Minutes of Meeting of April 18, 2001

Members Present: Dee Andrews, Hadi Behzad, Judy Clarence, Julie Glass, Kathy Hann, Shyam Kamath, Scott Stine, Vincenzo Traversa (Chair), Bruce Trumbo

Members Absent: Valerie Helgren-Lempesis

Guest: Emily Stoper

The meeting convened at 2:47 PM.

1. Approval of the agenda: The Chair requested that item 6A be moved to # 2 on the agenda to accommodate the Senate Chair’s schedule. Approved by a vote of 7-0, with 1 abstention.

2. Old Business: Non-Grade-Related Student Complaints.

The discussion continued intensive on this issue. Prof. Stine noted that Prof. Stoper’s March 28 memorandum had emphasized the necessity of punitive powers in the appointment of an ombudsman, whereas FAC had conceived of most problems being resolved at the department level, with only the most intractable reaching the ombudsman, who would hold office hours perhaps two hours a week for a two-year term as part of university service. Prof. Stoper asked how the ombudsman’s responsibilities would differ from those of the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs. Prof. Stine replied that the ombudsman would be working with the students because he or she wanted to, rather than involuntarily. Prof. Stoper responded that she believed that these complaints were more suitably dealt with by the Deans’ offices.

Prof. Stoper granted that the idea of the ombudsman was tempting, since he or she would essentially be a person who makes problems go away, and student complaints could have serious consequences for temporary and probationary faculty.

Several committee members noted that the Deans and their staffs might be perceived by disgruntled students as being part of the system working against them. It was asked how many cases typically arose each year. Prof. Stoper said that most common were students’ reactions to off-hand remarks and faculty behavior perceived of or in fact offensive to the student; but the unresolved cases are relatively few. Further examples of these problems were provided by FAC members. Prof. Stine repeated the utility of the ombudsman idea, especially as a way to prevent administrators from building a mental file against various faculty members. Prof. Kamath suggested alternatively that the demand for such a position appeared to be low, and the supply of volunteers uncertain. Prof. Behzad suggested that 4 units of release time might be provided to the Outstanding Professor each year to carry out these responsibilities. In deference to his fellow representative from the School of Business, he added that such an assignment might begin two years from now.

The motion was made (Trumbo/ Kamath) that the following policy be adopted by the Academic Senate: Students with non-grade-related complaints shall go to the department chair, who shall make every effort to resolve the complaint at the department level. If the complaint is not resolved at the department level, the student may proceed to the school dean, who shall make every effort to resolve the complaint at the school level. If the complaint is not resolved at the school level, the school dean shall consult with the Assistant Vice President of Instructional Services regarding...
whether the complaint merits review by the Fairness Committee. If it does not merit such review, the matter shall be considered closed.

Motion to table followed (Andrews/Behzad), to give the FAC Chair time to confer with the Provost regarding enforcement of the motion. The motion to table passed unanimously.

3. Approval of the minutes of meetings of April 4:

Three corrections were proposed: 1) to move Prof. Trumbo’s name from Members Present (Andrews) to Members Absent (Andrews); 2) to omit the second paragraph under agenda item 5A; 3) and to correct the spelling of Prof. Behzad’s name under Members Absent (Andrews).

The minutes as amended were approved unanimously.

4. Report of the Chair:

The Chair reported that he had conferred with the Assistant Vice President of Instructional Services regarding the Committee’s previous discussion of non-grade-related student complaints. The Assistant Vice President then conferred with the Chair of the Academic Senate to resolve the mixed messages being sent to FAC on this matter. (See item # 1 above).

The Chair also announced the winners of the Wang award. These are: Edward Emanuel, professor of theatre arts, CSU Fresno; Jane Hall, professor of economics, CSU Fullerton; Aubrey Fine, professor of education, Cal Poly Pomona; Maria Elena Zavala, professor of biology, CSU Northridge; and Valerie Bordeaux, director of university outreach and school relations, CSU Long Beach. The Chair expressed regret that neither of our fine candidates had made the cut.

Report of the Director of Faculty Development:

The Director announced that Faculty Development was considering an end-of-year barbecue for faculty members. The date and time proposed is Wednesday May 6, 11-1. She will contact other faculty to see whether the idea will fly.

5. Report of subcommittees:

Prof. Andrews reported on the substance of the meeting of the FAC Subcommittee on Lecturers on April 6. All members of the subcommittee were present. She noted that she explained to the subcommittee the reasons for FAC’s rejection this year of four earlier items relating to lecturers: assigned time for committee work, representation on standing committees, increased lecturer representation on the Academic Senate, and recognition of lecturers as faculty members in the CSUH Constitution. The Subcommittee agreed to request that the Academic Senate office survey the other CSU Senate Offices to determine the nature of lecturers’ service at the other CSU campuses, as well as policies on compensation. A second meeting was scheduled for April 20.

6. Adjournment: Motion to adjourn (Kamath/Stine) approved unanimously at 4:36 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee Andrews (Recorder)