



Faculty Senate News

January 26, 2005

The Senate officers are meeting this semester with students, faculty members, and administrators in the College of Arts & Architecture (January 25), the Smeal College of Business (February 10), the University Libraries (February 10), the Division of Undergraduate Studies (February 21), the College of Agricultural Sciences (February 21), and the School of Information Sciences and Technology (February 22). Much of the new business of the Senate arises from concerns that are raised during these visits.

One example, under discussion recently, was a suggestion last year that the University should require mandatory consultation between first-year students and their advisors. We have been floating this idea with both students and faculty members, and the response has been affirmative, sometimes strongly so. Requirements for an advisor's signature for registration and course changes were eliminated many years ago, and advisors are arguably less important than they were before the advent of eLion's guidance and online registration system. But now that face-to-face advising is no longer required, one wonders if it has come to be viewed by both students and the faculty as an imposition rather than a responsibility. Many believe that mandatory contact between first-year students and their advisors would be helpful. Send me an email if you have an opinion on this subject.

A couple of years ago, former Senate Chair John Nichols helped establish an inter-university group of senate representatives interested in the state of intercollegiate athletics. The Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA) is now finalizing a set of best practices and proposals for promoting the academic integrity of intercollegiate athletic programs. I think we are all justifiably proud of Penn State's performance in this regard. But if there are problems anywhere in higher education they should be the concern of all academics. COIA's draft document, which is linked from the Senate Web site, will be discussed at next week's meeting of the Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics. If you have comments, provide them to John or committee chair Martin Pietrucha.

The next Senate meeting is Tuesday, February 1. The following are among the items on next week's agenda:

- *Remarks by President Spanier followed by questions from Senators.*
- *A special forensic session on the General Education Health and Physical Activity (GHA) requirement.* The Committee on Undergraduate Education, which is sponsoring this session, is seeking comments from members of the Senate on the academic merits of GHA as a universal requirement.¹

- *Revisions to Senate Policies 51-50 and 60-00 regarding the cumulative grade-point average* (legislative). The proposed revisions would add clarity to procedures for calculating GPAs of students enrolled in sequential or concurrent majors.
- *Revisions to Senate Standing Rules, Article I, Section 11 (b,d,e)* (legislative). These changes would update the Standing Rules to reflect the new, on-line voting system used for Senate elections.
- *A report on the availability of student financial aid* (informational). This presentation will describe local and national trends in the costs of higher education, the availability of financial aid from various sources, and the typical debt loads borne by graduating seniors.
- *A report from the Travel Task Force* (informational). This report describes proposals for significant changes to University policies and procedures for reimbursing travel. Representatives from the administration's Travel Task Force and Technology and Implementation Team will present the report and respond to questions.
- *A report on "reserved spaces" for admission to University Park* (informational). This yearly report explains how three categories of "reserved spaces" are being used. In fall 2004, 248 of 340 allotted spaces were filled.
- *The annual faculty census report* (informational). The census report provides an update on faculty numbers and total Senate seats available for 2005-2006.

The complete agenda for next week's meeting is posted on the Senate's new Web site at <http://www.senate.psu.edu/agenda/index.html> and the minutes (*The Senate Record*) will be posted approximately three weeks after the meeting. The January 18, 2005, Senate Curriculum Report is available at http://www.senate.psu.edu/curriculum_resources/bluesheet/bluex.html. Members of the University community are invited to attend the February 1 or any Senate meeting, and we have seats reserved for this purpose. Any member of the University community who is not a member of the Senate may request to speak on any item of business already before the Senate. Requests must be made to the Chair, through the Executive Secretary of the Senate, at least four calendar days before the Senate meeting.

For information on how to submit major, minor, option or course proposals, the *Guide to Curricular Procedures* is available at http://www.senate.psu.edu/curriculum_resources/guide/contents.html and the *Senate Curriculum Report* is available at http://www.senate.psu.edu/curriculum_resources/bluesheet/bluex.html.

Kim C. Steiner
 Chair, University Faculty Senate
steiner@psu.edu

¹A purpose of forensic sessions is to feel the pulse of the Senate on particular issues before deciding whether, and in what form, legislation should be brought to the Senate floor. The Committee on Undergraduate Education will consider the discussion during this forensic session, and other input, in determining whether to propose a change to the GHA requirement. If you wish to comment on this subject privately, please email committee chair Art Miller (acm1@psu.edu).