Dean searches

Most of the dean searches are on schedule. In the Medical School the search for a permanent dean was postponed until after the LCME accreditation visit in April 2003. In the School of Biological Sciences there was a major snag. Provost Ballard wrote the faculty:

My primary question... is whether... a positive climate exists within SBS to conduct a search. If I can be convinced that a positive climate exists and that we have alignment on the nature of the search, then I am willing to proceed rapidly and aggressively with a search. I will not proceed unless I am convinced that we stand an excellent chance to attract a first rate candidate.

Quite frankly... I think that I have made numerous concessions and positive overtures to SBS in an attempt to move things forward. My view is that I have received little reciprocity. So, the ball is in the School’s court -- I need clear, unambiguous and positive signals that SBS is ready to move forward....

If the faculty would like to discuss the Dean Search, I would be happy to come to SBS....

Faculty in the school were surprised by tone of the letter (and some others), since they didn’t think there were major conflicts. They believed they were working well with the Provost, until he abruptly pulled out of the discussions and adopted a critical and confrontational tone. All communication seemed to have broken down. [Note: After the Senate meeting arrangements were made for Ballard to meet with the SBS faculty.]

Intercollegiate athletes

Jack Ward (Economics) gave a report from the Intercollegiate Athletics Committee (IAC), and said current policies didn’t provide enough protection for students involved in intercollegiate athletics. Most professors allow absences for events, and give makeup tests, but others do not. Apparently, some instructors give preferential treatment to students involved in debate or other university sponsored activities, but deny that treatment to athletes. It is easy to say athletes shouldn’t take a class with mandatory attendance, but sometimes the class is required.

Senators thought some faculty members might simply be unaware of the issues. Did the IAC want a university or unit policy? A policy recommendation to professors? A statement to be included in course syllabi? We asked that Ward look into the question of how often there were problems. We also asked that he check on how other universities handled the issue, and draft a recommended policy. The issue was tabled until Ward’s report at the next Senate meeting.
Curriculum Coordination for Life Sciences

Dean Piepho (Pharmacy) spoke with the Senate at the Senate’s request. He was chair of a committee that was attempting to look at curriculum coordination. Since it was a committee of deans, and curriculum is normally a faculty issue, some Senators were suspicious.

It turned out that the committee has not yet done anything, and hasn’t even set an agenda for itself. Piepho acknowledged that faculty made decisions in the curriculum area, and said there was no dean’s plot. It was simply an attempt to see whether there were any possibilities of coordination and cooperation.

Starting times for classes

Most universities standardize when classes will start. Apparently classes at UMKC start at different times in different units, and that makes it hard for students to get from one class schedule needed classes. Wendy Sistrunk (Library Senator) proposed the following resolution:

WHEREAS, students are not able to register for required classes due to class overlap because of varying start times; and

WHEREAS, students are not easily able to register for sequenced classes in the manner in which they are intended to be taken; and

WHEREAS, students are forced to wait upwards of two years before being able to register for required classes; and

WHEREAS, the university continues to grow significantly in student enrollment and hence the number of students needing to register for required classes; and

WHEREAS, scheduling class-rooms is made more inefficient a process due to class overlap because of varying start times:

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the faculty at the University of Missouri-Kansas City recommend that the Provost standardize class start times.

Some Senators thought there might be reasons why classes were scheduled to start at odd times, and the Senate deferred action until the item could be discussed in the various units.

Odds & ends

The Senate decided that elaborate security measures were unnecessary in the election for Vice Chair, and a ballot will go out to the faculty soon. The Vice Chair will be elected for the duration of former Vice Chair, now Chair, Kathleen Schwätzberger’s term. A new election for Senate officers will be held in the spring.... There was a brief discussion of whether the Senate should be evaluated. Some said that since we were elected by the faculty there was no reason for an evaluation, while others thought the overall performance of the Senate should be considered by the faculty.

Respectfully submitted,

Harris Mirkin, Faculty Secretary