

**JSCC Faculty Council  
Meeting Minutes  
Foundation Board Room  
March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010—St. Patrick's Day**

**Present:** Mark Walls, Kim White, Claude Bailey, Amy Wake, Donna Johnsey, Belinda Higgins, Stacey Dunevant, Mechel Camp, Gerald Graddy, John Koons, Roger James, Jayne Lowery, Nell Senter and guest, Betty Frost.

Mechel Camp began the meeting at 3:07 p.m.

**Agenda:**

**1. Information Items**

(A) House Bill 3542

Mechel Camp summarized the provisions of House Bill 3542. The bill would establish a bachelor's degree and ten years of state cabinet-level service as appropriate credentials for a Tennessee university president. There was some question about how imminent this bill's passage was. According to Camp, the bill was not currently on the legislative calendar. Another perspective was that sources suggested the bill was "a done deal." In discussion, the Council agreed the bill's provisions would negatively impact the credibility of administrative leadership at universities in Tennessee.

The following MOTION was made, seconded, discussed, and approved:

*The JSCC Faculty Council resolves that it opposes House Bill 3542 because it would enable state-level appointees not necessarily qualified in an educational experience to serve as a university president.*

(B) Committee on Committees

Camp summarized Beth Stewart's role in reviewing standing committees in an effort to reduce the number of unnecessary committees. Stewart, who had been scheduled to address the Council about this process, was unable to attend the meeting. She will send her comments via email to the Council at a later date.

(C) Tree Donations

Camp reported that \$80.00 had been collected from faculty for purchasing an arboretum tree and marker since the February Council meeting. The Council discussed prices of containerized trees, sign options for tree identifications or for memorials, and options for soliciting business contributions. It was agreed that another effort to solicit faculty contributions should be made.

#### (D) President's 3-17-10 Cabinet Meeting

Camp summarized Dr. Blanding's meeting with his cabinet:

- Blanding and other TBR representatives had met with the State Ways and Means Committee regarding the one-time, three-percent salary payment to state employees. Camp noted that the State Employees Association objected to such a payment when jobs were being cut across the state. She stated that Blanding had acknowledged the pending 6% funding cut next year as well as this past year's 20% cut.
- With other representatives from higher-ed institutions, Blanding attended a Complete College Act—Tennessee meeting that addressed course standardization. Camp explained that Dr. Blanding reiterated standardization will happen. Blanding also noted that the new act will produce some consolidation of campus services, eliminating some jobs on individual campuses and replacing them with central positions in Nashville.
- Blanding noted the Complete College Act—Tennessee mandated "block" scheduling for 2012. It was noted that the way this might actually be implemented was not known at this point.
- Blanding addressed TBR's momentum toward an "emporium" model for providing coursework in developmental reading and writing classes. He noted an aim of "enhancing" some courses as four-hour credit experiences on some university campuses (e.g. DSPW 0800 Developmental Writing included in an ENGL 1010 Composition I class).
- Camp noted that the Complete College Act's connection of graduation rates with performance funding led to discussions in the cabinet meeting about alternatives for awarding certificates or progressive degrees in order to confer "something" to acknowledge some level of student completion of work.

## 2. Discussion Items

#### (A) Representations of Tenure Denials in *The Jackson Sun*

Several Council members represented constituents' concerns about acknowledgements in the March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010 *Jackson Sun* that some faculty would be denied tenure. Council members noted that some faculty were insulted by the abruptness and insensitivity of perspectives reported in the *Sun's* articles. Council members reported that several faculty were upset that a public press report was made regarding tenure denials before any personal or campus indications were

made that some tenure applicants would be denied. Others noted the inappropriateness of such representations while the process was ongoing, with numerous faculty who had submitted portfolios awaiting word about their applications. Some wondered about the exact nature of Dr. Blanding's remarks to the *Sun*, noting that the text did not quote his exact words, but, rather, paraphrased information provided to the reporter.

A concern was noted about how the *Sun* articles linked "decreased funding" and "cuts" with tenure denials: e.g. "Some of the teachers who are applying for tenure this year will not receive it because of decreased funding" and "The cuts are hitting several faculty members also, as the college must deny tenure to several teachers who become eligible for the positions this year" ("College Leaders Fear Hike in Costs"; Colleges Face Layoffs"). The Council considered that TBR describes tenure as, "recognition" of (1) earned professional "merit" and (2) the "assumption" that clear, "long-term staffing needs" (TBR Policy 5:02:03:70) exist in faculty units, programs, or departments. An understanding was expressed that if both (1) merit and (2) ongoing staffing roles exist for faculty, it would be inappropriate to deny them professional tenure because of budget "cuts" or "decreased funding" as *The Jackson Sun* had indicated the case to be for some. It was noted that the terms of Financial Exigency or of a Reduction in Force would apply if programs were insolvent or were being cut, but denying earned tenure would not be appropriate if temporary contracts or part-time faculty would subsequently fill the teaching roles of denied faculty who had demonstrated merit.

The Council agreed that Chair Mechel Camp would clarify with Dr. Blanding exactly what he said to the *Sun* and whether the *Sun* articles correctly represent his view of whether decreased funding, itself, is a basis for denying tenure, as the *Sun* articles established.

Others on the Council reiterated earlier faculty and Council concerns that tenure decisions should be no surprise to faculty in an effectively-administered formative tenuring process that includes annual evaluations and reviews and genuine administrative and departmental mentoring and guidance.

