

university

SENATE

September 15, 2004
SC 201

Meeting convened at 3:40 pm

Members present (alphabetical):

Joseph Aina, Aram Aslanian, Rick Bassett, Ming-Ling Chuang, Lynne Clark [for Ellen Durnin], Mary Dever, Abe Echevarria, Gancho Ganchev, Joel Goldstein [for Sara DeLoughy], Denna Grasso, Kevin Gutzman, Carol Hawkes, Russell Hirshfield, Karen Koza, Tara Kuther, Sam Lightwood, Peter Lyons, Duane Moser, James Munz, Frank Muska, William Petkanas, Elizabeth Popiel, Phyllis Ross, Jeff Schlicht, Paula Secondo, Katrina Smith, Robert Whittemore, Edwin Wong.

Guests present (by department/division):

Faculty

Accounting: Monica Frizzell, Michele Ganon

Athletics: Bob Campbell

Biological and Environmental Science: Richard Halliburton, Susan Maskel, Tom Philbrick,
Theodora Pinou, Mitch Wagener

History and Non-Western Cultures: Burt Peretti

Justice & Law Administration: Charles P. Mullaney

Mathematics: Paula Maida

Nursing: Daryle Brown

Social Science: Chris Kukk (Political Science), Averell Manes (Political Science), Oluwole
Owoye – (Economics), Zuohong Pan (Economics), Steven Ward (Sociology)

Administration

Office of the President: James W. Schmotter

Academic Affairs: Gene Buccini (Vice-President)

Ancell School: Allen Morton (Dean)

Arts & Sciences: Linda Vaden-Goad (Dean)

Human Resources: Chuck Spiridon (Dean)

Multicultural Affairs & Disability Services: Barbara Barnwell (Exec. Assistant to the President)

Student Affairs : Walter Bernstein (Vice-President)

Student Center/Student Life: Paul Simon (Director)

President: Vijay Nair

I. President James Schmotter

Offering the Senate's welcome, Senate President Nair introduced WCSU President James Schmotter.

OPENING REMARKS BY DR. JAMES SCHMOTTER:

Dr. Schmotter noted that, as had been the case for retired President James Roach, he would also look forward to attending Senate meetings, underscoring the importance of the Senate to the life

of the University. “Administration and faculty must do things together and this is a very important body within the University for those things to happen.”

Reflecting that he was in his seventh week as WCSU’s new President, Dr. Schmotter said that he had been “learning a lot about WestConn,” trying to gain as much expertise as possible. And in the course of that preparation, “I was speaking to a student on Thursday morning; he came in to see me about a matter. I was... impressed by the seriousness of (his visit) in terms of his engagement with his academic program... I asked him how he came to WestConn.” He had spent his first two years at a Massachusetts institution, reporting that “he was doing ok, it was a pretty good experience, but it just wasn’t catching (him) so (he) wanted to transfer.” Late getting his materials to Fairfield University, still “kind of getting (his) papers together,” he stopped by WestConn, thinking he would attend just for a semester and then he would transfer on. And yet, his three semesters “changed (his) life.” Given who had “challenged him, who made him not want to be any place else but here,” he decided to stay.

Dr. Schmotter continued: “It was interesting how he described it. He said, ‘I think there are a lot of students here at WestConn who feel they have something to prove. They were at another place, they didn’t perhaps do as well as they should have; they felt they under-performed in high school. They may come from a disadvantaged economic background.’ He said these professors (at WCSU) knew how to take advantage of that hunger these students have and really turn it into a great learning experience. I think that’s really what Westconn is!”

“I’ve found this time and time again, the centrality of students that you all have here, is really important and we need to keep that going.”

Let me give you a couple personal philosophies I have.. The first is..., as I said, we’re all in this together. Recall the old Benjamin Franklin quote about hanging together or hanging separately? I think it really, really fits for us in higher education. It’s been my observation, my belief after 25 years in this business, twelve of them as a Dean, that anything we accomplish that gives young people in college the kind of experience that this student talked about, life changing experiences, that happens because individuals in the college or university go beyond the bounds of what their job descriptions technically is. The faculty member, staff member who go the extra mile because they love what they’re doing....”

“That’s how we run successful institutions, by creating an environment where people want to do that. As the President, I cannot tell you to do that; we cannot write that into your job descriptions. It’s really what you all have to internalize and I think to make that happen, every body of the university, or every entity of the university, the faculty, the administration, the collective bargaining units, the support staff, the alumni, everyone, has to work together and have that kind of attitude.”

“And I’m going to do everything that I can here to make that happen. I believe that we face a number of challenges as a university going forward, but I think we have more opportunities.

“I’ll make another kind of general observation about the future as I see it here. The past number of years have seen a terrific growth in our physical facilities and we’ve really turned this place

into something that we can all be proud to be part of. ... As a new president, like anybody else, I'm interested in new buildings because legislators like them... and you can point to them. And we have an exciting new science building going up and we're going to have an exciting arts center going up on the Westside campus. And we just opened a new dorm and we'll be doing things with the space we have on campus, White and Higgins Halls, the Roberts Avenue School (when we get it)... I've seen some of the space you're working in! Some of it is sub-standard. Some, I'd say, sub-human!

