

Fall 2009

Faculty Senate Newsletter

Message from the Chair

Dear Fellow Faculty Members,

The Faculty Senate takes on many issues throughout the year. Some of these issues, such as CIF implementation, revisions to the Academic Articles, and benefit package changes, arise out of the ongoing planning activities of the University. In all these cases, the Faculty Senate is an active party in the development and review processes. Right now, members of the Faculty Senate serve on working groups charged with developing a new Conflict of Commitment policy and with revising policies regarding Special Professional Faculty.

Some issues and initiatives, such as the Football Scheduling resolution, the Honesty resolutions, and the report on the Library (all passed this semester) begin in the Faculty Senate. The Faculty Senate's explicit goal is to put forth well-studied and informed positions. The Faculty Senate's efforts on these initiatives have produced sound recommendations and they have influenced University policy. As of the writing of this newsletter, the administration has responded positively to all these recommendations. My priority for the Faculty Senate is, whenever possible, to engage the faculty and the administration in a positive and constructive manner. The reports and resolutions described below have succeeded in this respect and for that I am grateful to all the senators for their efforts, most especially the committee chairs.

Some issues come directly from individual faculty. The Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate takes all suggestions and requests seriously. One important example was a request from a CAP to clarify the responsibilities each faculty member has under the new CIF system for ensuring high participation rates. The position of the Executive Committee and the Student Affairs Committee is that the primary responsibility for providing incentives to students to complete their CIFs rests with the administration and that there are serious ethical issues that can arise if individual faculty are expected to provide inducements. Through the Chair's Office, the Faculty Senate strongly encouraged the Office of the Provost to acknowledge the anxiety the participation rate question was creating, especially for assistant professors, and to discourage the use of individual inducements. The Faculty Senate was pleased to see Dennis Jacobs address these concerns in his recent letter to the faculty introducing the new University-wide participation incentive.

Some issues arise quickly and require immediate action. This is the case with the release of employment data on the web. Please know that I have had and will continue to have discussions with the administration until the situation is resolved to the satisfaction of affected faculty. The second communication faculty received about the data release is a direct response to concerns raised by the Faculty Senate. It is a step in the right direction but there are important issues that still need to be addressed. The Faculty Senate met on December 1 with John Affleck-Graves and Gordon Wishon to learn more about the data release and to convey many of your concerns. This meeting was extremely helpful and we will be following up with the administration on the suggestions and requests that arose. Please keep your senator informed of your concerns so that the Faculty Senate can best represent you in its discussions with the administration on this issue.

One suggestion for how each of us can better protect against identity theft was provided by Paul McGinn from Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering. All Indiana residents can place a security freeze on their credit reports at no cost. A security freeze prevents access to your credit history without your specific permission. When you decide to apply for credit you can lift the freeze for specific creditors. To learn more about this option, please visit <http://www.indianaconsumer.com/IDTheft/SecurityFreeze.asp>.

Finally, I am pleased to report that the Faculty Senate approved a resolution commending all members of the Notre Dame community that serve or have served honorably in the U.S. military. I had the honor of presenting the resolution at the Veterans Day Ceremony on November 11.

May God's blessings be upon you during this holiday season,

Tom Gresik

Chair

News from the Academic Affairs Committee

J. Keith Rigby, Chair

The Academic Affairs Committee has been involved with a number of significant issues this fall. Two sets of recommendations generated in the committee have been passed forward from the Faculty Senate and can be read on the Faculty Senate web site. Perhaps the most significant set of recommendations are those regarding the Hesburgh Library (<http://faculty senate.nd.edu/documents/documents/LibraryResolution.pdf>). A significant amount of effort was focused on a number of issues affecting the Hesburgh Library and its branches. We chose to limit the number of recommendations to concentrate on issues where immediate action could have a material positive effect on the future of the Library. This set of recommendations involved a considerable number of interviews in our fact-finding and varied from discussions in formal staff and faculty interviews to informal one-on-one discussions with individuals. To date, we have now heard from virtually all departments, all colleges, virtually all branches of the Library, and most institutes at Notre Dame. Our recommendations should not be viewed as a final set, but should be regarded as a significant step in potentially moving our Library forward toward a goal of being a major research library.

We also developed a set of recommendations suggesting some areas of improvement in the administration of Notre Dame's Honor Code (<http://faculty senate.nd.edu/documents/documents/HonestyResolution.pdf>). These recommendations were based on our fact-finding that identified areas in which compliance with the Code could be improved. As a direct outgrowth of that investigation, we are now looking at ways to improve the final exam schedule to facilitate a few longer exam periods to limit the need for "take home" exams or violations of the final exam schedule by giving exams on study days or other times. This is a work in progress and we welcome comments.

