

UNO Faculty Council Initiative (prior to official Faculty Senate Meeting)

January 31, 2017

Officers of the UNO Faculty Council continue to seek a quorum – 68 faculty members from the overall UNO faculty -- in order to be able to hold a meeting to approve changes in by-laws affecting the Faculty Council and Faculty Senate. Just prior to the opening of the January 31 Faculty Senate meeting, President Connie Phelps noted that while sufficient faculty members were present to allow the Faculty Senate meeting to proceed, the threshold for a Faculty Council meeting had not been met. Phelps noted that even under the new Council rules 55 members would be required for a quorum. She noted that, in the near future, the Council may have to proceed using electronic voting, which is not prohibited in the current bylaws, to approve both Faculty Council Minutes dating back to December 2014 and recent changes to the Faculty Council and Faculty Senate bylaws. She reminded Senators that the Faculty Senate itself had approved the new Senate bylaws in 2011, during the switch to the new UL system and Faculty Senate framework..

Update by President John Nicklow: University Budget, Institutional Review

Having invited President John Nicklow to speak to the Faculty Council on the subject of the university budget, Phelps asked him – in lieu of a formal Faculty Council meeting – to address the collected Faculty Senators. Nicklow indicated that a great deal of uncertainty continues to exist about the budget, and noted that UNO had already taken a \$450,000 cut due to the deficit dating back to last year. Nicklow noted that “we have absorbed that cut internally” through reorganization, additional revenue generation measures, some cuts, and through vacant lines based on the revenue share model. He has been sharing these measures with the Senate Executive Board and the University Budget Review Committee.

Nicklow noted that the state is still faced with a \$304 million deficit for the current year, however. The governor intends to hold a Special Session on February 13, though the details of his plan have not been fully made public. The “rainy day” fund will be tapped for \$120m, along with other cuts across the state budget – the Department of Health, the state judiciary, the legislature and statewide elective officials – more will be known on February 6 when he has to provide detail going into the Special Session. He has stated, however, that he intends to minimize cuts to higher education, hospitals, K-12 education, corrections and children/family services. Nicklow described this intention as a “glimmer of hope.” Nicklow noted that he has been meeting with some legislators who are advocating on our side, and we need to focus on the positive. We should continue to focus on enrollment and being self-reliant. We are looking at increasing revenue by other means too, including potentially leasing parts of the campus to non-profit and other organizations that might provide some synergies. In February he will take to the Board a lease agreement for the Athletic Center, to lease it to a charter school. Nicklow noted that the administration had approval from the Legislature to sell the Athletic Center property, which had appraised at \$950,000 – “money we could have walked away with.” But instead Nicklow chose to lease it, earning \$255,000 a year for a minimum of three-year term. We will make up the same amount we would have earned (if we had been able to sell for \$950,000) in just four years of leasing. Regarding a potential second midyear budget cut, Nicklow said he had told the deans that he is “committed to absorbing that centrally” as long as

the UBRC continues along its path of a “strategic allocation” model for existing budget. The deans are planning on this, he noted.

Nicklow then turned to the institutional review report, which he notes is available on the president’s office website. It is a 20-page document with about 14 recommendations. It was compiled by Randy Moffett, Bill Sharpton and Robbie Robinson in the Spring of 2015. Nicklow put the report into a chart, an IE framework that the university could continue to work towards. He has not emailed it to the university, but urged anyone interested to go to the site¹ to see the most current update. There have been two cycles of updating, he noted, and indicated that the administration of the progress that has been made so far. Nicklow also noted that some faculty are involved in a revising – an “evolution” – of the UNO 2020 Strategic Plan, to include some clear goals, lines of responsibility, benchmarking, and timelines. It will not be a paper document, it will be an online “living document” that will be updated twice a year and will be a key part of the IE process.

