

GENERAL FACULTY MEETING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

April 20, 2021 – 5:00 p.m.

Minutes

Introduction: Faculty Senate President **Charles Boncelet**

- Note that the meeting will be recorded.
- The last Senate Meeting and General Faculty Meeting (GFM) of the year will be May 3. At that meeting, Senate leadership will try to make the GFM relevant again as a potential decision-making meeting.
- We have two methods of faculty governance: the Senate and the GFM. We have 2 GFMs per year, required by the constitution. A quorum to do business at a GFM is 1/4 of the faculty, which is about 350. Because such an attendance has not been achieved in anyone's memory for an in-person GFM, it is now effectively a venue for a State of the University address by the President of the University, followed by Q&A.
- We are taking advantage of COVID (note the irony) in that online we may get a quorum of faculty. If we do, we're going to try to have an electronic vote to amend the faculty constitution. *Showed and summarized* Faculty Handbook (FH) 1.1.8 and 1.1.9. We can amend almost everything in the FH except those two sections. *Showed the resolution and Attachment proposed.*
- This is a Committee of the Whole, in this case the Whole of the faculty, not just the Senate. This is a discussion meeting to prepare for the May 3 GFM.

Questions and Statements (CB: indicates responses by Senate President Boncelet)

- Cory Bart (Computer and Information Science) What does this enable the Senate to do that they can't now?

CB: Simply put to allow them to change 1.1.8 and 1.1.9. Various changes in meeting rules, such as quorum, allowing electronic voting.

- Rakesh (Mathematical Sciences): We should allow different forms of voting. I am concerned that the senate could vote on too many things.

CB: Right now the senate can modify any section of the FH regarding Senate work. This changes nothing about your concerns.

- John Morgan (Physics and Astronomy): I looked at archives of GFMs from the 1960s, and the concern Rakesh expressed was expressed 50 years ago at the creation of the Senate. They were concerned that an unrepresentative oligarchy would take over everything. That is why there was section 1.1.9 -- so that undemocratic actions could be

overturned by a GFM. I believe that in 50 years, the Senate has done a good job. The crucial sentence that was added in 1.1.9 is the last one that says no change can eliminate the GFM. That provides the safeguard in the unlikely event of a Senate gone rogue, the faculty at large could hold a meeting and overturn that action. I am comfortable with the current wording of this change. I am not comfortable with changing the quorum. The first resolved clause, should not say "instituting" representative government, but more like "facilitating."

CB: We have no problem with that change.

Further, one of the worst ways of making a big decision is to have an in-person 350 person meeting, as it will not be a representative meeting. The people who attend will be those most interested in the outcome. Look at what the AAUP does - when we extended the contract last summer we had 550 AAUP members vote using a survey tool. I suggest an electronic ballot.

- Alan Fox (Philosophy): There is physically no way we can live up to the letter of the law the way that it is currently written. We would be better off moving to an electronic venue. This is our golden opportunity to make this change. This change unties the hands of the faculty.

CB: We could have done this last Fall, but we didn't know about the problem until Fred Hofstetter introduced a change that we realized we were not allowed to do because of restriction in 1.1.9.

- Sarah Peterson (English Language Institute): In section 1.1.9: there is reference to 2/3 vote of a quorum of faculty and second paragraph there is a reference to 2/3 of Senators.

CB: The first paragraph is about GFM, and second is about a Senate Meeting.

- Rakesh: Where in the constitution does it say that a general faculty meeting can overturn a decision of the senate?
- Deni Galileo (Biological Sciences): Speaking of the last GFM being well-attended, it was so well-attended that I couldn't attend it because of the 500 seat limit on our Zoom license. How are you going to make sure that this is only attended by faculty? You want to assure that voters are faculty.

CB: We have discussed this in Exec. We plan to use a Qualtrics survey that will be live during the GFM on Monday, May 3. People will have to vote using their udel.edu email address. This will not be a secret ballot. We will be asking if people are "present" in some electronic way -- meaning either in the Zoom or watching on UDLive. We cannot yet follow John Morgan's suggestion of voting over a week, but this amendment would allow us to move in that direction.

- John Morgan: addressing Rakesh's question. Section VIII, subsection 4, implicitly gives the GFM the power to overturn the Senate. I think it would be a good idea to add language to section IX that no change will be made that prevents the GFM from overriding votes of the Senate.

