

Academic Senate Executive Committee Minutes
Monday, January 25, 2010
(Approved)

Call to Order

Senate Chairperson Dan Holland called the meeting to order.

Approval of Executive Committee Minutes of January 11, 2010

Motion XXXXI-57: By Senator Wedwick, seconded by Senator Spialek, to approve the Executive Committee Minutes of January 11, 2010. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Distributed Communications:

01.11.10.01 *From Ed Stewart/Academic Affairs Committee: Context for Constitution Exam Requirement (Information Item 2/3/10)*

01.19.10.01 *From Lisa Huson, University Counsel: Constitution Exam Graduation Requirement – Legal Opinion (Forwarded to Senate Office by Jon Rosenthal)*

01.21.10.01 *From Ed Stewart/Academic Affairs Committee: Constitution Exam Elimination Resolution (Information Item 2/3/10)*

01.25.10.01 *From Ed Stewart/Academic Affairs Committee: Constitution Exam – Policy Change (Information Item 2/3/10)*

Senator Stewart: I am replacing the resolution with the policy change document. This is just a rough draft. I haven't gotten feedback from the Academic Affairs Committee, so it probably won't be on the agenda for the next Senate meeting. The one thing that we can talk about is the information that Jonathan Rosenthal has amassed giving context for the Constitution Exam requirement and why it may not be necessary anymore. There was a legal opinion that the state requirement no longer applies. Since that has come down, there is a list of universities and junior colleges, on page 2, that no longer require the exam. UIUC, UIC, SIUC, SIUE, NIU, WIU and EIU do not have Constitution Exam requirements. Chicago State does still have the requirements. Only two of the junior colleges on the list still require it. The amount of students impacted is on the third page, by academic year, fall, spring and summer. Basically, it comes to about 10% of ISU students impacted by the requirement. 100% of them are transfer students.

Senator Wedwick: This says that the State Board of Education does not require it for teacher education.

Senator Stewart: That's correct.

Senator Kalter: I am going to vote against this on the Executive Committee and in the Senate because my questions have not been satisfied. To me it is not about whether it's legal and it's not about whether it's practical. I also don't think the issue of equity is a real issue. To me it is about whether it is educationally important and important for citizenship and I think it is. I think that the fact that a lot of students don't pass it and have to take it again means that maybe instead of trying to figure out a way of being easy on the transfer students, we should maybe give it to everybody, because clearly there are a lot of students who are not familiar with the Constitution and their rights and privileges.

Senator Stewart: I agree with all of that. I love the Constitution and I love the democratic form of government and I would be one of the first ones rallying for this except they have already had to pass the Constitution Exam to get out of junior high and to graduate from high school. Making them do it one more time I don't think is going to have anymore benefit. You can't make somebody learn. Just because they have to pass this exam doesn't mean that they know any more about the Constitution than they did before they took it.

Senator Kalter: I think that one could say that about almost every course that we teach. If we gave them an exam three years out, would they remember everything that they were taught? The point of education is exposure and re-exposure.

Senator Stewart: I think that everyone should have to take a test on the Supreme Court rulings or something that has to do with the Constitution. The courses that our students have to take as a way of getting around the obligation of having to take the Constitution Exam really don't have all that much to do with the Constitution. Maybe one of them does, but they are more about social justice or government. If our students come here in their freshman year and they take all of the Gen Ed here, they are going to take those courses anyway. I would rather see a requirement to take something that really deals with the Constitution instead of 'you have got to take this exam unless you have been here since your freshman year, but all transfer students do.'

Senator Kalter: I guess I don't understand why the Academic Affairs didn't mandate something to replace it. When the Writing Exam was eliminated, there was the promise that something would come in to replace it. It's been about four years and nothing has replaced it. Not that I am worrying necessarily about that, but I would about the Constitution Exam. I am curious why we would get rid of the exam before we instituted a requirement for a class. Why not reform the curriculum to make sure that people are getting this and then get rid of the exam?

Senator Stewart: At first I was really opposed to this, but then I started looking at 'I've passed it twice already during my educational career'. The requirement, as it stands, only impacts transfer students.

Senator Holland: My question would be are we comparing a college-level exam with something taken in junior high school.

Senator Stewart: And is the exam different? It's about 35 questions.

Senator Carnahan: It's a factual exam. I am not sure it offers much insight into the Constitution, not its historical context and its context now.

Senator Kalter: Is that bad to have just facts?

Senator Carnahan: Yes, especially with the Constitution. What does it mean? How does it apply?

Senator Kalter: I would prefer it be more than facts, but facts are very important.

Senator Carnahan: Yes, if you are taking an exam only to pass it. No one is taking the exam to learn more about the Constitution. They don't have any forum to investigate it more than answering 35 questions. I am not sure that it offers any insight into anything. To have a class on the Constitution is different; I would support that. But a test I would argue offers little insight into any meaning behind the Constitution.

