

The
U.M.K.C.
Faculty
Senate

Report

The Voice of the U.M.K.C. Faculty

March 20, 2001

Note: Though important issues were discussed at this meeting, and we received the Report of the Senate Fact Finding Committee, the meeting lacked intensity. Perhaps it was because the outcome of the fact finding investigation in the School of Education was largely in process at the time of the meeting. Details are not known by your Secretary at this time, but there was a decision to delay hiring a division chair until next term. I don't know who made the decision, or whether it was a result of the fact finding process and Report, but hopefully it reflects a respect for the process, since it involved a large amount of work. It does follow the recommendation of the Committee. A fact finding venture of this type represented a new venture for the Senate, and the Senate and the Interim Provost both thought the committee had done an admirable job.

The Chancellor spoke with the Senate and said Bill Scott would continue to function as Vice Chancellor for Administrative Affairs until we could find a replacement, but wanted to leave because of health reasons. She seemed tired, and perhaps because it was a nice spring day, or perhaps because the stars were aligned in the wrong way, there were few questions and little discussion of other issues. After the meeting several Senators commented that it was an opportunity wasted, and discussed ways of avoiding that type of non-discussion in the future. [The Chancellor didn't refuse to discuss issues -- the Senate just didn't raise them.]

There was a good discussion of the part-time faculty issues, and the Senate was generally supportive of increased pay and benefits. However, problems and policies differ in various units, and pay scales vary. We also didn't know the budgetary effects of policy changes. A sharing of general ignorance seemed problematic, so we referred to matter to the Welfare Committee. They were to report to the Senate at our last meeting.

Education School Fact Finding Committee Report

The Senate accepted the Report, and complemented the Committee for an outstanding job but, surprisingly, there was hardly any discussion. The committee didn't want to discuss the report in detail since many issues and options were still being considered. The full report is available from your Senator or the Senate officers.

The report stated that though there did not seem to be malicious intent "miscommunication, misinterpretations, mistrust, misperceptions, misinterpretations and possible misjudgments (or perhaps errors of judgement) by many of those involved" led to the impasse at the School of Education (SOE). They thought many of the school's rules were vague and contradictory. Faculty/dean consultation was called for, but there were disagreements as to what constituted adequate consultation. The committee did think that "at least where tenure is to be awarded, faculty participation ... is essential.... [T]hat level of participation did not occur in this search."

In Article I, section 6.a.1, the SOE recognizes that “Selection of division ... chairpersons is a joint responsibility of the Dean and the division ... membership”. It further recognizes that “the administrative functions, titles, and status of [division chairpersons] shall be distinct and severable from their functions, titles, and status, if any, as academic staff members.” These provisions ... support the expectations that both requirements for hiring of administrators and for hiring of (tenured) faculty must be respected by faculty and administration in the hiring of division chairs form outside the school.

The committee concluded with some recommendations. They thought there were ambiguities in the rules for hiring faculty with significant administrative responsibilities, and recommended that these be cleared up. They found that “in many respects, this situation involves an internal dispute within the SOE that spilled over into the larger campus community.” The committee recommended that internal procedures for handling disputes be exhausted before recourse is made to the Senate. They wrote there were “fundamental unresolved issues” in the SOE with regard to the relationship between faculty and administration.

These issues provide a backdrop for the current dispute and... threaten the... success of the School in moving forward. We urge the administration and faculty to take immediate steps to begin resolution of these issues and to open more frank and positive dialogue at the School. We believe that... mediation and/or a facilitated retreat may provide significant assistance in this regard....

Finally, the committee recommended “that the hiring of a person for the chair of the CIL division should proceed only after clarification of the issues regarding the position and the process.”

