Minutes of Regular Meeting

Meeting

Regular meeting of the full senate, 3:15 p.m., Qatar Ballroom, Lavin-Bernick Center.

Presiding: The chair, President Cowen.

Attendance

Ex Officio: Cowen (pres/chair), Long (vice chair), Bernstein (provost), Sachs (svp, dean SOM), Lorino (CFO), David (pres, ASB), Barrera (chair, SAC), Mackin (secr), Wiese (parl)

Deans: DeNisi (ABF), Query (Libraries), MacLaren (NTC), (Arch.), Griffin (Law), Fitzmorris (proxy for Marksbury, SCS), Haber (SLA), Barrera (proxy for Buekens, SPHTM), (SSE)

A. B. Freeman School of Business: M. Sujan, H. Sujan, McFarland

Newcomb-Tulane College: Kalka

Architecture:

Continuing Studies: Green, McLennan

Law: Scalise, Davies, Hancock

Liberal Arts: Masquelier, Cole, Rothenberg, Mayer, Thompson

Medicine: Reitan, Mushatt, Landry, Kahn (proxy for DeSalvo), Betancourt

Public Health and Tropical Medicine:

Hutchinson, Hassig, Lefante

Science and Engineering: Schmehl, Walker, Mullin (proxy for Tasker)

Social Work: Pearlmutter

Student Senators: Aronson, Capek

Staff Senators: Martin (proxy for Hayes)

Senators at Large: Kehoe, Ruscher, Robins, Kahn, Carroll, Purrington, John, Lesmond

Invited Guests: Levy (assoc sr vp, research), Wright (representing McMahon, vp, info tech), Hogg (interim vp, student affairs), Love (vp, inst equity), Mitchell and Lopez (assoc provosts), Coignet (dir, univ relations), Conwell (chief of staff), Banker (spec asst, pres), Kilpatrick (Hullabaloo), Busby (dir, inst assessment)

Absent Senators: Y. Jones, Schwartz, Altiero, Marks, V. Jones, Bernhard, Horowitz, Bunnell, Doucet, Colombo, Lewis, Platner

Introduction of New Senators and Guests

President Cowen introduced the following senators:

Blandon David, president of the Associated Student Body

Dan Capek, vice president for student life,

Undergraduate Student Government

He also introduced as guests Katie Busby, director of institutional assessment, and Linda Wright, representing the office of information technology because Charlie McMahon was unable to attend.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on March 1, 2010, were approved after two corrections were made to the attendance listing.

Elections

Senator Morris Kalka was elected by the faculty senators to a three-year term as faculty representative to the board.

The election of a secretary to replace retiring Secretary Mackin was deferred to the next meeting because of a lack of nominees.
President’s Report

President Cowen said he had no news to report that the senate was not already aware of. He then invited questions.

Senator Walker asked about the status of incoming student deposits for the fall. The president said that deposits to date were up by ten deposits over the same date last year. The total was 648 deposits. He noted that yield at private institutions across the country was expected to be down 5 to 10 percent, while yield at public institutions was expected to rise. Tulane, however, was holding its own compared with the previous year.

Senator Carroll asked if the president had any news about an end to the hiring freeze. President Cowen said he would not be able to address that possibility until after the end of the current fiscal year. He anticipated being able to give a clear answer at the first senate meeting in the fall.

Senator Carroll asked whether that schedule would allow hiring procedures to begin in the fall for positions to be filled the following fall. The president said that was the administration’s plan.

Committee Reports

Committee on Physical Facilities

Senator John, chair the committee, discussed its annual report, which had been distributed to the senate, along with an attachment provided by Collette Creppell, university architect, comprising slides describing completed, ongoing and planned projects for the uptown campus. Completed projects included the Howard-Tilton Library’s Learning Commons and the improvements to campus lighting. Ongoing projects included the following:

- Dinwiddie Hall renovation
- McAlister Place project
- Newcomb Pottery Garden
- Glazer Gardens and Bocce Court
- Claiborne TUPD Substation and renovation of the former PIKE House to a TUPD substation campus-wide
- designated smoking areas
- Newcomb Place drainage and development
- Residential College II construction
- Alumni House renovation
- Richardson Building repairs

The two-floor expansion of the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library was listed as a confirmed project. A basketball and volleyball practice facility was described as still in the planning phase.

