Arts and Sciences Senate Minutes
October 23, 2006

Meeting was called to order at 3:35 p.m.

     I.   Approval of tentative Agenda: approved

     II. Approval of minutes from September 25th. Norman Goodman made a correction in IV. Para. 2: Should be Buffalo, not Albany. The Curriculum Committee should be hearing back from Albany regarding approval of requirements by the end of the month.

     III. Use of Electronic Records in PTC Cases: Peter Koch:

The following grew out of a question which Dr. Koch asked Joanne Davila, because of interest from departments for increasing efficiency in dealing with documents, mainly moving more toward the use electronic documents rather than paper documents. Part of the background for this came about from a group of physics departments whose chairs meet once a year, called the Midwest Chairs group. Dr. Koch sent an email to the chairs of this group to compare notes regarding different policies, etc. The email essentially asked whether they still use paper or are considering moving toward electronic files on a secure password controlled website to allow remote viewing of documents/voting, etc. for PTC cases.

Why do this with PTC? Everyone, in a certain sense nowadays, creates text based documents electronically. Most scholarly work is graded and presented this way and other scholarly work and artistic work is not. But it can be and is usually recorded for posterity. It is increasingly common that this is done digitally via still photos, audio visual, and so on. With files in paper format the PTC members have to physically go to the CAS dean's office to access and peruse each candidate's binder.   Getting the binders, which are controlled by one of the staff members in the dean's office, and then to have to find a quite place to read and look through them can be quite daunting. Moreover many faculty members are busy and travel quite a bit. Being able to access the file remotely via a secure website would allow PTC members to do this initial screening and grading work from anywhere that there is internet access which means virtually anywhere in the world. Many departments at Universities elsewhere are increasingly moving their business electronically. Some federal agencies, for example, the National Science Foundation, has required for some time that proposals be submitted electronically. This is done via password controlled websites and in fact NSF won a government-wide award for doing this. It is time and tax payer dollar efficient. Some other Universities have already or are now doing college level or university level document work electronically via websites. It is not a matter if we do it here, it is when we do it. Without a good discussion of all the relevant issues and adequate testing, there is no reason why this couldn't be pursued.

Comments were solicited from numerous people. Gene Sprouse (in a letter read out loud by Dr. Koch) expressed concern about confidentiality of files. This should be addressed by experts in information security. There is another issue. In the past we had some files in the Arts that could not be digitized. The files were hard to deal with. This in addition to the security issue needs to be addressed by the PTC.

Dr. Koch then read some emails from the Midwest Chairs. Most are still using paper. Communications are done by email but the dossiers are still in paper format. Many were also concerned about the security aspect of doing PTC business electronically. If security was carefully thought out, they would definitely go electronic. Another said that they were implementing a secure website at the departmental level for the electronic handling of promotion documents for appointments and promotion committees.

Joanne Davila: The PTC took this up with the A&S Executive committee. There are issues of printing out the documents. For instance, people can inadvertently use it as scrap, leave it laying around the office for people to see, etc. Some of the PTC members don't like to view things on their screen and would like to print out copies.

Peter Koch: When the APS journal started using electronic documents, it was hard to read on screen, but you do get use to it. Most of the time it is psychological. Some Adobe and PDF versions do not allow you to print.

Norman Goodman: Not clear on extent on what you are suggesting. How does the PTC get hold of electronic books that candidates have published? Are you talking about having an exchange of information that would obviate the discussion of the PTC?

Peter Koch: The question was raised. The committee will still meet. But the whole thing is to get access to the things they need to see without having to go physically to the dean's office. Presumably most books are not available on web.

Robert Kerber: We assumed it could be done safely. We are more concerned about the end game. Would the voting be done electronically without the committee getting together face-to-face?

There was discussion about departments that do not have the resources to produce files electronically. Does it fall on the Dean? How do they get tech support?

Frank Myers: In terms of security, has any anonymous referee's letters leaked out?

