

**Academic Senate Executive Committee Minutes**  
**Monday, March 19, 2007**  
*(Approved)*

**Call to Order**

Senator Crothers called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

**Present:** Lane Crothers, Larry Alferink, Paul Borg, Provost John Presley, Nathalie op de Beeck, Peter Smith, David Horstein, Ross Richards, Phillip Rodriguez, President Al Bowman.

**Absent:** Jacob Ward, Farzaneh Fazel

**Approval of Executive Committee Minutes of February 12, 2007**

**Motion XXXVIII-36:** By Senator Alferink, seconded by Senator Horstein, to approve the Senate Executive Committee Minutes of February 12, 2007. The minutes were unanimously approved.

**Distributed Communications:**

**02.20.07.01 From Provost Presley: Increased Adjustments for Promotion in Rank (Senate Communication 3/28/07)**

President Bowman approved increased salary adjustments for FY08 faculty promotions. The salary increment for individuals promoted from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor has been increased from \$2,250 to \$3,000 per year, and the salary increment for individuals promoted from Associate Professor to Professor has been increased from \$3,000 to \$3,750 per year. Senator Crothers asked if the increased adjustments for promotion in rank were retroactive to January. Provost Presley responded that they were not.

**02.23.07.01 From Paul Borg, Academic Affairs Committee: Plus/Minus Grading Memo – Recommendation for Task Force Formation (Senate Information Item 3/28/07)**

**Senator Crothers:** We have a recommendation from the Academic Affairs Committee for the formation of a task force to study the plus/minus grading system issue.

**Senator Borg:** The committee did not agree to dismiss this issue altogether.

**Senator Crothers:** Why cannot the Academic Affairs Committee do the research on this issue?

**Senator Borg:** There is too much to do; we did what we could and the committee said that there was not enough information to make a decision. They wanted a special committee to do this. The Senate can say no to this.

**Senator Crothers:** The plus/minus system is a better system than the straight A, B, C, D, F.

**Senator Alferink:** Not psychometrically; the reliability goes down. The reliability diminishes as you increase the categories.

**Senator Crothers:** If you have student on the margins of a C+/B-, its easier to give a person a B- than it is to give them a B. The Executive Committee can decide that we don't want to have the review recommended by the Academic Affairs Committee.

**Senator Borg:** On the Academic Affairs Committee, the student vote was not unanimous.

**Senator Richards:** The two students on Academic Affairs were the only two students within the entire Student Government Association that voted for it.

**Senator Crothers:** Yes, because they were the ones who had the most information.

**Senator Smith:** Is there any conclusive data that shows that this system is more beneficial?

**Senator Borg:** What do you mean by conclusive? There are an extensive number of opinions and data concerning this. There are at least eight different generic varieties of plus/minus systems, so it is not simply deciding whether to adopt it. If we did adopt it, we would still have to go through the process of deciding which type. That is one reason that the Academic Affairs Committee was uneasy. We received relatively few responses to our request for feedback and there was no consensus in the responses.

**Senator Crothers:** I don't think we have to have an elaborate argument; there has to be at least a common plus/minus system. I don't think that this should go one step further if the Executive Committee feels that this is a waste of time.

**Senator Smith:** I don't think it affects the ultimate GPA.

**Senator Alferink:** It drops the GPA slightly is there is not an A+.

**Senator Borg:** It drops the GPA for those students who are A students. It makes no difference for students who are B students or below.

**Senator Horstein:** For those of you have worked with a regular system and a plus/minus one, did you notice more debate about a grade either way?

**Senator Borg:** I have not noticed it.

**Senator Crothers:** With no plus/minus system, in my case, students who are on the margin try to predict what the final point total is that they need to make and then they stop caring at that point. I think that you would find that faculty are frustrated by that, because they would really rather give a person a plus or minus to give a more fair discrimination of a student's work. Ten points is a pretty large scale. Of course, we have are free to tighten that scale in the classroom if we wish.

**Senator op de Beeck:** I was on the pro plus/minus side having come from a place where we did a lot of plus/minus grading. I liked being able to distinguish between someone who did B+ work and someone who was doing B-/C+ work. I really felt like that took care of some of the gray areas in the way that the flat A, B, C, D scale did not. I feel that it is a way of improving the commitment to greater excellence.

**Senator Borg:** Nonetheless, this is what the committee has voted on and has sent forward.

**Senator Crothers:** Yes, and I am asking if we should continue to waste time with this issue.

**Senator Alferink:** One of the issues that came up last time was that the registrar's system does not have the space and field for the communication for plus/minus.

**Senator Crothers:** That's fixable.

**Senator Alferink:** It was estimated at that time to be very costly.

**Senator Crothers:** They also said that we could not get paid across 12 months until finally we said, 'pay us across 12 months.' and they figured out a way to override the system's code. They wrote a small code and it worked after they had told us for 20 years that it was impossible.

**Provost Presley:** I think it would be a good idea to have someone from the Registrar's Office on the task force if it goes forward. We would also need someone from Administrative Computing.

**Senator Crothers:** Yes, if we agree this should go forward, then the question of representation becomes primary.

**Senator Richards:** Was it the feeling of the committee that even after we go through this process, the committee will say we should do it?

