

Senate Council Minutes
September 18, 2006

The Senate Council met on Monday, September 18, 2006 at 3:00 pm in 103 Main Building. Below is a record of what transpired.

The meeting was called to order at 3:06 pm.

1. Announcements

The Chair shared that Lesnaw would be unable to serve as the Senate Council's representative to the Employee Benefits Committee (EBC); one of her classes meets during EBC meeting times. Jones suggested that Senators be offered the opportunity to serve on the EBC. The Chair said he would attend the EBC meeting the next day to offer appropriate interim representation.

The Chair stated that the minutes from August 18 would be sent out for review in the next few days. Mrs. Brothers offered an update on the hiring of a new staff associate. She shared that two applicants would be interviewed during the coming weeks.

2. Request to Solicit Input on [Domestic Partner Benefits](#) – Dembo

The Chair stated that although Faculty Trustee Dembo was not present, it would be best to at least begin the discussion on domestic partner benefits (DPB). The Chair offered comments regarding DPB and referred to the recent Staff Senate discussions on the matter, directing Senate Council (SC) members to the approved Staff Senate (UKSS) resolution regarding DPB. He invited Staff Senate Chair Kyle Dippery to talk about the UKSS resolution.

Guest Dippery shared that a UKSS DPB resolution was put forth at the August meeting, but the resolution was bogged down in definitions and in the quick time frame suggested for approval, wanting more time to consult with constituents, etc. In the interim, the resolution was refined via the UKSS listserv, resulting in the [approved resolution](#).

Guest and Staff Representative to the Board of Trustees Russ Williams shared that the issue would likely be assigned by Associate Vice President for Human Resources Kim Wilson to an as yet unformed committee, along with a couple of other new benefit possibilities. He said that as an administrative action, President Todd could approve the change himself, but might also request the Board of Trustees' (BoT) approval. Williams noted the importance of appointed and elected bodies offering an opinion before the issue progressed much further. In response to Jones, Williams said the UKSS resolution supported the concept of DPB without going into the fine points of the issue. He added that there could be financial ramifications regarding offering DPB to either same-sex (same) or opposite sex partners, but would not likely be significant.

There was brief discussion regarding which KY higher education schools might offer DPB, and the rationale behind the past University Senate (Senate) decision to expand the definition of “household” as it related to educational reasons. Lesnaw asked if there was any firm data available relating to offering DPB. She wondered how UK would define a domestic partnership and expressed concern that DPB were being discussed while the retiree health benefit package was being lessened. Williams said that her comments were very similar to those made by Staff Senate members. He added that there were forms that could be modified to be used as an affidavit or statement of a domestic partnership.

Williams stated that the University of Iowa implemented DPB. Approximately 20 same-sex couples and about 150 opposite-sex couples came forward, with an overall impact of about \$500,000; he opined that UK would have a similar experience. Lesnaw stated that she wanted any motion to include both same- and opposite-sex couples.

The Chair stated that a motion could be put forth to help focus discussion. He added that the Senate Council needed to decide first on whether or not to act, and then on what action should be taken. He said that the SC had a number of options: have an opinion distinct from that of the Senate; put forth some type of motion to propose to the Senate; or send the issue of DPB to the Senate with no recommendation.

Lesnaw initiated a brief discussion regarding the specific language used in the communication from the Office of the President to both Dippery and the Chair and how best to respond to the campus discussion on DPB. Yanarella stated that regardless of any possible flack from various groups, it would be a worthy issue to take a stand on. Randall said that UK was owned by the people of the Commonwealth as their flagship university, and that citizens had made known a collective opinion regarding domestic partnerships. He said that although there were issues that UK should be out in front on, the issue of DPB did not morally fit with the accord of the people of the Commonwealth.

Chair stated that he was relatively sure that sexual orientation was explicitly included in the UK’s equal opportunity statement. Williams confirmed that UK included sexual orientation in the equal opportunity statement. Thelin spoke against basing our actions on what the result of a plebiscite would be and stated that some things should not be based on majority opinion but on principles and convictions.

Michael **moved** that the Senate Council take no position on the issue. He stated emphatically that it was not the province of the SC to discuss benefit offerings, DPB in this case. He said that even though Jones had offered information regarding how DPB could be part of the SC’s purview, Michael was still uncomfortable making an official SC statement on the issue; the statement was not addressing inclusiveness as it would be related educationally, but rather with

the human resources aspect of it. He said that it would be most appropriate for individual faculty members to offer comments on it. Michael said that the University of Louisville's recent decision to offer DPB was not an acceptable reason for the Senate Council to discuss it. The motion **died for lack of a second.**

Michael requested from the Chair a point of order regarding justification for allowing a discussion on DPB. He stated that the discussion was out of order and that the SC should move to the next agenda item. The Chair said that he had read the listserv discussions regarding the appropriateness of the SC discussing DPB. He declared that the Administration had brought the issue of employee benefits to the faculty through addresses at the University Senate, so the issue of DP benefits would also be in its domain. Thelin stated that although while there was precedent for watching what other institutions did, it was not in itself not a reason to begin a discussion. However, it should not be a reason to not discuss the issue either.

