

The Arts & Sciences Senate meets on Monday, February 27 at 3:30 PM in the Javits Room of the Library.

Agenda
Arts & Sciences Senate
February 27, 2006

- I. Approval of agenda
- II. Approval of minutes of the November 2005 meeting
- III. Report from the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (J. Staros)
- IV. Status of the Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Policy Committee
- V. Report of the ad-hoc committee on the effects of enhanced enrollments
- VI. Elections Update
- VII. Report of the President of the Senate
- VIII. Other Old Business
- IX. Other New Business

Minutes of the Arts and Sciences Senate for November 21, 2005

The meeting was convened by Georges Fouron, president-elect of the Senate, at 3:30 PM in the Javits Room.

- I. Approval of agenda

The agenda was approved.

- II. Approval of minutes of the October 17, 2005 meeting

The minutes were approved with one correction.

- III. President's Report (G. Fouron):

1) External 5-Year Review of AFS and the Writing Program: Both reviews were reported to have gone well.

2) New CAS Faculty Symposium: G. Fouron reported, from a report by Fred Gardaphe, that the Faculty Symposium had been extremely successful. Over 50 participants listened to 18 faculty members, including 10 new junior faculty members, present their research. Fouron suggested that this event, if and when held again, be held at a venue closer to the university.

- IV. Report from the PTC: Amendment to the Constitution (see attachment below) (J. Davila)

This was the first presentation of an amendment to the constitution adding specific language which allows the committee to appoint a seventh non-tenured member during times when none could be elected in the regular election. Some discussion was held and changes in language were suggested to clarify the time frame. Amendments were "with the consent of the Senate" in line 2 and the word "currently" changed to "at that year."

- V. Report on Increased Enrollment (D. Kane Gillespie)

Kane requested that the report presentation be delayed until more empirical data could be included from the Dean's office along with the anecdotal evidence the ad hoc committee had gathered. Discussion ensued about a variety of ways that such data could be gathered, other from the Dean's office. J. Kuchner suggested that Peter Baigent be asked to a dedicated meeting of the Executive Committee in which he could present data about the impact of increased enrollment on student services in addition to the data about impact on academic culture.

- VI. Other Old Business

No old business was reported.

VII. Other New Business

N. Goodman requested that the current PTC guidelines, which stipulate that departmental committee reports on the teaching and scholarship of individuals up for tenure be included in their review files, be changed so that only departmental letters be required. He suggested that the reports are a prompt for departmental discussion of the individual's performance and only reflect the opinions of one or two department members. J. Kushner suggested it be a discussion item for the Executive Committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:10 PM.

Minutes submitted by C. Davidson, Arts and Sciences Secretary

Ad-hoc Committee on Enhanced Enrollment

- Charge to the committee

Your charge is to look into how bad the overcrowding situation is. You can interpret this as you choose: it certainly affects the faculty and TA workload in terms of increased class sizes; it affects the staff in terms of increased workload; it affects the ability of the undergraduate students to learn, because they are more consistently in large, often impersonal, lecture settings rather than in more intimate seminar-type situations. It affects morale on campus.

We are not interested in your being quantitative: that kind of information can be gotten from the chairs or the registrar. We are interested in conveying to the appropriate people a real sense of how bad things have gotten. We want the view from the trenches. It is not clear that the higher levels of administration appreciate the situation.

- Committee

Members of the committee were: Kane Gillespie, Chair, Susan Scheckel, Paula Di Pasquale, Cynthia Davidson, Sandra Brennan, Neta Dean, Kanika Jain, Dumaine.

The committee met in October and November 2005

Because this committee did not have the expertise to delve into issues of educational pedagogy, much of what follows is anecdotal or hearsay. Nonetheless, it illustrates, to nobody's surprise, that some serious issues do exist and that these issues promise to get worse if not addressed.

- Summary

The committee was hard-pressed to identify any positive aspects of the increased enrollment on the undergraduate learning experience, because the increased enrollment has not been accompanied by any commensurate enhancement in the numbers of faculty/TAs, or in the facilities.

Student Issues:

While students at large universities tend to be resigned to large introductory classes, it is expected that upper division classes will be small enough that students can directly engage the instructor and each other. This is becoming increasingly difficult. With increased enrollment, increased demand in many upper division classes has pushed them beyond what is pedagogically sound. Furthermore, faculty teaching large classes rarely have the opportunity to get to know the students, which places them at a disadvantage when they need to ask for letters of recommendation. We do not know whether this hurts our student's chances for admission to prestigious graduate programs.

Another issue has to do with gateway courses. Anecdotally, there are students who are forced to delay graduation, or select other majors, because they are unable to enroll in a 100- or 200-level gateway course. Also anecdotally, freshmen have been kept out of 100 level courses because upperclassmen, who can sign up first, often seek "easy" classes to fill out their schedule. Some have the opinion that freshmen should have absolute priority to 100 level courses.