**Senator Borg:** Not necessarily. The vote in the committee was, I think, six to five that we did not have enough information to make our decision. Then it was, I think, eight to one to establish a task force as a reasonable way of answering those questions that people were uncomfortable with.

**President Bowman:** It sounds like the committee believes that it is worth studying.

**Senator Borg:** Yes, they decided that it was worth studying to get more information than this committee felt comfortable making a decision with. My interpretation of the committee's feeling is that this is something that comes back regularly enough that we need something more definitive rather than just push it through the Academic Affairs Committee. It would normally go through a now defunct committee, the Academic Standards Committee. The Academic Affairs Committee does not meet often enough and has relatively few resources. I am not sure that until now we have had any social scientific expertise even to make a legitimate kind of survey; it was the social scientist on the committee who had the most qualms about making a decision. There are certain impediments to what we can reasonably do.

**Senator Crothers:** I have no problem moving it forward to the Senate. The question of representation will then become appropriate.

**Senator Borg:** We will certainly be amenable to recommendations.

**Senator Crothers:** If you wish to make any friendly amendments between now and then, we will happily accept them.

**02.28.07.01** *From Planning and Finance Committee: 2007-08 Institutional Goals and Priorities Report (Senate Information Item 3/28/07)*

The 2007-08 Institutional Goals and Priorities Report from the Academic Senate Planning and Finance Committee will come before the full Senate as an Information Item on March 28, 2007.

**03.05.07.01** *From Jan Shane: Service Awards - Call for Nominations (Senate Communication 3/28/07)*

The request for nominations for the 2007-08 Outstanding University Service Award, Outstanding College Service Award and Service Initiative Award will be communicated to the Senate on March 28, 2007.

**03.06.07.01** *From Lane Crothers: Memo to Governor for Ethics Training Implementation Sense of the Senate Resolution (Senate Communication 3/28/07)*

Senator Crothers composed a cover memo to the governor for the Ethics Training Implementation Sense of the Senate Resolution, which was approved by the Senate on February 21, 2007. Both the memo and the resolution were forwarded to the governor on March 6, 2007. President Bowman also received a copy of the resolution.

**03.06.07.02** *From Denise Wilson/Kimberly Nance, College of Nursing: Nursing Ph.D. Program Proposal – Removed from Consent Agenda for Full Review by Senate (To Academic Affairs Committee)*

**Senator Crothers:** The Ph.D. in Nursing was removed from the Consent Agenda and I might add that I did not make the request to remove it. That does not mean that I do not agree with the request.

**Senator Borg:** Do we have a timeframe for this?

**Senator Crothers:** It is a Ph.D. program, so you will have to look it closely.

**Senator Borg:** It is coming to the Academic Affairs Committee and we have three Senate meetings left. We have something on our plate before the next Senate meeting and this would have to join it. Given the discussions that we have had, I am not convinced that we can make a decision in one meeting so that this can be both information and action before the end of the semester. I could try to make it that way if this committee wants this done before the end of the semester.

**President Bowman:** It needs to move along because we are trying to get state base-budget money to support the program and the Senate has to act before it goes to the Board.

**Senator Crothers:** I appreciate that and anything the Academic Affairs Committee can do along those lines would be greatly helpful. But the Senate is not accountable for the eight months of work that it took before it got to us.

**03.19.07.01** *From Bob Board, University Writing Exam Board: Statement Regarding Revisions and Future Plans for Exam*

**Senator Crothers:** We also have the memo from Bob Broad, which was addressed to Senator Borg, a member of that University Writing Exam Board. It talks about the Board's future plans for the exam.

**Senator Borg:** This does not go on the agenda. It is a memo to the Academic Affairs Committee and is presented to this committee as an FYI.

***Proposed Agenda for Academic Senate of Meeting of March 28, 2007:***

*Call to Order*

*Roll Call*

*Approval of Minutes of February 21, 2007*

*Chairperson's Remarks*

*Student Body President's Remarks*

*Administrators' Remarks*

- *President Al Bowman*
- *Provost John Presley*
- *Vice President of Student Affairs Steve Adams*
- *Vice President of Finance and Planning Steve Bragg*

*Committee Reports*

- *Academic Affairs Committee Chairperson, Senator Borg*
- *Administrative Affairs and Budget Committee Chairperson, Senator Kalter*
- *Faculty Affairs Committee Chairperson, Senator Preston*
- *Planning and Finance Committee Chairperson, Senator Parette*
- *Rules Committee Chairperson, Senator Holland*

*Information Item:*

**02.23.07.01** *Plus/Minus Grading Memo – Recommendation for Task Force Formation (Academic Affairs Committee)*

**02.28.07.01** *2007-08 Institutional Goals and Priorities Report (Planning and Finance Committee)*

*Communications:*

**02.20.07.02** *Increased Adjustments for Promotion in Rank*

**03.05.07.01** *Service Awards - Call for Nominations*

**03.06.07.01** *Memo to Governor for Ethics Training Sense of the Senate Resolution (Senate Chairperson*

*Crothers)*

*Adjournment*

**Motion XXXVIII-37:** By Senator Richards, seconded by Senator Rodriguez, to approve the Academic Senate Agenda of March 28, 2007. The agenda was unanimously approved.

*Adjournment*