

University of Pittsburgh  
Faculty Assembly Meeting  
Minutes of October 7, 2003

1. President Bircher called the meeting to order at 3:04 PM.
2. The minutes of the Faculty Assembly meeting on September 3, 2003 were approved as written.
3. President Bircher asked for new items of business for the meeting. Professor Goodhart asked to bring up the use of Social Security numbers as a method of student identification.
4. Remarks of the President, Nicholas G. Bircher
  - Professor Bircher reported that the Senate Budget Policies Committee met on September 12 and recommended to the Chancellor that next year's faculty salary pool include an increase of at least four percent. Professor Wion, chair of SBPC, added that this is an early recommendation because the university has to build a salary increase and tuition increase into its budget proposal to the Commonwealth. Later in the year, the SBPC will make another recommendation. Professor Jacobson asked if the issue of trade-off of health insurance and salary was discussed at the meeting. Professor Wion said it was not discussed this year.
  - On the matter of the out-of-state tuition for Graduate Research Assistants, Professor Bircher said that Professor Olson had reported that the SBPC did not think that the Senate Admissions and Student Aid Committee was the right committee to address that issue because it deals primarily with undergraduates. He asked Professor Wion if there was any precedent for SBPC making a recommendation on treatment of graduate students on grants. Professor Wion said his committee had not looked into it, but could. Professor Balaban suggested that Vice Provost Klinzing or Michael Crouch might be able to shed some light on the issue. Professor Bircher said that he would look into the question.
  - The November 6 Plenary Session will be entitled "Perspectives on Shared Governance." The objectives of this plenary session are to increase faculty, staff, student and administration's awareness of, participation in, and effectiveness in the shared governance process. The format will be a keynote speaker, followed by a panel of local experts, on which Professor Nat Hershey has already agreed to serve. The Chancellor or his designate has also been invited to serve as a panelist. Audience participation will be a key element to the success of the event. Professor Bircher said he wanted to hear from everyone regarding what works and what does not work in the shared governance mechanisms.
  - The spring Plenary Session will be on "Examining the Roles of Women at Pitt." Vice President Frieze would provide an update of the planning committee's activities when she arrives at the meeting from class. (Because the meeting ended before she could arrive, her report was postponed until the next meeting.)
  - The Chancellor has appointed faculty members to be Board of Trustees Faculty Representatives on four BOT committees that required replacements. They are Professor Kathleen Blee, Department of Sociology, for Affirmative Action; Professor R. Tony Eichelberger, School of Education, and Professor William Zamboni, School of Pharmacy, for Athletics Committee; Professor Vicky Hoffman, Katz Graduate

School of Business, for Audit Committee; and Professor Mary Briscoe, Department of English, and Professor Jay Sukits, Katz Graduate School of Business, for the Investment Committee.

- Dr. Susan Neuman, faculty representative at the BOT Property and Facilities Committee, reported that the Committee met on September 19 and the following actions were taken: approved the purchases of two properties on Forbes Avenue, 3601-03 and 3815; approved renovation of the 12<sup>th</sup> floor of WPIC to add beds because of the closing of St. Francis Medical Center; approved construction of the Carillo Street steam plant, which will supplement the steam generated from the Bellefield boiler plant.
- Letters have been mailed to eight members of Faculty Assembly who have missed more than three consecutive meetings of both Faculty Assembly and Senate Council asking if they want to remain a Faculty Assembly member. In cases where a faculty member requests to be replaced, the person from that area with the next highest votes in the most recent election will be asked to serve. Three have so far responded; one will be able to attend future meetings and two are unable to attend and wish to be replaced.
- Opportunities are still available to write articles for “University Senate Matters” in the *University Times*. Professor Bircher will write some of the articles but this is an opportunity for others who have an issue to put their views on record in a public forum.
- Professor Bircher reported on the activities of some of the Senate standing committees.
  - The guest for the October 24 luncheon of the Commonwealth Relations Committee is Representative Thomas Petrone. This committee provides faculty with a great opportunity to meet and interact with legislators. It is important that faculty provide expert input and insight into the university to the legislators.
  - The Computer Usage Committee will be requesting to the Chancellor that there be an extension of the time beyond the current two weeks that a faculty can have access to the email accounts of a deceased faculty member. Professor Bircher thinks that 90 days is reasonable.
  - The request of the Benefits and Welfare Committee for an Advisory Committee on Recreational Facilities and Personal Fitness is still on the Chancellor’s desk. A request for a report on utilization of the Petersen Center as well as alternative facilities for faculty and staff use is also pending. A report on access and egress from various health plans will also be requested from the Human Resources Office. Automatic external defibrillators have been placed in the Petersen Center. The Committee will explore wider placement of these life-saving devices.
- The Provost will be asked about the status of the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Freedom.
- The Senate officers hope to have the opportunity to meet the Chair of the Board of Trustees, Chief Justice Cappy, in conjunction with the fall meeting of the Board of Trustees on October 23.
- A memorial service will be held for Dr. Peter Safar on October 29 and the second Safar Symposium will be held on October 30. Professor Bircher noted that Dr. Safar was one of the few clinician scientists who had an impact on hundreds of thousands of lives.

