

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Bradford, Fech, Franti, Hachtmann, Lindquist, Prochaska-Cue, Rapkin, Zimmers

Absent: LaCost, Ledder, McCollough, Schubert

Date: Wednesday, October 29, 2008

Location: Faculty Senate Office, 420 University Terrace

Note: These are not verbatim minutes. They are a summary of the discussions at the Executive Committee meeting as corrected by those participating.

1.0 Call to Order

Prochaska-Cue called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

2.0 ASUN (Emily Zimmer, Ryan Hassebrook, Matt Pederson, Trevor Nieveen)

Zimmer reported that ASUN is working on a number of different issues including textbook adoptions and classroom size. She stated that they are also pushing for a 24 hour study area in the union which may become more of a possibility once the cultural center is opened. She reported that there has been discussion about mental health issues and how the campus can do a better job of helping troubled students on campus.

Nieveen stated that ASUN is working on a program that would pair international students with domestic students. The international student can teach and inform domestic students about their country and culture and the domestic student can in turn do the same for the international student.

Zimmer reported that ASUN is actively participating in the Chancellor's Commission on Environmental Sustainability (CCES) and a newly formed Diversity Committee has been created. The Diversity Committee is attempting to develop a strategic plan across the campus that would enable the various groups on campus to come together to work on diversity issues thereby reducing duplicate efforts.

Zimmer stated that there is a Communication Committee working to develop a strategic plan that would enable ASUN to communicate more clearly with students. She noted that the campus master plan is an example of something that ASUN would like the students to be aware of because of the amount of construction that is occurring on campus that is causing inconvenience to the students.

Zimmer reported that the Special Topics Committee is working with the Faculty Senate on the Academic Honesty Committee. ASUN is also working on problems with the student email system. She noted that approximately 6,000 students are registered to use

the email system but only about 1300 are using it as their preferred email address. She pointed out that many of the students are still using Blackboard.

Zimmer stated that students are working along with the upcoming elections and reviewing student fees and where the money is being spent. She noted that ASUN is also working on projects with the Graduate Student Association.

Zimmer reported that ASUN has created a Financial Education Center. To date approximately 20 peer educators have been trained in two different sessions. She noted that the plan is to provide students with up to date financial advice.

Zimmer stated that ASUN elections will be conducted on-line in March. She pointed out that the on-line voting worked well with homecoming and ASUN hopes to see similar results in March.

Pederson reported that as Chairman of the Academic Committee he has heard a lot of complaints about midterm exams. He noted that the complaints are that the students are being hit with a lot of work at one time. He stated that he was wondering if it would be possible to run the midterms similar to the finals week schedule where specific times are dedicated for midterm exams. He stated that a system that would allow students to have a little more time to prepare for midterm exams would be helpful. He pointed out that some students will have three midterm exams within a 24 hour period.

Rapkin noted that the timing of midterm exams often depends on where the instructor is in the course material. He pointed out that it might be easier to deal with the few cases that arise where a student has too many exams in a short time frame rather than rigidifying two weeks for midterm exams. He stated that requests can be made that faculty members be a little more flexible during midterms to accommodate students who have too many exams scheduled around the same time.

Zimmer stated that she does not know whether this is a problem more associated with upper level students but ASUN saw a lot more problems with stress over midterms this year. She noted that a policy would possibly fix the problem for many students. She stated that students realize that faculty members put a lot of effort into planning their courses and there may be some instructors who might not like having a student take a test after the fall break.

Franti noted that an extreme case is a student having three exams back to back. He asked what would be more acceptable for students and what criteria would be used for determining a policy. Pederson stated that having two exams in a short period of time creates some stress but having three exams within 24 hours is very difficult. He pointed out that there is not enough time to study in order to do well on the exams.

Fech asked if ASUN focuses on the educational aspect by teaching students to empower themselves by not putting work off until the last minute. Zimmer stated that the mid-semester check is almost entirely academic. She noted that communicating to the

freshmen is most difficult particularly in trying to get them to learn good study habits. She thought that sending out an email message to students reminding them to look at and review their syllabi for upcoming work might be helpful.

Pederson noted that there is a policy that allows a student to request that an exam time be changed if the student has three exams within a short period of time. He stated that this might be helpful for students to know.

Lindquist pointed out that a recommended change to a policy must go to the full Senate for a vote. He noted that it would probably be more strongly supported if the recommendations came from ASUN. He suggested that ASUN draft a policy and then bring it to the Executive Committee for consideration. He stated that the Executive Committee would then decide whether it is something that it can support.