Phelps, noting that there were no questions, thanked Nicklow and returned to the issue of the bylaws changes. A Senator suggested that we lower the percentage for a quorum to a lower level. Phelps noted that the current bylaws call for 25% of full-time faculty members as reported to IPEDS. So for 271 faculty members we would need 68 people. The proposed bylaws call for lowering the threshold to 20%, or 55 faculty members. This may, in fact, be appropriate because we might not want the faculty represented by less than one-fifth of the faculty. Phelps then reviewed the history of the Faculty Council structure, and the LSU precedents. She noted that there had been precedents for online voting in the past, for the purpose of naming people to the hearings pool. Responding to a Senator’s endorsement of pursuing an electronic vote, Phelps noted that she is concerned that officer elections may not work in such a format, but agreed to push along approval of the minutes and other bylaws. Phelps asked if there were any other objections or comments regarding the bylaws. Hearing none, she ceded the floor to Cherie Trumbach for the opening of the Faculty Senate meeting.

UNO Faculty Senate Meeting

January 31, 2017 3:00pm, Innsbruck Room

Cherie Trumbach opened the meeting and asked Secretary Jim Mokhiber to call the roll.

¹ Nicklow is referring to the document accessible at http://www.uno.edu/president/institutional-review/documents/Institutional_Review_Final.pdf

Roster of Faculty Senate Members, 2016-1017						
Roll/Attendance January 31, 2017 Meeting						
ATT?	#	Representation	First	Last	Term	
	1	Administration Rep.	MAHYAR	AMOUZEGAR	(16-17)	
Y	2	Staff Council Pres.	LeeAnne	Sipe	(16-17)	
	3	SG President	Antonio	Torres	(16-17)	
	4	Alumni Assoc. Rep.		TBD	(16-17)	Faculty Senate President appt.
	5	Adjunct Rep.		TBD	(16-17)	Faculty Senate President appt.
Y	6	Business	Dinah	Payne (SE)	(13-16)	
Y	7	Business	Joe	Beams	(16-19)	
	8	Business	Christy	Corey	(16-19)	
Y	9	Business	Cherie	Trumbach (Pres., SE)	(14-17)	
Y	10	Business	James	Logan	(15-18)	
	11	Business	Tarun	Mukherjee	(15-18)	
Y	12	Education	Matt	Lyons (SE)	(14-17)	
Y	13	Education	Ivan	Gill	(14-17)	
Y	14	Education	Kenneth	Farizo	(16-19)	
Y	15	Engineering	Edit	Bourgeois (SE)	(14-17)	
Y	16	Engineering	Dimitrios	Charalampidis	(16-19)	
	17	Engineering	Ting	Wang	(15-18)	
Y	18	Engineering	Guillermo	Rincon	(16-18)	replacing Christy Ikeda (16-18)
Y	19	Liberal Arts	Nancy	Easterlin (SE)	(14-17)	
Y	20	Liberal Arts	D. Ryan	Gray	(16-19)	
	21	Liberal Arts	Chris	Day	(14-17)	
Y	22	Liberal Arts	David	Beriss	(14-17)	
Y	23	Liberal Arts	James	Mokhiber (Sec'y, SE)	(14-17)	
Y	24	Liberal Arts	Peter	Schock	(14-17)	
Y	25	Liberal Arts	Elizabeth	Steeby	(16-17)	replacing Steve Striffler (14-17), on leave
Y	26	Liberal Arts	John	Kiefer	(15-17)	replacing Pam Jenkins (15-17), retired
Y	27	Liberal Arts	Ed	Chervenak	(16-18)	replacing Vern Baxter (15-18), retired
	28	Liberal Arts	John	Hazlett	(16-18)	replacing Beth Blankenship (15-18), now admin.
Y	29	Liberal Arts	Robert	Dupont	(15-18)	
Y	30	Liberal Arts	Juliana	Starr	(15-18)	
Y	31	Liberal Arts	Cheryl	Hayes	F 2016	replacing Jeffrey Ehrenreich (15-18), on leave
Y	32	Sciences	Nicola	Anthony (SE)	(15-18)	
Y	33	Sciences	Melanie	Stiegler	(15-18)	
Y	34	Sciences	Kenneth	Holladay	(15-18)	
Y	35	Sciences	Wendy	Schluchter	(14-17)	
Y	36	Sciences	Greg	Seab	(14-17)	
Y	37	Sciences	Elliott	Beaton	(14-17)	
	38	Sciences	Joel Andrew	Webb	(14-17)	
Y	39	Sciences	Vassil	Roussev (VP, SE)	(15-18)	
Y	40	Library	Connie	Phelps (SE)	(15-18)	
Y	41	Library	Lindsey	Reno	(16-19)	
			20 for quorum			SE= Senate Executive Board Member

