FACULTY SENATE MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2005, 3:00 P.M.
HOLMES STUDENT CENTER REGENCY ROOM


K. Gallagher attended for D. Robertson

Parliamentarian Ferald Bryan was present.

FACULTY SENATE MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: Booth, Burns, Castle, Cummings, Gorman, Johnson, Kang, Kipperman, Kolb, L’Allier, Lin, Loubere, Marchewka, Markowitz, Munk, Peters, Pierce, Ridnour, Smith-Shank, S. Song, X. Song, Swanson, Tollerud, Wade, Walton, Wang, Webber, Wickman, Wolfskill

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 3:06 P.M.

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was approved with minor alterations.

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 19, 2005 FS MEETING
(Pages 3-6)

The minutes were approved as written.

IV. PRESIDENT’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. State Pension Commission Suggestions

The State is looking for ways to decrease the unfunded liability of the state pension systems. The Governor has proposed the following, listed by priority: 1) Limit annual annuities increases to the lesser of 3% or the change in Consumer Price Index, applicable to the first $24,000, with further limits on annuitants also covered by Social Security. This would guarantee that future annuitants would be unable to keep up with inflation. 2) Elimination of the Money Purchase Option. 3) Limiting money purchase interest rates to the most recent five- or ten-year rates of return. 4) The state will not pay benefits on pay increases that exceed 3% during the final four years of employment. 5) Increase retirement age to 65 with 8+ years of service, 62 with 30+ years, or 60 with 35+ years. Items 1, 2, and 3 would pertain only to new hires, as the state con-
stitution prohibits diminished benefits for current employees. This would, however, create a two-tier retirement system.

W. Baker inquired about potential opposition to the governor’s recommendations. P. Stoddard responded that this would have to be taken up by the state legislature and there are several places to fight this. Concerned faculty should talk to their state representative and senator. Representatives that represent districts with universities in them tend to be very sympathetic to the universities so I’m sure we can count on a lot of support there.

J. Stephen expressed concern that the Constitution does not protect our medical benefits after retirement.

R. Meganathan, D. Haliczer and J. Stephen discussed the ramifications of a court case from several years ago involving SURS and retirement benefits.

B. Miller related that she was talking to Brad Burzynski, our senator, about another benefit-denial situation and he suggested a class action suit. A discussion with P. Stoddard and E. Arriola followed, about who would instigate such a suit, and how the rights of those not yet hired would be represented. D. Lonergan wanted to comment that this is the classic 2-tier system that is used in union busting and that’s where it was pioneered because the people that are denied benefits don’t exist yet.

R. Meganathan and J. Stephen got into a discussion about Cigna benefits and reimbursements.

W. Tolhurst clarified that none of the concerns about medical insurance have anything to do with the State Pension Commission’s suggestions.

P. Stoddard informed the Senate that there will be a change in the CMS prescription management contract. Caremark is being replaced by Medco, effective July 1, 2005. The process for obtaining prescriptions will remain the same whether they are short-term or long-term medications. J. Stephen asked if that means local providers will immediately be able to fill 3 month prescriptions or will they have to go through that 6 or 7 months process again, and if we get another one dollar increase. D. Haliczer is betting that all the providers are going to have to re-certify with this new company, but she has already started giving them the information too.

P. Stoddard reported that he spoke to Registration and Records the increasingly early deadline for setting courses and that R & R wants to be able to post the schedules March 14, since students have to start registering by April. This is about a week earlier than they had been issuing the printed schedules. R & R still prints some schedules that go to departments and so forth. Other institutions post their schedules at about the same time. If people would like to pursue this at greater length, I’d be happy to listen to suggestions, form committees, get out torches, do whatever we need to.

B. Walter Czerniak Visit
Walter Czerniak (Assoc. Vice President for ITS) will be at the March 2 meeting to answer questions.

V. ITEMS FOR FACULTY SENATE CONSIDERATION

David Lonergan from Libraries was approved as chair of the Academic Affairs Committee, taking over for John Knapp, who is on sabbatical leave.

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

VII. REPORTS FROM ADVISORY COMMITTEES

A. FAC to IBHE – Patricia Henry – report (Pages 7-8)

P. Henry reported that the FAC met with Representative William Davis regarding the on-going problem with the budget. In particular, the IBHE is interested in developing a coalition of administration, faculty, student and business interests to make the case for higher education. The upcoming pension battles make this that much more important. The FAC is encouraging people to come up with slogans, as we are in a sound bite war. The idea is to point out that K-12 is intricately involved with higher education.

A report from the PPA Committee, Committee B, which is looking at accountability issues, contains several suggestions for regulatory relief. Rep. Davis mentioned that House Bill 750, dealing with K-12 funding, is something that could be expanded to include higher education as well.

The FAC adopted the following resolution: “Because the financial problems in the SURS system are the result of long-term failures to adequately fund that system; and Because the recommendations of the Governor’s Pension Commission are all focused on reducing faculty benefits, especially for potential hires; and Because it is never desirable to create an underclass of faculty; Therefore the FAC/IBHE resolves that the Commission’s solution should be rejected in favor of real, long-term, constitutional and full funding to all public educational retirement systems, in order to protect the quality of higher education.”