Franti stated that having a good communication policy would be great and he wondered whether it could be combined with the Chancellor's Commission on Environmental Sustainability (CCES). He stated that he has not heard anything about this Commission lately.

Zimmer stated that the ASUN Communications Committee is separate from the CCES although there are student representatives on the CCES. She noted that the CCES is up and running and they have had a couple of meetings. She stated that she believes the Commission is working on developing who they are and are seeking to create a web page. Bradford noted that the Executive Committee asked Chancellor Perlman about the CCES and the Chancellor stated that a formal announcement will be made about the Commission.

Franti stated that there is a visiting professor here who has expertise in environmental sustainability and it would be great to have the Commission speak to him. Zimmer stated that the student representatives on the CCES are working with various groups on campus that are involved with environmental sustainability. She stated that she assumes the faculty members on the Commission will let the faculty know about the work that is being done. Bradford stated that the Commission should be put on the annual reporting schedule of the Senate so it can present a report.

Zimmer stated that some students are concerned that the administration is not very supportive of environmental sustainability and suspect that the Commission was formed to appease students. Fech stated that he felt that the Chancellor strongly supported the Commission. Franti pointed out that if there is no communication from the Commission to the faculty and students then it will just fade away.

Zimmer stated that students are still strongly supportive of environmental sustainability and many feel that an energy policy is important to them. Lindquist pointed out that the Commission started with ASUN and while the faculty is committed to it, the students are critical and if they push for the Commission it will go forward and do good things. Zimmer stated that she does not think the student effort will die. She noted that she

appointed a sophomore to the Commission and hopefully this student will remain on the Commission for a few years. She pointed out that President Milliken seems to be very committed to the idea and is calling for sustainability at the central administration level. She stated that the hurdle is with Business and Finance. She noted that this office needs to get serious about it and needs to be very forward looking on sustainability. She pointed out that some purchasing practices would need to be changed.

Zimmer stated that there is no consensus on the cancellation of Dr. Ayers' visit. She noted that viewpoints go from one extreme to the next. She stated that the ASUN did pass a resolution last week about the cancellation. She stated that ASUN appreciated the leadership the Chancellor showed in the incident but did not appreciate the fact that outside efforts affected an internal campus event. She noted that the resolution condemns the threatening messages that were sent to the university. She pointed out that one of the unfortunate things about the event is that the college celebration has been pushed to the bottom.

Lindquist noted that the Senate has not met yet to discuss the cancellation but he imagines that reactions will be similar to that of the students. He noted that people are concerned that external influences have an influence on internal practices.

Zimmer reported that students still want outlets to express their thoughts on the issue. She stated that the issue of academic freedom has been discussed but there is pressure to use the term democracy because it is a term that people can understand better.

Prochaska-Cue thanked the ASUN officers for meeting with the Executive Committee and suggested that they draft a policy on midterm exams and give it to the Executive Committee for review.

3.0 Announcements

3.1 Message from President Milliken

Prochaska-Cue reported that she received a message from President Milliken offering to speak to the Executive Committee regarding his comments on the cancellation of Dr. Ayers' visit. She asked if the Committee would like to meet with him. The Committee stated that it would.

4.0 Approval of 10/15/08 and 10/22/08 Minutes

Lindquist moved and Zimmers seconded approval of the 10/15/08 minutes as amended. Motion approved.

Bradford moved and Lindquist seconded approval of the 10/22/08 minutes pending Prochaska-Cue's corrections. Motion approved.

5.0 Emeriti Association Representative Jim McShane

5.1 Cancellation of Dr. Ayers' Visit

Prochaska-Cue noted that the Emeriti Association passed a resolution calling for the Senate Executive Committee to conduct an investigation into the cancellation of Dr. Ayers' visit. McShane reported that the Emeriti Association met last week and the

members were disturbed over the cancellation of Dr. Ayers' visit because it looks to be a serious violation of academic freedom. He noted that the Association felt it was worthwhile to say something about the issue. He pointed out that the appearances of how it happened are awful. It began with hearing from an angry Regent, then hearing threats about funding from outside sources and rumblings from the Governor and Attorney General followed; and then the talk was cancelled due to threats but yet very few people have had access to review these threats. Bradford pointed out that the Governor hinted on Fox News that he ordered the cancellation of Dr. Ayers' visit. McShane stated that he did not know that the Governor has that kind of authority.