(And while) we need to work on that, because that's important, I think as we go forward into the future, what we're really going to be focusing on is what goes on inside those buildings. It's building the academic programs serving students, paying attention to academic matters that's really our next challenge and that too is why I think the Senate is so important. We're going to be engaged in some collective conversations with the whole community about who we are now and where we want to be. I am delighted by the enthusiasm and the energy that I see in the people in this room and elsewhere. So far this job, on the scale of a 1-10, for me is a twelve and I hope it continues to be that way."

"Thanks for having me and I look forward to coming here. You all know how to reach me. Don't hesitate to do so. If I don't know the answer or I can't help, I'll try to help you. Thank you."

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS:

After thanking the President, President Nair noted that of the resolutions passed by the Senate in April and May, two had been forwarded to President Roach. The first, regarding the separation of Communication and Theatre Arts into two departments was approved by Dr. Roach. The second, concerning children and pets on campus was not approved, his explanatory response having been included in the Senators' packets.

The University Strategic Plan, as revised by the Senate Subcommittee on the Strategic Plan, had been reconsidered at the April meeting of the Senate, which accepted the UPBC resolution that the changes be incorporated into the Plan. The latest and final version of the Strategic Plan has been issued by Vice President Gene Buccini, which President Nair has forwarded to everyone. In addition, it appears on the Senate website for those interested.

Noting that at the beginning of each year, it becomes difficult to determine who is actually in the Senate, those in attendance were asked to check opposite their names if they remained Senate members, and for those newly becoming members to delete former senators' names, adding the new names on the list. Substitutes are to indicate that next to their names; visitors should sign the visitors sheet so that the recording secretary can include attendance in the minutes.

President Nair then introduced the new recording secretary, Linda D'Aurio (Secretary of Graduate and External Programs), replacing Tina Maripuu (Secretary, Social Sciences and History).

President Nair drew attention to a resolution in gratitude and appreciation of Tina Maripuu's contributions last year as recording secretary:

WHEREAS, Tina Maripuu served as the Recording Secretary of the University Senate during the academic year 2003-2004, and

WHEREAS, keeping attendance records, operating the recording equipment, and transcribing the audiotapes of the Senate meetings require diligence and organization, and

WHEREAS, Ms. Maripuu excelled in performing the above duties and provided invaluable service to the Senate with punctuality, accuracy, and professionalism,

THEREFORE BE IT NOW RESOLVED that the University Senate expresses its appreciation and gratitude to Ms. Maripuu for her service to the Senate and wishes her well in all her future endeavors.

(Whittemore/Munz). Passed unanimously.

With regard to resolutions brought before the Senate, President Nair asked that they be in writing before votes are taken so that such action of the Senate reflects accurately upon the actual language of the resolution. He noted that forms are available for this purpose, although they are provided as a convenience, not as a requirement.

Given that a fairly long agenda was before the Senate, President Nair wanted to have a sense of the body how to proceed if business were not completed. The Senate by-laws, he reminded the Senate, provide that if the business is not completed, then the body could or should meet on the next Wednesday of the month. In the past, he has asked Senators their preference, if they wanted to meet a week from the day or postpone the uncompleted agenda items until the next meeting.

Dr. Carol Hawkes reminded the group that one week from today, Richard Light was coming to campus to speak. President Nair asked for a show of hands as to who would be available to meet the next Wednesday, "same place, same time." (No hands were raised). So noted, the agenda not completed would be picked up at the October meeting.

III. MINUTES

The Senate shall accept the minutes of its April 2004 meeting. (Munz/Aina) Passed with three abstentions

The Senate shall accept the minutes of its May 2004 meeting. (Munz/Schlicht) Passed with five abstentions

IV. OLD BUSINESS:

Items A and B:

President Nair noted that the first two items on the agenda (A. R-04-03-04: Faculty Development and Recognition Committee Awards; B. R-04-04-02: Proposed Guidelines for Missed Classes)

remained there so as not to be forgotten. No action was required by the Senate, but they will remain on the agenda as Old Business until we have something to vote on or until the people who made the motion ask that they be removed.

Item C: EAP Committee Annual Report

Included in the Senate packet, it did not require a motion, but was available for comment. None was offered.

Item D: R-04-04-04 The Senate shall accept the proposed revision to the Center for Professional Development Bylaws (Schlicht/Munz)

It was noted that questions were raised at the May meeting of the Senate to which no one present could provide answers. Dr. Aslanian was available today, so the floor was opened for discussion. President Nair invited Dr. Whittemore to speak once more to his question about the CPD by-laws, particularly regarding the change of the Coordinator to a Director.

Dr. Whittemore - He spoke to his continuing confusion about the distinction between coordinator and director positions attached to various centers. For him, the lack of consistency in the understanding of what such a distinction entails seemed to be unfortunate at best. If we don't have a clear understanding of what the two "statuses" mean, why is the distinction being made? Noting that the description in the revised CPD by-laws "sounded... like a coordinator's job," Dr. Whittemore sought clarification over the change.

Dr. Aslanian – Although Dr. Caruso could not attend this meeting, Dr. Aslanian has spoken with him. Dr. Caruso, "made the change about eight years ago because of his collaboration with the schools in the region. And the superintendents thought it a more fitting position to be a director because of all the collaborations he does in the school districts.... It was more fitting for schools, that 'coordinator' had a different connotation ... but (Dr. Caruso) did not bring (the change in title) to the Senate...."

