Call to order

Approval of the minutes of November 6, 2014

Report of the Executive Committee

Remarks by the Chancellor

Scheduled Remarks
  None

Standing committee reports
  None

Ad hoc committee reports
  None

Old Business
  Academic Policies and Services Committee: Motion to approve new degree program (Brian Christman, Chair)

New Business
  Motion on anonymous electronic voting: Senators Joel Harrington, Claire Smrekar, Bryan Heuser, and Myrna Wooders

Good of the Senate

Adjournment

Voting Members present: Bachmann; Blume; Cannon; Christenbery; Christman; Creech; Delpire; Dewey; Friedman; Greer; Haglund; Harrington; Hasty; Hetherington; Heuser; Hopkins; Johnson, J; Johnson, R.; Lamb; Lim; Lind; McCammon; McCoin; Oskay; Pearson; Price; Rohde; Slayton; Sloop; Tarpley; Walsh; Webb; Wehby; Willis; Wittig; Wooders; and Ziegler.

Voting Members absent: Anderson, Adam; Balser (regrets); Baker (regrets); Benbow; Brown; Cliffel (regrets); Enterline; Fauchet (regrets); Fogo; Fountain; Guelcher; Guthrie (regrets); Hall, D. (regrets); Hemingway; Johnson, E.; Kennedy (regrets); Koutsoukos; Marcus; Maroney (regrets); Martin (regrets); Norman; O’Hara O’Connor (regrets);
Reside (regrets); Smrekar; Spottswood (regrets); Steiger; Talbot; Townes (regrets); Turner; Wait (regrets); Wright (regrets); and Wright-Rios.

**Ex Officio Members present:** Anderson, Audrey; Bandas; Brady; Combs; Cyrus; Hall, A.; Kopstain; Lutz; and Zeppos.

**Ex Officio Members absent:** Bernard (regrets); Fortune; Johnston (regrets); McNamara; Miller (regrets); Raiford; Stalcup; Sweet; Wcislo; Wente (regrets); and Williams.

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**Call to order**

Chair Paul Lim called the meeting to order at 4:10pm.

**Approval of the minutes of November 6, 2014**

Chair Lim asked for approval of the minutes. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

**Report of the Executive Committee**

Chair Lim gave the report of the Executive Committee:

1. **Faculty Manual update**
   a. Letter of welcome for all new faculty members from the Faculty Senate chair: This suggestion came from a member of the Faculty Manual ad hoc committee.
   b. Role and significance of the senate for the new faculty member: Will underscore importance and raise awareness of the faculty senate.
   c. Role and significance of the faculty manual: It is important for all faculty to know about the faculty manual.

2. **Concur and its ongoing issues**
   a. Arts and Science Faculty Council report: Chair Lim has talked to Beth Conklin about this. She shared with him a 20-page document outlining issues with the Concur travel website.
   b. Chair Lim also mentioned discussing this with Provost Wente and Vice Chancellor Balser in the Executive Committee’s monthly meeting with them.
   c. Chair Lim said that they are also interested in getting the other schools/departments to weigh in to get a more global perspective on the way Concur has functioned within Vanderbilt.
   d. Tony Grayson who is in charge of Concur will be talking to the Executive Committee at their next meeting about these issues.

3. **Formation of the task force on University Athletics:** Chair Lim said that after Vice Chancellor David Williams’ presentation, the Executive Committee has discussed creating a senate task force on university athletics. There is a university standing
committee on athletics that Vice Chair-elect Ann Price chairs, but we believe that these are important issues that deserve more in depth attention by the senate. Chair Lim said that this task force will include both senate members and also members of the faculty at large.

4. VU and VUMC split and its aftermath: Chair Lim said that this is an ongoing issue for all of us. We can talk about this more as it unfolds.

5. Retirement benefits presentation and rollout plan: Chair Lim thanked Past Chair Donald Brady for putting this presentation together for the special-called meeting in November. He talked about his own department having Past Chair Brady come and talk to them about the changes in retirement plans. He encouraged other senators to have these conversations in their departments.

6. Globalization and Internationalization Town Hall: Chair Lim said that Past Vice Chair Jeff Johnston and Vice Chair Rolanda Johnson are finalizing the survey questions and the survey will be sent out early next semester. We want to engage faculty members in this conversation while the implementation of the strategic plan is happening.

He asked for any questions.

Senator: Some of the documents available on the website regarding retirement benefits seem to be contradictory. Another thing that happened is the staff member that relayed this information tells me that the faculty senate voted on and approved this new plan. I don’t remember the vote.

Chair Lim: I don’t remember that either. But that seems to be a piece of misinformation.

Senator: Then the relevant people should be informed.

Past Chair Donald Brady: What is on the HR website now is what currently happens to retirement benefits. An article just came out today in MyVUMC and will be coming out in MyVU that leads you to the new website with the plan for retirement benefits in the future.