McShane stated that there is a lot of cynicism regarding this event and there is a real danger in showing people that events on campus can be controlled by outside forces just because they do not like something that might be occurring. He noted that canceling the talk set a very bad precedent.

McShane stated that his and the Association's concern is that procedures were violated. He stated that the Association is recommending that a disinterested party, who does not serve at the pleasure of the administration, investigate what happened. An investigation could assure the campus that the actions taken were reasonable and acceptable. He noted the disinterested party could also investigate whether there are policies that allow this kind of cancellation to happen and if so the policies could be reviewed to see if they need to be improved.

McShane stated that another concern is with the Threat Assessment Team. He questioned who is on the team and do they serve at the pleasure of the administration.

McShane pointed out that faculty receive tenure so they can speak fearlessly about their field and their research findings without fear of being fired. He noted that he heard Chancellor Perlman state that he hopes the faculty will continue to be vigilant about issues of academic freedom but that academic freedom is not a perk of the faculty but is a principle of the institution which is designed to protect students and faculty on campus and in the broader community.

McShane pointed out that there have been cases on campus where some faculty members were penalized because of what they said. He noted that tenure protects faculty members' jobs and although academic freedom may not be a perk of the faculty, it is their responsibility to protect it and that is why they work for tenure.

McShane stated that he gets the sense that the Chancellor did not consult with the faculty on his decision. Prochaska-Cue stated that neither the Senate Executive Committee nor faculty members within the College of Education and Human Sciences who extended the invitation to Dr. Ayers were consulted.

McShane stated that he looked for a parallel situation. He stated that under the Academic Rights & Responsibilities Procedures, Section VII, if a faculty member is denied access to his/her classroom the Chancellor must meet with the Academic Rights and

Responsibilities Committee. He pointed out that the Senate President could possibly invoke a special committee to look into the situation or could have the AAUP's Committee A look into the matter.

Prochaska-Cue noted that the Chancellor has claimed that this is not an issue of academic freedom. McShane stated that it is potentially a case of academic freedom. He reported of an incident in the mid 1980's of a film showing at the Ross Theater that was cancelled due to outside pressure. The case went to court and the judge ruled that the university could show the movie. He did not know if a threat from a Regent to stop private support of the university was enough to invoke this ruling.

McShane stated that the Emeriti Association wants to help persuade the faculty to do something about the incident but it does not want to condemn the Chancellor without investigating all of the details. He stated that the goal is to see that tenured faculty members are involved in making decisions such as this in the future.

Prochaska-Cue noted that what is particularly troubling is that the decision was made without faculty input and it was made only at the administrative level. Bradford pointed out that the decision was also made during fall break when faculty and students are less likely to react to the decision even though the event was over a month away.

Lindquist stated that it is easy to look to see if there are procedures in place to deal with this kind of situation and to see if they were adequately followed but getting access to the necessary information may be more difficult. Bradford stated that we have access to any of the records but the decision was more than likely conveyed by the spoken word.

Fech asked if the Association is looking for some kind of agent to look into what occurred here. McShane stated that the Association is looking for some constituted body, which could be a subset of the ARRC that could look into and make recommendations to the Senate. He stated that if the Executive Committee does not want to do it than it could ask the national AAUP, Committee A to look into the matter. He pointed out that there are some risks in having the AAUP investigate what occurred. He stated that it might say that the Chancellor's actions were reasonable or it could say that the institution should be censored. He noted that the Senate would need to determine exactly what it wants the AAUP to do.

Rapkin pointed out that this is an unusual case of academic freedom because it is not the content of Dr. Ayers' speech that has invoked reaction but his actions in the past. McShane noted that Dr. Ayers' past actions were never mentioned when he spoke to the State Department of Education in 2002 and it is his expertise in education that is being sought. He pointed out that now there are problems because Dr. Ayers' visit is being linked politically.

Prochaska-Cue thanked McShane for coming and speaking to the Executive Committee and stated that she will let him know what the Committee and Senate decides to do.

Rapkin suggested that the President of the Faculty Senate should be included as a member of the Threat Assessment Committee.

6.0 Unfinished Business

No unfinished business was discussed.

7.0 New Business

No new business was discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Wednesday, November 5th at 3:00 pm. The meeting will be held in the Faculty Senate Office. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and David Rapkin, Secretary.