

University Faculty Senate Minutes

March 17, 2015

The meeting of the University of Mississippi Faculty Senate was called together at 7:00 PM on March 17, 2015.

Senators in attendance: Rachna Prakash; Chuck Ross; Philip Jackson; Patrick Curtis; Brice Noonan; Randy Wadkins; Brad Cook; Tossi Ikuta; Feng Wang; Tom Garrett; Adetayo Alabi; Ben McClelland; Chris Offutt; Andre Liebenberg; Robert Holt; Yang-Chieh Fu; Oliver Dinius; Darren Grem; Joshua Howard; Vanessa Gregory; Dennis Bunch; Lorri Williamson; Susan Ivey; Jessica Leming; Jing Jing Wu; Dwight Frink; Milam Aiken; Sasha Kocic; Tejas Pandya; Heather Allen; Valentina Iepuri; Adam Estes; Jos Milton; Laurel Lambert; Erin Holmes; Allison Bell; Breese Quinn; David Rutherford; Desiree Stepteau-Watson; Marcos Mendoaza; Minjoo Oh; Joe Sumrall; Rory Ledbetter

Senators excused: Greg Love

Senators absent: Elliott Hutchcraft; Antonia Eliason; Christopher Newman; Michael Gardiner; Mary Thurlkill; Ben Jones; Marilyn Mendolia; Allan Bellman; Mark Ortwein

The following departments' seats were unfilled as of this date: Biomolecular Sciences, Chemical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Law (2), and Pharmaceutics

Guests: Dr. Brandi Hephner Labanc, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs; Ms. Stacey Reycraft, Director of Student Disability Services; and Dr. Holly Reynolds, Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts

• **Call Meeting to Order**

- 7:00PM

• **Approval of February 10, 2015 Minutes**

- Approved

Barnett: Before we begin, I wanted to mention something that is not on the agenda. There is a new search committee for the Director of the Center of Excellence in Teaching and Learning. Would any senator be willing to serve on this?

Dwight Frink volunteered.

• **Presentation by Dr. Brandi Hephner Labanc, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Ms. Stacey Reycraft, Director of Student Disability Services, and Dr. Holly Reynolds, Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts on Testing Center Availability to Students Registered with the Office of Student Disability Services**

Reycraft: Thanks for the invitation. As the university has grown, this has become more of an issue, so I'm happy to be here to speak with you about this.

Currently, we utilize a three-prong system—faculty and academic departments are responsible for giving the vast majority of tests. Student Disability Services (SDS) has a very small space, and the College of Liberal arts has a small space for ~10 students, as well.

What are accommodations? Under what circumstances would a student need these accommodations?

1. Extended Time
2. Alternate Testing Environment- an environment less distracting than classroom

Students needing these alternate testing environments include those with brain damage; psychiatric disorders; students who need a reader/scribe (blind, low vision, physical disabilities for those who cannot type). There are an increasing number of students using assistive technology, which is when they use technology to read to them or scribe for them.

In terms of the three types of testing, the faculty and departments are responsible for the vast majority of students. Issues brought to us include often having to put students together in an alternative testing space; difficulty finding proctors; limited appropriate testing space, so they are using faculty offices, conference rooms, computer labs, support staff offices, empty classrooms, hallways, common areas, and closets. For example, once we had a department that had a line of students waiting for alternative space to test, but one student was short on time because he had a class beginning, so he had to take a test standing up over a cabinet.

Reynolds: SDS only provides accommodations for students approved for readers, scribes, and assistive technology. I think we have 40 students this semester. There are times during the semester (finals) when we can't take appointments because we are all proctoring.

In the fall of 2013, Dean Hopkins and I approached Stacey Reycraft because we were receiving people with complaints. Dean Hopkins was willing to put money behind it if Reycraft would help us. That fall, we tested 121 exams and decided that it went well, so we decided to start this during regular semester testing. I took a classroom that holds 60, and we tested 15 students at a time. We offered testing from 1-6pm, Monday through Thursday, in the testing center. During the semester, we ran for 11 weeks, had 93 unique students, and 100 exams. During finals, we had 89 final exams. It cost us \$8,000 to provide that service, and much of that was for the space during finals week. We had 8 departments use it. Stacey tells me that other schools outside of Liberal Arts wanting to use it, as well, so if their deans give additional money, we could open it up.

We did it again in fall 2014, and we had fewer exams given (60), and 108 during finals, and it cost about \$5600. We had 10 departments use it, and we are still getting requests.