A Senator remarked that the roll should be changed to reflect the appointment of Provost Mahyar Amouzegar. Mokhiber agreed to do so (as is reflected in the roster above).

Approval of the Minutes for November 21, 2016 Senate Meeting

Trumbach asked if there were any changes necessary for the minutes. Hearing none, she asked for unanimous approval of the minutes. No objections were heard.

Update by Career Services' Celyn Boykin

Trumbach invited Boykin to address the Senate briefly. Boykin reminded senators that Career Services is now located in Suite 250 of the University Center. She indicated that the Center wants to get the word out about internships and workshops available to them. Boykin noted that she hopes to increase awareness of Career Services by visiting departments on campus. She distributed a flyer with further information, and urged faculty to support her office's work.

Faculty Senate President's Updates: SEB Meetings, Meeting with Rallo, Act 619

Trumbach thanked Boykin, and noted that she would speak to the Senate Executive Board a little bit later this semester. Others, including department heads and administrators, have also signed up to address the SEB, and thus keep the Senate's meetings from being overwhelmed by such meetings.

Trumbach also noted that she and Vice President Vassil Roussev will go to Alexandria on Thursday to represent UNO's faculty in an 8:00 am meeting with [Commissioner of Higher Education] Dr. Joseph Rallo. She noted that she will give a report on the session regarding the Legislature's Act 619 and the Board of Regents response. She invited faculty to attend if interested. Trumbach noted that she had spoken with the Senate president from ULL, who expressed less concern about the research provisions of Act 619. Trumbach noted that the Senate Executive Board may issue its own response to 619, but Trumbach urged faculty to go to the link and send a response to the Board of Regents individually. A Senator asked for a clarification regarding the PhD provisions. Trumbach explained that the provision seemed to mean that new PhD programs could only be added on LSU's main campus in the future. Trumbach noted that ULL, LA Tech and UNO should share a negative view of such a measure, and we should make sure our voices are heard on such a measure. Another Senator asked if an announcement had been sent to the faculty about the Rallo meeting. President Nicklow noted that only some faculty received the message from the UL System. Trumbach again urged the faculty to email her if they have messages they wish to have transmitted to Rallo in Alexandria. Roussev noted the webpage: <http://regents.state.la.us/page/F3>

Senator Dinah Payne noted that the Crawfish Mambo was coming up, and indicated that naming rights are being sold for \$10,000. Homecoming is Saturday as well, and Payne urged senators to attend the basketball game associated with it.

Vote on the Senate Bylaw Changes (measure passes)

Trumbach then returned to the issue of the Senate bylaw changes, which have been circulated and revised multiple times. She then entertained a motion to approve the bylaws.

→ MOTION: Senator Bourgeois then moved to approve the revised Faculty Senate bylaws pending the approval of the revised Faculty Council bylaws. Phelps seconded the motion. There were 30 votes in favor of the measure, none opposed. No abstentions. The motion passed.

Update with the Provost/President Nicklow: Library opening, SACS status, transfer quality point data/GPAs, non-resident tuition, Act 619, enrollment, UNO branding initiative

Trumbach noted that due to the absence of Provost Mahyar Amouzegar President Nicklow would offer a few additional remarks.

