ag)	42	✓	Kevin McCarter (Exp Stat/Ag)	65		Wanjun Wang (Mech Eng/Eng)
20		Neila Donovan (Comm Sci Disord/HSS)	43	✓	Patrick McGee (English/HSS)	66	✓	Christopher Weber (Polysci/HSS)
21		Kerry Dooley (ChemE/Eng)	44	✓	Ken McMillin (Animal Sci/Ag)	67		Hsiao-Chun Wu (Elect & Comp/Eng)
22	P	Bruce Eilts (Vet Clinical Sci/Vet)	45		Reem Meshal (Phil & Relig/HSS)	68		David Young (Physics/Sci)
23	✓	Kenneth Fasching-Varner (Ed T Pol Pract/Ed)	46	✓	Louay Mohammed (C & Environ/Eng)			

Guests:

Louis Day	Koran Addo	Claire Advokat	Jane Cassidy	Sherri Wischusen
Patti Exner	Rachel Waren	James Stoner	Thomas Rogers	

Consideration of the Minutes

Moved and accepted conditionally

President's Report

- One reason we have a short agenda is that we have had a lot of cooperation from faculty to address some of the issues brought up in last month's new resolutions. A committee is meeting with Dean Laura Lindsey and emeritus Chancellor Jim Wharton about the LSU Lab School. There is also a committee headed up by Ravi Rau meeting concerning Graduate Membership issues. The Faculty Senate Executive Committee will meet tomorrow with the Chancellor to discuss the Provost candidates, of which there were some promising candidates.
- Restructuring higher education in LA now appears to be focused on northern LA. But we need to keep an eye out on any restructuring activities. The faculty at LSU-S are preparing a vote to express their desire to stay in the LSU system and not be transferred to the UL-system.
- The Conference of LA Colleges and Universities that met last month at Lod Cook also addressed some of these restructuring issues and funding of higher education by Senator Nevers.

- Senator Nevers today unveiled a post-hoc bill to address some of the issues with the bill setting a 60-hour common curriculum and course numbering system. One of the problems with this previous bill is a lack of quality control for common courses. The current effort by Senator Nevers does not seem to address this problem, but rather sets a very short timeframe for establishing a common course numbering system by August, 2012. The new bill also sets an aggressive time frame expanding the common course numbering system to include all courses.
- The next state-wide faculty summit meeting will be held this Saturday, March 17, at LSU-A. Guest speaker will be our own A.G. Monaco, head of HRM.

Q&A Summary:

No discussion

Stephanie Braunstein announces that Michael Russo has received an award from [tape] as one of 2012 Movers and Shakers.

Report of the Nominating Committee (Mandi Lopez, Chair)

The slate of the nominating committee for Faculty Senate Officers and members:

President: Kevin Cope

Vice-President: Ken McMillin

Secretary: still open

Member-at-Large (two positions): Louay Mohammed, Stephanie Baunstein, and Joan King

No nominations from the floor. Voting will occur at the April meeting.

Old Business

Second and Final reading:

Faculty Senate Resolution 12-3

“Including Class Attendance Among Course Grading Criteria”

Introduced by Professors Louis Day, James Stoner and Claire Advokat

WHEREAS, class attendance is fundamental to a quality education at Louisiana State University, the state’s Flagship University; and
WHEREAS, excessive class absences may result in students’ failure in courses, thereby delaying their graduation and possibly leading to withdrawal from the university; and

WHEREAS, the State of Louisiana subsidizes the educational costs of all LSU students and has a right to expect respect for its investment in this education, respect which includes but is not limited to, regular class attendance; and

WHEREAS, the most effective means of fostering student responsibility for class attendance is a university policy permitting instructors to include attendance among their grading criteria; and

WHEREAS, Academic Affairs has interpreted the statement in the current university policy on grading (PS-44) that judgments concerning grading “should be based solely on academic considerations” as prohibiting taking into account class attendance in the awarding of grades

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Faculty Senate recommends that PS-44 be amended to insert these two sentences following the word “considerations” as noted above:

Because class absences are likely to affect a student’s mastery of course content, they may be considered among these “academic considerations” in determining the final course grade. Therefore, instructors, at their discretion, may also include “unexcused” absences as a component in the assignment of course grades, as long as attendance policies are spelled out clearly in the course syllabus at the beginning of the semester.

Background

After considerable discussion with colleagues over the years, representing most of the major colleges, we are convinced that the problem of class absences is wide-spread and pervasive and is inimical to the quality of education expected of a flagship university.

