

ACADEMIC SENATE MINUTES

DATE: November 6, 2003

PRESENT:	Doug Brown	Sandie Rietz
	Paul Bauer	Audrey ConnerRosberg
	George Madden	Keith Edgerton
	Randall Gloege	Alan Davis
	Connie Landis	Matt Redinger
	John Cech (ex-officio)	Dan Zirker (ex-officio)
	Janie Park (ex-officio)	
ABSENT:	St. John Robinson	Mark Hardt – <i>excused</i>
	Joe Michels (ex-officio)	Randy Rhine (ex-officio)
	George White (ex-officio)	Terrie Iverson (ex-officio)
	Curt Kochner (ex-officio)	Tracy Jo Schweigert (ex-officio)
GUESTS:	Deb Peters	Kirk Lacy
	Cathey White	Liz Tooley

PRESIDING: Keith Edgerton, Chair

Keith Edgerton called the meeting to order at 3:40 p.m. in room B009 at the College of Technology.

The minutes of October 30 were approved as presented.

I. ITEM FOR INFORMATION

Item 3 (02-03) REVISED New Program: Minor in International Studies – with revisions

Dr. Park noted that this program proposal was sent back to the department last year because it was not thoroughly defensible to the Board of Regents. The program seemed too vague, so that students could get this minor without any real international study. It now has more depth and strength to it.

⇒ Motion by Matt Redinger, seconded by Doug Brown to **approve Item 3 (02-03)**.

⇒ Motion carried.

⇒ Motion by Matt Redinger, seconded by Randall Gloege to **waive second reading of Item 3 (02-03)**.

⇒ Motion carried.

Dr. Park noted that this new minor will hopefully be before the Board of Regents in January 2004.

II. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Virtual faculty teaching online courses

It was noted that there are a lot of rumors floating around about “virtual faculty,” and the Senate would like the record set straight.

Dr. Park began with some history, noting that most faculty on campus who want to teach online courses are doing so. Those that do not want to teach an online course will not be changing their minds, most likely. There is only so much one faculty member can take on, and faculty have said that 21 credits is a full load. However, with online courses many faculty are teaching more than 21 credits a year, some up to 30 per year. Dr. Park noted that she has discussed this issue with the Arts and Sciences Department Chairs, and will meet with Business and Education & Human Services in the future about what is now considered a full load. There is a maximum level, but it is not really defined, and may be different for different people and departments.

Dr. Park stated that the virtual faculty plan will allow MSU-Billings to offer many more online courses, thus raising our online enrollments from 5000 to a goal of 10,000. This would provide stability in funding for the entire University. The virtual faculty would be full-time faculty that teach solely online. They can be here in Billings, or in another country; it doesn't matter. If hiring these virtual faculty raises the enrollments to 10,000, work will fall back on the existing departments in the form of advising, student support, and quality control of those virtual courses. As the enrollments go up, an infrastructure to support those new enrollments will have to be built in the departments to support all those students.

To guarantee high quality faculty and build an infrastructure, we could pay \$100 per student—currently, full-time faculty are paid \$200 per student. The other \$100 would go to the department offering the course.

Dr. Park stated that this is not a plot to undermine our current faculty. This is a way to stabilize our funding.

Dr. Park also noted that Communication and Theatre has been given authorization to search for a full-time virtual faculty member.

It was noted that putting a cap on what our on-campus faculty can teach a year may impede their generosity toward the University. It was also noted that just because someone has proven he or she can teach 30 credits a year, it doesn't mean every faculty member should teach that many credits. However, if the Board of Regents, through their new reporting procedures, sees that some faculty are able to teach 30 credits, the Board will probably say that everyone should teach 30 credits. It was cited that faculty who teach a large number of online courses tend to miss department meetings, not finish their research, and fail to advise students properly. It was also cited that many accrediting bodies, such as NCATE and AACSB, have credit load limits.

The question was raised as to why growing enrollment is so important. Dr. Park stated that our tuition and state support do not keep up with our inflationary costs, such as utilities, faculty and staff salaries, etc. If we do not grow by 4% FTE every year, we have to cut our budgets somewhere. With the online program we have the opportunity to reach students we normally don't.

It was noted that we could end up like the University of Phoenix, just selling credits. It was noted that departments must be involved in the hiring of the virtual faculty and the maintenance of quality in those courses. Dr. Park noted that if this virtual faculty program works, she is opposed to making an entire online, self-supporting University that is separate from the rest of the University. The departments should maintain control of those programs.

It was noted that another rumor around campus is that if a department does not want to offer a course online, the administration will go out and hire someone to teach that course online, without the consent or input from the department. Dr. Park noted that she has never done that. The administration has an obligation that if students need a course, seats in that course should be available. However, on-campus students should not have to take an online course to fill out their degree requirements. They should be guaranteed that they can take their required courses on-site.

It was noted that this proposal could work, but the quality will be ensured by department chairs and active faculty. Perhaps some of the \$100 that goes to departments should go to the department chair stipend, or to hire someone to assist the chair.

It was noted that some departments are very under-staffed. It was also noted that the actual number of credits in a full load should be decided by the Faculty Association, not the Senate.

B. General Education Courses at the COT

Dean John Cech of the College of Technology noted that the COT is in the process of evolving into a community college. As part of that evolution, more Gen Ed courses need to be offered at the COT, because the current offerings are incomplete. This past summer, the COT began working to get more Gen Eds offered at the COT, but they have not yet met with the departments on the east campus. It was noted that it is important that the courses offered at both campuses be consistent.

It was stated that the ideal process would be that Cathey White, Team Leader, Transfer & Learner Support, would request certain courses be offered, and it would be up to the Arts and Sciences departments to staff those courses. A less than ideal situation would be that Arts and Sciences may not have time to staff those courses, so Dean Cech or Ms. White would hire a part-time instructor for those needed courses, making sure that the instructor meets the requirements to teach that course.

It was noted that the Gen Ed Committee talked about having the Gen Ed faculty as a group: a “part” at each campus, but one faculty. It was noted that the COT people should meet with the Gen Ed Committee and also the Arts and Sciences departments before proceeding.

C. Announcements

Keith Edgerton stated that he sent out information about Commencement and the Flagship Resolution to all faculty.

Dr. Edgerton also announced that Dr. Geoff Gamble, President, MSU, will meet with the Academic Senate on Tuesday, December 2 at 3:30-5:00 p.m. Please make every effort to attend.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

rjrm