Nicklow reminded the Senate that the Grand Opening of the Fourth Floor of the Library would occur at 1:30 on Thursday. It is an outstanding space, he noted.

Nicklow also indicated that he and Associate Provost Caroline Noyes attended the December SACS conference, and reported that UNO is on “monitoring” status for another year. He cautioned though that this should not be construed as SACS feeling “that we did something poorly. My impression was that they wanted to see that this was not a flash in the pan, so to speak. ‘Let’s see if they can do it for another year.’” Nicklow noted that he was pleased with UNO’s activity in the past cycle.

President Nicklow noted that he wanted to put some items on the ULS Board Agenda in February. In 2012, the UNO Faculty Senate voted to not allow quality point data to transfer to the institution. Nicklow gave a hypothetical example of why this might be an issue: a student scores a 1.5 for his first UNO semester, and then takes a break from UNO. He then follows up with a 4.0 semester at Delgado. However nothing about that 4.0 transfers back to UNO for consideration. The student thus returns to UNO on probation, allowing him only a short time to prove himself. This, Nicklow says, is a “strange...practice. It might be acceptable for selective institutions, [but] I think we just want to have a conversation about it and see whether we want to go down a road of changing that.” Nicklow promised to get the Senate data regarding how many students are in that situation in the UNO population.

Nicklow noted there would be a Board agenda item aimed at reducing non-resident online tuition to be equivalent to in-state tuition, or thus eliminating the non-resident fee for fully online programs.

Another item will be a reduction in the out-of-state tuition, pending approval of the Board. We’ve learned, Nicklow said, that we have been waiving a large portion of the out-of-state tuition. “With the reduction,” he continued, “we actually don’t lose any money, but what it does do is open up a brand new population for us to recruit.” The system waiver requirements kept about 1300 students in our prospect pool from coming to the institution because of finances last year. Providing in-state tuition is increasingly common, he noted.

A Senator noted that it was his understanding that, until now, in graduate online programs, students enrolled in six hours would pay in-state tuition, but above that would pay the full amount. Under this new plan, would a student enrolling in 9 hours be exempt? Nicklow indicated that this was the case.

Regarding the TOEFL reduction the Faculty Senate is scheduled to discuss, Nicklow noted this was another effort to become more competitive.

The university president reiterated Trumbach's urging that faculty comment on Act 619. Nicklow provided responses of his own on three key themes, and forwarded this information to Senator Hewitt. Nicklow's concerns revolve around research missions at institutions like ours, which together generated \$120 million in research for the state of Louisiana. Nicklow also observed that several items appear to be beyond the Board of Regents' purview. A third area that concerns him has to do with centralization and unification, putting all of us – including Nunez, Delgado, SUNO, etc. -- on the same payroll system, for example. That, however, would require perhaps four years and \$50million upfront cost. The principle may be good, but the cost would be too high.

Regarding enrollment, Nicklow noted that when comparing spring 2016 to spring 2017, if one subtracts what we lost in the fall from last spring's number, we would technically be at flat enrollment. We lost 386 students in the fall, and we are about 200 behind where we were last spring. He sees this as a positive development. Nicklow noted that we are 19% up in our applications for first-time, full-time students for next fall. We are ahead 14% for first-time, full-time admits for the fall, due to a slight lag in graduate program admissions. We have about 100 more students registered for the February open house.

Nicklow noted that some faculty are involved in the ongoing enrollment branding initiative. Two creative designs have been put forward, and they are being tested with about 1500 people for their reactions. Nicklow urged anyone interested to discuss with Trumbach.

A senator asked about transfers from LSU to UNO. Nicklow said there had been an uptick, but we did not see a large growth due to the TOPS issue. Our percentage of TOPS students stayed exactly the same. We saw an influx but we lost TOPS students as well.