Peter Koch: No that hasn't happened yet. With email, it is easy to make mistakes as opposed to a secure website. We are talking about faculty careers.

Norman Goodman: How does the PTC feel about viewing computer screens?

Joanne Davila: Feelings were mixed. Some felt it would be very nice (can view it from home, etc). Some did not feel comfortable viewing the screen and are not technologically savvy.

Norman Goodman was more concerned that people under those conditions might not read the documents as carefully then if they had the paperwork.

Joanne Davila: We would have to trust the members to be diligent and really put the effort into doing that.

Dean Staros: These are technical issues. We would have to lay out specifications and then go to Rich Reeder as to the feasibility and security.

Peter Koch: We would still want final copies of files/records in analog form.

Norman Goodman suggested getting a proposal together for Senate discussion.

    IV.   College of Arts and Sciences Report: Dean Staros

    Dean Staros reported on the initiative that the President announced at the convocation about the 50 new hires across the University. There are several specific initiatives, one that the provost mentioned at the University Senate, the Empire Innovation Initiative and the New York Special needs program. These were specific pots of money that SUNY Administration made available to campuses through a proposal format. We received approximately 4 lines. The special needs would be defined as certain professional schools (he believes it is Engineering and the School of Nursing).   There is the EIP. This was specifically designed by the state to increase faculty in areas of high extramural funding. The Provost put together a working group that included Dean Staros, the Vice Dean of the Medical School, Dean Conover from Marine Sciences and Dean Shamash from Engineering. All of them submitted proposals to the provost. These were then sent to Albany and we received some money (1.7 million). This covers 17 ½ lines. So that is 21 or 22 lines. The President has some new operating money she specifically mentioned in her convocation address. In particular, the state has picked up the differential cost of utilities that we had been paying out of our operating money. The President is going to make some of that available as star hires and senior faculty hires. Seven to ten of those will be across the University.   In any case, that takes care of the 30 out of 50 lines. There are 20 others that have not yet been defined. There has been repeated reference to cluster hiring.   Because there was so much emphasis in the Empire Innovation Initiative on the Sciences, I have encouraged more on the Social Sciences/Humanities to balance this. We have the opportunity to compete for ½ lines in this new initiative that the provost mentioned in computation sciences. There are ½ lines available through the environmental sciences initiative.

N. Goodman: At a meeting with the Executive Committee and President Kenny, she was very non-committal. Is there anything the Senate can do to help to claim some of those lines not only for research but help alleviate some of the teaching problems?

Dean Staros: There are some ideas that have come out.   There is a proposal to have a cluster that is focused on the Honors College where the Honors College and the departments wound enter into a joint agreement that half of the teaching equivalency of anyone hired on that would be devoted to the honors college.

IV.   Report on Teaching, Learning and Technology (Graham Glynn):

My position is actually an amalgamation of three former departments: Educational Technologies, Instructional Technologies and the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. The intent is to provide one stop shopping for faculty in terms of support for teaching in general and for technology. Many services are provided. One of the charges is to plan our way forward in supporting innovations in teaching and learning and the integration of technology and teaching. I would like your input. Will be meeting with departments, etc. We do have the resources behind us. I would like to hear your frustrations, e.g., lack of equipment, etc.   I am currently occupying Nancy Duffrin's Old office in the library. Please call or stop by with any questions or problems that you may have.

Joan Kuchner: Are you going to develop a clear web page on how faculty can find out what services are available. Also what are the costs?

GG: This organizational structure is actually a prototypical website.

Old Business: none

New Business: Dean Staros had two announcements: There will be an open faculty meeting for CAS faculty during campus life time on November 8th in the SAC Auditorium. On November 10th there will be a new faculty symposium at the Wang Center. This will be an all day event. Please call Libby Tolson in the CAS office if you would like to attend.

Adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Submitted by:

Laurie Theobalt
Secretary
University Senate