



The New UNO Senate Review

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Beginning in February 1968 and continuing through 1994, the UNO Faculty Senate kept the faculty, administration, and staff apprized of its work by means of a periodic newsletter, called the Senate Review. From modest beginnings, the newsletter grew to significant size, containing schedules of meetings, copies of Senate resolutions (and administration responses), information about the activities of various Senate committees, membership lists of various faculty committees, and even a "Point of View" column by the current President. Then, in 1995, the publication ceased. Suddenly the Senate stopped regularly informing its constituents of the crucial business it was conducting on their behalf. Beginning in the late 1990s, really dedicated Senate constituents could look up Senate business on the web, but how many faculty did so on a regular basis? Since becoming President last summer, I have felt that our light was hidden under a bushel and that we needed to reestablish regular communication with the faculty. Tentative steps in this direction were taken with the publication of last summer's two open letters to the faculty on budget cutting. With the "publication" of this issue of The New UNO Senate Review, which will be sent only in email form, the Senate hopes to reestablish a connection with its constituents.

The old Senate Review was a gold mine of information about the Senate, but the very completeness of its record was also a weakness. Most of the newsletters consisted of full transcriptions of Faculty Senate resolutions and administration responses, lists of various committee members and of upcoming meetings. Important and less important lists and resolutions jostled with each other for the reader's attention. It took a truly dedicated reader to sift the wheat from the chaff, and many may not have taken the time.

In contrast, The New UNO Senate Review hopes to be a short, readable condensation of the most significant items of business recently undertaken by the Senate. It asks only a few minutes out of your busy schedule, and it promises to update you quickly on the business of what is, after all, one of the most important means of carrying out shared governance at UNO. For those who wish to be filled in on the details, a link will be appended at the end of each newsletter to our web site, where can be found all the agendas, minutes, resolutions, membership lists, and annual reports that one could wish for. There's more there than you might expect. The Senate minutes, for example, always contain written reports of meetings of our officers with such important groups as the Chancellor's Council, President Smith, and the three other University of Nebraska Senate Presidents. The minutes also contain regular reports from all the Senate's standing committees and from our liaisons with the UNO AAUP, the Academic Planning Council, the Alumni Association, the Graduate Council, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee, and AFCON, the Academic Freedom Coalition of Nebraska.

Now, what have we done recently? In the October 2002 meeting, the Faculty Senate considered a suggestion from Harl Dahlstrom that students from nearby counties in Iowa be charged in-state tuition. By memo VC Hodgson responded to Dahlstrom's suggestion. He noted that UNO currently has two programs that allow reduced tuition for Iowa students. The first is the general "Tuition Scholarship for Non-Residents," and the second is the "OMSA Scholarship," designed for Iowa students who reside in the Omaha Metropolitan Statistical Area. The Senate's Educational Resources and Services Committee has been charged with looking into what if anything needs to be done further.

In September, Michael Peterson, President of the UNO AAUP, and I wrote an open letter to the faculty on the recent staff lay-offs. On September 27, Chancellor Belck wrote an open letter to the faculty in which she encouraged conversations on these matters and solicited advice on how future lay-offs could be made as compassionately as possible. I have received a few responses to the Chancellor's letter. In our October meeting, senators suggested making better use of our faculty experts in this area. We also charged the Faculty Personnel and Welfare Committee to assemble an informed and cogent Senate response to the Chancellor's request. Chancellor Belck has asked that our response be formulated by the end of the fall semester. If you have suggestions and comments on the lay-offs, please forward them either to Greg Sadlek or to Vaughn Johnson, chairperson of the Faculty Personnel and Welfare Committee.

In a September meeting with Faculty Senate presidents, President Smith asked those in attendance to encourage campus discussions on the Patriot Act, particularly on the effects of the Patriot Act on academic freedoms. The act will have three areas of impact on the university. First, it will require the university to register all foreign students on campus using SEVIS, the Student Exchange and Visitor Information System. Second, the university must inventory its labs and report on those containing select toxic substances. Third, the university must closely regulate those having access to laboratories containing those toxic substances. This will require background checks of all foreign students who have access to such labs. A slightly longer summary of the Patriot Act can be obtained in the Senate offices, RH 309, or it can be sent to you by email. If you have comments on academic freedom and the Patriot Act, please send them to Greg Sadlek.

The Senate recently concluded a bit of unfinished business from last year. Last October, the Senate passed Resolution 2600, which essentially ruled that a "C-" would be considered the equivalent of "C" with respect to certain key policy statements in the undergraduate catalogue. The Administration, however, asked the Senate to reconsider the resolution. The Senate did so in early 2002, and decided to keep the resolution as it was. The process was not brought to its final conclusion, however, until October of this year, when the Senate brought the resolution back to the Chancellor, and she formally approved it. The new policy goes into effect immediately. Look for the appropriate changes in the web version of the undergraduate catalogue.

The Senate also passed a new policy on repeated courses. The resolution essentially limits the number of times a student who has earned a C- or better can preregister for the same course. Look up resolution 2616 on the Senate web page for details.

The Senate decided, for the first time in its history, to engage in a community service activity. On Friday, October 25th, volunteers from the Faculty Senate worked on a Habitat for Humanity site at 3624 Redman. Good progress was made on this single story dwelling, and the volunteers returned tired, muddy, but happy to have been of service.

Our next full Senate meeting will occur on Wednesday, November 13th, at 2:00 in the Dodge Room of the Milo Bail Student Center. I close with a poignant and almost lyrical quotation from a Point of View column written by Carl Camp in 1991:

Here we are, seemingly in the flickering of an eye, at mid-point of the first semester of this fleeting academic year. It hardly seems possible, but we are well into Nebraska's most bountiful and . most beautiful season. Figuratively speaking, it is a season mixed with good news and a certain melancholy: good crops and a riot of bright colors feast our eyes; however, all is leavened by the impending onset of the trials of yet another Nebraska winter. In my view, the season proceeds similarly on the UNO campus: the good news is that student enrollment is up, more students are taking more credit hours, and demand for the services we are prepared to offer is still rising. However, the sobering, melancholy truth is that public resources at our disposal to accomplish our mission are down and are destined, it would seem, to decline even farther. Despite the good news, despite appearances which are being kept up by a hard-working faculty and staff, in the final analysis this is a melancholy season in the life cycle of the University.

It could have been written yesterday. As the French say: "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose," the more things change, the more it's the same thing. We'll certainly have many more occasions to talk budget over the coming year.

Greg Sadlek

Senate web site: < <http://www.unomaha.edu/~facsen/>>

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