There are several issues "hanging in the wings" which include modification of the Inside ND website to improve navigation within the site. Comments are always welcome.

News from the Administrative Affairs Committee

Seth Brown, Chair

The Administrative Affairs committee has considered three issues this semester. The first has to do with the scheduling of home football games. We all recognize the pervasive effects of football scheduling, but a number of faculty have felt the problems caused by the delays in announcing the 2010 schedule in their attempts to schedule academic conferences at Notre Dame. The committee therefore formulated a resolution reminding everyone of the academic impacts of delays in scheduling of home football games, and requesting that future schedules be announced at least fifteen months in advance (<http://faculty senate.nd.edu/documents/documents/FootballResolution2009.pdf>). We recognize that unforeseen difficulties can sometimes impair advance scheduling, but we hope this resolution will both enhance efforts to overcome such difficulties, and to improve communication with the faculty to minimize the academic impact of any unavoidable delays.

Secondly, the committee met with Fr. Robert Sullivan, Vice President of Academic Mission Support, and his assistant Kerrie McCaw, to discuss his office's efforts to develop a database of Catholic scholars that would be useful in assisting departments' hiring efforts. The committee found the discussion helpful and informative, but agreed that it was too early to judge the success of the program. Finally, the committee considered changes to the Academic Articles regarding the appeals procedure for Library, Research, and Special Professional faculty that would render these procedures more parallel with the new procedures for T&R faculty that were adopted last year. The committee had considered and commented on a draft of the changes in the spring semester, but the Faculty Affairs Committee of the Academic Council proposed significant changes in the way that appeals committees would be constituted. In the status quo (and the original proposal), such three-person panels were elected by the appropriate faculty as needed when an appeal was filed. In the newly proposed revision, a standing committee of twenty-one regular faculty (at or above the rank of associate) would be elected to staggered three-year terms, with six each elected by the research and the library faculty, and nine by the special professional faculty. The three-person panels would then be chosen from among this committee, with one person chosen by the appellant, one by the members of the committee, and the chair of the panel chosen by the Provost. (In all cases, persons with a conflict of interest would be recused from considering the appeal.) While the committee did not react with a sense of urgency to this change (the prior election system seems to have worked well), we did not consider the changes to be problematic either.

News from the Benefits Committee

Nasir Ghiaseddin, Chair

The Benefits Committee has been meeting with HR representatives on an ongoing basis, usually once a month, to discuss and provide input on issues affecting the faculty. These meetings are generally very useful in bringing the faculty perspective to their attention and affect the policies regarding the faculty benefits. It has also provided a mechanism for resolving issues faced by the faculty in their dealings with Meritain Health and other health care providers. Our meetings with HR will continue throughout the year and we will be monitoring the developments in healthcare and how it affects us at Notre Dame. We will continue to be a voice in HR policies that would affect the Faculty. The committee encourages faculty who experience unresolved benefits problems to inform us as we have had success with past issues.

In addition to Health Benefits, the following are other major issues on our agenda:

1. **Faculty Salaries:** We have been in discussion with the Provost's office about faculty salaries. Our bench mark indicates that Faculty Salaries at Notre Dame in each rank and overall are below the median salaries of our peer universities. In our discussion with the Office of the Provost, it was agreed that over time, faculty salaries at Notre Dame need to be raised to a level consistent with the median of AAU salaries for each rank. We will continue to meet with the Office of the Provost and monitor the progress toward this goal.
2. **Parking Space:** The University is considering allocating a certain amount of parking space closer to the buildings for those who would like to pay in exchange for a parking space in close proximity to their offices. We will be monitoring this development and will bring the faculty perspectives on this issue to the attention of the administrators.
3. **Handicapped Parking Space:** Some studies by the faculty and students have indicated that there is a lack of sufficient handicapped parking space on campus. We will be discussing this issue with University administrators.

News from the Student Affairs Committee

John Gaski, Chair

Over the past couple of years, the Faculty Senate and Notre Dame administration have exemplified a model of how the two can work in productive accord—in particular concerning redesign and scientific enhancement of the TCE (CIF) instrument. Now, the Student Affairs Committee is charged with addressing some corollary issues related to implementation of the newly-revised device. Possible reactions and recommendations should be forthcoming this academic year.

An ongoing function of the committee is regular liaison with the Student Senate.



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The Faculty Senate is conceived as an assembly through which the faculty can exercise a collective and independent voice in the governance of the University.

In forming its recommendations, the Senate pledges itself to the principle of reaching conclusions based on research and free and open discussion. In the submission of its recommendations to a University officer or to the Academic Council or other group, the Senate invites further study and discussion with that person or group whenever disagreement occurs. So informed with the spirit of independent and cooperative effort, the Faculty Senate hereby commits itself to the service of the faculty, and thereby to the service of the University.