### **FOLLOW UP:**

On Wednesday, March 24<sup>th</sup>, Council Chair, Mechel Camp spoke with Dr. Blanding regarding the *Sun* articles' representations of budget concerns and decreased funding as a basis for tenure denials. Camp reported to the Council that Dr. Blanding stated the articles' representations overall were generally correct. He stated that long-term needs of the college were key concerns in his tenure decisions. He explained that he would have preferred to wait and see how the economy evolves before making tenure decisions, but that because of the rules associated with tenure he could not wait another year, for example, and then decide that he needed to get rid of some positions in a 90-day turn-around time. He clarified that it was a financial necessity for the

college not to tenure all sixteen people who had applied and that, from a financial perspective, he probably would have preferred fewer be tenured but went with the recommendations given to him.

#### (B) Constitution and By-laws

Mechel Camp reported that Dr. Blanding had said he wanted changes to the Faculty Council Constitution and Bylaws, approved by the Council and then by the faculty in February, 2010. For the most part, the changes he described would make the Council smaller. To Camp, Blanding specified reductions in the number of each area's representatives by one and a reduction in the number of at-large representatives from four to one. Additionally, Blanding specified that one Associate Dean would be on the Council "to facilitate communication."

First, the Council asked Camp to return to Dr. Blanding and determine whether he intended the proposed changes as suggestions or as his own preferences that he would require. Second, the Council wondered if Dr. Blanding recognized that the Council had completed a careful and lengthy process, defined by the Council's existing Constitution, for revising the Constitution and Bylaws and then seeking faculty approval for them. Council representatives noted that such changes to the Faculty Council Constitution, if required by the administration, would countermand faculty wishes and negate faculty roles in designing the terms of its own representative body. Others noted that a faculty body constituted by administrative design, not by faculty design, would cease to be, in fact, a *faculty* council. Council members also acknowledged that any reductions in the Council's membership would compromise the Council's representative function.

In the end, the Council clarified its preference for retaining the Constitution and Bylaws it had revised to match JSCC's new organization, had presented to faculty through a vetting process, and had received the votes last month to approve.

#### **FOLLOW UP:**

In her Wednesday, March 24<sup>th</sup>, meeting with Dr. Blanding, Mechel Camp represented to Dr. Blanding the Council's concern about administrative requirements or restrictions for the Council's make-up that might compromise the Council's autonomy "as a faculty-led body that gives faculty a voice in college matters that concern them." Camp reported that Blanding said he would agree to the faculty's preference on the number of members and on an Assistant Dean's faculty election to the Council—rather than required administrative appointment—if representatives were required to roll off the Council after their term and, for six years, remain ineligible for service on the Council.

Dr. Blanding stated that he agreed with the need for the Council to be regarded as a faculty-led body that offers faculty a voice in college matters, but also stated that he

feels every faculty member has a responsibility to serve on the Council. He explained that this would lighten the burden on some who have served repeatedly and make sure that all voices of the faculty are heard.

Following subsequent Council responses via email, on March 29<sup>th</sup> Mechel Camp announced a called Faculty Council meeting for Wednesday, March 31<sup>st</sup>, to consider Dr. Blanding's requirement of a six-year "roll-off" period for representatives when they complete their two-year terms of office.

### **3. Approval of 02-10-2010 Council Meeting Minutes**

The following MOTION was made, seconded, discussed, and approved:

*The JSCC Faculty Council approves its February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010 Council meeting minutes.*

### **4. Committee Reports**

There were no committee reports.

### **5. Budgeting Questions Following Horace Chase's Report**

This item was tabled.

### **6. Scheduling of Classes**

Having been tabled in the February Council meeting, issues were raised again about last-minute shifts in Spring, 2010 class assignments, late notifications of such changes, changes to course assignments without consulting faculty and about the impact of such changes on students who expect the professors or the class formats for which they have registered.

Other concerns were noted about recently posted schedules that were incomplete and inaccurate. One explanation discussed was that a live homepage link had to remain open while J-Web drafts were in process. Faculty wondered, if this were the case, why a homepage link could not be blocked or at least designated as tentative or incomplete. It was noted that such inaccurate postings cause great stress for faculty, advisors, and students. The Council expressed its encouragement for the JSCC administration to avoid such confusions in the future and requested that Mechel Camp present this matter to President Blanding as a concern.

### **FOLLOW UP:**

On Wednesday, March 24<sup>th</sup>, Mechel Camp discussed with Dr. Blanding problems associated with publicizing JSCC's schedule before it was finalized. She also spoke with Beth Stewart regarding this problem. Stewart explained that it was an error for

the Arts and Sciences schedule to have been a “live” homepage link. She had been asked if the schedule could be published, and she had authorized it without understanding the schedule had not yet been finished, she said. Camp also discussed with Stewart the faculty’s need for input in the scheduling process and with decisions about class assignments prior to the published announcement of those assignments. Camp reported that “hopefully we’ll be able to find a good vehicle for that in an upcoming meeting.” Dr. Blanding stated that some of the issues with scheduling may be resolved with the state’s newly-mandated “block” scheduling; he noted that the terms of that sort of scheduling are still unclear.

## **7. Tenure and Promotion Policy**

Regarding issues with the Tenure and Promotion policy, tabled from the February Council meeting, problems were reiterated with loose, incomplete, and inconsistent policies and practice. A sense of powerlessness was expressed regarding faculty expectations for correcting what some felt has been a careless process—not administered effectively—to confirm strengths or correct weaknesses in faculty service.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010 at 3:00 in the Foundation Board Room.

The meeting adjourned at 4:48 p.m.

---

Mark Walls, Secretary  
JSCC Faculty Council

---

Mechel Camp, Chair  
JSCC Faculty Council