

APPROVED MINUTES FOR THE 4th REGULAR MEETING

OF THE FACULTY SENATE

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES-CAMDEN

MARCH 7, 2006

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 12:26 p.m. in room 121 Armitage Hall, Dr. Charles Jarrett, President, presiding.

1. The February 7, 2006 Faculty Senate meeting minutes were **APPROVED, VOICE VOTE** .
2. Dr. Gerald Verbrugghe, Chair of the Information Services Committee, requested to change the Information Services Committee's composition by adding another ex-officio member to be represented by the Dean. The change was **APPROVED, VOICE VOTE**.
3. Dean Nancy Rosoff gave a presentation on Undergraduate Research Initiatives, informing the Senate that a Committee on Undergraduate Research has been formed to develop ways to encourage and recognize undergraduate research and creative achievement. Some of the specific responsibilities of the committee include: defining undergraduate research activities; establishing an undergraduate research week that provides multiple opportunities to showcase student work; creating a means of documenting student research projects; and developing ways of publicizing undergraduate research opportunities and accomplishments to multiple constituencies.

Because R.U. Camden considers the opportunities for undergraduates to engage in research and creative projects under the guidance of our faculty one of its hallmarks, the university needs to boost this aspect of the curriculum and find a more systematic way of recognizing student research.

To honor undergraduate research and creative achievement, an Undergraduate Research and Creative Achievement Poster Session will be held on April 25, 2006. Students doing departmental honors theses, significant independent study projects, and other appropriate research projects/creative activities will be invited to present their work. Also recognized will be students who have received the Dean's Undergraduate Research Prize and undergraduate research and travel grants. (Forty students have already sent in their entries.)

The Committee on Undergraduate Research is also compiling a list of curricular opportunities for research and creative achievement. It will be published online, as will be a website devoted to undergraduate research and creative achievement. For example, students need to be aware that they can initiate honors projects based on their research.

The Dean's Undergraduate Travel Grants are now available on an automatic, ongoing basis. Students may apply for these once they have been accepted to present at a professional conference. The next deadline for the undergraduate research grants is April

30th; this date applies to students seeking funding for research in the summer or fall. (See <http://www.camden.rutgers.edu/RUCAM/info/GrantApplicationResearch05-06.pdf>.)

Nominations for the Dean's Undergraduate Research Prize are due on March 21st. Students must be nominated by a faculty member: Dean Rosoff asked the Faculty Senate to nominate worthy students for this award and to remind their colleagues to do so as well.

When asked whether departments should publicize examples of student projects, Dean Rosoff answered yes, suggesting, for example, that such information be posted on line.

A senator asked whether research could be made part of the sophomore experience so as to attract students who might otherwise wait until their junior year to transfer to Rutgers (e.g., as part of the Stars 2 program). Dean Rosoff replied that this would be a good idea and certainly attractive to both students and potential donors, but that such a program would depend on funding.

Dean Rosoff thanked everyone for the support they have given to these programs. Questions about the work of the committee and/or grants and prizes can be directed to her (nrosoff@camden.rutgers.edu).

4. Dr. Joseph Schiavo, standing in for Dr. Richard Epstein, Chair of the Rules of Procedure Committee, announced that there are still vacancies for campus committees and for a Senator-at-Large of the University Senate. Volunteers and nominations for on-campus openings should be directed to the Rules of Procedure Committee by April 12th; nominations for Senator-at-Large should be sent to Dr. Schiavo or Dr. Gail Caputo by March 16th.
5. Senators were distributed the following resolution urging reconsideration of the Dean's new policy on minimum class size:

Resolution Urging Reconsideration of the Dean's New Policy on Minimum Class Size

The Arts and Sciences Dean's Office has recently announced a policy under which no course with fewer than five students will count as part of a faculty member's teaching load (memo of Michael Palis to department chairs, Feb. 6, 2006). Courses whose enrollments become less than five are to be treated as "Individual Studies", and the faculty member will be required to teach an extra class in the next academic year to make up for the lost course.

The Faculty Senate strongly disapproves of this policy for several reasons outlined below. The core of our disapproval speaks to our ability to fulfill the academic mission of the college, to issues of faculty governance, and to an unjustified and unwarranted intrusion on these issues by the administration. As the representative of the faculty "in toto" and in its capacity as an advisory body to the deans, the Faculty Senate strongly recommends that this policy be reversed. We urge a return to the prior policy with greater

flexibility adopted toward the offering of small classes and the inclusion of small classes in a faculty member's workload. We note that a memo from Daniel Hart to the chairs in the Spring of 2005 contained a similar policy to the present one, but that memo included the words "In general ..." and also offered an alternative criterion that each faculty member should teach 25 students each semester.

As a matter of governance, the new policy arbitrarily removes from departments and programs their ability to make the important decisions that they have traditionally made and that they are in the best position to make. This policy, which requires every faculty member whose course is converted to "individual studies" status to teach it as an uncompensated (financial) overload and then be required to teach an additional course within the next year, was introduced following discussions with only selected faculty (the chairs). This action may generate serious (and unnecessary) workload-related grievances by a significant fraction of the faculty for two reasons.

1: Article XV of the Collective Bargaining Agreement states that "workload assignments . . . shall be consistent with the practice of their department, program, or unit." This article suggests that departments, programs and units are on an approximately equal level in determining work-load; and the newly minted memo from the Dean's office arbitrarily changes the balance inherent in that article. Moreover, it is dramatically inconsistent with past practices on this campus.

2: Independent studies would become a financially uncompensated activity and the existence of independent studies predictably would seriously decrease with time.

Departments have traditionally made decisions about which courses to offer and what enrollments to allow, generally without interference from the administration, except where PTL budgets were involved. One trend of the past few years has been devolution at the university and at the campus levels, for example with the devolution of budgeting authority. Most important, departments and their chairs are in much better positions than central administrators to make decisions about which courses need to be taught for their departments and under what conditions, as should become clear from the following discussion of the consequences of the new policy for our campus.

A one-size-fits-all policy on class size is inappropriate and detrimental to the academic health of the CCAS. The CCAS is not a single focus educational environment, unlike the Law or Business schools, but one that serves more than 20 diverse interests and opportunities. From the point of view of a large department where advanced classes typically enroll 20-30 students or more, one may indeed wonder whether a particular class attracting only a few students meets the needs of a program. Not all departments are large. In a significant number of our departmental programs, most or all advanced classes typically attract single-digit enrollments, and the fact that a course attracts three or four students instead of five or six in a particular semester may be both a consequence of departmental enrollment and a simple function of normal yearly fluctuations in campus

enrollment. In this case, the frequent cancellation of such courses could easily destroy the ability of a department to meet the needs of its majors. Moreover, the reputation of a department that frequently cancels classes by administration decree may well lose prospective students for the campus.

A look at the College of Arts and Sciences' Annual Report reveals that in the Fall of 2004, across a wide range of disciplines, 59 undergraduate and 32 graduate sections had single-digit enrollments. Certainly, some of these are courses with stable enrollments in the high single digits that are not presently imperiled by the policy in question. However, an advanced course that currently seems safe at 7 or 8 students may be endangered by this policy in the near future when the recent small freshman classes reach their junior and senior years. It may be that some of these are courses do not need to be taught regularly, but surely, it is the departments and their chairs who are in the best position to evaluate this.

In some disciplines, upper-level courses are generally open to all students and are often taken by those fulfilling general degree requirements; in other fields, advanced courses require strict prerequisites and often must be taken in a certain sequence, as well. These courses thus attract primarily students majoring or minoring in that field. In such disciplines, the pool of students interested in upper-level work will be spread over the sequence of courses in such a way as to create marginal enrollments in individual courses, even when the total number of majors and minors is strong. Opening advanced courses in these areas to a larger pool of students is either not possible, or would dilute the content of the courses so as to make them meaningless to the advanced students who require them.

