SENATE MEETING: October 8, 2018

Presiding: President Michael Fitts

ATTENDANCE:

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


FACULTY SENATORS:

Freeman School of Business: J. Trapani, M. Sujan.

Newcomb-Tulane College: J. Tasker.

Architecture: G. Owen, W. Redfield.

School of Professional Advancement: T. Fitzmorris, A. Garcia.

School of Law: S. Seichshnaydre, J. Duggan.

School of Liberal Arts: M. Sachs, B. Brox, R. Velkley, R. Atencio, M. Adams.

School of Medicine: S. Landry, Z. Pursell, D. Majid.

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

School of Science & Engineering: M. Barrios, C. Wenk, V. Moll.

School of Social Work:

Libraries, Academic Info & Resources:

SENATORS AT LARGE: C. Burnette (for J. Lipman), M. Dieee (for H. Long), S. McKabe, L. McMahan, B. Demare, A. Truitt,

STUDENT SENATORS: E. Blake, N. Kasireddy, M. Vasishth, D. Gadison

STAFF SENATORS: L. Behrhorst, N. Fuentes (proxy for M. Heyder).

COMMITTEE CHAIRS: S. McKinley, E. McMahon, A. Truitt, B. Demare, C. Burnette (for J. Lipman)

INVITED GUESTS, VPs (NON-VOTING): S. Dattagupta, C. Raphel, N. Wong, M. Cunningham, A. Lopez, T. Krousel-Wood,


The regular meeting of the Senate began at 3:15 p.m. in the Qatar Ballroom of the LBC.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Senators voted unanimously to approve minutes of Senate Meeting of September 17, 2018.

INTRODUCTION AND REMARKS BY PRESIDENT FITTS:

President Fitts welcomed the colleagues to the meeting. He announced that the trajectory of Hurricane Michael isn’t clear, but that the university keeps up with sensitive weather information, and the experts we have will tell us what they find out. Now it appears we won’t get it. The rain we are currently having, he suggested, is probably part of the passing front.

President Fitts went on to note several developments. Now that we are past October 1, it’s clear that everything we said about the admission of the incoming class is true: it’s the strongest class that we have seen. Our retention rate has also gone up as measured on October 1, 2018. The new rate is 93.5%, the highest ever. He reminded senators that only a few years ago the rate was in the 80s. students who are here on October 1, 2018. This improvement, he argued, attests to the quality of our teaching and the overall environment within the university. He also mentioned that the President’ Commission on Race has asked to search for individuals we should honor, persons for whom we could possibly names spaces on the campus. We need a diverse set of honoring sites, so we have started to think hard about who in our history would be an appropriate candidate for such honors. He encouraged senators and others to send names of potential honorees to Professor Rosanne Adderley of the History Department.

President Fitts went on to say a few words about campus safety, which is important to the entire community. The university has undertaken various initiatives to improve this: better lighting on campus, cameras everywhere, and so on. We are also partnered with Allied Security. Over the last three years the amount of reported crime has gone down 33%.
Obviously, we want no crime at all, but these various changes have had a positive effect. We are dedicating a police station right in the center of the downtown campus and we are moving forward on an uptown police station across in the empty lot across from the Boot. As part of our safety initiatives we have just concluded a national search for a new chief of police. The successful candidate is Kurt Williams, who comes from New Orleans where he was the deputy chief of police, and at one time oversaw the uptown district. He was also very good at cementing our relationship with the NOPD.

Election of a Senator from SPHTM to serve on the Committee on Committees. To be elected from among currently sitting Senators.

Vice Chair Justin Wolfe called for nominations. The only nominee was Professor Emily Harville, who was elected by acclamation.

Faculty Data Report (Part II): Provost Forman

Provost Forman was here to discuss the new table of faculty data that he circulated before the meeting. He made it clear that his presentation was a kind of addendum to the presentation he gave at the Senate last year. What senators can see, he pointed out, is that each school is listed, and for each school there are two slides. The first is the number of faculty in each rank over the years. This slide was in his earlier report of the spring, but in this new configuration he had added the year 2004, just prior to Katrina. This was in response to the claim that the size of the faculty was larger before Katrina, but the data shown here indicates that this is clearly not the case. As you look at the data, he continued, you can see that there have been a variable number of adjuncts from year to year. Senators, he warned, should take the figures on adjuncts with a grain of salt. The actual record-keeping on adjuncts has been approximate, at best. Some stay on the books even though they may not be teaching. The other thing senators may notice is that the number recorded for the School of Medicine appear to be crazy. Senators will see the dramatic decrease in the number of faculty, but this is also a statistical illusion. It results from the fact that there is always more turnover in the School of Medicine, but this is not always accurately reflected in the data.

Now, because of large number of faculty in the School of Medicine we
did two calculations at the university level: one that includes the School of Medicine, one which does not. We then calculated all faculty gender breakdown by track over time. What you see is that the number of tenured faculty is growing, and that female proportion of the faculty is also growing.

