SENATE MEETING: March 5, 2018

Presiding: President Michael Fitts

ATTENDANCE: 48 Voting Senators; 17 Voting Senators Absent.

NON-VOTING SENATORS: S. Richardson, S. Ramer.


FACULTY SENATORS:

Freeman School of Business: J. Trapani.

Newcomb-Tulane College: J. Tasker.

Architecture: A. Eloueni, G. Owen.

School of Professional Advancement: A. Garcia.

School of Law: S. Seicshnaydre (Proxy James Duggan), J. Duggan, R. Westley (Proxy).

School of Liberal Arts: M. Olsen, M. Sachs, R. Velkley, R. Atencio (proxy), M. Adams.

School of Medicine: K. Hering-Smith, S. Landry, Z. Pursell, D. Majid, E. Boh.

School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine: M. Demosthenidy, L. Bazzano, E. Harville, P. Kissinger.


School of Social Work: L. Saltzman.

Libraries, Academic Info & Resources:


STUDENT SENATORS: E. Blake (Proxy Joseph Sotile), M. Vasishth, D. Gadison.

STAFF SENATORS: L. Behrhorst.


INVITED GUESTS, DIRECTORS & PRESIDENT’S OFFICE (NON-VOTING): H. Boyd.
The regular meeting of the Senate began at 3:18 p.m. in the Qatar Ballroom of the LBC.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Senators voted unanimously to approve minutes of Senate Meeting of October 8, 2018.

**INTRODUCTION AND REMARKS BY PRESIDENT FITTS:**

President Fitts opened the meeting by welcoming senators to the meeting on this rainy day. He noted that he thought we may have to build an ark. The rain is usually one that prevents a quorum, but he was impressed that we do have a quorum. As the first order of business, the senate voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the October 8 meeting. President Fitts noted that the Homecoming weekend had been spectacular, the best attended we have ever had at Tulane, and he thanked everyone for their support. In one quick note he reported that the university has just closed early decision applications. We were up 27% over last year in early decision applications, and over the past two years we are up 60%. These may be highest increases in the country. The quality of these applications is also up. So, it’s going to be a very competitive class. This interest in Tulane around the country, if it continues unabated, is a great harbinger for our future. Third, President Fitts mentioned that a Subcommittee of the Committee on Race and Student Values is looking at ways to name buildings or extend other honors to individuals from the ranks of minorities. At present, he noted, the university has never conferred such honors on any people of color. The university and the responsible committees would like to get the names of deserving individuals who would be appropriate for such honorary recognition from alumni, staff, and faculty. Nominations by the end of December would be a good thing. In a final note the President mentioned that senators may have seen that a complaint that Newcomb College discriminates against men has been lodged with Office of Civil Rights. Legally, you can have an all-female college, but once the student body is no longer entirely female, then you cannot discriminate against men. The Newcomb College Institute, he argued, is a great institution. It educates women for leadership, but we must and want to comply with federal law. In his view there are ways to open activities and comply with the law. We will do that, but we’re currently in the middle of discussions with the Office of Civil Rights about this. That’s where we
are. At this point President Fitts opened the floor to questions, and there were none.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Committee on Educational Policy, Justin Wolfe. Professor Wolfe opened a discussion and eventual vote on proposed dates in the University Calendar. He pointed out that we had hoped to bring this forward last spring, but we weren’t able to do so; so we held off. Now, the contracts for graduations at the Superdome need to be signed. The proposal originally came as an effort to shift the calendar so that the practice of fall sorority rush, which went into the spring semester of the academic year, be moved to take place prior to the beginning of the spring semester of academic year. The Office of Student Affairs found there were complaints that under the present practice students going through rush had missed classes, and so on. This earlier practice also had an impact on retention. His committee would like to make the proposed changes a standard policy so that we don’t have to deal with the calendar so often. There were questions about making calendar choices and student life at Tulane, and Professor Wolfe indicated that his committee will ask the Office of Student Affairs to look into them. Questions arose from the floor. First, what opportunities will exist for other organizations to use this time? The proposal is to start the semester to Tuesday after Martin Luther King Day, which would push Tulane’s commencement to a week later on the calendar. The dates of the commencement are not necessarily beyond what they have been, but this would be the new set of dates. This would not involve any loss of teaching time. The number of Mondays in the semester would remain the same. The proposal from the Committee on Educational Policy initially asked for these changes to be institutionalized going forward. But the committee ultimately decided not to bring that proposal forward, so the proposal now on the floor is only for five years. As chair, Professor Wolfe indicated that he had talked to a lot of people involved. That is the proposal: to shift the calendar forward for five years. One senator noted that this change couldn’t work in 2025 because of Memorial Day falls on a Saturday that year. To this Professor Wolfe responded that the proposal involves actual changes only in two years. Professor Allison Truitt asked whether this involves a greater charge in dining halls. If this were to become more regularized, does this
not give privilege to the Greek community of Tulane, and how does that fit with the sexual harassment campaign? If the dorms are open for these students, would other students make use of this time? Professor Wolfe responded that the committee hopes for this, but it isn’t part of this motion. Vice-President for Student Affairs Dusty Rhodes noted that this proposal was mainly for first-year women. National sorority organizations mandate the time of rush. So 70-75% of first year women go through this process. Another senator was concerned about how this might affect summer session, for which there had earlier been a greater break from the spring semester. The summer school is afraid this would hurt their enrollment. Has the committee considered that? Professor Wolfe answered there was some consideration, but the potential loss of the May semester was considered. It could begin in the week before commencement and crossed over into early June. This is a pattern that could continue. We could also imagine different program in the winter. But it would add a week to the academic year and thus shorten the time for the end of the summer session. Professor Wolfe had not heard that question from SOPA. Schools beyond SOPA don’t take advantage of this so much. If the change causes significant problems, he noted, we may want to reconsider. Professor Jana Lipman wanted to know whether the changes can be reconsidered, allowing for us to check up on how they are working? Professor Wolfe responded that the registrar’s office will know about this, and the question will come up again before the Senate and the Committee on Education Policy. The deans and senators should let the CEP know if they see real problems. If we don’t hear anything, we’ll assume everything is all right. If we proceed to lose enrollment, then we’d need to know this and respond to it. A discussion of various potential problems and solutions ensued. Professor Mark Vail asked whether these changes would affect fall enrollment. If not, then he is very much in favor of them. Another senator says his college hasn’t heard anything about these proposed changes and that he doesn’t feel comfortable voting on this today. He’s very uncomfortable voting on something that he doesn’t discuss with his faculty, how it affects summer programs and so on. Ghe question was called at this point for a vote by show of hands. The motion passed by a vote of 28-8.
OLD BUSINESS

Professor Carola Wenk expressed her wish that materials for Senate meetings, including the agenda and related documents, be distributed to senators earlier than is now the case, and ideally a week before the meeting.

New Business: There was none.

ADJOURNMENT: In the absence of other business, the meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Samuel C. Ramer
Secretary of the Senate