Senator John was asked about construction activity at the Freret end of Newcomb Place. President Cowen suggested that Vice President Lorino could best answer that question. Vice President Lorino said that the construction was to open up the intersection with Freret Street and allow traffic to enter and exit campus at that intersection.

Senator Carroll asked whether the result would be to move the traffic from McAlister Place to the library. Vice President Lorino acknowledged that to some extent that would be true. Senator Purrington commented that the change was, in fact, a reversion to the way it used to be.

Continuing his report, Senator John said parking on campus remained a concern that would be addressed by a subcommittee focused on traffic and security. Senator Carroll asked if the number of racks for parking bicycles on campus could be increased. Senator John said the subcommittee would look into it.

Senator Purrington asked about a rumor the university was planning to build a “cathouse” on campus. President Cowen acknowledged that the rumor was true, but the plans were for real cats and the administration preferred the term “cat condominiums.” The purpose was to house feral cats that were living on campus. He said the administration had consulted with experts on cats’ behavior and needs and was trying to deal with the cats in a humane, sensitive way. After some comments about charging the cats fees and offering naming opportunities to donors for the cat condominiums, the discussion of physical facilities came to a close.

Committee on Information Technology

Senator Lesmond, committee chair, presented the committee’s report, which had been distributed to the senate before the meeting. He discussed
two major issues: the technology help desk and the online system for course evaluations.

Senator Lesmond said that many complaints had arisen about the help desk and the in-house staff dealing with computer issues. Another issue was the speed of delivery of services after a service call was placed or service was promised. The current contract, he said, specifies a two-minute wait time. That contract costs $240,000 and expires in June 2010. Reducing the wait time to one minute would cost an additional $75,000.

Senator Lesmond said he had conducted a test of the response time; he made 30 calls, 24 of which were not answered after 5 minutes.

An additional problem, he said, was that the on-campus staff was not performing adequately. He said that he had received complaints about rudeness and about delays in service. Often, the wait was one week for a technical staff member to show up, which is a long time for those who are unable to use their computers.

Senator Lesmond then listed four alternatives that could help remedy the problem:

1. Bring all help desk function back on campus at Tulane. The cost was roughly and conservatively estimated at $500,000.
2. Retain an outsourced help desk system, but change vendors to control costs and improve service. The current contract is for 24/7 service, but reduced hours could provide increased competence at equal or lower cost.
3. Hire more in-house technical staff to address the specific needs of faculty and students.
4. Retrain the existing staff members and make them more accountable or else outsource on-site assistance.

Senator Lesmond asked Linda Wright of the office of technology to add her observations. She explained that the number of in-house technical staff members was two and more would be beneficial. She said that Vice President McMahon appreciated input from the Committee on Information Technology and the entire campus community on both problems and suggestions.

Senator Harish Sujan commented that the laptop station on campus seemed to work well. He believed that the major problem was the contractor who ran what he called the “helpless desk.” Senator Lesmond restated the problems he had observed and emphasized again that the contract was coming up for renewal in June.

Senator Kalka asked what data was available on the effect of reduced hours for the help desk. Ms. Wright estimated that calls coming in between 9:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. were a small proportion of the total, perhaps an eighth. She added that Saturday and Sunday calls were a very low number.

Senator Purrington noted that most faculty members and students used laptops and the laptop repair facility was performing well. Ms. Wright said that the downtown campus was different and still used many desktop computers. Senator Lesmond added that many faculty members uptown used both laptop and desktop computers. He said he himself required a fixed computer because of the large amount of data he worked with.