We have also received suggestions, such as offering morning exams. We have a space crunch from morning to early afternoon all over campus, but we got a space open in Minor Hall, and we have it starting at 8am. We can accommodate 10 students. The most we had at a time in the space before was 5 students. This week alone, we're giving 50 exams. Already in 4 weeks, we have given well over 100 exams. Pharmacy wants access, and they have agreed to pay. We haven't had any pharmacy exams given yet, but we've granted access.

We have created an online form that faculty fills out for the student, and we have a part time staff person who receives that through email, and she passes it to us. She communicates with the student and faculty member, and we have a proctor that administers the exam (we employ 1 part time, proctor, and a handful of graduate students that act as proctors). We have to watch how many hours the proctors work each week, though, which is a real concern.

Q: I agree that we need this, and I have seen many times when we've needed it, but when I look at this, spring 2014 and fall 2014, it's costing over \$40/exam. When I look at that, I think that's pretty expensive. It looks to be incredibly costly for the university or the school. Maybe the student should pay it? I don't know, but per exam, that's a high figure.

A: We pay \$10/hour to the proctor. We are paying the testing coordinator \$12/hour, and a good bit of the cost is the space. We don't always have to pay for it. I think more schools should utilize this, because it'll drive the cost down.

C (question asker): Maybe, but not necessarily. I would see these figures and would go to my Dean, and say that I don't think it's worth the cost.

A: And I'd say that it's less than a lawsuit. I frankly don't think \$5,000, \$6,000, or \$7,000 is all that much to alleviate a problem that we are constantly seeing.

C: I agree with you. We have a responsibility to this population of students, and we do need to figure out a way to get schools involved. What are other schools doing? We're getting more and more students that have this need, so what are other SEC schools doing?

A (Reycraft): We did a survey of peer institutions. I have that information, and I'll hit on that towards the end of my presentation.

OK, legally, we have to provide this service. I always say that if we accommodate the process, we don't have to accommodate the final product (which is the grade), meaning the test has to be based on their knowledge, and not the impact of their disability.

In the late 1990s, there were about 200-220 student registered with disabilities, and there has been a 93-94% increase since. One reason is because enrollment is up, but it's also because we're seeing the first generation of students under protection of federal law. We are also seeing advances in medical treatment, so we're seeing students with severe physical disabilities that in the past wouldn't have made it this far (for example, cystic fibrosis). What is interesting about this is that we're seeing students with "invisible disabilities," which has an impact on people's perception.

I did a 10 year comparison based on testing. In 2004, we had 405 students approved for testing accommodations. In fall 2014, we had 857. That's a lot of exams per semester that need accommodations. The increase is overwhelming, so we're struggling. That's 112% increase over 10 years of students using testing accommodations.

When we got this invitation, we surveyed our students from Jan 29-Feb 16, and we had a 23% response rate (837 surveyed, 192 responded). 82% agree that their instructors are cooperative and supportive of their request for testing accommodations. 81% said their

instructors understood the testing accommodation process. I'm excited to see that the effort is so sincere from our faculty.

Regarding questions about the environment, though, we saw changes. 40% of students felt that the space they were put in didn't have enough room. 35% of students felt that it was more distracting than the classroom. 32% felt the temperature and lighting weren't good. The question I'm really concerned about, though, is this: do you believe a grade suffered because of an inadequate testing environment? 73% of students said yes. What type of grade to which the question was referring was left open- test grade, final grade, etc. I worry because I think that this is a lawsuit waiting to happen. For example, some comments that were made include a student sitting on the floor in a secretary's office to take an exam, on the floor in a hallway, someone in a TA's office with 3 additional students while the TA's talking to other TA's about person issues. One student indicated that he/she was put in a closet to take an exam.

Q? Did you survey students that took tests in your environment?

A: Yes. I didn't bring those results, but I can show you those at a later time.

OK, this is a problem campus-wide. We also surveyed 30 out of 31 SUG schools. Out of the 30 that responded, 18 have a dedicated testing space within disability services for all accommodated testing. Seating space ranged from 7-74. We have 2 seats. 3 SUG schools have a university-wide testing center that is also used for accommodated testing.

Q: Are those students required to go to that testing environment?

A: I don't think so. A couple of our students commented that they liked taking tests in the professor's office. There will always be students that don't use the center.

And 9 have systems similar to us, where the academic departments have the main responsibility to provide space.