Since the inauguration of PS-44, Academic Affairs has generally interpreted this policy as precluding any grade considerations based upon class attendance. Admittedly, the language is rather ambiguous, but a fair reading of PS-44 is that the policy does indeed prohibit the use of class attendance in the determination of a student’s grade. We believe the time has come to change this policy to permit instructors to take class attendance into consideration in their grading. This amendment would send a strong message that the university considers class attendance essential to the intellectual development of LSU students.

Some of the rationales for this policy change are incorporated into the Resolution, but we offer the following additional justifications for this policy change:

1. Because some faculty are frustrated with what they perceive as a “culture of permissiveness” at LSU towards class attendance and a policy that frustrates their attempts to alter this culture, they resort to other means to circumvent the policy

by including in their syllabi class participation points or grades. While class participation grades have frequently been used as a legitimate component of the grading scale, too often they are employed as a means of encouraging (if not ensuring) class attendance. A policy change like the one proposed above would at least make the process of including class attendance in the grading scale more intellectually honest.

2. Like most communities, a university is animated by certain core values that are imparted to its students through a continuous process of acculturation. Among these are professional responsibility and respect. Students who are persistently absent display a wanton disregard for the academic responsibilities that flow from the privilege of attending an institution of higher learning with selective admission standards such as LSU.
3. Within the university setting, students form a *learning community* among themselves. The absence of some class members from this intellectual environment demeans the quality of this shared experience and displays a lack of respect for their classmates. In addition, regular class absences signal a lack of respect for the instructor on the part of the student. This proposal will send an unmistakable signal to our students that they have a moral obligation to attend class, except when they are impeded by circumstances beyond their control.
4. Insofar as we can tell, the current university policy is inconsistent with most other major universities. A survey of the policies of 19 universities, representing geographical diversity, revealed that 18 of these permitted grading, at least to some extent, on class attendance (the 19th university's policy was somewhat ambiguous) as long as this expectation is included in the syllabus.

[reading of resolution by Louis Day not on video due to technical issues]

Q&A Summary:

Evelyn Orman: Since we can assign participation grades why should we include attendance as a grading option. I believe that the participation grade is more educationally worthwhile, if designed properly, than a simple attendance grade.

Louis Day: Some instructors use participation activities that are not intellectually challenging. I don't agree with that. Some universities have fairly strict attendance policy where missing more than 3 classes can lead to a student being dropped from the class. We aren't proposing that. I believe that this resolution sends a message that faculty consider class attendance important.

David Lindenfeld: Do you mean that the number of absences can lower a grade? Or that students can get points or a higher grade just from attendance?

Louis: We don't specify it either way. But I hope that faculty would not give points just for attendance.

Wes Harrison: Has there been any examples of students protesting a grade based simply on non-intellectually challenging participation grades?

Louis: Not that I know of.

Thomas Rogers (student government): PS-22 does provide an extensive list of excused absences but not any details on what is proper documentation. So students are concerned about providing proper documentation for an excused absence. We also believe that participation assignments are better at engaging students in the class.

Louis: Regarding the first point, I have a statement in my syllabus that states that I'm the final decider on what is an excused absence and I don't usually require much documentation.

Vince LiCatta: I'm relying a comment from Bill Wischusen who is in charge of our large introductory biology classes. He is not in favor of this.

Louis: This is just one more tool for faculty to use. Faculty aren't forced to use this.

Jim Stoner: Student attendance is very important. The student paper had an article that stated that if this passed it wouldn't be terrible. I'll take that as an endorsement.

Kris Fletcher: Participation is a thorny issue. How do you grade participation if every student doesn't participate?

Patrick McGee: People who teach first year writing in English are in favor of this.

George Stanley: I want to see intellectually challenging participation activities. I give a single-question straightforward written quiz in every lecture for 250 students in General Chemistry. I have 87-90% attendance in this large lecture due to this quiz. I only take 15 mins to grade 250 of these because about 80% of the students get the question right. So I believe that faculty can always design intellectually challenging participation activities to engage the students and encourage attendance. I do believe that good attendance is very important. I will vote against this because I believe we already have the tools to encourage good attendance.

Dorin Bolder: I do group projects in Engineering and participation in these projects is very important. I need a way to "punish" students that do not do their fair share in these projects.

Kris Fletcher: I view this as another tool to get students to come to class.

Suzanne Stauffer: I support this as it gives us more tools to encourage attendance and it comes under academic freedom.

Student: I'd like to see PS-22 defined better regarding documentation for excused absences.

Question is called.

Resolution passes 27 to 6.

New Business

No new business from the floor.

Adjournment at 4:15 PM. A new recent record for shortest Faculty Senate meeting.