Senator Kalter: Why not create a course or have a course mandated?

Senator Carnahan: I don't have a problem with mandating a course. We had talked about Gen Ed, because the Gen Ed review is sort of coming along, but we sort of just put it off and said that this is something that we want to seriously look at. I think this was a compromise a lot of people made. We'll get rid of this now, but we want to really examine how Gen Ed works, because it obviously not fulfilling what it says it is fulfilling, which is something about the Constitution.

Senator Stewart: The exam requirement is almost more symbolic than it is educational.

Senator Carnahan: I don't think that we are taking it seriously because if we were, we would see that reflected in the classes people are taking so that they don't have to take the Constitution Exam.

Ms. James: Is there any way to find out if the transfer students have already fulfilled the requirement?

Senator Hochhauser: I think a lot of times they will take a Gen Ed class, but it still won't count for the Constitution Exam. A lot of times community colleges will stamp that the Constitution requirement has been fulfilled because they have taken the high school Constitution Exam.

Senator Stewart: Jonathan said that those junior colleges are going to stop doing that, so the number of students required to take the exam is probably going to at least double.

Senator Hochhauser: I just see it as an inequity. They may be ready to graduate and then they realize that they have to take the exam. They then have to cram for it along with all of their other classes.

Senator Stewart: Most of them find out just before they are ready to graduate.

Senator Kalter: Acknowledging all of the problems, I am still going to say that I want to hear from the Gen Ed review and have it fixed at that level rather than getting rid of the exam first. I am only one vote on this committee, but that is how I am going to vote. I think this is bringing up a larger issue of should we have constitutional understanding embedded in our Gen Ed Program.

Senator Holland: So you do not intend to bring the resolution to the next Senate meeting?

Senator Stewart: No, and it's not a resolution. Now it is a policy change, but we really need to discuss the wording of the policy change in our committee before we bring it to the full Senate.

Senator Kalter: So take the Constitution Exam off of the agenda?

Senator Stewart: Yes.

Senator Holland: So both of these Information Items would be removed? That brings up an interesting question. We have one Action Item. Do we want everyone coming out Wednesday for one Action Item?

Senator Kalter: It is a very minor Action Item. It is one in which they changed one word and there is no caucus.

Senator Holland: The committees may need to meet and that would allow them to meet a little longer. Is there anything in administrator reports that couldn't wait?

President Bowman: The budget situation is probably not going to change. The state still has cashflow problems and we are managing as best we can. Last week, I mentioned that we received \$13 million and that has taken a little of the pressure off. The Comptroller has been real good about working with us on where we are with cashflow month to month.

Senator Holland: Anything from the Provost's Office?

Provost Everts: Nothing that can't wait.

01.20.10.01 From Rodger Singley, URC: ASPT Calendar 2010-2011

Senator Holland: We do have one other distributed communication.

Senator Kalter: I was a little confused about this one. Is this a change or just a report?

Senator Holland: I think it's just a report.

Senator Kalter: So it's the same calendar as always.

Senator Holland: It looks like it.

Proposed Agenda for Academic Senate on February 3, 2010:

Academic Senate Meeting Agenda

Date: Wednesday, February 3, 2010
Time: 7:00 P.M.
Location: Old Main Room, Bone Student Center

Call to Order

Roll Call

Approval of Minutes of January 20, 2010

Chairperson's Remarks

Student Body President's Remarks

Administrators' Remarks

- *President Al Bowman*
- *Provost Sheri Everts*
- *Vice President of Student Affairs Steve Adams*
- *Vice President of Finance and Planning Daniel Layzell*

Committee Reports:

Academic Affairs Committee: Chairperson Stewart

Administrative Affairs and Budget Committee: Chairperson Kalter

Faculty Affairs Committee: Chairperson Liechty

Planning and Finance Committee: Chairperson Fazel

Rules Committee: Chairperson Solberg

Action Item:

12.17.09.04 Honorary Degree Recipients Selection Policy (Distributed in 1/20/10 Senate Packets) (Faculty Affairs Committee)

Information Items:

~~*01.11.10.01 Context for Constitution Exam Requirement (Academic Affairs Committee)*~~

~~*01.25.10.01 Constitution Exam – Policy Change (Academic Affairs Committee)*~~

Communications

Adjournment

Motion XXXXI-58: By Senator Stewart, seconded by Senator Kalter, to cancel the Academic Senate meeting of February 3, 2010. The motion was unanimously approved. Internal Committees will, however, meet.

Adjournment

Motion XXXXI-59: By Senator Stewart, seconded by Senator Kalter, to adjourn. The motion was unanimously approved.