We have some short term and long term recommendations for the senate. Short term is for more people to utilize the College of Liberal Arts' space. We try to keep a campus conference room list up to date with contact numbers. The staff in the departments aren't thrilled with this method, because they have to take the student, and they're wondering if they should escort them with the exam, and they also don't have the time to sit there and proctor. We had one instructor who taught a history class that had 15 students that needed testing accommodations. In that situation, a TA went with the students outside of the department.

Long term recommendations: Based on discussions with faculty and students, we would like a dedicated space for accommodate testing, between 30-50 students (with cameras); individual rooms for those who need scribes and readers; of the SUG schools that had a dedicated space, all have a full time staff member whose sole job is to focus on testing. Currently, we have a staff member that spends a significant amount of her time doing this. We also recommend using Graduate Assistants to serve as proctors, readers, and scribes. We want this to be located on-campus, because this will more easily allow students to take a test at same time as the class. This would also allow easy access for students with mobility-related issues. We also recommend extended hours, such as 7:30am-6pm.

Q: Talking about law suites, most of us don't know what the legal requirements are. We usually find a desk in a hallway and see if that's ok with the student, but I don't know what the legal requirements are. What is the floor space required, lighting, and decimal level, etc.?

A: Department of Justice cases have come up, and they basically say that it has to be an environment less distracting than the classroom. These are the worst written laws out there. All we know is that it needs to be good for test taking. A closet may be less distracting, but is it good for test taking? We also give ear plugs to try to help.

C: Just something to think about during planning: you mentioned lawsuits. You said accommodations must be better than classrooms, so it might be wise to require anyone who gets accommodations to use it.

A: We can't make anyone do anything legally, but as long as we offer it, and the student chooses not to, we're covered. And we have to document that.

C: I came from a university that forced students to use the accommodations, because the students may be embarrassed to use it and wouldn't speak up. You might want to talk to your legal team to see if this is something you should do.

A: Yeah, legally we can't force them. And as long as we have it documented that we offered, we are not held liable.

Q: What kind of documentation do you mean? Does that burden fall on faculty members?

A: I always encourage faculty to document this, and it can be as simple as little notes that describe your conversation with the student. Emails or a word document that you created, just in case one day you're asked about it.

C: Of the students that have been using this, I'm curious if there is a trend in types of courses using it? Are they lower level large courses, or all over the map?

A: I'd say probably the larger classes focused toward freshman, because the freshman class is growing, so the amount of students with disabilities is rising.

Q: You said that not many schools want to use the current center. What reservations have you heard from the schools?

A: Sometimes I send out a call and get no response. The business school has a room, and they're considering using a computer lab. I'm solely talking to deans, but bubbling up complaints from faculty are occurring.

Q: Where do you project our numbers to be if enrollment continues to increase? Are these numbers going to grow with enrollment, or will it continue to spike?

A: Good question, and we hope not. There are a lot of factors that would go into that. Out of state students who register with disabilities office is high, and I don't know why. But in short, I think we'll see an increase. Easily by fall, we'll have over 1,000 registered. Hopefully the quick spike will slow down, though.

Q: When you talked to SUG schools, have they seen a similar spike?

A: Yes, everyone has seen a spike. In 2008, the definition of disability was expanded, and clear language about schools not requiring an excessive amount of documentation for disability was created. With those two changes in the law, the increase happened. I don't know if the other SUG schools saw the same increase as us. You know, a lot of schools are seeing decreases in enrollment, too, so we're unique in that.

Q: Where is this on the priority list, Provost Stocks?

Provost Stocks: Two things we're considering. First, the Jackson Avenue Center is a possibility as an ETS testing center, and I've asked them to consider if they can accommodate some of this, as well. The other place is the Johnson Commons East renovation. This will be a more student oriented area, and maybe there will be space in there.

C: One other thing I would add is putting more energy around need, so we know what we're looking at. The other thing I'll highlight is that 82% are happy with faculty being so helpful.

Provost Stocks: If you need to use the testing service, and the dean won't pay it, let us know.

Reynolds: And remember, the morning exams are very popular, and it's hard to find space in the morning.

Q: Holly [Reynolds], are you concerned that the increased enrollment means increased need for office space and classroom space, and your space might run out because of this?

Reynolds: Yes, of course I'm worried about that. I want faculty from all over campus to be able to use this. There is a classroom down the hall from us, and it only had 1 class scheduled between 8am-5pm. But then I found out UM Box office had control over that, and she was renting it out to private groups, so I didn't get it. In fall, that space is used for orientation classes.