The other rationale regarded having appropriate "standing in the community as an outreach resource of the university to the school districts. He's constantly dealing with superintendents and principals providing services and it was just more fitting given the nature of this work. I'm not sure he wanted to change the whole definition of Director. But in this particular situation, it seemed appropriate and since he had not gone through the Senate," Dr. Aslanian continued, he supposed that the resolution of last year had to do with making this one change in the by-laws.

President Nair – Noting that there were other changes, as in altering what appeared under number four, and that item thirteen was changed to number nine. Whether this amounted to a significant difference, he could not say.

Dr. Whittemore – While not wanting to cause "ripples" in the motion's passage, he did wonder if among all centers that did "articulate a great deal with the community," such a change was in order. At the same time, he added that "over a year ago in the Senate, President Roach was in attendance and he tried to clarify (this distinction) in terms of the proposal for a Center for Graphics Research (President Nair)." Budgetary issues may have been involved, and maybe even parking privileges, about which President Roach had little to add.

Dr. Ross wondered if the terms signified a “sufficient status” concern between Coordinator and Director, and wondered if this was a concern for Dr. Caruso lodged among school officials.

Dr. Aslanian confirmed that “they thought it wasn’t fitting” or at least that was what Dr. Caruso had said in his experience as “a member of the Western Connecticut Regional Superintendents Association, where he served for a number of years.”

Dr. Ross – “I really do think that the title ought to have a specific definition and it ought to be consistent across the board. Otherwise, if we’re saying that the word coordinator is not sufficient status, then are we saying that the people who are called coordinators are on a lower step? I mean, it’s a little strange to me and we do need to clarify that.” Dr. Ross thought that this particular motion need not be held up by this valid concern, but that the Senate should return to the issue.

Dr. Buccini concurred. “Years ago, we never used the word ‘Director.’ We were told we had to use ‘Coordinator.’ Over the years, that kind of got blurred as various centers were approved that did use the title of Director.” Dr. Buccini agrees with Dr. Whittemore that there needs to be clarification, “so that even others that currently have Coordinator titles can have the appropriate title in their particular fields.”

At President Nair’s invitation, Dr. Whittemore volunteered to consult the Faculty Handbook in order “to bring the matter back to the Senate.”

Dr. Munz – Turning to another but related issue of procedure, Dr. Munz noted that “we have a procedure for approving centers, which also requires the approval of the Board of Trustees. But we don’t have any procedure for eliminating centers.”

Dr. Hawkes – Responding that “they go out of existence after five years (if they are not active),” Dr. Hawkes said she “was told many years ago the word ‘Director’ was an administrative title and not available for faculty. I don’t know whether this applies to centers or just to the academic administration of the university – it might be well to look into that.”

President Nair observed that when the Senate approved the Center for Graphic Research with a Director without a substantial objection raised and since this was approved by the Board of Trustees, “I think we are probably safe on that part.” But he also added that further attention should be paid to the broader issue.

Motion passed with two abstentions.

Item E. Report of the Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Appeal Procedure for Proficiency Skills Requirement.

President Nair reminded the Senate that this committee was formed as a result of a Senate resolution that was passed at the May meeting, and charged with reporting back to the Senate in October. However, ahead of schedule, the current proposal is before the Senate.

The Senate shall accept the *Report of the Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Appeal Procedure for Proficiency Skills Requirement* (Munz/Schlicht).

Dr. Hawkes noted that the ad hoc committee, appointed by the Senate, considered very carefully the various issues involved. “We know that there is a proficiency requirement which was passed by the Board of Trustees. Our effort was to provide a means for students who, through no fault of their own, could not fulfill the requirements within the 24 credits stipulated by the Board, ... could (have) a hearing and they could make an appropriate appeal.... The Committee recommends that the dean notifies such students, that they make their appeal to the dean citing reasons beyond their control why they were not able to do this and it would be to the deans’ discretion to weigh the evidence as you make an extension of not more than one additional semester for the student to fulfill the requirements.”

Dr. Moser raised a concern about wording in item four where it says “A student may appeal the ‘penalty.’” Dr. Moser doesn’t “view this as a penalty. This is not a punishment. It’s actually for the students’ own good. I’d like to change the word ‘penalty’ to ‘suspension.’ The change was accepted.

Dr. Whittemore – Wondering if anyone was present from the Registrar’s Office, he asked how such action would “be firmly regulated. Once the dean has made this statement, is Banner going to make it evident for any of the number of people sitting in the Registrar’s Office that this is a person who has been (suspended) or given an extension? Is there a way of flagging that?”

Dr. Hawkes responded that “This will be flagged” and that it had been “discussed between the Registrar and the Institutional Research Office which will generate a list of students by schools and departments and brought to the appropriate deans.” She also thought that this had been “Ok’d by most of the offices involved.”

Responding to Dr. Moser’s question as to “why this (an extension) is limited to one additional academic semester, asking as well if this seemed like enough time for students in this predicament,” Dr. Hawkes explained, “The spirit of the Trustees resolution (was) that... one additional semester was as far as it should be extended. The Trustees wanted all students to do this within less than a year, before 24 credits. Now one additional semester extends it a little bit beyond that, but the idea is not to have the students continue almost without end without having the basic requirements for graduation.” Furthermore, the committee did feel that one term was sufficient time.

J. Schlicht – “Along those lines, let’s say the student is about to end the semester and gets in a catastrophic accident and (he or she is) not going to be able to come back to school for a year. (Is) what we’re saying that this would force the student into this ‘suspended’ state?”