Lesnaw applauded Provost Subbaswamy's openness with the SC on various issues and requesting its opinion. She added that she was equally pleased when President Todd requests an opinion on an issue. She acknowledged that approval or disapproval was not appropriate in this case, but stated that the more the Administration solicits the opinion of faculty, represented by the Senate Council and Senate, the better the whole educational effort will be. She spoke strongly in favor of responding to requests for opinions. Jones expressed complete agreement with Lesnaw's comments.

Dippery shared that similar sentiments were expressed at the UKSS meeting. The original UKSS resolution included language that indicated approval of DPB. He stated that the final resolution simply offered support.

Lesnaw **moved** that the Senate Council express to President Todd its support of offering benefits to domestic partners, including same sex and opposite sex partners. Faculty trustee Yanarella **seconded**. In response to Thelin, Lesnaw explained that she specifically mentioned both same- and opposite-sex domestic partners. Yanarella offered a **friendly amendment** that the motion state that the University Senate also be assayed as to its position on the issue of UK offering domestic partner benefits. Jones **seconded**. Yanarella stated that the friendly amendment would ensure that the Senate as a whole would be given an opportunity to offer an opinion, separate from that of the SC. Jones confirmed that the SC opinion would be transmitted separately.

Yanarella stated that with all due respect to opposing opinions, he was of the belief that DPB was profoundly a faculty issue, one that was deeply important to faculty peers. He said the SC should take a stand on DPB; many faculty had advocated DPB for years. Yanarella spoke for the amendment and the motion itself.

There being no more discussion, a **vote** was taken on the amendment requesting a University Senate opinion on domestic partner benefits. The motion **passed** unanimously. After some discussion, it was decided that the final motion would be sent to President Todd and carbon-copied to Associate Vice President for Human Resources Wilson. Jones confirmed that the letter would go to the President shortly after the meeting, and also be shown to the Senate. Michael again expressed deep concern with any discussion of DPB by the SC. He said that he did not feel that he represented his college on matters of benefits, and that the credentials of the SC would be damaged by discussing non-educational matters.

A **vote** was taken on the motion that the Senate Council express to President Todd its support of offering benefits to domestic partners, including same sex and opposite sex partners, and that the University Senate also be assayed as to its position on the issue of UK offering domestic partner benefits. The motion **passed**, with six in favor and one against.

3. [GERA Final Report](#)

The Chair asked Yanarella (also GERA Committee co-Chair) to offer an outline of the General Education and Reform and Assessment Committee (GERA). Yanarella recapped the purpose and timeline of GERA. GERA emerged as a joint SC/Provost committee, charged with planning and coordinating a campus conversation and a way of incorporating assessment components into any new general education program. GERA was not intended to implement, have budget authority or make any decisions, nor was it intended to be a long-term committee or make recommendations to the Administration. Yanarella stated that GERA worked within those boundaries and sponsored a host of activities around campus:

- Conducted a faculty survey on the University Studies Program (USP) and found a questioning of the continued viability of USP;
- Coordinated 15 campus forums to catalyze discussion on the External Review Committee's Report; the forums were held from January through April 2006, with two forums having been held for the very large College of Arts & Sciences;
- Hosted a website that was kept up to date with summaries of the forums, and a page of library resources related to the general topic and other items;
- Underwrote an eight-person team's involvement in the American Association of Colleges and Universities' Institute on General Education over the summer, which further leavened discussion on general education reform; and
- Hosted and directed a Planning Process Workshop in August 2006 to explore the essential items of general education, essential skills and assessment matters appropriate to the 21st century.

Yanarella opined that GERA performed all these things with hope and modesty and strove hard to create a deliberate process but also give due regard to not running ahead of faculty consensus. Virtually everything done by GERA was put on the website, including meeting minutes; any faculty member was given a ready means for learning about GERA activities. Currently, GERA was preparing to close up shop and was looking for another body with an as yet undesignated charge to continue efforts to improve general education, and was looking to the Provost and the SC to set the foundations of the next phase.

The report did not include any outline set of imperatives, but Yanarella offered the following suggestions for future steps:

1. Continuity with initial phases should be a priority, in part to avoid redoing what had already been done. A subsequent committee should build on the information gathered regarding general education itself, as well as faculty views;
2. Designate faculty bodies for responsibility in developing curriculum design and implementation planning;
3. Determine the place and relative roles of Colleges and majors with regard to general education curriculum responsibilities;
4. Consider how opportunities for faculty development and graduate student training be incorporated into general education reform so that they can be involved in any new courses; and
5. Work with Provost Subbaswamy and President Todd in calibrating faculty resources and financial support in the context of significantly increasing freshman enrolments. While GERA tried to keep finances at bay at the beginning, believing it not being pertinent at the outset, the issue of funding would loom larger as more decisions were made. Thus far, however, President Todd had shown a measure of monetary and symbolic support.