Senator Mayer asked whether it would be more reasonable to have technical staff assigned to buildings or regions of the campus. She said that would allow people to know whom to call directly for problems and follow-up. Senator Lesmond said that his proposal to publish the phone numbers of the technical staff was aimed at the problem of accountability, but two or three staff members would find themselves answering the phone all day long.

Senator Tasker questioned the cost estimate of $500,000 to bring the function on campus. He said that figure did not take into account the money schools and departments were currently spending on their own technical support because the centralized system was unsatisfactory. Senator Lesmond agreed that because of duplication of efforts, a portion of the cost savings that might be achieved was probably not included in the estimate. He added that including those costs would imply that some would be willing to give up their dedicated support.

President Cowen asked Senator Lesmond what the next step was. Senator Lesmond said it was to decide what to do about the help desk contract when it came up for renewal in June. The other issues could be postponed.

Senator Pearlmutter spoke in favor of
retaining a 24/7 contract. She said she made use of the service on weekends and would have lost valuable time without the service being available.

Dean Query asked whether the current contract contained measurable standards that the contractor must comply with and whether the office of information technology had enforced those provisions. Ms. Wright said the office did enforce standards but those standards were based on monthly performance, not failures over a few days or a week.

Senator Rothenberg asked whether the senate was being asked to address the need for a change in the contract and, if so, whether that action implied endorsement or rejection of the other alternatives in the report. Secretary Mackin then suggested that Senator Lesmond make a motion specifying what action he recommended to the senate.

Senator Lesmond made the motion that the senate recommend that the contract be reopened to competitive bidding to arrive at a vendor who would provide 9-to-5 service instead of 24/7, with the proviso that the quality assurance would be verifiable. That motion was seconded.

Senator Carroll said she did not know anyone in the humanities who relied upon the help desk. Once one finally reached the help desk and then spent 20 minutes proving that he or she was a member of the Tulane community, then the help desk would not only fail to solve the problem, but would send an e-mail the next day claiming to have solved the problem.

President Cowen observed that the committee had made the senate aware of the problem but needed to do more work with the office of information technology in framing a solution to the problem, which could be brought to the senate. Secretary Mackin then moved to refer the motion back to the committee. That motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Senator Lesmond then discussed the second issue, involving online course evaluations. He said the provost’s office was working on the problem of percentage of completion of evaluations, but a second problem involved the fact that some courses were unable to offer online evaluations that worked. The business school offered a number of modular courses lasting six to eight weeks in which the students were unable to complete their evaluations. Apparently, the difference in timing of these courses conflicted with the design of the online evaluation system. He recommended that the professional schools be allowed to contact students directly when evaluations are available.

Senator Purrington asked whether this issue was a senate responsibility. President Cowen said he did not believe so. Any professional school that wanted to contact its own students had the right to do so. He considered the report of the problem an item of information, not action, for the senate.

Committee on Equal Opportunity and Institutional Equity

Senator Ruscher, chair of the committee, presented its annual report, which had been electronically distributed to the senate. The report focused on the committee’s consideration of the “family-friendliness” of Tulane. The committee examined policies of peer institutions in several areas.

One recommendation was that one-year extensions of the tenure clock should be automatic when a faculty member became a new parent. Currently the extension required a request, as though it were something out of the ordinary, which could be a concern for untenured faculty members. The committee proposed an amendment to the Faculty Handbook to make the extension automatic.

Secretary Mackin moved to refer the proposed amendment to the Committee on Faculty Tenure, Freedom, and Responsibility for consultation because the proposal would affect tenure and probation. That motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Senator Ruscher then discussed other aspects of the committee’s report. She said that Tulane lacked clear policies on leaves for family reasons or illness. Those policies had budgetary implications because they would require resources for funding adjuncts. She said the committee would continue to research best practices, and she recommended that individual units also consider ways to implement better policies at Tulane.

Other areas of concern involved support for
staff when co-workers were on medical leave, locations for women to breast-feed infants, and leave programs for graduate students. She also mentioned a need for educating the Tulane community about family-friendly environments.