Dr. Hawkes thought that faced with such an unusually pressing circumstances, “every policy has the possibility of being waived.... One of the alternatives that was considered was following the grade appeal procedure, but this committee felt that it was going too far.”

Dr. Lightwood - "Just to clarify a little bit, sometimes students will stop going to school after one year (about 24 credits) and after taking a year off, is the intent that it should be the first semester back?"

Dr. Hawkes believed that this was correct.

Pres. Nair noted that in the absence of a motion to suspend the rules, the Senate would not be able to vote on a policy issue. With no expressed will to do so, the vote was postponed until October.

Item F: Academic Freedom, Tenure, Promotion

President Nair opened the discussion by pointing out that the discussion had begun at the May meeting. In the absence of any commentary from Senate members, he called for speakers from the audience.

Dr. Frizzell – Declaring herself “a little befuddled” by the Study Committee’s motivation. Why the need for such “specific changes” given revision in DEC procedures which she thought were in place. “We had put out, effective for the 2002-2003 academic year, someone had revised the procedures and there was an ad hoc committee of our sub committee of P & T and of the Center for Excellence in Teaching with suggestions for faculty portfolios” She thought those recommendations were clear, and so what it was that “the DEC’s should be looking at.” As she reads the Study Committee’s report, “They’re talking about the quality of activity and how to document the quality of activity and participation. And I don’t want to see procedures that are introduced that are so minute that we get hung up on a particular subject .. you know.. 2, 1 a, 2, 1 b. I don’t like to have that type of thing. I’d like to see it more general, more open. I think it’s up to the dean to see that the faculty members (on the DEC’s) document, why that particular person should receive tenure, should receive promotion.

Dr. Whittemore’s impression was that the Study Committee’s intent was not so much that we jump into replicating SCSU procedures, but instead that the process at a sister institution would act as a stimulus for considering the evident interests raised by this study committee. “It seems to me that what’s lurking in this discussion is something very substantial about DEC committees, about what they are and are not doing for colleagues in departments. It seems to me assessment is more than just preparing the report that goes to P & T and whether it ‘gets through’ or not. It’s also about how do we as colleagues from the very beginning support ‘junior colleagues’ toward the moment when they go before the P & T.... Do we see our DEC’s articulating well to the needs of... colleagues for either advancement or tenure...? My sense of assessment is that assessment is more than just at the end of the road, it’s also being reviewed before you get to assessment.... (In my own case), I have wonderful colleagues who are incredibly active in trying to make the DEC work. But I also think that at times we’re not as clear with our junior colleagues as we can be and I wonder if that’s part of what’s lurking here.”

President Nair interjected that over the twenty years of his presence here, “every year the P & T calls for open meetings to reach (colleagues). Anybody who wishes to come is invited. I was the Chair of P & T for some years, but I don’t recall a single instance when DEC members came, even though I personally think they should. Because if you want to maintain communication

with the P & T Committee, if you're a member of the DEC, that is probably the best forum to do it in.... If your point is that there should be better communication, I'm saying there is a venue for that which we should take advantage of. There are a couple of members of P & T here, and if they wish to object to what I said, that's fine. Or correct me."

Dr. Muska's primary concern, as with Dr. Whittemore, had to do with "elements of support." "If a junior member came up for promotion and was denied, I think there should be some points (with which) we could explain where (he or she) could improve. The process is to help each other improve, and there have to be reasons ... (for) wanting you to beef up your performance."

Dr. Ward described what he recognizes as occasional breakdown in communication between DEC decisions and those rendered by P&T. He believes that "the usual business" of mystifying the process is not helpful, not just for those who want, from decisions made, to make improvements specifically in their performance, but also for those who need grounds upon which to reconsider if their own aspirations toward tenure and/or advancement in rank are possible.

Dr. Lyons agreed that the need for "feedback is absolutely crucial for both promotion and tenure.... I think if we can identify a clear and beneficial way to do this, then we will have done a really good job." Reading the SCSU procedure, "they use some numeric system that actually is returned to the candidate." For the DECs or for P&T, the basis for "rejection" would thereby be accessible to candidates. "I don't know if that's exactly the way that we want to go..." but DECs may provide "strong positive evaluations," as might a dean, and with a negative P&T decision, there is no way of knowing "why." "I think it's incumbent upon us, if we're trying to build a community, to express in some way why a decision has been made."

Dr. Aslanian agreed that with regard to "scholarly activity," there is an inordinate amount of "secret" deliberation over the way of assessing the quality of such contributions.

As in the May 2004 meeting, President Nair reminded the Senate that a "very large committee" in 1991 that had "dealt with these very issues," including establishing a definition of "scholarly activity" that was still in the *Faculty Handbook* (page 136). "I don't know if that is the correct definition for us thirteen years later, but I suspect that as time has gone on, we've simply forgotten that it is in the *Faculty Handbook*."

Dr. Muska – "Since the departmental evaluation committee and the dean only make the recommendations, obviously the next step is the president. If the president says 'no', people have a right to know."

Dr. Kuther voiced from the experience of a colleague "at an Ivy league institution (where) the whole process of promotion was accepted at every level" and nonetheless, "when the recommendation went to the president, it was denied." In order to forestall such surprises, she feels that "annual information should be provided for (candidates) to know and improve on their shortcomings."