Senator: One of my colleagues raised the question: is this consistent with our contracts?

Past Chair Brady: What contracts?

Senator: The general contracts outlined in the Faculty Manual.

Past Chair Brady: The ability to have matching funds and the contribution limits—all of that remains the same. Who administers the plan itself and the options that are offered is what is being adjusted. I would expect that it is consistent with our contracts.

Remarks by the Chancellor

Chancellor Zeppos talked about the recently announced changes about VUMC, athletics, internationalization and globalization, and strategic planning implementation.

Old Business

Academic Policies and Services Committee: Motion to approve new degree program (Brian Christman, Chair)
Chair Lim gave a summary of what happened at the last senate meeting concerning this motion—when the vote was announced, it was determined that there wasn’t a quorum present, so there could be no vote. He then recognized Senator Brian Christman who presented the motion from last month’s meeting:

“Resolved, That the Faculty Senate approves the proposed Astrophysics Ph.D. program”

Senator Christman said that the program has already gone through extensive review with various committees both inside and outside the university. He also mentioned that Professor David Weintraub of the Physics and Astronomy department is here to answer questions about the program as well. Chair Lim then opened the floor for discussion.

Senator: I very strongly support this program, but I have one question. Who are our peer institutions who have these programs?
Professor Weintraub: There are a number of tables in the proposal itself that identify peers by size and reputation. Among top 25 research universities that offer this Ph.D.: Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Columbia, CalTech, Chicago, Johns Hopkins, Cornell, Berkeley, and UVA.
Senator: I also support the program. But I did wonder about having two junior faculty teaching the core as was mentioned in the review letters? Is that a concern?
Professor Weintraub: Both of those faculty members received tenure last spring. This concern no longer exists.
Chancellor Zeppos: I want to commend David, Richard Haglund and their colleagues in the department. This is a phenomenal proposal. The department has made some strategic hiring decisions in this area to get to where they are now.
Professor Weintraub: These two faculty members were specifically hired seven years ago to enable us to get to where we are right now to be able to offer this degree program.

Chair Lim called the question. The vote was taken by a closed ballot, and there were 36 votes to approve the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

Motion on anonymous electronic voting: Senators Joel Harrington, Claire Smrekar, Brian Heuser, and Myrna Wooders

Chair Lim recognized Senator Joel Harrington and asked him to speak the rationale of this motion:

“Whereas on March 13, 2003, the Faculty Senate discussed the issue of privacy and electronic voting at some length and, on April 10, 2003 the Senate further discussed and passed a motion including the statement: “Voting on matters before the Faculty Senate shall normally be by "ayes" and "nays" (voice vote or show of hands) or by electronic voting;””
And whereas the rule above continues to be a part of the Constitution of the Faculty Senate and technology has advanced so that anonymous electronic voting has become substantially more efficient;

Be it resolved that, except for routine matters such as the approval of minutes and adjournment or when a roll call is effected, all voting in the Faculty Senate be electronic and anonymous.”

Senator Harrington said that this is based on two premises: 1) the secret ballot is the bedrock of our democratic society and it works well at all levels of governance. It takes away any coercive effects of an open vote and it gives us a reliable measure of support on a specific issue, 2) this would be done by electronic voting, and it would take one-tenth of the time that a closed, written ballot takes. Senator Harrington also mentioned that someone from the Center for Teaching could come and demonstrate the clicker technology for us at the next senate meeting.

Chair Lim opened the floor for discussion.

Senator: I have comment in support of this. Not only is it easy, but you can save the results for documentation and recordkeeping.

Senator: I have used this technology in my teaching for a number of years, and I think it would be great to use this in the senate.

Senator: I think if our students can do this, we can do this.

Senator Harrington: Derek Bruff of the Center for Teaching has offered to loan us clickers to get us started.

Senator: I have used this technology for a while, and it is not totally failsafe. There are times when the computer breaks down, etc. So the word “all” in the motion makes me nervous.

Senator Harrington: In that case, we go back to paper ballots. We will always have paper ballots on hand just in case.

Senator: The motion as currently written wouldn’t allow for that.

Senator: So, is that a proposal for an amendment to the motion?

Senator Harrington asked Past Chair and Parliamentarian Donald Brady if paper ballots could be used in an emergency if this motion were adopted. Past Chair Brady said that the motion would need to be amended to allow for this exception. A friendly amendment was presented below:
“Be it resolved that, except for routine matters such as the approval of minutes and adjournment or when a roll call is effected or in the matter of electronic disruption, all voting in the Faculty Senate be electronic and anonymous.”

Senator Harrington said that he would accept this friendly amendment.

Senator: The current constitution gives the option for electronic voting, but it is never used.

Senator: So, why don’t we just use the option for electronic voting? I don’t know that we need to have a motion to do that.

Senator Harrington: Because it’s not required—it’s only optional, currently.

Senator: What’s the advantage of requiring it?

