

University of New Hampshire

University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository

Faculty Senate Agendas & Minutes

Faculty Senate Documents

2-23-2009

2008-09 FACULTY SENATE - February 23, 2009 Minutes Summary

Faculty Senate

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholars.unh.edu/faculty_senate_agendas_minutes

Recommended Citation

Faculty Senate, "2008-09 FACULTY SENATE - February 23, 2009 Minutes Summary" (2009). *Faculty Senate Agendas & Minutes*. 297.

https://scholars.unh.edu/faculty_senate_agendas_minutes/297

This Text is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Senate Documents at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Senate Agendas & Minutes by an authorized administrator of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact Scholarly.Communication@unh.edu.

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
2008-09 FACULTY SENATE

FEBRUARY 23, 2009

MINUTES SUMMARY

I. Roll – The following senators were absent: Afolayan, Baldwin, Gross, Kaen, and Mayer. Excused were Carey and Graham. Provost Mallory, Thomas Pistole and Kevin Linton were guests.

II. Remarks by and questions to the provost – The provost said that six years ago when he became provost, he wanted to accomplish three goals: to facilitate an inclusive campus, to work within the existing budget towards financial stability by moving RCM funds to the academic units, and to implement the Discovery Program. The work towards implementation of the Discovery Program has been a long process, one which required negotiation and compromise and now has the unanimous recommendation of the senate's Academic Affairs Committee. Some may believe that the motion goes too far or not far enough or wonder if it should be considered while the university is engaged in strategic planning and financial challenges. Leadership transitions should not have any direct bearing on the faculty's authority over and responsibility for the general education curriculum. In order to assure robust student enrollments and to attract high quality students, the university needs to present interesting curricula. Implementation of the Discovery Program would also provide a boost to the strategic planning process and serve as the academic cornerstone to initiatives which will result from that process.

The provost said that the Discovery Program proposal is not radically different from the current general education program and that students would be required to take the same number of credit hours, would have access to inquiry-based pedagogy, and would engage in a culminating activity to reinforce learning in the major. He added that the intended flexibility of the recommendation also allows further consideration of such attributes as interdisciplinarity and perspectives on identity, two areas important to contemporary students. He said too that the university needs to enhance student learning assessment, which could be done with the implementation of the Discovery Program which has a college-based process of course approval.

III. Remarks by and questions to the chair – The senate chair said that faculty and others have been participating in frequent and intense strategic planning meetings and that he has found the process productive, collegial and faculty involved. Priorities put forth by the working groups will become part of the strategic plan. He added that now was a good time for the senate to weigh in on matters such as the Discovery Program and the Blue Ribbon Panel report, so that the Strategic Plan could incorporate them into the discussions. The senate chair said that senate committees have a backlog of charges ready for presentation to the Faculty Senate; and so he asks that the Faculty Senate meet again next Monday, March 2, at 3:10 p.m. in 314 McConnell Hall.

IV. Minutes – The minutes of the last senate meeting were approved unanimously.

V. Discovery Program – The senate office has sent to the senators three motions which the senate's Academic Affairs Committee agrees should be substituted for the previous wording, as a

friendly amendment to the three motions on the Discovery Program presented at the last senate meeting. The amended motions are:

MOTION 1: The Faculty Senate endorses the Discovery Program’s inquiry, disciplinary breadth, and capstone components. (The Academic Affairs Committee recommends passage of this motion.)

MOTION 2: The Faculty Senate endorses the Discovery Program’s interdisciplinary understanding attribute. (The Academic Affairs Committee does not recommend passage of this motion.)

MOTION 3: The Faculty Senate endorses the Discovery Program’s perspectives on identity attribute. (The Academic Affairs Committee does not recommend passage of this motion.)

Anita Klein moved and Don Chandler seconded an amendment to motion one, to say that students may take two of their three “natural science” disciplinary breadth courses in physical sciences, biological sciences, or environment, technology and society courses. The rationale is that this amendment would ensure that departments with numerous undergraduate requirements are not subjected to the additional pressure on scheduling, of distributing the three natural sciences among the three general subject areas. This amendment would affirm the rule as it applies currently to general education courses. A senator said that putting environment, technology and society courses in the same group with physical and biological sciences does not put like things together. A professor expressed concern that, without this amendment, many CEPS and COLSA students would be required to take an additional course which would not fit into their already tight schedules and that this would be a hardship. Others professors pointed out that students could take one course which would meet two Discovery Program requirements. The chair of the Academic Affairs Committee said that the committee’s criteria are pedagogical soundness, flexibility in application, a framework that enables dynamism as curricula develop, and feasibility; and he added that students being able to take one course which meets two requirements provides the needed flexibility. The Discovery Program requirements would apply only to students who enter UNH after the new requirements are enacted. After discussion, the amendment’s mover and seconder withdrew the amendment.

Discussion continued on motion one, as printed above. A senator said that, under the Discovery Program, the inquiry course must be a 400 or 500 course taken in the freshman or sophomore year; and he asked how students, who transfer into the university at the start of their junior year, would fulfill this requirement. The chair of the Academic Affairs Committee said that the process would be the same as now. The registrar would look at each situation on a case-by-case basis. If the student can make a case to the registrar that a previously-taken course should qualify as fulfilling the inquiry requirement, then that course would be accepted. Also, an inquiry course might double count as a disciplinary breadth course. Although departments would not be required to offer inquiry courses, students may find double-counting courses to be appealing. Departments could propose inquiry courses, the dean approve them, and the Discovery Program confirm that each course met the requirements.