Ideally we would offer sufficient numbers of introductory courses and sections to meet demand, but we have neither the personnel nor the facilities to do so.

All majors are designed so that a student can graduate in 4 years. Students do not always cooperate: changing majors or ignoring advice are good ways to delay graduation. It would be useful to know what fraction of students who fail to graduate in 4 years do so largely because they were closed out of required classes.

out what a great idea it was to put an eating establishment in a central location, but it has become too successful. Unfortunately, new buildings are planned in response to crises. There is little we can do about this short of seeking benefactors with large wallets.

Community Morale:

Stony Brook University does not exist in a vacuum. Students who feel disserved by the negative affects of the increased enrollment tell others, some of whom may be potential students. Faculty candidates can be put off by stories of the increasing workload and the inadequate physical plant. Students who do not have good experiences are more likely to become bitter alumni who will not support the University in the future. All of these snowball, to the detriment of the university. If we do nothing, things will get worse.

Solution:

There are no easy solutions. The university has committed to a larger student population. We clearly need to increase the numbers of teaching faculty commensurately, and provide adequate teaching space. This is something we cannot do solely on our own - we need support from the state of New York. The initiative to increase out-of-state enrollment is something we can do, and have begun. The increased tuition will in principle permit us to increase the numbers of faculty.

The departments and faculty need to identify those bottlenecks that make it difficult for students to graduate in 4 years. In the short term, an unsatisfactory but perhaps necessary expedient is to offer additional lecture sections by video. We should be able to guarantee that any student who follows the rules, and doesn't change majors after a certain point, will be able to graduate in 4 years. We should be able to offer all students the opportunity to take upper division courses with many fewer than 30 other students, so they can have the opportunity to engage in meaningful directed discussions with their instructors and peers.

Staff Issues:

The major issue is that a larger number of students are being advised and assisted by a smaller (or minimally increased) number of staff members. This includes both professional staff and faculty. Consequently morale is low. The staff does an exemplary job trying to keep on top of these matters, but one worries how far they can be pushed. On the faculty side, our teaching loads have crept up to the point where they exceed those of many of our peer institutions.

TA Issues:

There are simply an insufficient number of TAs. This precludes the offering of sections in some courses (where students could benefit from the additional attention). Many TAs are reduced to the role of graders.

We should examine the use of advanced undergraduates as graders, or as laboratory TAs, thereby freeing up graduate TAs for teaching recitations. Colleges do a terrible job preparing grad students to teach; often the only teaching experience they get is in recitation sections. Taking this option away does them a disservice.

Faculty Issues:

We are being asked to teach more at the same time that we are under pressure do more sponsored research. In terms of teaching, there is a fixed number of hours in a day. We can devote less time to individual students. This is exacerbated because at the same time the number of TAs has fallen, so the students lose that source of advice/help.

One great selling point of this university is the involvement of undergraduates in faculty research. Mentoring undergraduates takes time and effort that most of us feel to be well worth while. But it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain excellence here while all other workloads are creeping up.

There has been a reticence among certain members of the faculty to engage in service outside their departments, often because they simply do not have the time to commit another hour or 2 per week. This is detrimental to the very concept of faculty governance, because we have trouble finding 50 members of the faculty to serve on the senate. The unfortunate side effect of our increased workloads is less attention to the operations of the University, which can lead to even less attractive working conditions.

Curricular Issues:

These echo the student issues. Anecdotally, there is unmet demand in certain courses. In addition, two items related to the writing requirement were raised. The large than optimal class sizes leads to a reduction in the number of writing assignments. This is a disservice to our students, who need all the writing practice they can get. But it is understandable because the faculty do not have the time to read the increased number of assignments (this can be exacerbated by the inadequate number of TAs in some departments). Anecdotally, in some cases graduation writing requirements have been waived for students who have been unable to enroll in the appropriate courses.

Graduating unprepared students is a political issue these days. It is best for us and for our students if we can give them a quality education.

Physical Plant:

We know that campus is crowded. We need new academic space, new dormitory space, and more living space. The overcrowding in the SAC cafeteria points

Proposed Constitutional Amendment - second reading

To be added following 3.a.(2)

"In the event that it is not possible to find a qualified non-tenured faculty representative, the Senate Executive Committee shall appoint, with consent of the Senate, a tenured faculty member to fill out this term. That faculty member may be from any department not represented on the PTC that term."

Amendments were "with the consent of the Senate" in line 2 and the word "currently" changed to "at that year."

Proposed Resolution

Whereas the University remains in session on federal holidays, and
Whereas the local schools are closed on federal holidays, and
Whereas many Senators have school-age children,
The Senate recognizes that attending a Senate meeting on a federal holiday can be burdensome on some of our members.

Therefore, be it resolved that:

When the nominal date of an Arts and Sciences meeting falls on a Federal holiday, the meeting of the Senate will be deferred one week.