President Nair invited people to consider the possibility that if, as Dr. Whittemore had suggested, the DEC has one perspective on a candidate and the P & T has a different perspective, in such a case “there’s a (transparent) lack of communication.”

Dr. Buccini – “It seems that any evaluation system should start with standards. What is the standard that we want for a person to be an Assistant Professor, to be an Associate Professor, or a person to be a full Professor? We need to articulate standards. I really do think that the buck does stop with the President (but at the same time) the faculty doesn’t want to lose the right to set those standards.” His own experience tells him that candidates “are always asking me what the standard is so (they) can work to achieve that standard. ‘Is the standard to be a full professor at this university that I’m expected to have certain publications, that I am expected to show a certain level of teaching ... from the students etc.?’”

Without such standards, Dr. Buccini continued, any new P&T Committee might end up “using a set of standards that perhaps are not clear, not visible when people go up for evaluation and they’re rejected (such that they may feel justified in) saying, ‘Hey, wait a minute. What’s the standard? I thought it was this; I thought it was that.’”

With such standards, when DEC’s don’t do what they need to do, “it’s the department that can end up, to their junior faculty... saying here’s where we expect you to be in say five or six or seven years; here are some things we need to work with you to do. So I really think we need to look at what those standards are and I would hope that the faculty is the one who develops those standards and it’s not (an) administrative decision.”

President Nair– “One of the recommendations made by the 1991 committee of the Senate was that the departments are to articulate the standards by which they’re evaluated and to communicate those standards to the appropriate person, DEC and so forth. I don’t know how many departments have done that since then. But the point is well taken.”

Having witnessed three university presidents handling “the decision process differently,” Dr. Muska affirmed that “no matter what issue came up, the bottom line was the ultimate decision was made by the President. (But) I think the issue is how can you build a positive process, remove craziness with respect to lawsuits, and give that information back to the candidates that are denied so that they can rebuild their portfolios.”

Dr. Schmotter – Since the buck was “stopping” in his hands, Dr. Schmotter noted, “I’ve done hundreds of these cases as a dean. I believe that (the) tenure/promotion process has to give feedback every year as to why the candidate is rejected. People have to know where they stand and when a decision comes to me as President, as it came to me when I was a Dean, I’m going to look for evidence.”

“(When) one group... says “we disagree”, when there’s a split, if someone just says we agree to approve this, that’s not going to be very convincing to me. I’m going to look at the whole piece of evidence and I do have a real responsibility to indicate to the candidate why this is happening. It’s not going to be a surprise to (the candidate) when it happens.... I’m going to look at the whole record, realizing that the buck stops here, but I think we have to reveal the reasons. It

shouldn't be a surprise to anyone, anywhere along the line. That includes the President.... I'm trying to give you some idea of what I've done in the past. I think all players in the game (need to) understand what the rules are. What you'll be judged on is very important (to know beforehand)."

President Nair – Reading from page 193A, Item 7 of the Faculty Handbook: “The CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement establishes five categories for evaluating faculty members.... Departments, through their by-laws, shall articulate the expectations by which quality of performance in each of the five categories is to be judged. This information should be made available to the Dean, the P & T committee and the President.”

“So, it was the feeling at that time that the idea of articulating the expectations should start with the department because they know their discipline better than anybody else. So that is the beginning. I'm not suggesting it's going to solve everybody's problems, but certainly that was the feeling at that time that that was a good beginning to solve this complaint and this is exactly the same kind of concerns that people had thirteen years ago.”

J. Schlicht – “I just want to say that it seems like the resolution or the consensus is that there needs to be standards that evidently aren't in place. So should we as Senators all be going back to our departments today and, say by the end of the year, our departments should have standards in place that are submitted to some review somewhere? Everybody should make some decisions here, due to the timeline.”

Dr. Gutzman – “If the problem is the distinction or disjunction between what happens in the Departmental Evaluation Committee and what happens in the P & T Committee, the solution would not be to go to the departments and say, to give standards. Peoples' perception is that there have been people who have been approved by the DEC and disapproved by the P & T and having the DEC explain itself doesn't solve the problem. The problem is the complete silence of the P & T Committee about why it makes decisions that are contrary to what the DEC recommended and in many cases that the deans have strongly endorsed. So what we need really is the feedback from P & T Committee, not to tell the DEC, ‘Please explain why you've made a decision that the candidate found congenial and everybody thought was in keeping with departmental culture.’”

J. Schlicht – “I definitely can't disagree with that. As someone coming up for promotion this year, the university has a responsibility to tell me, if I don't get promoted, why not. So I'm not going to argue that. But what I'm hearing is maybe the P & T doesn't know what the standards are for the departments, so we're making a decision that's based on some other instincts rather than actually being able to say, ‘Ok, here's the list, you fell short.’ And that's why they're (the P&T) not giving me any feedback, because they can't, because they don't have anything to compare (the P&T decision) to.... I'm surprised people haven't complained before about that or, if they have, (that) they haven't been persistent.”

Dr. Kuther wondered if there was anyone present who could speak on behalf of P & T and say whether they felt the departments had or had not articulated to them the criteria upon which a decision could be made.

Although last year's P & T Chair had just left, President Nair noted that three P & T members remained in attendance, but that he didn't know if they felt like they wanted "to address that question or not."

Dr. Aina understood that P & T deliberations, however open the discussions within the committee room, were concluded by "secret ballots." Under those conditions, how could feedback be provided as the basis of any decision? Dr. Aslanian as well "thought it was in the by laws for P & T that they had to maintain confidentiality."