J. Stephen asked if the FAC had looked at the effect modifications to the PELL Grants would have on our affordability studies. P. Henry indicated that she will bring that up.

B. BOT Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Personnel Committee – Joseph “Buck” Stephen and Ferald Bryan – no report

C. BOT Finance, Facilities, and Operations Committee – Paul Stoddard and Xueshu Song – no report

D. BOT Legislation, Audit, and External Affairs Committee – Donna Smith and Shey Lowman – no report

E. BOT – Paul Stoddard – no report
VIII. REPORTS FROM STANDING COMMITTEES

A. Academic Affairs – Chair – no report

B. Economic Status of the Profession – Radha Balamuralikrishna, Chair – report – walk-in

R. Balamuralikrishna reminded members that some of us are on nine-month contracts and that during the summer it becomes the individual’s responsibility to pay the insurance premiums. Benefits will not exist if payments are not made, and any conditions that arise may never be covered; therefore, HR is working on an early warning letter that will be sent to all members sometime during April.

W. Tolhurst pointed out that those on a nine-month pay schedule are taxed before making their summer premium payments, and thus are losing money. J. Stephen added that you can only collect from your flexible spending account while you’re actually getting a paycheck.

A female employee has sued the State of Illinois because her employee benefits didn’t include contraceptive medication. If you were an employee from August 1, 2000 up to this date, you are automatically in the class action suit unless you specifically opted out prior to January 4, 2005.

It was pointed out that our current plan covers Hepatitis B and C vaccines for employees under 24 years of age, but not Hepatitis A. The Committee’s opinion is that all vaccines should be covered.

The University Benefits Committee is recommending that 1) children of domestic partners be eligible for tuition waivers, and 2) a time release of 30 minutes for operating staff and supportive professional staff to allow for fitness training.

As a point of information, the premiums paid by physicians for malpractice insurance is much higher in our state (e.g. $80,000/year compared to $8,000 in neighboring states). This affects us in at least two ways: access to these specialists and, of course, costs.

R. Meganathan asked about the availability of the flu vaccine. J. Stephen responded that the clinic says they don’t have any flu vaccine.

P. Henry inquired as to the status of the domestic partners benefits plan, specifically with regards to children. R. Balamuralikrishna indicated that the plan is sitting on the President’s desk.

C. Resource, Space, and Budget – C.T. Lin, Chair – no report

D. Faculty Rights and Responsibilities – Joseph “Buck” Stephen, Chair – report

J. Stephen reported that he will be meeting with Chief Grady and also with Walter Czneriak concerning privacy issues.
J. Holt expressed concern about the website www.pickaprof.com having grade distributions online. J. Stephen relayed that after discussions with Don Larson and Ken Davidson, he learned that NIU has received Freedom of Information Act requests for these data, but was not willingly sharing that information with pickaprof. L. Kamenitsa asked if President Peters once said that NIU had entered into a contractual agreement to provide information for one of these sites. P. Stoddard indicated that we never got an answer that the university had done this.

E. Rules and Governance – Augden Windelborn, Chair – report

A. Windelborn reported that Rules and Governance had been addressing how it would be possible for members of the University Council to avoid the redundancy between Faculty Senate and University Council meetings. The simplest solution would be to modify the FS agenda so that redundant material be presented at the end of the meeting and if UC members desired to leave at that time, they could do so because they would be hearing the same information again at the University Council meeting.

W. Tolhurst suggested that University Council members be allowed to designate Faculty Senate members as alternates to attend Faculty Senate meetings.

F. Elections and Legislative Oversight – Gretchen Bisplinghoff, Chair – report

1. Selection of a committee for the Evaluation of the Executive Secretary of University Council and the President of Faculty Senate – Faculty Senate Bylaws, Article 7 – walk-in

G. Bisplinghoff selected, at random, UC members Kent Gallagher and David Wade, with Jean Pierce as the alternate, FS members Jack Marchewka and Greg Barrett and alternate Rangaswamy Meganathan, and students Nick Pappanduros and Craig Marcus (alternate).

2. Selection of a committee for the Evaluation of the Faculty Personnel Advisor – Faculty Senate Bylaws, Article 7 – walk-in

G. Bisplinghoff selected, at random, Scott Wickman, Sharon Sytsma and Augden Windelborn. C.T. Lin is the alternate.

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

X. NEW BUSINESS

A. Possibility of Bus Service to Elburn Train Station

P. Stoddard reported that President Peters believes there will be bus service to the Elburn train station when the latter becomes functional.

XI. COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR
XII. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Minutes, Academic Planning Council  
B. Minutes, Athletic Board minutes  
C. Minutes, Campus Security and Environmental Quality  
D. Minutes, Committee on Initial Teacher Certification  
E. Minutes, Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum  
F. Minutes, Graduate Council  
G. Minutes, Undergraduate Coordinating Council minutes  
H. Minutes, University Assessment Panel  
I. Minutes, University Benefits Committee minutes

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:12 P.M.