

Minutes of the Meeting of the Faculty Delegate Assembly of Hunter College
October 22, 2008
1:10-3:00
Room 1203 HE

1. Call to order. FDA President Prof. Jason Young called the meeting to order at 1:19.

2. Approval of Minutes of September 24, 2008. The minutes of September 24, 2008, were approved.

3. Executive Committee Report. Prof. Tony Doyle gave the Executive Committee Report.

Prof. Young thanked the Executive Committee for organizing the October 15 FDA Social, attended by roughly 40 people.

4. University Faculty Senate Report. Prof. Young introduced Prof. Phil Pecorino, Queensborough Community College and Member of the UFS Executive Committee.

Prof. Pecorino provided updates on the following recent UFS activities and issues.

***CUNY admissions policy.** Traditionally the UFS has reacted to the administration, rather than taking the initiative. But that should change, and a recent UFS success suggests that it is changing: The administration wanted to change the admission policy without faculty input. The UFS pointed out that this is not the prerogative of the administration, since such a move would violate the CUNY charter. The charter grants the faculty a role in determining what is taught and to whom. This means that the charter grants faculty a say in admissions policy. The administration retreated in the face of UFS objections. The faculty wasn't opposed to the initiative but rather to how the administration proceeded.

*** Performance Management Process (PMP) goals.** Goals are set for each of college. The chancellor scores each college on the extent to which it has reached these goals. Among the goals is increase in graduation rates. The scores determine each president's pay raise.

Teaching loads are also a PMP goal. Chancellor Goldstein wants a higher proportion of classes taught by full timers. According to the chancellor's office, for Fall 2007 Hunter full timers taught 7.1 hrs on average. Veteran faculty generally taught slightly more, junior faculty, who enjoy reassigned time, less. The UFS thinks the the Hunter figure, as well as the university-wide figures released by the chancellor's office, are too low. For instance, those faculty teaching outside of their home school were not getting credit for their additional teaching. Also, we don't know whether people on travia are counted.

***CUNY-wide focus on academic freedom.**

-- The UFS recently approved a statement on academic freedom. All campuses should be beholden to the same standards of academic freedom. The UFS hopes to mediate in controversies regarding academic freedom between faculty and the administration.

-- Computer use policy. Many faculty don't like the current policy. Frederick Schaffer, CUNY's top lawyer, has appealed to case law in an attempt to show that CUNY administration, as the employer, has the legal right to see anything that any CUNY employee does on a computer using CUNY equipment or networks. Mr. Schaffer doesn't want to distinguish faculty from non-faculty. The UFS does. Very few universities have accomplished what CUNY has, namely, that the university cannot look at the computer files of faculty. The one exception is that technicians can go to faculty computers if there is a problem with the network traced to that computer. Faculty have fought for privacy and confidentiality for their research. Some faculty have moved their research off campus to protect their privacy.

*** New state and federal laws regarding textbooks.** The laws require faculty to post course and textbook information in time for course registration. The legislation is aimed in part at the high price of textbooks, particularly the most recent edition of a text. The state law goes into effect in 2009, the federal in 2010.

***The impact of upcoming budget cuts on CUNY.**

-- The hiring "pause" is now a freeze, from which, however, the hiring of faculty is exempted. The chancellor says that he won't preside over any cutback of faculty. No one in the chancellor's office has broached early retirement yet.

-- CUNY intends to sell the air space that it owns.

-- There will likely be drastic cutbacks in OTPS (Other Than Personal Service)

-- Tuition increase. The chancellor supports a "modest" tuition increase for the fall of 2009. There will probably be no increase for the spring of 2009. The chancellor favors regular small increases in tuition over occasional sharp increases.

-- CUNY capital budget for infrastructure. The chancellor hasn't said a word about this at the last two UFS meetings. Usually it's the first thing that he talks about.

-- Vendor for credit cards. We have a new vendor, cheaper than the old. The drawback is that the new vendor doesn't take Visa.

* **Syllabuses.** As part of assessment, faculty are supposed to make syllabuses available. Syllabuses belong to the faculty and not the administration. Syllabuses are treated as a contract between teacher and student. Students should know from the outset what the course is about, what's expected of them, and what they have to do to get a given grade. The UFS will not challenge the new policy requiring faculty to make their syllabuses available ahead of time as long as the policy is reasonable.

5. Technology issues at Hunter: Manfred Kuechler, Acting Provost of Technology

* **Impending state and federal legislation requiring faculty to post course and textbook information in time for course registration.** The legislation is a major victory for the students against the big publishers. The legislation was sponsored by the Democrats. Nancy Pelosi was behind it, so was The Public Interest Research Group (PIRG). Publishers are against it. There are good reasons for the law. It's not really a matter of getting the government into the classroom. The purpose of the legislation is to give students a reasonable idea of what their texts are going to cost.

* **Course descriptions linked to the online schedule of classes at the registrar's website.** Soon students will be able to link to a document that faculty provide that describes the course. Currently there's just a brief note. The point of the policy is to provide students with good information on a course that they're thinking of taking. This can lead to a more efficient sorting of students to courses and professors: Students are more likely to be happy with the course that they've selected if they have good information about them beforehand; their professors are more likely to be satisfied with their students if the latter have made an informed choice about the course. Faculty members get to decide what goes in the course description. It should include objectives and goals but doesn't have to be a syllabus. Faculty will upload the document themselves in any of the following formats: Word, PDF, or HTML. This feature should be available by November 15. Unlike Webgrade, faculty will be able to change the document at any time.

Prof. Young pointed out that this new policy might encourage departments to hire adjuncts earlier, since there will be pressure on departments to post course descriptions on the registrar's site promptly.

* **Blackboard.** This has been a bad semester for Blackboard. There have been times when it has been unavailable or when students have been getting closed out. Part of the problem is that Blackboard itself is concerned with marketing at the expense of quality assurance. And now they are primarily focusing on version 8,

which means that they have not been duly attentive to problems with earlier versions of Blackboard.

* **Website on textbook price comparison:** www.bestbookbuys.com. This site gives students some idea of what they can expect to pay.

6. Old Business: There was no old business.

7. New Business: There was no new business.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:06.

Respectfully submitted,

Tony Doyle
FDA Secretary