While 444 courses are capped at twenty-five students, inquiry courses may be capped at twenty five or up to thirty-five students; and in fact, an inquiry course could be much larger if it had labs or sections with no more than 35 students, insofar as the standards for inquiry are met. The chair of the Academic Affairs Committee said that the provost's office has provided up to \$500,000 to facilitate Discovery Program adjustments and that there will be a five-year review process for the Discovery Program courses. Each student would need to take seven or eight disciplinary breadth courses, depending on whether the student took a course which fulfilled two requirements. The eight disciplinary breadth areas would need to be covered; and the student handbook would state how courses could double count. A professor said that his department told him to vote against motion one, because the department has a great many students and too few faculty to offer a capstone course to every student. However, that department is in support of the inquiry and breadth components. The committee chair responded that the capstone requirements are defined very widely, in order to make it feasible for departments to fulfill the requirement and that only one quarter of the majors would need to take a capstone course each year. Larry Prelli moved and John Aber seconded an amendment to motion one, to say that academic departments may petition their dean for variances in application of the Discovery Program. The rationale is that departments would therefore not be compelled to participate in the Discovery Program in ways that are deleterious to those departments or schools or colleges. Cause would need to be shown in order for such a variance to be approved. Other professors spoke against the amendment, saying that there would be equal treatment concerns, if the deans of different colleges reacted differently, and that this amendment could inhibit the stability of the Discovery Program and might make it possible to gut the program. After discussion, the question was called; and the amendment failed to pass, with ten ayes, thirty-one nays, and two abstentions.

The senate discussed the advisability of breaking motion one into three motions, one each on inquiry, breadth, and capstone. A professor said that just the breadth component would be a significant enhancement, as would the inquiry component. Other senators stated that the three components should be voted on as a whole, in order to enhance the integrity of the Discovery Program. Bill Stine moved and John Aber seconded an amendment to divide motion one into three motions, one each on inquiry, breadth and capstone. The committee chair said that the Academic Affairs Committee had vetted an integrated program that should not be considered in pieces. The amendment failed, with a vote of five ayes, thirty nays, and eight abstentions. **Motion one as first proposed today passed with thirty-three ayes, six nays, and four abstentions.** Motions two and three were tabled until the next meeting. The senate thanked the Academic Affairs Committee chair and members for their hard work on reviewing the Discovery Program.

VI. Blue Ribbon Panel on Research – The senate chair said that he had sent an email asking the senators to send a short, declarative, concrete statement highlighting each concern or commendation regarding the Blue Ribbon Report. After compiling as exhaustive a list of specifics as the senate is willing to provide, we could then create a ballot to be distributed among senators, for them to signal whether they feel the issue is a valid concern or commendation. If any given statement garners one third of the votes, it would go into the final version of a sense-of-the-senate letter listing those specific concerns and commendations; if not, the statement would be dropped. A professor asked if senators could receive the ballot in time to get input from departmental colleagues. The chair of the senate's Research and Public Service Committee

said that he has summarized the input into two categories which are: (1) that the senate is concerned about a potential shift in the overall mission of the university and the potential for undermining the existing strength in undergraduate programs, by reallocation of resources away from undergraduate education and to research and graduate education and (2) that the senate is concerned about the financial implications of many aspects of the report (such as additional administrative positions in the colleges, reduced funding of undergraduate programs which are already critically underfunded, and that more lecturers and adjuncts may be hired).

A senator said that his department is concerned about what the Blue Ribbon Panel report would mean for undergraduate-only programs. He said that thirty-nine of the UNH degree programs have graduate programs but that five degree programs do not. Another senator said that it is important to commend the report on its support for adequate stipends and housing for graduate students. A senator objected to the tone of the report, which seemed to validate sponsored research and marginalize the scholarship and creative work done in the liberal arts. One example of this is the report's recommendation to make faculty sabbaticals contingent on applying for sponsored research. Another senator said that the point of the research endeavor is to create new knowledge, not to bring in revenue. He added that the senate should provide more detail than appears in the RPSC chair's summary of the two categories. A professor said that the notion is false that enhancing research would diminish academics, because all faculty do both scholarship and research. He added that the latest version of RCM moved funds from the auxiliary units to the academic units and that funded research lost a lot in that process. A professor said that some universities have eliminated the dean of the Graduate School and now administer the graduate programs within the college units.

A senator said that the research structure in the Blue Ribbon Panel report is foreign to many liberal arts faculty and that those faculty feel alienated from the report because the research structure they use is not visible in the report. Another professor responded that research is fundamentally important to academics and that the large externally-funded research apparatus is crucial in order for much of the research at the university to be effective. He asked for more positive statements about the Blue Ribbon Panel report. Another senator said that support for the university library is not included in the report and that, if the library is to provide more materials for research, the library must receive the funds to do that. The senate chair said that the senate will have a special meeting next Monday and discuss this matter further.

VII. Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned.