



Annual Report

2002 - 2004

President: Gregory M. Sadlek

May 2004

UNO Faculty Senate Biennial President's Report, 2002-2004

Dear Chancellor Belck,

I am submitting herewith a report on the activities of the Senate during my two years in office as President. Rather than cover every single aspect of our work, I have sought to point out highlights and dominating themes. For example, you have been regularly informed of the individual resolutions passed by the Senate over the past few years. Rather than repeating those resolutions here, then, I will simply point out that all the Senate's resolutions are available on the Senate's website should you care to review them again. Something similar can be said regarding Senate agendas and minutes.

Overview

Although the Senate kept itself busy with its task of shared governance over the past two years, the two years had somewhat different characteristics. The first year, 2002-2003, was dominated by concerns over a series of budget cuts made necessary by the poor financial condition of the state. From the beginning, the Senate was concerned with learning about and influencing the magnitude of the budget cuts proposed and, then, offering the administration suggestions on how best to make those cuts. In contrast, the second year, 2003-2004, did not have a single, dominating focus. Major concerns were campus safety, the publication of faculty governance documents, our retired colleagues, the university budget allocations, and the academic program prioritization process.

2002-2003

Budgets and the effects of budget cutting dominated the Senate's business in 2002-2003. There were significant cuts both in the fall and the spring semesters. In September of 2002, some faculty concern existed not only with respect to which programs were cut but also with respect to the employee termination process. This led to a series of discussions across campus, a Senate resolution expressing our concerns, and discussions of a new draft of UNO's guidelines for "reduction in force." In October, the campus witnessed student demonstrations outside of the fall faculty convocation, protesting the cuts to various programs in the humanities, and the Senate passed a resolution in support of the demonstration's organizers.

In November, the Senate passed Resolution 2650, which called upon the system administration not to increase funding for priority programs if the university budget was severely cut. The proposed increase at the time was \$6,000,000. Also in the fall, the Academic and Curricular Affairs Committee discussed the deleterious effects of the elimination of developmental courses due to the budget cuts. In February of 2003, both you and VC Hodgson visited the Senate meeting to deliver reports on the second round of budget cuts. Around this time, new campus task forces, named after various colors, were set to work making suggestions on budget cutting and restructuring. Most of these task forces had faculty representation. In March 2003, the Senate passed a resolution calling upon state officials to be aware of the adverse impact that the proposed additional round of budget cuts (then predicted to be a cut of 10%) would have on the quality of state higher education. At the same time, representatives of the Senate helped other university supporters lobby the Unicameral for lighter cuts to higher education. Throughout the spring, the Goals and Directions Committee sought to find ways to bring recycling back to campus after the fall cuts, and the Professional Development Committee worried over cuts to such faculty development funds as the University Committee on Research and the University Committee for the Advancement of Teaching. In May 2003, the Senate passed a resolution in support of 15% increases in tuition. In the end, the spring cuts turned out to be significant but less than the predicted 10%. We were grateful that you and VC Hodgson found a way to make the cuts without a single sitting professor losing his or her job, and without cutting additional programs.

Beyond the budget cuts, there were certainly other issues that concerned the Senate in 2002-2003. One of these was the suggestion of charging in-state tuition to UNO students coming from the Council Bluffs area of Iowa. The Senate found that some scholarships already existed for some of those students, but, given the budget climate, the Senate was not able to make further progress on this issue. Ironically, during the spring semester of 2004, the Board of Regents debated the suggestion of giving in-state tuition rates to students from any states contiguous to Nebraska. This suggestion, too, was not adopted.

During fall 2002, the Senate concluded work begun the year earlier on the new C- grade. Resolution 2600, passed during the fall of 2001, which dictated that the C- would be held the equivalent of a C with respect to certain key policy statements in the undergraduate catalog, was not implemented during 2001-2002. This resolution was finally approved by the administration and implemented in 2002. Also during the fall of 2002, the Senate engaged in a community service project. Volunteers from the Senate worked alongside students in a local Habitat for Humanity project in Omaha.

In the fall of 2002, Senator Sadlek, concerned with the lack of communication with the general faculty population, began publishing via email a periodic Senate newsletter, which he called the *New Faculty Senate Review*. The goal of this newsletter was to be a short, readable condensation of the most significant items of recent Senate business along with short passages of reflection on this work. Eight issues of the *New Faculty Senate Review* were published during this biennium. At the time of this writing, they were still available on the Senate website.

In December of 2002, the Senate reaffirmed its support of domestic partner benefits, and Senator Sadlek conveyed the Senate's position to the Board of Regents in the same month. In March of 2003, the Senate Educational Resources and Services Committee teamed up with the UNO Library to offer a seminar entitled "Scholarly Communication: Defining Roles for Faculty and Librarians." The major concern discussed was the ever increasing costs of serial publications. The Senate Committee on Faculty Personnel and Welfare also considered "Profile B" in the reappointment, promotion, and tenure guidelines of the College of Arts and Sciences; this profile seemingly contradicted university RPT guidelines because it required a tenure candidate in CAS to earn a rating of "outstanding" neither in teaching nor in research. The Senate committee, however, did not recommend any changes in the university's RPT documents, thus, forcing the College of Arts and Sciences to remove "Profile B" as an active option.

2003-2004

The Senate's 2003 retreat focused on the creation of a new *Faculty Handbook* and a review of the prioritization process. Each standing committee reviewed a section of the old handbook and reported its suggestions for up-dating to Senator Henry D'Souza and his Faculty, Personnel and Welfare Committee. With the help of Office Administrator Sue Bishop, Senator D'Souza and his committee then translated these suggestions into a new web-based version of the handbook. The work went on over the course of the year, and by the end of the year, a strong working draft of the document was online. The Senate had a focus group meeting of campus experts in April to review and critique the draft. Based on this feedback, Ms. Bishop plans to upgrade the design aspects of the web page over the summer of 2004.

Over the summer of 2003, the Senate was surprised to learn that the Board of Regents was considering and, indeed, would approve a pilot "Dual Enrollment Program," an agreement between UNO and the Millard School district that, in effect, allowed high school students to register for entry-level UNO college courses, taught by AP high school teachers, in their senior year. The Senate was eager to exercise its shared governance oversight with respect to this pilot program. The Academic and Curricular Affairs Committee kept its eye on the program over the year as it developed, and at the end of the academic year, it was awaiting assessment data on student performance in anticipation of the Board's review and reauthorization of the program in the summer of 2004.

In addition, during the fall of 2003, the Senate created two new ad hoc committees. The first, chaired by Professor Jerry Cederblom, concerned itself with the creation of a new "college" for emeritus professors. With the support of the administration, this entity was later called the Senior Scholars Academy. Over the course of the year, the planning evolved nicely, and by spring 2004, regular meetings were being held with senior scholars, governance structures were being invented, and two rooms in the library were being renovated for use by the senior scholars.

The second ad hoc committee was charged with reviewing the academic program prioritization process of 2001. In addition, the committee considered the distribution of funding to high priority programs over the past three years as well as the future development of UNO academic prioritization. The committee worked in conjunction with the Strategic Planning Steering Committee but filed an independent assessment and recommendations at the May 2004 meeting of the Faculty Senate. In brief, the committee found no major shortcomings in the process used in 2001, but it recommended that academic prioritization be a topic of regular collaboration by NU Senate Presidents. The committee also found that it was time to assess the progress made by the original prioritized programs (on a five-year cycle), to consider new UNO programs for inclusion among UNO priorities, and to plan for a reduction of the number of the original high priority programs.

In December of 2003, the Senate Executive Committee met for the first time with its Creighton counterparts in the UNO Alumni House. The two committees had a loosely-structured discussion of their respective ways of operating, and they shared mutual concerns. All those involved thought this was a useful exercise in comparison and contrast of significantly different academic perspectives and well worth repeating on a regular basis.

In the fall of 2003, one UNO professor received a threat via email from a student at UNO. This incident led to a wide-ranging discussion of UNO campus security. In February, the Senate sponsored a presentation on campus security in which it heard presentations by VC Jim Buck, Paul Kosel, Stan Schleifer, and Professor David Carter. The panel reviewed the current state of campus security and the standard procedures for dealing with emergencies. Professor Carter reviewed tactics for dealing with

campus security and the standard procedures for dealing with emergencies. Professor Carter reviewed issues for dealing with abusive students in the classroom.

In March, the Faculty Senate cosponsored (with the UNO chapter of the AAUP) a panel discussion on university computer privacy. Among those making presentations were Dr. Martha McCaughey, Associate VC for Technology John Fiene, Professor Leah Pietron, and Professor Michael O'Hara. There was little agreement among the panelists as to the amount of privacy protections that faculty enjoy. Some believed that faculty by law have no privacy rights at all with respect to the contents of their university computers; others believed that NU faculty enjoy considerable privacy rights. All agreed, however, that this is a significant issue that will bear even closer scrutiny in the future.

The Committee on Educational Resources and Services resurrected the Paul Beck scholarships, which had been dormant for several years. At the end of the academic year, two awards of \$1000 each were given.

The Senate Bylaws give the President of the Senate the power to appoint a Budget Advisory Committee. We had not had such a committee in the recent past, and we did not have such a committee during 2002-2003, during the severe budget cuts. In May of 2003, however, Senator Sadlek appointed such a committee (under the leadership of Professor John Bartle) and charged it with reviewing the university budget and offering advice in case of further budget cutting. The committee met regularly during the 2003-2004 academic year and offered a report on certain aspects of the budget in the March 2004 Senate meeting. The most controversial finding of the committee was that, while the share of the state-aided budget going to other NU campuses increased regularly since 1999, UNO's share apparently decreased. This report led to a series of discussions between Senate leadership and the administration. Eventually, even President Dennis Smith joined the discussion. Several contrasting ways of looking at the state-aided budget became apparent. The reason for the committee's initial finding apparently was that, in the period under question, UNO was generating more tuition income (because of rising enrollments) and thus had less need for other sources of public funds. This, in turn, was directly tied to specific aspects of President Smith's philosophy of allocating resources. No consensus emerged over whether this was, finally, "fair," but the Senate believed UNO should be concerned over the tuition-distribution policies of future system presidents.

Finally, the Senate reviewed and approved several new academic programs over the course of the past two years. Among these programs were: a Ph.D. in Information Technology, a joint UNO/UNK MFA in Creative Writing, a specialization in Investment Science and Portfolio Management (CBA), the Juvenile Justice Institute (CPACS), a BA in Latino/Latin American Studies, a B.S. in Organizational Sociology, and a B.S. in Bioinformatics. The Senate also went on record as supporting the merger of the College of Continuing Studies and the College of Public Affairs and Community Service and the change of the UNO Department of Communication into a school.

Conclusion

All together, this report, although it does not record every single achievement, suggests a strong record of accomplishment from 2002 to 2004 for the members of the Senate. UNO Senators, working in their standing committees under inspired committee leadership, have again proven that they are dedicated to the important work of shared governance. They are to be commended for their heartfelt commitment and hard work.

Finally, I want to say what a pleasure it has been to have worked with you over the past two years and to thank you for all the support you have given to the Senate and its endeavors.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory M. Sadlek
Senate President, 2002-2004

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