Some senators expressed concern about the possibility of multiple extensions of the tenure clock and increasing the types of life events that could result in an extension.

Senator Carroll thanked the committee for pointing out that Tulane lacked a sick leave policy for its faculty. She cited the example of a colleague who was ill and was forced by the dean to pay for an adjunct out of her own pocket.

Senator Kalka raised the issue of a faculty member who did not want the extension but did not want to come up for tenure early because in some schools that would raise the standards for tenure. Provost Bernstein concurred that the issue of not wanting an extension could be serious, and he raised a corollary issue of someone changing his or her mind about the extension. He said the committee had more details to work out in its consultation with FTFR.

Committee on Educational Policy

Vice Chair Long, chair of the committee, presented its annual report, together with a motion to adopt the proposed academic calendar for 2011-2012. The report had been distributed to the senate before the meeting.

The results of the review of the performance of admitted student athletes on April 30, 2009, indicated that their performance exceeded the standards set forth in senate policy. Vice Chair Long said the review would be repeated by the end of the current semester.

The committee held a joint meeting with the Committee on Committees. Some of the results of that meeting, he said, would be discussed under new business. That joint meeting also discussed the relationship of the Graduate Council to the University Senate and reprised the question whether the council should be a standing committee of the senate. The provost’s office had been working on amendments to the council’s constitution and would add amendments to improve communication between the senate and the council. Those amendments were expected to be presented to the senate at its meeting in May 2010.

Vice Chair Long then moved the adoption of the academic calendar for 2011-12. He noted that the committee had recognized concerns created by the current calendar’s effect on Monday classes when two consecutive Mondays were included in spring break. That problem would not arise in the proposed calendar. He said future committees on Educational Policy should address the issue when it arises again. The senate approved the 2011-12 academic calendar by unanimous voice vote.

New Business

Committee on Committees: Bylaw Changes

Vice Chair Long, chair of the Committee on Committees, presented a first reading of changes to Bylaw III that had been recommended by the committee [see Appendix 1]. He said the changes, which would affect non-voting ex officio positions on two committees, were at the behest of the administration. Vice President Lorino had requested that the university architect be added to the Committee on Physical Facilities, and Vice President Baños had asked for several changes to the membership of the Committee on Student Affairs to reflect changes in administrative structure. The senate did not raise any questions about the first reading of the proposal.

Committee on Committees and Committee on Educational Policy: Joint Proposals to Change the Bylaws

Vice Chair Long, chair of both committees, offered a first reading of amendments to the bylaws that had been approved jointly by the two committees [see Appendix 2]. The first proposal would create a new senate standing committee, the Committee on Assessment. The second proposal would clarify the functions of the Committee on Educational Policy.

Senator Purrington asked what the genesis of the proposed Committee on Assessments was. Vice Chair Long said the committee was requested by Katie Busby, director of institutional assessment.

Senator Rothenberg commented on her experience as a member of the task force on
assessment. She said the task force found that different units had very different requirements and methods for assessment. She did not oppose the proposal, but she was curious how the committee would function amid these differing needs.

Ms. Busby said that she recognized that different schools might indeed develop school-specific practices to suit their needs. The committee, however, would serve as a forum for sharing information between schools. One school might decide to adopt the practice of another school. The committee could also recommend practices to meet needs that were common across the institution.

At the urging of Provost Bernstein, Ms. Busby also elaborated on the genesis of the committee. A university-wide committee on assessment was considered a “best practice” by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Tulane should have such a committee in place as it goes through the SACS reaffirmation process.

In response to a question from Senator Purrington about the reason the committee was placed under the senate, Ms. Busby said that the senate was the most appropriate place within the structure of the university.