- Alan Fox: I don't think this eliminates the ability of the faculty to govern. The old system was generated when there were 500 faculty. Now it's impossible to use the GFM. The size of the body has grown beyond the capacity of the ability to have a meeting.
- Deni Galileo: I agree with Alan on that point, but John was talking about a safety net. We could put some of the language of 1.1.8.4 into the last sentence of 1.1.9.
- John Morgan: My concerns are not merely hypothetical. Around 1990, the Senate Executive Committee proposed that only tenured faculty members should be senators. It was well-intended, but would have resulted in the senate becoming older and more oligarchic. Ten years ago, a Senate President wanted to limit the voting rights of Continuing Track faculty. Both of these were voted down by the Senate, but proposals are made.
- Rakesh: We have a representative government that does almost everything, and the GFM is there for unusual situations. I support Deni Galileo and John Morgan's safety net.
- Vickie Fedele (Associate in Arts Program). Some folks are troubled by senate seat allocation. Getting a quorum on May 3 is vital to their perspective. What is your thinking about whether we get a quorum on May 3.

CB: We currently have the power to change the size of the senate (FH 1.1.4). This amendment is specifically just to allow the senate to amend 1.1.8 and 1.1.9. I hope that enough people will be interested in what President Assanis has to say that we will get a quorum. If you can spread the word and tell people to come, that would be great.

- Pak-Wing Fok (Mathematical Sciences): I agree that we need a safety net. What would the point of having a safety net be if we cannot assemble a meeting with a quorum.
- Cory Bart: Concerns about a rogue Senate seem credible, but having the electronic means of voting seems like the safety net. Does the ability to vote electronically make the second change unnecessary?
- Kathleen Schell (College of Health Sciences): There would be more trust in the Senate if there were common procedures or orientation, so that responsibilities are carried out the same way in each unit.
- John Morgan: There can't be a single prescribed way for the Senators to report back. Some smaller colleges have college-wide senate elections and there is no college faculty meeting. This is one of the reasons why it would be good to increase the number of senators. It is particularly a concern in A&S where we have 3 fewer senators than we have departments.
- Tiffany Barber(Africana Studies) are we voting on changing the size of the Senate today?

CB: No, we are not voting on anything today. We will have a vote on this limited thing on May 3, and that will enable us to move forward with other changes that are being suggested.

- John Morgan: Given that President Assanis is know to talk a long time and gets many questions, have the vote at the beginning of the meeting.

CB: I intend to open the vote at the beginning of the meeting. Note that we have the Senate Meeting after the GFM, and the GFM always has a full agenda, so I have a personal interest in simplifying the GFM as much as possible. It's President Assanis's meeting, so I have to talk to him.

- Rakesh: How are going to have a GFM with a quorum? If the Senate does something the faculty want to change, how will we do it? That's something to think about for the future.

CB: We are assuming we will go back to on-campus meetings in the future, but we don't know how we are going to handle. If we increase the number of senators, which I support, but we cannot find a room on campus that we can use for that larger senate.

- Darryl Flaherty(History): If you have the capacity to raise the size of the senate, why have you not, particularly with concerns for the disenfranchisement of some A&S departments.

CB: We have discussed it, but we run into the size of the room.

- Darryl Flaherty: I'm puzzled because I thought we were doing business. Will the Senate expand.
- Brian Hanson (Geography and Spatial Sciences, Senate Secretary): Part of this change, with the attempt to normalize virtual meetings and electronic voting within the constitution, is to remove roadblocks to raising the size of the Senate. We have been trapped in Gore 104, and the acceptance of electronic voting will lead most likely lead to future changes.
- John Morgan: It is my impression that the online meetings of the Senate have gone well and may be better than in-person meetings.
- Lawrence Duggan (History): Should the size of the Senate be increased by two or three so that Women and Gender Studies and Africana Studies can be included? It seems that we could raise it by two or three and not break the bank.
- John Morgan: It's not just a matter of adding two or three senators. Senators are proportional to the number of the faculty in the college. An increase to the senate would not necessarily go to A&S. Why don't we let every department have its own Senator? This was thought about 50 years ago, but departments split and merge.
- Brian Hanson: We would not necessarily allocate the senators to A&S. We have a formula. If the Senate increased in size, the first ones would actually go to EHD and EOE.
- CB: seeing no further hands, we'll close. I hope to see you all at the GFM, and bring your friends.

Meeting adjourned at 6:23.