Senator Harrington: The advantage of requiring it is that you do not have to call for a secret ballot, which in itself is a declaration of a position depending on how the debate goes. We know going into the debate that it’s going to be a secret ballot and we also know after the vote has been taken where the level of support is whereas with an open vote, we don’t know this. The main thing is that it opens up debate because we know going in that there’s going to be a secret ballot.

Senator: Do we have data to suggest that people vote more accurately in secret than in non-secret?

Senator Harrington: Are you proposing that we do some background research before we put this to a vote?

Senator: No. Well, yes, but no.

Senator Harrington: I do not have that data, but I don’t think this would help our discussion of this motion today. Put a different way: do you have any arguments against this? Would this stifle the discussion in any way or give us a false vote?

Senator: I have some data that is published about smoking preferences and high school students. And there is a difference between overt and secret votes.

Senator: The more anonymous we make it, the more accurate it will be.

Senator: The nice thing about having the technology is that it can be used for straw polls and other purposes besides voting.

Senator: What about if you press the wrong button? Can you retrieve your vote?

Senator Harrington: Yes, you can.
Chair Lim closed discussion and explained that the vote on this motion would occur at the next regular senate meeting in February 2015.

Senator: There have been other motions where we voted on them at the same meeting. Why not this one?

Past Chair and Parliamentarian Donald Brady explained that any motion to change the Rules of Order has to be presented at one meeting and voted on at the next meeting (at least three weeks later).

Senator: So we can use electronic voting to vote on this motion next time?

Chair Lim: Yes, we can.

**Good of the Senate**

Chair Lim asked for anything under Good of the Senate.

Senator: With regard to our earlier discussion about changes to the retirement plan, the Faculty Manual says we do have a choice of four different providers. So, a change in the retirement policy requires a change in the Faculty Manual. And the Faculty Manual part 1 chapter 5 addresses how we have to change it. And then we should have a vote on this. It’s a change in the provisions of our contract. So, we need a proposed amendment, and then we need to have a motion and a vote.

Senator: I think this needs to be discussed in the Senate Affairs committee, because we shouldn’t be voting on things we cannot change and the Faculty Manual should be factually accurate, so it seems like this should be a discussion for a committee.

Chancellor Zeppos: You still have the choices under the plan.

Senator: But staff got this memo saying that they did not have a choice.

Senator: I don’t have a position on this, but I would like clarification from the Executive Committee about the role of the faculty senate in the manual. If we are voting for changes that have already been made, then I don’t see the point of voting. But if it says that faculty have to vote before changes are made, then I’d like to know what happened because I just don’t know. I’d like some clarification.

Chair Lim: I think it is appropriate to defer this matter to the Senate Affairs committee and the Faculty Manual ad hoc committee.

Senator: I’d like to know if we are voting on policy or if we are voting on revisions to the manual to keep it current.
Chancellor Zeppos: I think what the committee is also looking at is: is there stuff in the manual that does not pertain specifically to faculty? They are looking at the question: what should be in the faculty manual?

Senator: I think that’s appropriate. If there are things in there that shouldn’t be, that’s fine. But if there is stuff that we need to vote on, then we should know what that is.

Senator: We do have a contract. And the contract does refer to the Faculty Manual. The Faculty Manual has a procedure for revisions in the Faculty Manual. I think we have to clarify how we make those revisions, and then we should follow the Faculty Manual. There have been major changes that have not gone through the procedure outlined in the manual.

Chancellor Zeppos: For any major change, I would want it to go through the senate.

There was discussion about the parental leave policy and how it came through the senate before being put into the Faculty Manual.

Chair Lim: The role of the senate is that it serves as an advisory role to the Chancellor for the policy changes in the Faculty Manual.

Chancellor Zeppos also mentioned changes due to federal regulations from NIH, etc. These must be enacted and put into the Faculty Manual, and the senate has decided not to vote on it since we would lose our federal funding if we didn’t change the policy.

Senator: But you can enforce them without putting them into the Faculty Manual, correct?

Chancellor Zeppos: But then you get into the situation where I have a contract, and there’s a relationship between you as a faculty member and the university. I think it’s preferable that all the rules of governance of faculty be in the Faculty Manual.

Senator: The chapter dealing with amendments to the Faculty Manual does take care of interim changes. It also has a provision that the Chancellor can propose an amendment to the manual, the faculty could vote no, and the Chancellor could have the final decision.

Chancellor Zeppos: I’m making a different point, which is I’m not always proposing changes that I necessarily want—I’m required to make these changes by federal agencies, etc.

Senator: Right, this is what is in the Faculty Manual. You notify the senate that these changes have been made, and then the senate can discuss them, if they wish. There may be certain cases, I don’t know what, but in which the senate says that they don’t like the changes.
Chair Lim: I think all of this discussion is indicative of the Faculty Manual as a critical and canonical text. We have the ad hoc committee working on it, and many of these issues have already come up.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 5:15pm.