Vice Chair Long pointed out that the joint committee review of the proposal considered the possibility of some overlap between the proposed Committee on Assessment and the current Committee on Educational Policy. That deliberation raised some concerns about the clarity of the current statement in the bylaws about the functions of the Committee on Educational Policy. As a result, the committees jointly recommended the second amendment to the bylaws to clarify the functions of the Committee on Educational Policy. The proposed restatement of functions divided executive responsibilities into university-wide and undergraduate categories and made executive and advisory responsibilities more explicit. The senate raised no questions about this first reading.

Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Mackin, Secretary

Secretary’s Note: All written reports mentioned in the minutes, together with the full text of approved Handbook revisions and other policy changes, will be available on the senate Web site, http://www.tulane.edu/~usenate/.
Appendix 1, Proposed Amendment to Bylaw III on Committee Membership

The Committee on Committees recommends that Senate Bylaw III, Section 2 (Committee Membership) be amended as follows:

#1 Change “Committee on Physical Facilities: Membership” as follows:

…Ex officio and non-voting members to include the Chief Financial Officer, the Associate Vice-President for Facilities, the University Architect, and the Director of Security.

#2 Change “Committee on Student Affairs: Membership” as follows:

…Ex officio, non-voting members shall be 9:
Vice-President for Student Affairs
Student Affairs Associate or Assistant Vice-Presidents (3)
  Housing/Residential Life
  Campus Recreation and Student Centers
  One Other Chosen by the Vice-President for Student Affairs
Senior Associate Vice-President for Campus Services
Executive Director of Student Health Services
President of the Associated Student Body
President of GAPSA
President of USG
Appendix 2, Proposed Amendments to Bylaw III

Jointly from the Committee on Committees and the Committee on Educational Policy:

I. To Create a New Senate Standing Committee, the Committee on Assessment

A. Add to Section 1:

Committee on Assessment: Functions

Executive: To review and make recommendations to the Director of Institutional Assessment regarding the

- exchange of assessment information and assessment strategies among academic programs and administrative units;
- the planning, development, and implementation of institution-wide assessment efforts;
- fostering a campus culture of assessment and institutional effectiveness;
- implementation of student outcomes assessment;
- accreditation-related assessment procedures at all levels in the university;
- appropriate and legitimate use of surveys to collect data; and
- review of and response to unit assessment plans and reports.

Advisory: To make recommendations to the Senate on policies relating to assessment.

B. Add to Section 2:

Committee on Assessment: Membership

Voting members include the Director of Institutional Assessment (ex officio) as co-chair; one faculty member from each of the School of Architecture, the A.B. Freeman School of Business, the School of Continuing Studies, the School of Law, the School of Liberal Arts, the School of Medicine, the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, the School of Science and Engineering, and the School of Social Work, one of whom shall serve as co-chair; the chair of the Newcomb-Tulane College curriculum committee (ex officio); one member of the administration from each of the offices of Institutional Research, Student Affairs, Library, Technology Services, and University Communications; and two student representatives: one undergraduate student and one graduate student.
II. To Clarify the Functions of the Committee on Educational Policy

Substitute the following for the existing portion of Section 1 under this heading:

**Committee on Educational Policy: Functions**

*Executive:*

(1) University-wide–To review and make recommendations to the faculties and deans regarding:
   (a) policies and procedures that affect teaching;
   (b) the quality of support services relevant to teaching quality.
(2) Undergraduate programs–
   (a) To review admissions policies to assure acceptable minimum standards. [This function excludes review of interdivisional transfers and review of advance standing determinations for transfer students seeking admission from outside the University.]
   (b) To review by Subcommittee (which may be a committee of the whole) the admission and academic performance of student athletes according to the terms of the policy adopted by the Senate on 04/18/2000.

*Advisory to the Senate:*

(1) on questions related to academic policy and planning, admissions, and student financial aid within the University which may either have been referred to, or have originated with, the Committee;
(2) in recommending a satisfactory calendar for University operations;
(3) in recommending the initiation of new or the termination of existing undergraduate degree programs, new undergraduate majors involving two or more units, and the initiation of new or the termination of existing joint undergraduate degrees or joint undergraduate/graduate degree programs.