The graph in the front of the report has four different pieces of information: the total number of students from 2003-2004 onward, which shows that our classes are about 5-7% larger. But the faculty itself has grown even more rapidly. Then there are three calculations of the: student/faculty ratio. The numbers here are widely divergent numbers, and all three numbers are correct. He then proceeded to explain these differences. The top number, a ratio of 11.6, measures all regular full-time faculty divided by the total number of students. If we add adjuncts into the equation, we get a ratio of 9.9. If we add faculty more broadly, including faculty that don’t reside in any one school (faculty in institutes and centers, for example), you get a ratio of 7.9 US News & World Report not only permits this latter technique but encourages it. In these calculations we count an adjunct as 1/3 of an FTE. Graduate and professional students also count. It’s not so simple to get a clear sense of these things, but our ratios are comparable with other schools. It’s a lot trickier with schools of medicine because of the number of clinical faculty. Professor Allison Truitt thanked the Provost for his report and asked how adjuncts are counted. Provost Forman responded that he was doing a headcount of adjuncts active at the time he was measuring. Once again, adjuncts counted as 1/3 of a regular faculty member. All the data, he emphasized, should be viewed as starting points. Professor Carola Wenk asked about the figure of 11.6. She suggested that it wouldn’t take many more faculty members to bring that 11.6 down to 11.0 and asked whether there are plans to enhance numbers of faculty? Provost Forman responded that the administration is hard at work seeking resources for schools that would allow them to recruit more faculty: deans obviously need resources to expand their faculties. But he also argued that calculating the pressure upon faculty from year to year is slightly misleading. He would prefer to regard the expansion of the faculty as a goal that would accommodate larger freshman classes. He added that a student/faculty ratio of 11.6 doesn’t
measure what courses enrollments look like. So there’s not an easy connection between the ratio and the actual size of classes. Professor Sam Landry asks whether we could get exact figures for School of Medicine. Provost Forman doesn’t know how to do this without going from individual to individual and doesn’t believe that the result would be worth the time and effort. Professor Landry urged that the School of Medicine has suffered a lot in terms of their academic ability after the loss of so many faculty members after Katrina. The Provost suggested that we need to forget the pre-Katrina data and think instead about what we need for the future. Professor Landry argued it’s vital for the university at large because research and graduate students are such major drivers of our overall mission, and the School of Medicine, has taken a big hit in its faculty’s ability to get grant funding, something that has changed over the years. He reiterated his view that we will need tenure-track faculty in the School of Medicine in order to reverse this pattern, and Provost Forman agreed with this. President Fitts noted that one of the values of this statistical exercise is to show that a lot of things that are widely believed about these figures aren’t true: indeed, faculty numbers have been going up, but we all know that the School of Medicine is critical. But looking at pre-Katrina numbers, he suggested, should not be the benchmark. The question is rather where the best place is to expand the School of Medicine, both for research and clinical purposes. In terms of our decisions, we know we need to do this. Vice Chair Wolfe wanted to know more about gender breakdown among schools: some are close to parity, he noted, while others are not so close. He asked what observations Provost Forman could make in this regard. Provost Forman responded that in his view no clear story jumps from this data except that the progress in gender hiring has been consistent and steady almost across the board. He works with deans and they review the data, but he also conceded that Professor Wolfe was right: the data on gender varies from school to school. For example, women are underrepresented in STEM. He commented that his office is working with each school to find the most realistic path forward. But he does not see any clear story coming from the overall data. Professor Truitt noted that there is more gender parity in instructional ranks, but not tenure-track and tenure positions and asked whether there is perhaps a feminization of instructional
faculty ranks. Provost Forman responded that more recent hiring over the past ten years is one in which women have fared well. PoP ranks with large representations of women are much more in foreign language instruction. He also finds school numbers themselves can be misleading, and department numbers are different. He doesn’t want to dismiss Professor Truitt’s question. Another senator thought the figures needed to be looked at the departmental level, not just schools. Provost Forman responded that calculating at the departmental level is not a very effective approach if only because we have so many interdisciplinary programs, and so on.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Assessment Committee: Professor Trapani (SLA). Professor Trapani thanked the individual members of his committee for their work. The purpose of the committee, he noted, is to review the university’s assessment evaluations and results. Now, he and his committee are focusing on the various learning requirements that the Southern Association (SACS) is asking for. His report was brief but listed all the agencies that accredit Tulane programs. Of these, he argued, SACS is the only agency that evaluates the entire university, and the federal government uses it to evaluate funding decisions. SACS evaluations are thus very important. Last year, he recalled, Tulane finished up its five-year review. We got feedback from SACS, and the overall result was that we did reasonably well. But there were a couple of areas in which SACS evaluators noted weaknesses. The first was our exclusive reliance on indirect assessment or teaching, in which students estimate what they learned. In the future they wanted a more formal assessment procedure. The second area cited the evidence of how evaluations were considered or used. Tulane, for the moment, does not have much of this now. Arranging for this is a lot of work. Please note that her office is there. We do have to work on assessment. We plan to review the plans we have in place for each of our programs and encourage everyone to review their programs every year. Another important thing is to have an assessment plan for the new core curriculum. Lastly, we’re going to have a new student evaluation system this year. At this point we have identified our agenda, and meeting SACS requirements is it. The committee does not currently
have any recommendations to bring before the Senate. Professor Jeff Tasker noted that the value of SACS is not obvious to most faculty. He asked what role does SACS plays in funding? In addition, he asked whether the federal government uses SACS to find out whether you are a quality institution, but not so much in evaluating an individual grant application. The answer here is that non-accredited institutions cannot receive federal funds. We don’t need an A in this matter, Professor Trapani noted, but he emphasized that we can’t afford an F. Professor Sam Landry asked whether we could turn to other accrediting agencies. Provost Forman replied that accrediting agencies are regional, and SACS is the only agency that we can turn to for accreditation.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Professor Martin Sachs presented a letter to President Fitts signed by fifteen faculty members of the Department of Theatre and Dance and one faculty member of the Music Department urging the university to undertake greater safety measures at the Music and Theater departments. A recent incident of alleged sexual abuse at Dixon Hall prompted this request for upgrading the locks on the doors of Dixon Hall in particular. President Fitts responded to the Music and Theater letter, indicating that he cannot comment on the specific issue about which there was a public report. But he indicated that he certainly heard Professor Sachs’s letter and shares his concern about security late at night on the campus.

**OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business.

**ADJOURNMENT: 4:11**

Respectfully submitted,

Samuel C. Ramer
Secretary of the Senate