
**FACULTY SENATE SPECIAL MEETING
MINUTES
9 June 2015**

Chancellor Rebecca Blank called the meeting to order at 3:34 p.m. with 143 voting members present (111 needed for quorum).

Chancellor Blank provided an opening statement then opened the floor to a question period. Several questions and comments followed.

Chancellor Blank reminded those present of Senate procedures and rules.

Professor William Tracy (District 4) moved adoption of the following motion, which was projected in the room and distributed at the door. Motion seconded.

Proposed Resolution of the UW-Madison Faculty Senate

Whereas, in 1848, the citizens of Wisconsin recognized that public higher education is a worthwhile investment in the public interest of the State and have since invested billions of their hard-earned dollars in creating one of the finest university systems in the world; and

Whereas, “academic freedom is the freedom to discuss and present scholarly opinions and conclusions regarding all relevant matters in the classroom, to explore all avenues of scholarship, research, and creative expression, and to reach conclusions according to one’s scholarly discernment. It also includes the right to speak or write – as a private citizen or within the context of one’s activities as an employee of the university – without institutional discipline or restraint on matters of public concern as well as on matters related to professional duties, the functioning of the university, and university positions and policies” (*Faculty Policies and Procedures* 8.01.B.); and

Whereas, in 1894, the Board of Regents proclaimed that “Whatever may be the limitations that trammel inquiry elsewhere, we believe that the great state University of Wisconsin should ever encourage that continual and fearless sifting and winnowing by which alone the truth can be found”; and

Whereas, in 1964, the Board of Regents wrote “In adopting this codification of the rules and regulations of the University of Wisconsin relating to tenure, the Regents reaffirm their historic commitment to security of professorial tenure and to the academic freedom it is designed to protect. These rules and regulations are promulgated in the conviction that in serving a free society the scholar must himself be free. Only thus can he seek the truth, develop wisdom and contribute to society those expressions of the intellect that ennoble mankind. The security of the scholar protects him not only against those who would enslave the mind but also against anxieties, which divert him from his role as scholar and teacher. The concept of intellectual freedom is based upon confidence in man’s capacity for growth in comprehending the universe and on faith in unshackled intelligence. The university is not partisan to any party or ideology, but it is devoted to the discovery of truth and to understanding the world in which we live. The Regents take this opportunity to rededicate themselves to maintaining in this university those conditions which are indispensable for the flowering of the human mind”; and

Whereas, UW System’s universities are devoted to the search for truth, which underlies every purpose of the UW system. These purposes include the development of human resources, the discovery and dissemination of knowledge and the extension and application of such knowledge everywhere within the borders of the state and beyond; and

Whereas, Omnibus Motion #521, passed by the Joint Committee on Finance on May 29, 2015, contains in item 39 the following language that would redefine tenure, “Specify that the board may layoff or terminate a tenured faculty member, or layoff or terminate a probationary faculty member prior to the end of his or her appointment, when such an action is deemed necessary due to a budget or program decision requiring program discontinuance, curtailment, modification, or redirection,” thereby eviscerating the fundamental protections of academic freedom afforded by tenure and negating recognized tenure provisions followed by all major US universities, including our peers; and

Whereas, Omnibus Motion #521, passed by the Joint Committee on Finance on May 29, 2015, contains in item 39 the following language redefining shared governance such that “*the budget or program decisions made to discontinue, curtail, modify, or redirect a program would not be subject to review in the hearing*” by the faculty hearing committee; and

Whereas, Omnibus Motion #521, passed by the Joint Committee on Finance on May 29, 2015, contains in item 35 language redefining shared governance such that “*the faculty of each institution would have the primary responsibility for **advising** the Chancellor regarding academic and educational activities and faculty personnel matters subject to the responsibilities and powers of the Board, President and Chancellor*” [emphasis added] as opposed to **deciding** such matters as under current law; and

Whereas, Omnibus Motion #521, passed by the Joint Committee on Finance on May 29, 2015, contains in item 38 language redefining shared governance such that “with regard to the responsibilities of the faculty, academic staff, and students of each institution, ‘subject to’ means ‘subordinate to’”; and

Whereas, regent and system policy cannot supersede state statute; and

Whereas, if adopted, such statutory legislative language would conflict with any regent or institutional policies recognizing tenure and shared governance principles that would be recognized as adequate by the American Association of University Professors; and

Whereas, if adopted, the proposed language will lead to the demoralization and/or departure of substantial numbers of faculty, will have negative repercussions for recruiting outstanding new faculty, and will seriously damage UW-Madison’s national competitiveness and the faculty’s ability to grow the economic future of the state and to serve its students and its citizens, preventing the accomplishment of its primary mission through the Wisconsin Idea; and

Whereas, erosion of the quality of the faculty and the university’s national and international reputation will diminish the value of a University of Wisconsin degree, and its instructional, research and outreach excellence; and

Whereas, the faculty condemn any changes to the university’s tenure and shared governance policies that are inconsistent with those of our peers or with general professional standards.

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Faculty Senate of the University of Wisconsin–Madison calls on the Joint Committee on Finance and/or State Legislature to strike all non-fiscal language contained in Omnibus Motion #521 from the Omnibus Bill.

Be it further resolved that the Faculty Senate of the University of Wisconsin–Madison calls on President Ray Cross to use all means at his disposal to call on the Joint Committee on Finance and/or State Legislature to strike all non-fiscal language contained in Omnibus Motion #521 from the Omnibus Bill.

Be it further resolved that the Faculty Senate of the University of Wisconsin–Madison calls on the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System to use all means at its disposal to call on the Joint Committee on Finance and/or State Legislature to strike all non-fiscal language contained in Omnibus Motion #521 from the Omnibus Bill.

Be it further resolved that the Faculty Senate of the University of Wisconsin–Madison calls on Chancellor Rebecca Blank of the University of Wisconsin-Madison to use all means at her disposal to call on the Joint Committee on Finance and/or State Legislature to strike all non-fiscal language contained in Omnibus Motion #521 from the Omnibus Bill.

Ample discussion followed.

Prof. Tracy called the question at 4:54 PM. Seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

The motion to approve the resolution passed by voice vote with one dissenting vote.

Following several additional comments from the floor, the meeting was adjourned at 5:22 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Steven K. Smith
Secretary of the Faculty