Part-time faculty

The Senate discussed the plight of part-time faculty. They teach many of the required courses, are an increasing percentage of the teaching faculty, and are grossly underpaid. In the U.S. the average salary for part-time faculty is \$3,000, while at UMKC they usually get \$1,800, though some units pay more. Part-time faculty normally do not share in the UMKC benefits package, and do not have representation in the Faculty Senate. Traditionally they have been invisible and silent, though many have been with the university for years, and some are challenging that status. One Senator said campuses become addicted to part-timers because they are cheap. Others argued that the increasing percentage of part-time faculty weakens the academic integrity of the university and of the programs offered. They characteristically do not participate in graduate programs or do research, and they don't carry the service load of full-time faculty.

The Senate lacked basic information. There were some programs that depended heavily on adjunct faculty, but we weren't sure how many. Their status, pay and motivation varied, and no one rule could be for the whole university. If the salary of part-time faculty was raised to be in accord with national (or even local) norms, what would be the consequence for the budget? Is this a priority issue if it precludes other changes? Additionally, if we paid part-time faculty \$3,000 they would make more than the \$2,750 regular faculty normally received for teaching an overload.²

¹The community colleges pay \$2,200, while UMKC pays \$1,800.

²Some people, who had taught overloads for other faculty members who had gotten sick, etc. were surprised that extra money was offered for teaching overloads, since nothing had ever been offered to them. :-)

Senators thought this was clearly a faculty issue, since it affected workload and the nature of the institution. If current programs rested on large numbers of underpaid faculty, how could we talk about additional services? Should we concentrate on supporting these programs up so we can adequately serve the students we currently have? We asked the Welfare committee to study the problem, and suggested they include full-time non-regular faculty in their study.

Academic computing and other issues

There were problems with **computing policies**, with computer choice, and with the use of the student computer fee. Some wanted to discuss these issues with CIO Klimczak, others argued that a structure was in place to deal with the issues. The question was deferred.... Reports on **salary compression**, and on the structure and roles of the **Ph.D. Executive Committee and the Graduate Council**, will be done soon.... The **dean's evaluation** procedure was discussed. Some schools have a high rate of return, but in most about 40% of faculty respond. The reasons for this might vary. Anecdotally, Senators knew some faculty that were afraid their answers would be divulged even though elaborate precautions were taken to maintain secrecy. Some said it reflected the low expectation that faculty had about their ability to influence policy, while others noted that the no-vote percentage reflected the percentage in the national election. Did non-votes indicate contentment? or low morale? or paranoia? or laziness? Without data we could interpret the phenomena many ways :-) Apparently the attempt to change the **payroll calendar** so that new faculty could get paid in August rather than waiting until September is hitting resistance at the system level. Nobody knew why.... The **Senate is planning a retreat** on April 6th to discuss BluePrint and other issues. Sue Thompson, of the School of Education, will be the facilitator.... It was suggested that the University **move the drop date** to later in the semester so students would have more time to withdraw. Senator Holder (Chemistry) find out why the withdrawal date is so early and will report to the Senate.... There was a question about the appointment of the new **Interim Dean in the combined computing/engineering school**, and the Senate will discuss the issue at its next meeting. Apparently, the faculty was not consulted. (This was not a formal protest, just a question about policy and about the reason for the appointment.). Additionally, now that the two schools were combined they would lose 2 Senate positions... The **Chancellor spoke with the Senate** and announced that Bill Scott will leave UMKC because of health issues, but will remain until we finish a national search. Nancy Mills (Dean, Nursing School) will chair the search committee.... The Chancellor agreed that the budget planning process, and the budget, was confusing. She is trying to make it more transparent.... She was asked why staff **VERIP positions** were filled while faculty positions had not been, since there seemed to have been a decrease in full-time faculty but not in staff. The Chancellor said the figures distributed to the Senate and published in the *Senate Report* were from November. The administrative positions were easier to define and were filled more quickly than faculty positions, but by now most faculty VERIP positions had been filled. The Senate did not raise the issue of how the money had been distributed.... The Chancellor said UMKC was somewhat insulated from the energy price increase because we had long-term contracts.... The *Senate Report* of 3/6/01 was approved.

Respectfully submitted,

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Faculty Secretary