Nicklow urged faculty to attend Homecoming, and noted that February 21st we are going to have about 2000 students on campus on STEM Day. There will be a Mardi Gras parade in the middle of the day, and that evening we will play LSU in baseball. We will debut our new UNO mascot.

A Senator asked again about the size of the tuition reduction noted earlier. Nicklow said it would be 40%, and confirmed that it will be the same for domestic and international online students. Nicklow says he believes the change will be effective this summer.

Returning to the issue of TOEFL. Nicklow said it seemed like UNO had taken actions that were not to its benefit with regard to competitiveness. UNO has one of the highest TOEFL scores in the state, and he urged the faculty to consider the issue carefully.

UNO Stipend Policy

Trumbach then noted the changes in the Stipend Policy. Jim Logan noted that up to date documents on the issue could be found online at our Moodle site.

Senator Edit Bourgeois noted "fierce opposition" in the College of Engineering if the endowment part of the salary is counted as additional compensation. Several endowed chairs

hired years ago were offered a salary with part of that salary coming from the endowment. President Nicklow responded, noting that endowment stipend is not part of base pay. Are such monies permanent or temporary? They are not in perpetuity, as one must be reviewed to receive them, thus they are not considered base pay. He understands the desire to include such monies in base pay, and is not necessarily opposed to the principle, but observed that it would open the door in a number of ways. Senator Logan noted that this issue has been discussed several times already. Senator Wang noted his own salary as an example, noting that he was an endowed chair, but his base salary was only \$59,000 with the balance coming from the endowment and other funds. Nicklow returned to the issue of including other forms of temporary payments, like chair stipends, in base pay. Senator Wang noted that additional compensation poses several issues for faculty. Nicklow recommended that faculty representatives on the UBRC raise the issue. Senator Logan reminded the Senate that one key goal was to bring some order to the issue of stipends, to define them better. This policy is a better policy, but can be changed in the future.

Discussion of the effect of the new policy upon summer teaching ensued. Logan noted that the problem was apparently primarily of concern for Engineering. Nicklow asked for faculty input and a vote, and then recommended the UBRC take another look at the policy. The policy is more generous than at other institutions, he claimed, noting that his goal was to try to allow faculty to earn more when justified. This formula will allow such a result. Discussion of the number of chairs and other faculty affected ensued, with one senator indicating the total would probably be three endowed professors.

Nicklow acknowledged the issues that need to be addressed, but stated again that he believes the issue will be to the benefit of most UNO faculty. Discussion of a motion to approve the stipend policy ensued. Nicklow noted that the UBRC could return to the issue, with representation by Senators Jim Logan and Bobby Dupont. However Nicklow reiterated that, in the absence of a vote, the old stipend policy would still obtain.

A Senator asked for clarification regarding the current understanding of how endowed chairs are compensated. Senator Dupont noted that the problem is largely semantic, and it is simply key that their pay not be considered base pay. Trumbach urged Senators to trust their four representatives on the UBRC.

Senator Bourgeois asked if we could table the measure. Nicklow again asked for a vote on the policy, with feedback from the Senate, and promised that the UBRC would take up the endowments issue right away. He does not want people negatively impacted for the summer by the Senate's inaction.

→ MOTION. In response to discussion regarding the drafting of a motion, Secretary Jim Mokhiber offered the following language: "The UNO Faculty Senate recommends approval of the stipend policy with the understanding that the UBRC will continue to discuss how additional compensation will be handled for endowed chairs at its next meeting." The motion was seconded. Twenty votes in favor, 1 opposed, with 8 abstentions. The motion passed.

New business: TOEFL score for Admission

Trumbach then addressed the proposed change of the required TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) score for undergraduate admission from 79 to 70. She noted that other institutions, like ULL and LA Tech had set their admissions thresholds at 70 and 71 respectively. She noted a wide range of scores ranges across the country, and suggested that these did not always track closely with the perceived quality or rigor of the institution.

