University Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

April 29, 2014

In Attendance:

1. Elaine Abelson, Lang
2. Emily Barnett, Parsons
3. Adria Benjamin, Mannes
4. Carolyn Berman, NSPE
5. Julie Boyd, Drama
6. Ted Byfield, Parsons
7. Erin Cho, Parsons
8. Margaret Fiore, NSPE
9. Ragnar Freidank, Drama
10. Peter Haratonik, NSPE
11. Gina Luria Walker, NSPE
12. Frank Nemhauser, Mannes
13. Dmitri Nikulin, NSSR
14. Julia Ott, Lang
15. Richard Salcer, Parsons
16. Elaine Savory, Lang
17. Earl Scott, Parsons
18. Luciana Scrutchen, Parsons
19. Chris Stover, Jazz
20. Sven Travis, Parsons
21. Jurgen Von Mahs, Lang
22. Susan Yelavich, Parsons
23. Inessa Zaretsky, Mannes

Not Attending:

24. Wendy D'Andrea, NSSR
25. Marcel Kinsbourne, NSSR
26. David Lopato, Jazz
27. Candy Schulman, NSPE
28. Shane Selzer, Parsons
29. Marcus Turner, NSPE
30. Val Vinokur, Lang

I. Approval of Minutes from February and March

Frank asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the February meeting. A motion is made, seconded, and then approved. Frank then asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the March meeting. A motion is made, seconded, and then approved.

II. Discussion and vote on proposals from March meeting

Frank asked for discussion regarding proposal one.
Discussion:

Susan was concerned about sending UFS emails from a PO email account. Ted shred that emails will now be sent from <ufs@newschool.edu> and email account owned and managed by the co-chairs. All future emails from the UFS will be sent from this account. Susan asked if that meant the UFS had access to emailing everyone at the university. Sven felt that passing one of these resolutions will result in access. Ted clarified that these sorts of announcements will have to go through CEA as that is the process for getting these messages sent. Ted doesn't think it is an ideal system but reiterated that it is an incremental process. Jurgen asked about another format through which to communicate, like a blog or Facebook, since they would be less centrally controlled. Ted suggested that if the UFS was interested in that idea then someone would need to volunteer to do it. Sven said that historically the UFS did maintain a blog but feels that the UFS would need a budget so they could hire a student worker to maintain it since UFS members did not want to. Ted said that he worked with the PO to get a small budget for a research assistant. Peter reminded the UFS that the messages would still need to go out within 72 hours, which is the proposed resolution. Julie though that the commenting system in place now was a huge accomplishment. Sven suggested that the word “UFS” be added before the word “email” in proposal one.

A motion was made to pass the amended version of proposal one. The motion was seconded, and then approved.

Frank then asked for discussion regarding proposal two.

Discussion:

Ted explained that this proposal was drafted in the hopes that it would help create greater transparency around various proposals that are shared with the UFS. The UFS wants to be more transparent but does not want to have to be responsible for sharing resolutions or proposals that come from just one angry faculty member. Requiring five faculty co-signers and two UFS members would prove and assert that there are other faculty who feel the issue in question is important. Richard asked if requiring five faculty was too much. Susan asked if the language might be changed to requiring a co-chair from the UFS instead of just a UFS member. Nothing on the proposal states who is going to post these resolutions. Ted felt that the UFS needed staff. Peter said that they don't want to put too much power in the hands of the co-chairs. Jurgen felt that the language shouldn't be too rigid. Chris asked what sort of language will go along with this proposal so faculty know about this process. Richard wondered how the actually mechanics of this process will work. Ted again said that the UFS needs staff and that without it nothing will really ever get done.

A motion is made to approve proposal two. The motion was seconded, and then approved.

III. Discussion and vote on proposed change to UFS bylaws re: UFS committees

Frank asked for discussion on the proposed language change to the UFS bylaws.

Discussion:
Susan was concerned about the language in the proposed text that states the co-chairs would appoint the committees. Peter suggested that the language be changed to “seek membership.” Margaret wondered if it might be a good idea to devise committees based on when senators are available to meet. Frank felt that might be unwieldy. Ragnar returned to the idea of changing “committee” to “working group” but the consensus is that “committee” sounds cleaner and more succinct. Emily wondered about the word “chairs” in the proposal. Frank said that he thought the word “seek” was vague enough, especially coupled with the language, “may be necessary.”

A motion is made to approve the changes to Section C of the bylaws. The motion was seconded, and then approved.

IV. Visit by Teresa Ghilarducci – Report on University Divestment on Fossil Fuels

Teresa Ghilarducci’s full report on the public forum held in mid-march about divestment issues will be circulated to the UFS in a week’s time.

In short, the question being examined is whether the endowment would be impacted if carbon-based assets were divested. A consulting firm named Slocum was hired to provide a study, which claimed that as a result of divestment returns would diminish, resulting in less money in the university’s endowment. But Ghilarducci postures that looking forward and doing a different sort of assessment could result with carbon-based investments becoming a liability instead of an asset. TNS has a very small amount of carbon-based assets and asking the BoT to divest is just one tactic to become a more sustainable organization. The faculty and staff could also look into divesting their pensions.

Discussion:

Sven wondered if there was discussion about how divestment might affect TNS brand and if we would see more registered students as a result. Jurgen wondered what the chances are to even impact change at this point. Ragnar was surprised by how rattled people at the forum were about the suggestion that divestment could even happen. Earl wondered if the primary purposed was to motivate change. Dmitri wondered about the political and moral aspects of the issue. Teresa suggested it was just a symbol for a larger movement and suggested that the UFS write a letter. Teresa offered to draft the language for the letter to send to the consultant noting the UFS’s concern. Carolyn shared that at Lang a climate change awareness week was proposed where faculty would incorporate one aspect of climate change into their lesson. Julia shared that there are students who are passionate about this issue and it would be great for the UFS to stand up with the students. IN addition to the draft letter to the consultant Teresa also volunteers to draft a letter to TIAA CREF asking for information for faculty who may want to divest their pension.

V. New Business

Ted updated the UFS about the new faculty commenting mechanism for green papers. The system is available through the UFS website. Faculty need to log in to the system using their NS net id. Commenting is opening until May 23. Ted asked that UFS
members share this information with faculty in their division and reiterated that this system does not replace other commenting systems. It is a supplement to existing systems.

Elaine thanks the UFS who supported the town hall and shared the idea that moving forward the UFS should consider having a closed session without the administration there. Elaine also shared that as a result of the advising conversation at the town hall the UFs has set up a small task force to meet with Michelle Relyea, Vice President for Student Success, and will report back to the UFS.

Susan shared updates about the elections. NSSR will have elections if they get any nominees. Parsons is on track but will likely not be completed before the last UFS meeting of the semester. Jazz held their election and Richard Harper will be their new senator. Susan is not sure where Drama is in the process. Margaret shared that NSPE’s elections close on April 30. Susan will reach out and invite new senators to the UFS meeting next week. Frank said that he will give an update about the co-chairs when he has information to share.

A motion is made to adjourn the meeting. The motion is seconded and then approved.