• Senate Committee Reports

○ Executive Committee

- Barnett: This is not on the agenda, but I want to bring it up. I was contacted by the University of Southern Mississippi asking faculty senates to form a united voice to approach the legislator to ask for a 5% increase in faculty pay. I encourage you to ask your colleagues to write to your representative and tell them why this is important. The chairs/presidents of faculty senates around the state have been talking about how to best approach this, and there are lots of opinions, and there has not been a consensus about a time when we can all go to Jackson. I heard NPR was reporting on this today, which I wasn't aware of, and it's moving quickly. We're trying to decide if this is a thing we need to push for. I asked the Provost for advice, and I'm not sure if you want to speak about this at this time?

Provost Stocks: IHL made the decision to suspend the funding formula and ask for 5% increase for staff. I was asked to appear in front of the Appropriations Committee, and all universities asked for this. We don't know if that'll happen, and as recently as two weeks ago, there were talks of tax cuts within the state. We're still hopeful.

Barnett: So, that's about all the information I can give you. Tom [Garrett] will join me if we do travel to Jackson. If anything comes of this, I will keep you all apprised of that. In the mean time, I encourage you to ask your colleagues to reach out.

Q: So this is already beyond the senates? Our representatives know about this, so we should write our congressman?

A: This is at the state level. We have talked about legislators, not the IHL.

Provost Stocks: Yes, because this is already an IHL initiative.

A: This is because there was an excess in appropriations?

Provost: I can only speak from my impression- it's because of the funding formula suspension. I believe this suspension is a 1 year thing.

Q: Is this officially suspended?

Provost Stocks: It's suggested/proposed.

- Academic Affairs

- Update on Best Practices related to Academic Discipline (See Attached)
 - This list would suggest the appropriate disciplinary measure to take for a set of common infractions.

Chair Breese Quinn reporting:

We have been working on this for a while, and we have come up with a document to make recommendations to departments based on 3 elements:

1. Education about the academic discipline process should be made available and strongly promoted to faculty. We listed resources that we know of here. This should be discussed in departmental faculty meetings.
2. Departments should explicitly include discussions regarding academic discipline in the mentoring process for new faculty.
3. Individual faculty should set clear expectations for academic integrity and discipline in course syllabi.

These are the elements that we came up with for guidelines for departments, and they could be different for different departments. We are here for the faculty to approve or reject this document.

Michael: We're asking for approval. What will happen if we approve is that I will send this to the Provost, and if they see this as appropriate, they will pass it to the departments.

Motion approved. Seconded.

Discussion? None.

All in favor.

- Update on the GradeBuddy Online Note Distribution System • GradeBuddy.com, according to their website, "provides a platform for students to access the best study materials to help accelerate learning and increase academic success." It is a system that allows student to sell their in-class notes via an online portal to other students. The question has been raised whether this should be considered academic misconduct and whether this represents an inappropriate use of the intellectual property of the professor.

Barnett: Breese [Quinn], do you have any update on GradeBuddy?

Quinn: No, I have been out of town, but I will look into that before next month.

- Academic Support
No formal report.

- Finance
No formal report.

- Governance
No formal report.

- University Services
 - Update on the Proposed Resolution Pertaining to the Family Medical Leave Act (See Attached)
 - This was an item presented at the February 2015 meeting and is being revised based upon feedback provided at that meeting.

Vanessa Gregory reporting (Chair Greg Love absent):

I was absent during the last meeting, but what I understand is that people are hoping to split one resolution into two acts. There are now two in front of you. The first is calling for a transparent, clear leave policy. The second is calling for an approved policy, taking into account the teaching schedule.

Barnett: We will discuss each separately.

Transparency resolution:

Motion approved. Seconded.

Discussion? None.
42 in favor. 0 opposed. 0 abstentions.

Fair family leave policy resolution:
Motion approved. Seconded.
Discussion? None.
All in favor. 0 opposed. 0 abstentions.

- **Old Business**

None

- **New Business**

- Resolution Regarding the Providing of Insurance Benefits to Same-Sex Partners of University Employees (See Attached)
 - In November 2014 the Robert Holland Faculty Senate at Mississippi State University passed a resolution calling upon its administration to take steps towards expanding the eligibility requirement of employee benefits. This resolution is intended to support the work that they are undertaking.

Barnett reporting:
This has been drafted in supported of Mississippi State University faculty senate.

Motion approved. Seconded.
Discussion? None.
42 in favor. 1 opposed. 0 abstentions.

- **Adjournment**

- 8:15 PM. Next meeting is April 14, 2015.