Trumbach welcomed Assistant Provost for International Education Alea Cot to address the Faculty Senate on the issue. Cot stressed that the graduate TOEFL would remain at 79, but changing the undergraduate threshold would make UNO more competitive in attracting international students. Cot noted that it was important to give students admitted with a lower score all the tools and skills necessary to succeed. She noted that the Division of International Education has been working with the Department of English, and has developed a co-curricular course that is somewhat similar to the “pathways” course for other students. A student admitted with a TOEFL of 70 will be enrolled in English 1157 and the co-curricular course in order to help them with their writing. Lowering the score will not take place in a vacuum, she emphasized.

We have about 100 applications in from international students for fall 2017 freshman admission. Some submit SAT scores, due to the need to submit math scores. If we lowered the TOEFL, she believes, we would attract more, including international transfer students. The TOEFL change, combined with lowering the out-of-state fees by 40%, should make UNO more competitive overall.

A Senator asked what “sheltered sections” of English 1157 and 1158 means. Cot noted that this is a proposal for the future, but indicated that any such sections would be taught by someone with an ESL [English as a Second Language] background. This would not be remedial work, and in any event this is not what is being proposed at the moment.

Cot noted that a number of students come through the IELP [Intensive English Language Program] program, and are at the Level 7 stage, but they are eager to get straight into the university and its coursework. The co-curricular option should help them to do so.

A Senator stressed this support was crucial to ensuring that such students not find themselves in 4000-level classes unable to write. Cot agreed.

Vice President Vassil Roussev noted that he had taken the TOEFL as a graduate applicant, and found the exam to be a “crude tool” whose scores did not make subtle distinctions between student language skills. The change from 79 to 70 would probably be very hard to detect, he said, and the main issue is providing them the necessary support.

Senator Peter Schock, head of the Department of English, noted that we were meeting similar obligations with regard to our Privateer Pathways students, and need to make similar opportunities available to international students. In response to a comment by a member of the audience, Cot noted that there were “opt in” possibilities for all students to take the co-curricular class.

A Senator stressed that it was a “moral obligation” that we actually follow through and provide the support for these students. Senator Schock, Department of English head, affirmed that this would be the case, as it currently is for students in the pathways program. Cot noted that the co-curricular course was currently being taught by an IELP instructor, but agreed that if the sequence of courses increased or the program grows otherwise it would indeed need additional resources. Senator Nancy Easterlin, of the Senate Executive Board, noted that at a recent meeting of the SEB new Provost Mahyar Amouzegar had indicated that he could not make a commitment to additional resources in this regard due to a lack of funds. Easterlin requested that a demand for full resources for ESL purposes to be part of the Senate record. Senators debated whether any Senate action was an advisory opinion or not.

→ MOTION: Senator Bobby Dupont moved that the Senate endorse the change in the report. The motion was seconded. 28 voted in favor, none opposed, 1 abstention. The motion passed.

Final Announcements by Senate President: Commencement correction, upcoming elections and Issue Tracking

Trumbach noted the need for a clarification regarding a memo on “ceremonial” commencement that had been circulated. She wanted to correct the record, indicating that she had misspoken to President Nicklow in telling him that the Senate had voted on the issue. Christy Corey had brought the issue to the Senate to solicit opinion, but we were “approximately 50-50 or so on it.” We did not take a formal vote on it, and Trumbach wanted to clarify the record and take responsibility for the inclusion of information to the contrary in the president’s letter.

Trumbach also reminded the Senate that elections for officers takes place in April, and the Senate Executive Board needs to begin considering the election issues. The positions of President, Vice President and Secretary are up for election.

Finally, Trumbach noted that our GA is looking into some way to integrate an “issue log” into a new round of improvements to the Senate website, so we can track what issues are out there and who is responsible for follow through. We need to have a clearer way for tracking issues.

A motion to adjourn was heard, seconded and approved.

[END]