President Nair affirmed that this was the case.

Dr. Aslanian – "So the bylaws would have to be changed in order for us to proceed. I don't know what the process is to initiate that process."

Prof. Campbell – Having sat on the P & T Committee "for years," he noted that confusion arose "when the DEC is very much for or against a candidate without having true support to back that up. There's a lot of times it becomes personality: someone is friendly with someone in the department and they all feel good feelings about that person," but little grounds for those feelings are provided. "The times when I've had difficult decisions are times the DEC (members) really haven't done their job. They don't support a candidate with any information; they're not clear with what their standards are."

Affirming President Nair's earlier point, Prof. Campbell has himself observed "open meetings to answer questions and again no one ever comes to those meetings. No one ever asks how are you making the decisions you've made. Personally, I find the majority of the DEC's have been doing a fine job; but that 10 or 20% that are not are making it very difficult for the P & T to do their job."

Dr. Echevarria – Also a veteran of service "on P & T years back," his concern is that even if the Art DEC "do our job right... and we get all the information to (P & T), when it gets there, (having presented) the equivalency of what we do that represents book (publication) or whatever in some other areas... there is nobody sitting on the P & T (who) can talk to those equivalencies. That might serve as a weakness for that candidate coming up. So if that should happen, then I think feedback should be given so that (candidates) know, if there's a weakness, where that weakness is in the presentation."

Dr. Kuther – Given Dr. Echevarria's comments, Dr. Kuther noted (1) that this may be an important area for reconsideration, "where a member of the DEC can sit in on a (P & T) meeting and provide input. Secondly (2)... I believe, that all departments design their evaluation criteria and it's in their by-laws so that the DEC has some responsibility ... (to)explain how they evaluate candidates. And then, speaking as someone who just got tenure, I want to note, ... (3) the DEC's tend to be overwhelmingly positive and they emphasize the strengths of the candidates and sometimes I think it's important to emphasize (what needs improvement) and that's where I think the feedback comes in and I'm not so sure that that happens."

Dr. Muska asked Prof. Campbell if, in the circumstance that a P & T vote departs from a DEC recommendation, “Do you then send it up to the President saying, you didn’t support this guy?” He also wanted confirmation that P & T votes were indeed secret ballots.

Confirming the secret ballot, Prof. Campbell continued, “What we try to do is evaluate everything that’s in (a candidate’s) file, and... if the DEC says this person’s scholarly activity is extraordinary, then we go back and we look at (the record) and we (may) disregard the fact that (the DEC) said.... We have to go by everything that they said (in the file).”

Dr. Muska – Pointing out that “most of us have known each other for a long time and we’ve been dealing with this from both sides, (whether) administration, faculty, or staff, ... we need to develop a process where this (threat of) litigation is out of (the deliberations). From what I’m hearing from some of the different candidates, we should be able to get over that hurdle of the secret system. I don’t know how to do it, but everyone should be accountable and reasonable and (still be able to) make a decision.”

Dr. Munz – “I’d just like to report what I’m almost certain is a fact about my four years of service on P & T. During that time, we did not have one DEC who did not highly recommend each candidate and we never had a dean do otherwise. In other words, the deans are also saying they highly recommend everyone. So that’s what P & T was getting.”

Dr. Owoye – Also a P & T member, he observes that the DEC’s have tended to resort “to blowing praises for every candidate.” But, Dr. Owoye continued, “When you go and look into (candidate) files, there are no documents to support what the DEC is saying! So what do you want P & T to do, promote everyone? Recommend 50 people to the President, to advance to Associate or Full Professor?” He believes that DEC’s must “do a better job.” One way of going about this is to better organize the tallying of those criteria that, if the DEC has done its job, should be immediately accessible to the P & T. He noted with load credits, for example, that the reporting of “how many credits... this person (has) taught over the past four years” should not require some lengthy narrative.... “So this is what we have to address: tell us what this person has done over the past four or five years, and not right from the get-go, blowing the trumpet.” He believes that if DEC reports are consistent to this pattern, “then we’ll have the solutions to all these problems. (But) we have to address the issue (of reporting and documenting) right from the departments up to the Dean, and then from the Dean to the President.”

Dr. Ward – “Maybe the reason peoples’ trumpets are being blown is because they deserve to be. The fact that everyone has glowing recommendations may mean everyone (at that point in their respective careers, has accomplished a significant amount). It’s not necessarily an indication that there’s something wrong!”

Dr. Owoye responded that regardless if that were the case, still DEC’s may, in considering something like load credits (among the five categories for assessment), not treat reporting on them as a straight-forward evidence of contractual obligation. “The P & T does not need to know that this person has ‘super’ (numbers of) load credits! What does that have to do with being ‘super’ (when this has to do with) fulfilling a professional obligation?”

Dr. Ward – “But this assumes that P & T are the wise ones and DEC’s are sort of groups (less informed or less attentive to what’s important in a candidate’s record). And that’s not what’s happening.”

President Nair – “I don’t think the issue is that the DEC is going to combat for too many people. I think the issue is that if you make a statement (in a file), either positive or negative... there ought to be something to back that up.”

Dr. Ward wanted to note that in his own service on DEC’s, “we did say no to people.” He is skeptical about the notion, which the discussion up to this point suggests to him, that P & T is “somehow the ‘wiser’ observer. I don’t think that’s the case at all.”

