

# Samford University Faculty Senate

## MINUTES, Committee on Academic Affairs

**DATE OF MEETING:** December 5, 2000

**TIME:** 3 p.m.

**PLACE:** Room 308, Divinity North

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Voting members present: Profs. Norfleete Day (Divinity), William Ellison (Law), Pat Hart (Education and Professional Studies), Greg Jeane (Arts and Sciences), Jane Martin (Nursing), Marlene Reed (Business), Perry Tompkins (Arts and Sciences), and Steven Epley (Arts and Sciences, presiding as chair)

Voting members absent: Profs. Sherry Lawhon (Music), Roger Parker (Pharmacy), Suzanne Peterson (Library/Staff)

*Ex officio* members present: Paul Aucoin (Registrar), Emily Thompson (student representative, who was not present when student requests for action were considered)

**I.** The chair called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

**II.** Prof. Tompkins moved that the minutes of the meeting of Nov. 14, 2000, be approved as submitted. Prof. Reed seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Prof. Jeane moved that the chair's memo to Dr. Lewis dated Nov. 27, 2000, be approved as submitted to committee members and Dr. Lewis. The memo informs Dr. Lewis of the committee's recommendations concerning Faculty Development Grant applications for the 2000-01 academic year. Prof. Day seconded the motion, which then passed unanimously.

### OLD BUSINESS

**III.** Prof. Ellison reported on a meeting with Dean of Students Richard Franklin and university Values Advocate David Nichols to discuss how to merge Prof. Ellison's proposal for mediation of certain academic dishonesty charges with the university's existing values violation policies.



According to Prof. Ellison, Dean Franklin and Associate Dean Nichols expressed concern that faculty on the whole might not support mediation. Several committee members expressed their belief, based on conversations with colleagues and the faculty survey carried out by last year's committee, that faculty generally support mediation as an alternative to the full-blown values violation process. In addition, Ms. Thompson said students are also generally receptive to the idea. Prof. Ellison said he would convey those observations to the deans, who are trying to get together with Values Committee Chair Roger Parker for further talks about how to integrate mediation into the existing processes.

## NEW BUSINESS

IV. Dean Aucoin reported on a proposal being recommended by the Student Success and Satisfaction Cross Functional Team, made up of administrators and faculty members. The Team requests that the committee consider requesting faculty to assign mid-term "progress indicators" for each freshman undergraduate student in their courses. He said the details of submission and distribution have not been worked out yet--though perhaps faculty would issue simply grades of "S" for "satisfactory," instead of letter grades of A, B, or C; and "D" for "unsatisfactory," and "F" for "failure"--as well as logistical matters, such as where to mail the reports. Committee members expressed support for the idea of "midterm progress indicators," and Dean Aucoin said he would carry that sentiment to the rest of the SSS/CFT.

V. The committee next considered scheduling issues. Some faculty, it was reported, had requested the committee to reconsider whether Labor Day should be returned to its old status as a university holiday. The committee decided not to recommend a change in the current Labor Day policy, but to ask the Student Affairs Office to plan outdoor activities for students, faculty, and staff to lighten the burdens involved with working on a national holiday.



Prof. Epley made a motion that the committee recommend no major changes to the university calendar for the next two academic years. Prof. Reed seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

VI. The committee next decided to recommend a grade replacement policy which Dean Aucoin termed "a form of academic forgiveness." He stated that Samford had a grade replacement policy until the mid-1990s, when it was shelved.

The committee voted to recommend to the Faculty Senate that students who make a "D" or "F" grade be allowed to petition the committee for permission to retake the course. If a higher grade is earned, the "D" or "F" grade would remain on the student's transcript, but it would not be calculated in the student's grade point average.

Various committees said that potential employers or professional schools to whom the transcript is sent are free to recalculate the student's GPA using the "D" or "F" grades, so the committee felt that its motion preserved Samford's academic integrity.

Prof. Epley made the motion to recommend the grade replacement policy. Prof. Jeane seconded it, and it passed unanimously.

**VII.** The committee acted on four requests from students. Because of the need to protect confidentiality, the students' names are not recorded in this set of minutes. However, because a complete official record must be submitted, it will be deposited with the Provost's Office. Only those with a legal "need to know" the student's names may consult this confidential set of minutes.

One Metro College student requested permission to take an overload of 24 credits in the combined Spring I and II terms in 2001. Metro College Dean Cindy Formanek Kirk recommended approval of this request. Prof. Tompkins moved that it be approved. Prof. Reed seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

One student asked the committee to forgive two grades of "F" and two grades of "Incomplete" from the spring 1982 semester. The student made the petition because a Florida college cited those grades in rejecting the student's application to enroll. After examining the student's generally strong academic record at Samford and considering the length of time that had passed, the committee voted to grant the petition. Motion to approve was made by Prof. Epley and seconded by Prof. Reed. The vote was 5-1 in favor.

One student requested that an "F" grade from Spring 2000 be changed to a "W." The student had stopped attending the class and thought he or she would thus automatically receive a grade of "Incomplete," not realizing that he or she had to drop the course officially in the Student Records Office. The student said he or she was retaking the class in this semester and asked that the grade now being earned replace the grade of "F."

Initially, the committee unanimously approved the motion to approve the petition, made by Prof. Epley and seconded by Prof. Reed. However, the committee later voted to rescind this action and table the student's petition until the student provides documentation or statements from the appropriate faculty member, adviser, or dean to support his petition. The motion to table the petition, which is further explained later in these minutes, came from Prof. Day and was seconded by Prof. Epley. The vote to table was unanimous.

The final student whose request came before the committee asked that three grades of "FA" (failure caused by excessive absences) from the spring 1999 and fall 1999 semesters be changed to "W." The student acknowledged in hindsight that it would have been wiser to submit a "W" form to Student Records, but at the time the student "kept hoping things [involving overtime assignments at work] would get better and they did not."

Metro College Dean Kirk recommended against granting the petition. Prof. Day moved that it not be granted. Prof. Tompkins offered a second. The vote to deny the petition was unanimous.

The committee decided to rescind its earlier action and table the third student's request because members wanted to be completely consistent in their treatment of student



petitions. Since Dean Kirk's recommendation was given great weight in rejecting the fourth petition, it was thought only fair to request the same documentation from the third petitioner. The first two petitions, which were approved, were submitted with extensive documentation.

The sense of the committee was that student petitions for academic relief ought to be accompanied by supporting documentation from appropriate faculty, the student's adviser, and/or the dean of the school teaching the course(s). Prof. Epley, with the support of the committee, said he would request such documentation in the future, if it is not already provided by the student.

There being no further business, the chair adjourned the meeting at 4:25 p.m.

*Minutes submitted by chair Steven Epley.*

Next meeting: **Tuesday, January 30, at 3 p.m. in Divinity North 308.**