- Professor Bircher said he attended “Cameos of Caring,” the Regional Nursing Awards Dinner, on October 4. It was an excellent example of positive community outreach sponsored by the School of Nursing. There were representatives from all the health care systems in western Pennsylvania and there were 40 awardees.

#### Questions and Comments

- Professor Chesler, Co-Chair of Benefits and Welfare, said that an agenda item of his committee would be benchmarking the university’s benefit package against peer institutions. He has asked the Human Resources and Provost’s representative to provide a response. The last benchmarking study was done nearly ten years ago. Professor Chesler reported that the IRS has liberalized the use of flexible benefits to over-the-counter medicines. Right now the master card provided for flexible benefit participants cannot be used for over-the-counter drugs. Participants must save receipts and submit them to be reimbursed. He also commented that less than 25% of the university’s employees participate in the flexible benefit program, which he thought was a regrettably low number. Another concern of the committee is whether the structure of salary and benefits permits or inhibits voluntary retirements. No conclusion was reached but it may be a matter for the university to consider. Given that there is no retirement age and no early retirement plan, what is the current pattern of retirement at the university now? He said the committee had no sense of what is happening to the demography of the university. Professor Jacobson added that claim forms for flexible benefits can be downloaded from the web. Professor Bircher asked whether flexible benefit accounts were still “use it or lose it” and Professor Chesler said yes. Professor Jacobson asked whether the administrators have an incentive to turn down claims and Professor Chesler said no.
- Professor Tobias asked about the relationship of WPIC to the university and to UPMC. He recalled a claim that WPIC could not stand alone but had to be part of UPMC. Professor Bircher said he would look into the matter.

#### 5. Reports by and Announcements of Special and Standing Committees of the Senate

##### *Anti-discriminatory Policies Committee*

Richard Tobias, Chair of ADPC, reported on the issue of handicapped access. He said that when problems are raised, something is done about it, but he thinks there are other problems. The committee does not have the resources to deal with these. There has still been no word on domestic partners benefits. He is trying to make contact with Temple and Penn State. He said that Penn State has gotten private funds, but he thinks this is still discriminatory. Not much has happened at Temple. He assumed that nothing will happen until the budgets are approved by the Commonwealth.

#### Questions and Comments.

- Professor Wion mentioned that the State University unions are pushing for domestic benefits. Professor Tobias said that was true and that the governor has given domestic benefits to state union employees. Professor Bircher said that he will bring up the issue with the Chancellor and the Chair of the Board of Trustees.
- Professor Goodhart asked if the committee was keeping a log of problems of handicapped access. Professor Tobias said only in the minutes. Professor Goodhart responded that it should not be too hard to keep a log and record successes. Professor Balaban responded that it was good suggestion. The committee could keep track of problems and ask people to report on them.

6. New Business

Professor Goodhart raised the issue of using Social Security numbers as student ID numbers. He said his students had expressed concern when they learned this as they are worried about identity theft. Professor Friedman said it is against federal law to use Social Security numbers and the library uses the numbers on the back of our IDs. Professor Jacobson said that the use of Social Security numbers comes from the Registrar's Office and supposedly was because there was no software for generating random numbers. Professor Wion reported that the university is getting a new Student Information System and we should communicate with the university that a different numbering system be used. Professor Jacobson said that using Social Security numbers has been an administrative convenience for student aid and employment. But privacy matters and concern with identity theft are important issues now. Professor Bircher said that he would bring the matter up with Chancellor. He also noted that medical records use Social Security numbers.

7. Announcements

There were no announcements.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Josephine E. Olson, Secretary