Dr. Maida observed that “the DEC sometimes does not put forward any negative responses” because in collaboration with a candidate, a DEC may have chosen to put forward a candidate’s most remarkable achievements,” emphasizing what “you would want... remembered (by the P & T).” A candidate, again in consultation with departmental colleagues, may have indeed decided to withdraw elements of a file that would not be as strong. What would be left, might very well be “a lot of glowing recommendations.”

Dr. Aina asked to respond to Dr. Ward’s concern about the “super” body to these deliberations. “It is meant to be! The process starts with the DEC, then it goes to the dean, the dean is supposed to be a little involved with the DEC to see what the DEC has done, to add or delete. P & T is supposed to do a little of what DEC has done, and it goes to the President, which is the final auditor.”

Prof. Campbell noted that he has never felt a “sense of unfairness” among those serving on P & T Committees. “I think people take this task very seriously. I never left one of those meetings feeling like, ‘Gee, that person really got “screwed.”’ They’re tough decisions sometimes, but I think people really go on for 45 minutes to an hour on one candidate, with a lot of discussion, a lot of give and take. I really think from my perspective (that) people are being treated fairly.”

Dr. Buccini – “Over the 23 years that I’ve been here, I’ve spoken to many people who have been on the P & T and I hear the same thing, year after year, and I’m hearing the same thing here today. Many of the people who have been on P & T keep saying, ‘Gee, what we get doesn’t seem to support a lot of the superlatives that the DEC’s are saying.’ I hear that here and I’ve heard that over the years. I (also) hear the same thing from faculty members that I talk to that wind up not getting an evaluation that they thought they deserved, and that is, ‘We don’t get any feedback.’”

“It seems to come down to two very real issues. One is, shouldn’t the faculty get some feedback so if they didn’t measure up to what the P & T thought was necessary for... a higher recommendation, they should know where they failed in that evaluation process?”

“But at the same time, the P & T needs to let the DEC’s know, here is what we’re looking for and this is what you should be looking for. The only way the DEC’s get that is by going to the meeting with the P & T members, which they haven’t (been doing). I think both the P & T and

DEC need to make a change. They need to get some feedback from the P & T and the DEC's need to get the information up front in terms of what are the standards (by which) people will be judged”.

Dr. Manes – Noting that she also has sat on P & T, she “did find the process unfair... . I thought there were serious discrepancies as to how various different people were being judged. (Thinking back to Dr. Echevarria’s comments), we are not evaluating people from all fields equally. I think there is politics that goes on and I think that I disagree, I felt that there were discrepancies between the DEC's presenting candidates.” Responding to Dr. Munz who had claimed never to have seen a DEC report that was not “100% glowing, I did see DEC reports that were not 100% glowing.” Furthermore, she disagrees “that the P & T is following its own by-laws and criteria.”

Dr. Aslanian wondered what would happen if “the DEC does set a standard that maybe P & T doesn’t agree with. Do they have the right to make changes? Is there a hierarchy here?” Speaking in support of Dr. Buccini’s recommendation, he thinks it’s a good idea to “get DEC's to meet to discuss what are (their) standards, what are (their) expectations?”

President Nair reminded the Senate that the faculty handbook states “that the DEC should articulate the standards by which people are to be evaluated. It doesn’t address the issue of what happens if the standards aren’t high enough. The reason at that time, if you remember these discussions back in May, the problem at that time that the Senate was dealing with is, where should the standards come from? The argument is that the standards are not quite the same in Art as in Chemistry, so the feeling at that time was that the departments really ought to articulate (their own expectations). And if the P & T or the DEC or the President were to say, ‘No, I’m not buying this,’ then that will have to be dealt with. The process has to start somewhere.”

Responding to Dr. Ward’s comments, President Nair said that his “point was not that the P & T does or does not censor the DEC’s report. My point is that the P & T often does not know what the standards of the departments are.”

Dr. Steinberg wanted to “underscore” President Nair on this point. “I’ve served a couple of terms of P & T. We (the membership of the P & T Committee) represent our faculty but we don’t represent all disciplines in each year. So we really depend upon the DEC's to describe what the value is from their discipline’s perspective... to understand what a clinical workload is, if you’re in a more traditional department. A ‘Clinical’ in Social Work or in Educational Psychology. Or in Nursing, for instance, it’s an unknown entity for people who are teaching lab sciences perhaps.”

“And so we depend on the DEC to describe within that workload, what the meaning of those workload assignments are and to them you give a value of standards from the discipline. (And yet), course evaluations are often missing, (and so) we don’t even know what the students are saying about faculty. Despite what I personally think (about course evaluations being somewhat of a popularity contest), there are messages that are given in there.”

“Five years ago I served on a NEASC report team, in which we tried to locate course evaluations for every department. We couldn’t even find them! So it’s no surprise that the DEC’s don’t have that information available and then P & T says we know nothing about the quality of their teaching, except for descriptive accolades. But there have been no classroom observations by peers, there’s no evaluative standards that we can use to measure the excellence of performance. We depend upon our colleagues in the various disciplines to do that for us.”

“The whole issue of feedback from P & T goes into another by-laws issues that obviously is up for grabs. But we really need more evaluative, rather than descriptive, materials coming through our DEC’s and we need to have opportunities where people who undertake reassigned time can have evaluation statements made. I’ve been Chair of a department. Nobody ever wrote (about) the quality of my being a Chair; it’s kind of interesting! And I was an Acting Chair for a year before tenure. So I got a little nervous and I had a change of deans going on and there was this workload that I couldn’t account for, except that they didn’t fire me mid term!”