Yanarella asked that the SC receive the final report, forward it to the Senate for review and consideration, and work with the Provost to take the general education initiative to the next level of examination and articulation.

The Chair noted that the External Review Committee's Final Report was presented to the Senate. He explained that because GERA was a joint committee of the Senate Council, the final report would not necessarily be given to the Senate.

Yanarella **moved** that that the Senate Council: receive the GERA Final Report; forward it to it to the University Senate for review and consideration; and work with the Provost to take the general education initiative to the next level of articulation and examination. He agreed to the Chair's suggestion that the motion be separated into two parts. Jones **seconded** the motion that the Senate Council receive the GERA Final Report and forward it to it to the University Senate for review and consideration. The motion **carried** unanimously.

Yanarella then **moved** that, with attention to general comments offered in the University Senate's review of GERA's Final Report, the Senate Council would work with the Provost to take the general education initiative to the next level of examination and articulation. Lesnaw **seconded**. Lesnaw offered a friendly amendment to insert "forthcoming" before "University Senate." Yanarella and Jones **accepted**. A vote was taken on the motion for the Senate Council, with attention to general comments offered in the forthcoming University Senate's review of GERA's Final Report, work with the Provost to take the general education initiative to the next level of examination and articulation. The motion **carried** unanimously.

On behalf of the GERA Committee, which had worked very hard and within broad boundaries, Yanarella offered appreciation for the Senate Council's actions.

5. [Change to SR 5.1.8.5](#)

After some discussion, it became apparent that the proposed change to the *Senate Rules* (SRs) should first be reviewed by the Senate's Retroactive Withdrawal Application Committee. Lesnaw **moved** that such an action take place. Jones **seconded**. A **vote** was taken on the motion to request that the Senate's Retroactive Withdrawal Application Committee review the proposed changes to SR 5.1.8.5. The motion **passed** unanimously.

6. [Proposed Vice President for Institutional Diversity](#)

The Chair shared that the Provost had asked the SC to endorse or offer input on the new proposed position of Vice President for Institutional Diversity. The Chair related that he, Vice Chair Grabau, Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs Heidi Anderson and Provost Subbaswamy sat down and discussed some questions raised by Senate Council members. Grabau had summarized the meeting in an email to the Chair, who then forwarded it to Senate Council members. The Provost requested input before the Board of Trustees' (BoT) October meeting.

Jones confirmed that Grabau's email answered all the questions raised. In response to a concern by Lesnaw, the Chair explained that after a national search is conducted and the position of Vice President for Institutional Diversity is filled, the current position of Associate Provost for Multicultural and Academic Affairs shall be eliminated.

Lesnaw **moved** that the Senate Council support the proposed creation of a position for a Vice President for Institutional Diversity, as was outlined in the letter circulated to Senate Council members. Harley **seconded**. The motion **carried**, with six in favor and one abstention.

6. [Legislation on Public Access to Federally Funded Research](#)

The Chair shared that his intent in placing this item on the agenda was for the SC to confirm the decision reached on its listserv to refer the issue of legislation on

[Public Access to Federally Funded Research](#) to the Senate's Library Committee (SLC). As a result of a discussion on the legislation on the SC listserv, Randall, chair of the SLC, agreed to act on it, in conjunction with fellow committee member College of Libraries Dean Carol Diedrichs. The SLC would be meeting on Thursday at 8:30 am. The Chair asked for a motion.

Jones **moved** that the issue of legislation on Public Access to Federally Funded Research be referred to the Senate's Library Committee. Harley **seconded**. The motion **passed** unanimously.

There being sufficient time left in the meeting, the Chair accepted Jones's request to speak about the continuing status of the winter intersession (WI). Jones, referring to the resolution passed by the SC on April 3, 2006, which strongly requested an evaluation of the WI, expressed concern that no information had come out about any such evaluation. Greissman shared that Provost Subbaswamy had made another administrator responsible for an evaluation of WI.

Jones **moved** that the Senate Council charge the Chair with contacting the appropriate person about the urgency of the high priority of a report regarding the winter intersession; the Senate Council would not extend the winter intersession to winter 2007 – 2008 unless the analysis was completed. Lesnaw **seconded**. The motion **passed** unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:46 pm.

Members present: Baxter, Grabau, Harley, Jones, Lesnaw, Michael, Randall, Tagavi, Thelin, and Yanarella.

Provost's Liaison present: Greissman.

Guests present: Kyle Dippery, Russ Williams.

Submitted by Kaveh Tagavi,
Senate Council Chair

Prepared by Sheila Brothers on September 21, 2006.