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Minutes of October 26, 2017, Faculty Senate Meeting

Members Present

(Senate President) Sarah Mergel; (Education) Andrea Ridley; (Health Professions) Donna Bledsoe, Cheryl Grayson, Lisa Hunt, Gene Powers, Deb Richardson, Gail Ward; (Liberal Arts) Jenny Crisp, Cecile De Rocher, John Gullledge, Baogang Guo, Kent Harrelson, Matt Hipps, Cathy Hunsicker, Doyle Loughren, Travis McKie-Voerste, Lydia Postell, Tami Tomasello; (Library) Lee Ann Cline; (Science, Tech, and Math) Norm DesRosiers, Nick Gewecke, Tim Hawkins, Jean Johnson, April Kay, Annabelle McKie-Voerste, Gene Mesco, Vince Postell, Chris Wozny; (Wright School of Business) Garen Evans, Ben Laughter, Bob Haverland; (Dalton State President) Margaret Venable

Guests Present: Kerri Allen, John Asplund, Judy Cornett, Richard Hambrock, Michael Hoff, Mike Joseph, Brian Lucas, Hussein Mohamed

Meeting called to order; minutes of previous meeting approved

Sarah Mergel called the meeting to order at 3:15 and established that a quorum was present. She asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the October 5 meeting; the motion was made and approved.

Revised college statutes

Dalton State President Margaret Venable addressed the senate on the status of the revised college statutes. She thanked the senate for the opportunity to discuss the matter in person, saying that it would be difficult to have the conversation by email. She said that the statutes were very close to a form in which they could be brought to the faculty for a vote, but said she

was concerned by the process by which the statutes had been revised. The statutes define who we are as an institution, and the revision process needs broad-based input.

She said that when Michael Hoff led the committee to develop the new strategic plan, there were multiple opportunities for members of the college community to give input; Dr. Venable said that this process leads to a better consensus on the finished document. She stated that the senate needs to include staff and students in the process of revising the statutes.

Dr. Venable mentioned that she had inherited an organization structure that hasn't always worked for her. Other institutions have more inclusive membership in groups like the President's executive cabinet; Dr. Venable would like to add positions to get a larger cross-section of the college, including members from the faculty senate and the SGA, among others. She said that her vision of shared governance is shaped by her previous experiences at other institutions, and that shared governance in general is an evolving concept.

Dr. Venable said that documents like the Board of Regents' Policy Manual are open to interpretation, and that it's important to look at the full policy on matters of governance; this will require taking subsidiary documents of the BOR into consideration.

Matt Hipps said that it was never suggested that others at the college should not have a say in the statutes; there were multiple opportunities for input, including senate meetings, minutes of committee meetings, etc. He said that the USG guidelines are clear about faculty responsibilities. Matt stated that he is in favor of inclusion, but that no organization on campus has input from everyone. He expressed concern that the process the Senate collectively worked on was held up at the last minute.

Dr. Venable reiterated that the statutes are very close to being finished; she said she had spoken with several people who were concerned that they didn't have an opportunity for input.

Chris Wozny said that the revised statutes recognize multiple voices on campus—the SGA, etc. He asked what specific changes Dr. Venable or others would like made to the statutes; the senate would need specific recommendations or concerns.

Dr. Venable said that she wants the campus community to have a "general level of comfort" with the statutes; the senate should provide opportunities for input and make everyone aware of them.

Ben Laughter said that the faculty senate labored for months on the revision; the VPAA, who was present at many senate meetings and was aware of the revision process, raised no objections.

Dr. Venable said that Jodi Johnson came to her with concerns about the wording of the document; Dr. Venable said that in the past, she had made the mistake of pushing an item through, only to regret it later. Ben asked Dr. Venable whether she would be satisfied with the process if it resulted in the document's remaining unchanged; Dr. Venable said, "Very possibly."

Annabelle McKie-Voerste asked whether the senate should invite the other parties to come talk about the statutes. She also asked specifically about the wording in Article 5, and whether we should discuss the reasons for the original wording.

Dr. Venable said that even a college president doesn't have complete authority over things like admissions requirements. Matt Hipps said that much of the wording in the statutes was taken directly from BOR documents.

Gene Mesco asked about the timetable and methods for seeking input. Could the current document be sent to the SGA, Staff Council, etc. with a deadline attached? Cathy Hunsicker asked whether it was appropriate to backtrack for the benefit of a few people, when the majority are already in favor of the current document. Vince Postell asked what would happen

in an impasse, in which the various constituents could not agree on the wording of the statutes. Dr. Venable emphasized that she would be more comfortable with additional input. Travis McKie-Voerste said that the senate had followed the prescribed process in revising the statutes.

Gene Mesco reiterated his question about the timetable. Dr. Venable said that the statutes could be brought for a vote at the December faculty meeting. Vince Postell said that having everything ready by December was unlikely; it will take a month or so to get input, then the committee will need a month to revise the statutes; the spring faculty meeting is a more realistic goal. Jenny Crisp asked if a faculty meeting could be called earlier in the spring semester; Dr. Venable said that it could.

Gene Powers said that the Board of Regents' wording may be the cause of the problem; some constraints are imposed by the BOR. Cheryl Grayson suggested highlighting the items in the statutes that can't be changed because their wording follows the BOR's language.

Gene Powers asked about the precedent that would be set by disrupting the senate's process. Dr. Venable said that the statutes are a special case because they affect everyone on campus, whereas many senate actions affect only the faculty.

Gene Powers asked if there would be reciprocity—will other organizations on campus ask the faculty or faculty senate for input into their decisions? Tami Tomasello said that a line must be drawn at some point—why should the senate make an extra effort when others don't do their part? Dr. Venable said that in the strategic planning process, Mike Hoff had made multiple opportunities for input.

Gene Mesco asked whether Dr. Venable would be willing to formally declare that she would veto the existing document if the faculty were to approve it in its current form; Dr. Venable said that yes, she would. Sarah Mergel pointed out that it's not possible to veto a measure that hasn't been voted on.

Lisa Hunt spoke of the need for facts and data about the feedback mentioned by Dr. Venable—how many people actually disapproved of the revised statutes? Deb Richardson mentioned the need to look at the BOR's ancillary documents for clarification and support of the wording in the statutes.

Sarah Mergel asked for a motion to go into executive session. Chris Wozny made the motion; it was seconded and approved.

[Executive Session](#)

The senate discussed the matter further. To gauge senate feeling on the matter, Gene Mesco moved to send the current statutes to Dr. Venable without changes. The motion was seconded and discussed; the vote was against it. Chris Wozny moved that the Welfare Committee take up the matter. The motion was seconded and discussed.

The motion that the statutes be referred to the Welfare Committee, to seek feedback from staff and students and to revise the statutes as necessary, was approved by the senate.

Ben Laughter moved to end the executive session; the motion was seconded and approved.

[Adjournment and next meeting](#)

There being no other business, Sarah Mergel declared the meeting adjourned at 4:50 pm.

The next senate meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 16.

Respectfully submitted,

Kent Harrelson

Senate secretary