“Then individual faculty need to seek out statements to enrich their portfolios when they know that, number one, the DEC may not know, or they’re hearing unusual assignments in workloads that deserve special attention. So that’s some of the fleshing out that P & T’s need when they’re reviewing.”

Dr. Owoye – Shifting the discussion, Dr. Owoye noted that currently “there are three different categories: 1. Highly recommended, 2. Recommended, or 3. Not Recommended for Promotion. Whereas for tenure, it is either Recommended or Not Recommended. From my experience with the P & T, where you have six highly recommended, it is implicit that the president is going to pick those six highly recommended. And if you have sixteen ‘recommended,’ those sixteen will not get promoted. So they need to go back as a body and revisit that idea of ‘highly recommended,’ ‘recommended’ and (instead) just use ‘recommended’ and ‘not recommended’ and let the President make his decision, so the buck stops with the President.”

Although Dr. Muska disagreed that “highly recommend” was “implicit” in any way as to subsequent presidential action, Dr. Owoye rejoined that in his experience, “when it’s not ‘highly recommended,’ people will tell you it’s the ‘kiss of death.’”

Dr. Muska would “not want to limit the President’s ability to say, ‘Wait a minute! I disagree with the P & T committee because I think that this candidate deserves it more than this other candidate because he has the information from DEC (that backs up the recommendations).” Yet his concern remains about a process that places, upon those who participate in that process, the prospect of being sued for decisions made. “I don’t think anybody should be on the line worrying about whether or not they’re going to get sued. We need to do the right thing and the right thing is not worrying about suits. When we’re dealing with careers, I have a real problem with (this).”

Dr. Owoye asked to return to the issue of “different disciplines for which the P & T may not have the expertise to judge the quality of (an) applicant’s job, (in which case) it is incumbent on that applicant... to appear before the P & T to explain.” Dr. Owoye noted that as it stands, a colleague “can appear before the P & T and explain and let us know why he or she should be recommended.”

Dr. Aslanian responded that actually he had “requested to meet with P & T just to explain myself. I had hoped I could have a few minutes.” But instead, he was “asked why I needed to explain what my materials couldn’t. So I felt discouraged. The materials couldn’t say it, so I had to say it twice. So... I wasn’t sure what the protocol was, I wasn’t sure if we should go before the P & T. Maybe that’s part of the process we need to look at.”

Dr. Echevarria – “I just want to say that many have taken that course of action and have gotten beyond that and have gotten promoted. We’re beyond that choice.”

Dr. Whittemore, following up on comments from Dr. Kuther and Dr. Muska, observed that a comprehensive process of peer review should allow for colleagues to discuss with a candidate “the department’s overall mission” when he or she was hired and to remind a colleague when and if those expectations are not being met. “I fear that the reason we don’t do that” is over apprehension that such discussion as a part of a review would be understood as a flag for the P & T to stop advancement or promotion. “I think that we are fearful within a process of assessment alone that anything appearing to be borne of doubt is somehow a negative mark. If we have a system of evaluation leading to assessment and the evaluation is an on-going discussion about (what) is really strong, (what) is wanted, (and) how can we help you build this, then that’s a different discussion.” Instead of a culture driven by apprehension, rather the process might more effectively and supportively expressed in on-going evaluative discussion. “That’s a critical concern that I have about this process. I don’t think (we are currently engaging in) a genuine conversation with our colleagues looking toward advancement. I think we are pretending it could be, but I think we’re staying away from it for fear that it’s (likely to) be misread... cueing somebody to the weaknesses of a candidate in order to give grounds for denial of advancement.”

Item G: Institute for Holistic Health Studies annual report

President Nair noted that the last item on the agenda was the Institute for Holistic Health Studies annual report. Not requiring a motion, because it need not be approved in order to be formally received, he nonetheless invited comments. Hearing no comments, President Nair asked for and received a motion to adjourn, which was seconded and passed (5:00 pm).

Respectfully submitted,

Linda D’Aurio – Recording Secretary
Robert Whittemore – Senate Secretary

WCSU SENATE RESOLUTIONS
September 15, 2004

WHEREAS, Tina Maripuu served as the Recording Secretary of the University Senate during the academic year 2003-2004, and

WHEREAS, keeping attendance records, operating the recording equipment, and transcribing the audiotapes of the Senate meetings require diligence and organization, and

WHEREAS, Ms. Maripuu excelled in performing the above duties and provided invaluable service to the Senate with punctuality, accuracy, and professionalism,

THEREFORE BE IT NOW RESOLVED that the University Senate expresses its appreciation and gratitude to Ms. Maripuu for her service to the Senate and wishes her well in all her future endeavors. R-04-09-01. Passed unanimously.

The Senate shall accept the minutes of its April 2004 meeting. R-04-09-02. Passed with three abstentions.

The Senate shall accept the minutes of its May 2004 meeting. R-04-09-03. Passed with five abstentions.

The Senate shall accept the proposed revision to the Center for Professional Development Bylaws. R-04-04-04. Passed with two abstentions.

The Senate shall accept the *Report of the Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Appeal Procedure for Proficiency Skills Requirement*. R-04-09-04. No action (policy).