Some discussion suggests that the new policy emerged from concerns about equitable distribution of workload and efficient use of resources. If these are the issues, the administration must also consider that the amount of work involved in teaching a course is determined by a number of variables, of which class size is only one. Department chairs are in much better positions to evaluate the needs of their programs and the amount of work involved in various teaching arrangements. If financial limitations make the elimination of some small classes inevitable, we believe the cuts should be made in a less arbitrary manner after consulting with the chairs and faculty of the impacted departments.

The most important point here is that rigid enforcement of a five-student minimum enrollment threatens the ability of smaller programs and departments to consistently offer courses that students need to complete majors and minors in the fields. It is simply not appropriate to declare that faculty members in these programs should teach as "independent studies" advanced classes that are regular and essential parts of a major, that require all the preparation and contact hours of a regular class, and then punish that faculty member by requiring extra work in the next semester. Independent study is an opportunity for unusually advanced or uncommonly specialized work. Degrading independent studies to a financially uncompensated activity as a routine way of offering upper-level content

destroys what has been, we might say, the “golden egg” for undergraduates on this campus, close-contact with individual faculty. We also believe that, if the new policy is adopted, it will be difficult or impossible for the smaller departments to find new faculty who are capable of research of the caliber that Rutgers expects and who are prepared to shoulder an excessive teaching load without appropriate compensation.

Rutgers-Camden has been a small campus that nonetheless offers a full range of majors, and for that reason, remains unique among the institutions of higher learning in Southern New Jersey. Over time, and possibly over a relatively short time, this new policy could lead to the outright elimination of programs providing degree majors in several disciplines. A policy that imperils our ability to offer these majors and the independent intellectual experience imperils the ability of Rutgers-Camden to remain viable. Moreover, a policy that puts academic programs at risk has ramifications far beyond our campus. Some of the programs that might be at risk are in foreign languages and sciences, areas where there is already a critical need for teachers in New Jersey schools, and which have recently been singled out by the President of the United States as areas in which our nation's schools need more teachers who can offer Advanced Placement courses (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, A6, Feb. 8, 2006). A policy that puts these and other programs at risk is not a good policy for our campus or our state.

For all these reasons, the Senate strongly urges the Dean’s Office to reverse the policy on minimum enrollments as stated in the memo of Michael Palis to department chairs, and to restore the central role of department chairs in making decisions about course offerings and faculty work-load.

The resolution was **APPROVED, VOICE VOTE.**

The Senate discussed this issue further in response to suggestions about adding a resolution asserting the need to involve faculty in the decision-making process. During the discussion, it was suggested that the administration be made aware that class size readings can be misleading. Interdisciplinary courses, for example, may show an enrollment of less than the minimum number because other students in the same class have registered under another discipline.

Senators pointed out additional problems with an administrative policy that fails to take into account issues such as when enrollment of a course would be gauged: prior to the first day of class (i.e., before some students who might yet register for the course had had an opportunity to sign up)? several weeks into the semester (i.e., when withdrawals may have resulted in a course enrollment below the mandated level)? Senators also raised questions about compensation and how this policy would affect students who expected to take certain courses.

The following resolution was proposed:

Matters of teaching, curriculum, and compensation should be resolved not unilaterally by the administration but through a process of consultation with faculty.

The resolution was **APPROVED, VOICE VOTE.**

6. There was no other new business.

The meeting adjourned at 1:10 p.m.

REPORT ON ATTENDANCE:

Members Present: C. Jarrett, J. Meyer, L. Bernstein, W. Saidel, L. Burke, I-M Chiu, S. Fiske, R. Habib, J-L Hippolyte, C. Singley, M. Amdur, A. Espiritu, J. Rushing, J. Golden, A. Shankman, L. Thomas, J. Still, H. Herrera, H. Li, M. Greipp, R. Cowley, K. Bezrukova, K. Thierry, G. Caputo, J. Siegel, B. Adelson, L. Garcia, J. Schiavo, R. Tarbell

Members Excused: G. Kortsarz, N. Sulik, K. Shienbaum, W. Saidel

Members Absent: W. Glasker, J. Dighton, L. Burke, J. Wall, S. Pandey, J. VanTil

Submitted by,

Laurie Bernstein, Secretary

Faculty Senate (AY 2005-2006)