Minutes of the CSBS Faculty Senate Meeting on 12/7/09

Present: Tim Strauss (Chair, Geography), Annette Lynch (DTGFS), Brian Roberts (History), Taifa Yu (Political Science), Otto MacLin (Psychology), Cindy Juby (Social Work), Cyndi Dunn (Soc-Anth-Crim), Phil Mauceri (Dean).

I. Approval of the minutes

The minutes of the October 19th meeting were approved as amended. The minutes of the November 6th meeting were approved as written.

II. Teaching and Service Award Nominations

Senator Dunn recused herself and the senate went into executive session to discuss nominations for the Ross A. Nielsen Professional Service Award and the Class of 1943 Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Following this, there was discussion about whether it is appropriate for names of nominees to be made public by being published in the senate minutes. It was determined that this is appropriate.

The senate nominated Carolyn Hildebrandt (Psychology) for the Ross A. Nielsen Professional Service Award. The senate nominated Cyndi Dunn (SAC) and Kay Weller (Geography) for the Class of 1943 Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Chair Strauss will contact the nominees to inform them of their nomination. He will ask them to assemble their supporting materials and deliver the files directly to the Provost’s Office.

III. Elections for university committees

Chair Strauss has received a copy of all University Faculty Senate Committees including those requiring CSBS representation. Senator Yu, who also serves on the Committee on Committees, noted that the list is inaccurate in several places. A more accurate and up-to-date list will be provided after the committee meets again on December 11.

There are approximately ten positions that will be coming vacant in 2010 and will need to be filled by representatives from CSBS. Senators are encouraged to recruit nominees for these positions.

The Committee on Committees is responsible for organizing the elections and announcing the open positions. However, Senator Juby noted that when she was previously chair of the college senate, it was in practice considered her responsibility to solicit candidates for vacant seats and coordinate the college elections.

Senator Yu noted that some of these committees have been inactive for some time and are being considered for elimination including the University Writing Committee and the University Faculty Senate Budget Committee.
IV. Liberal Arts Core

Dean Mauceri was asked to address the senate about current concerns and proposed changes that may affect Category V of the Liberal Arts Core.

1) There has been some discussion within the Liberal Arts Core Committee of adding new courses to Category V.

2) There has also been discussion of trying to shorten the Core in various ways including reducing the Category V hours from nine to six. Earlier in the year, Provost Gibson expressed interest in reducing the size of the core as a way to address budget cuts and possible staffing issues during the Spring 2010 semester. However, it appears that that option is no longer being seriously considered. There has been concern about some areas of the Core being heavily staffed with adjunct faculty. In the case of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, approximately one quarter of our LAC courses are taught by adjuncts, well below the ratio in some other colleges.

3) The Liberal Arts Core Review Steering Committee is also embarking on a two-year process to rethink the entire Core.

In response to these issues, Dean Mauceri has asked the Category V Committee to write up a memo addressing the importance of social science to the LAC including both the number of hours required and the criteria for courses to be included in this category. They will be presenting this information at the next meeting of the Liberal Arts Core Committee.

V. Proposal to drop the American Ethnic Studies minor

There are no objections to dropping this minor from any of the affected departments. Dropping the minor has been approved by the College of Humanities and Fine Arts Faculty Senate.

There was some discussion of the fact that interdisciplinary programs are often unsuccessful if they do not have strong faculty and institutional support. They are more likely to be successful if they have a designated home department that assumes responsibility and/or if they have a committed director and executive board. These issues should be carefully considered whenever the senate is asked to approve new interdisciplinary programs.

The senate voted to approve the suspension and eventual termination of the American Ethnic Studies minor.

It was noted that the course 900:145 Seminar in American Ethnic Studies is listed in the 2008-2010 Catalog as the capstone course for this minor. If the minor is being dropped, then the 900:145 course should also be dropped from the catalog.
VI. Budget issues

Chair Strauss noted that many faculty have expressed serious concerns that money is being spent on things like new equipment and technology at the same time that faculty are being asked to agree to various types of furloughs or temporary salary reductions.

Dean Mauceri pointed out that in some cases there is “one-time” money that must be spent by the end of this fiscal year. That money cannot be used for recurrent, on-going expenses such as salaries, since it will not be there next year. He also noted that there are often constraints or requirements for the spending of money such as the federal stimulus funds. Some of the stimulus money is being spent for a new student information system which has been a pressing need for some time. Senators noted that the proposed furloughs and salary reductions would also occur by the end of this fiscal year, in the same time frame during which the stimulus funds are to be spent, and that the University of Iowa has used stimulus funds to avert furloughs and salary reductions.

Senator Lynch said that she is less concerned about one-time money such as the stimulus money than about the university’s overall budget priorities. It appears that funding for auxiliary enterprises such as athletics and the Gallagher-Bluedorn Performing Arts Center has been increasing at the expense of funding for the core academic mission of the university. She would like faculty to take a more active role in articulating our views of the university’s budget priorities.

VII. New topics for the Faculty Senate to consider

Chair Strauss articulated the sentiment that the college senate could address additional topics beyond more routine matters like award nominations and curriculum packages, and that it could serve as a forum for faculty to take a more active role in university governance. He solicited input from senators regarding issues that they would like the senate to address.

Discussion returned to the possible dissolution of the University Faculty Senate Budget Committee. It seems that now of all times this committee should have an important role to play in providing faculty oversight and input into the budget process in order to protect the core academic mission of the university. Senator Yu stated that he was the only person who voted against the dissolution of this committee at the recent meeting of the Committee on Committees.

Senator MacLin proposed that the college senate write up a possible charge for the University Faculty Senate Budget Committee that could be forwarded to the University Faculty Senate with a request that they revitalize this committee. Senator Lynch said that she would contact Susan Wurtz (Chair of the University Faculty Senate) to discuss the best way to proceed with this. She will also draft some wording for the college senate to consider at our next meeting. Senator MacLin said he would be willing to present whatever we approve to the University Faculty Senate.
Dean Mauceri was asked for his views about the role of the college senate. He said that he sees the senate as having an important role in the annual review of the college strategic plan.

VIII. Next meeting of the Faculty Senate

Because the first Monday of January is prior to the start of the semester and the third Monday is Martin Luther King Day, the senate will meet on January 11, 2010 if a January meeting is necessary.

IX. Remarks from the Dean

All of the college scholarship committees have been combined into a single CSBS Scholarship Committee which will handle all college scholarships with the exception of those specific to particular departments or disciplines.

Dean Mauceri has abolished the College Advisory Committee for tenure and promotion. Given that the membership rotated every year and had no clear criteria to guide decision-making, he felt that the committee was not able to provide consistent advice and did not serve a useful purpose.

Senator Roberts asked the dean to clarify the role of the council of department heads in the tenure and promotion process. Is there any decision-making body between the level of the department and the dean?

Dean Mauceri stated that in January the department heads and the dean have a retreat at which they discuss all of the tenure and promotion cases for that year. Heads present each case and may be asked to justify or clarify certain aspects. They may also voluntarily solicit advice from other heads in terms of wording of the letter. This is a purely advisory process and the group has no decision-making power. Following this, the deans and the provost have a similar retreat at which each dean presents the cases from his/her college and may be asked by the other deans to justify those decisions. This is also purely advisory. The decisions are made by the dean and the provost.

Some senators questioned the elimination of the College Advisory Committee and felt it might have a valuable role to play. This discussion was tabled until the next meeting of the senate.

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cyndi Dunn