

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA FACULTY COUNCIL

Minutes

Tuesday, September 8, 1998

Iowa Room (335), IMU

Members Present: A. Bhattacharjee, L. Burmeister, J. Carlson, K. Clark, C. Colvin, J. Cox, R. Curto, J. Jew, J. Kline, J. Menninger, K. Mescher, M. Pincus, M. Stone, K. Tachau, E. Wasserman, B. Wiley.

Members Absent: B. Butler (excused), H. Diehl, R. Weir.

Guests: Jennifer Baker-Cronin (*Iowa City Press-Citizen*), David Bills (Faculty Senate Committee on Honorary Degrees), Lee Anna Clark, Jon Whitmore (Office of the Provost), Charles Drum, Steve Parrott (University Relations), Robert Foldesi (Office of the Vice President for Finance and University Services), Mary Mathew Wilson (Faculty Senate Office), Lyle Muller (*Cedar Rapids Gazette*), Judd T. Smith (*Daily Iowan*), Brian White (University of Iowa Student Government).

- I. The meeting was called to order at 3:38 PM.
- II. Prof. Kline moved, seconded by Prof. Pincus, to approve the agenda after adding items IV. G., under Announcements, and VI. E., under New Business; the revised agenda was approved unanimously.
- III. Prof. Burmeister moved, seconded by Prof. Bhattacharjee, to approve the minutes of the 25 August 1998 meeting of the Faculty Council; the minutes were approved unanimously.
- IV. Announcements
 - A. President Wiley informed the Council that they may meet with Governor Branstad during his final visit to the campus on 25 September 1998, 2:00 PM, in the Levitt Center.
 - B. Visits to the campus of the two gubernatorial candidates, Mr. Vilsack and Rep. Lightfoot, and will occur on 17 and 18 September 1998, respectively, under the auspices of the Governmental Relations Committee and organized by Prof. Gfeller. There will be tours and meetings with faculty but no public meetings. These are educational sessions.
 - C. Pres. Wiley reminded councilors of the University Convocation on Monday, 28 September, at 7:30 PM in Macbride Auditorium, with a reception to follow in Iowa Hall.
 - D. At the first meeting of the Faculty Senate, 22 September 1998, Provost Whitmore will address the faculty. Also, faculty senate presidents from Iowa State University and the University of Northern Iowa will discuss their senates' activities.

- E. At the 24 September 1998 meeting of the Board of Regents in Iowa City there will be presentations on teaching: Prof. Lisa Troyer will discuss the nTitle system for web-based instruction, two students will discuss their honors research projects and Prof. Alice Fulton will describe the high participation by undergraduates in the Honors Program.
 - F. Planning is under way for a new capital campaign; faculty input is sought. Councilors who wish to participate should contact Pres. Wiley.
 - G. Prof. Carlson reported on the executive session of the 25 August 1998 meeting of the Faculty Council: The Council went into executive session to discuss a proposal from the University administration relating to changes in payroll procedures. After discussion, the Council voted to endorse the proposal and to encourage faculty to participate in the plan when it is offered to them.
- V. Old Business: there was none to discuss.
- VI. New Business
- A. Prof. Mescher moved, seconded by Prof. Tachau, to accept the recommendation of the Committee on Committees of Prof. Michael Flanigan to replace Prof. John Keller on the University Libraries Committee for the remainder of his term, 1998-99. The recommendation was passed unanimously.
 - B. Robert Foldesi, Associate Vice President for Finance and University Services led a discussion on the University of Iowa Mediation Service (UIMS). Approximately 50 university staff and faculty have been trained in mediation principles and practices; individuals trained will volunteer for a term of service. Faculty were selected for training by Associate Provost E. Altmaier. UIMS offers confidential mediation of disputes and is intended to supplement existing dispute-resolution services. In mediation, the parties ultimately decide the issues, not the mediator. Mr. Foldesi distributed a brochure and information package that describe the service. There will be an organizational meeting in October, 1998. The ombudsperson office will act as a clearinghouse, connecting mediators with parties. No records of individual mediations will be kept.
- Prof. Cox asked whether union employees are covered. Mr. Foldesi responded yes, anything pertinent to the employment situation can be mediated. Issues involving unionized employees will also be managed in accord with the appropriate contract provisions. The service will have a six-month and 12-month evaluation of the program.
- Prof. Kline wondered how the service would be evaluated since no records will be

kept. Mr. Foldesi responded that parties will be polled on their satisfaction with the process: did they think it successful? Prof. Kline verified that the mediation itself would be confidential. Mr. Foldesi stated that records of surveys would be kept in the ombudsperson's office. The discoverability of their records isn't yet clear, but confidentiality of the involved parties will be protected to extent possible. There will be no records of the details of the dispute nor of the mediation.

Prof. Jew wondered how this new service would be different from that offered by the ombudsperson; would the new service use the same pool of mediators as exists for faculty grievances. Pres. Wiley stated that the list of three mediators used by the Judicial Commission is already taken from the pool of trained faculty and that policy will continue. Mr. Foldesi noted that trained personnel are better prepared. He portrayed the difference as follows: the ombudsperson, in trying to find a solution, tends to lean towards advocacy for the employee; mediators don't take sides, they try for resolution by the parties.

Prof. Tachau recalled her impression that the ombuds office was set up more for mediation than advocacy, and asked what would happen if one party declines mediation. Mr. Foldesi responded that there would be no mediation unless all parties agree in writing.

Prof. Jew noted that the ombudsperson's office reported fewer cases over the past year and asked whether there might be an impact on the new mediation service? Mr. Foldesi responded that there was insufficient experience to predict. He stated his belief that general employment problems exist and mediation offers an alternative to formal grievance procedures or involvement by the ombudsperson. Some interest in mediation has already been expressed. He hopes the new service will help build a sense of community.

Prof. Colvin asked whether there was equal representation of faculty and staff among those trained. Mr. Foldesi said no; relatively few faculty (4) have been trained because relatively few faculty volunteered.

- C. Prof. David Bills led a discussion of a report from the Faculty Senate Committee on Honorary Degrees. During the recent 150th birthday celebration, former University President Hunter Rawlings III suggested the desirability of honorary degrees. The committee was formed on that suggestion. Prof. Bills summarized by stating that the committee reached agreement on the four principles contained in the report. There was some ambivalence on certain issues, which readers may perceive in the report. Prof. Bills stated he was present not as an advocate for a recommendation, but merely to explain the report.

Prof. Tachau inquired about the footnote #7, pointing out that University President

Hunter Rawlings III, who initiated the discussion of honorary degrees, went on to Cornell University where they also don't award such degrees. Prof. Bills agreed that was the case.

Prof. Bhattacharjee opined that the arguments against awarding honorary degrees don't seem compelling. Recognition of high achievement, as opposed to fund-raising, is a good idea. Points raised in the report in favor of honorary degrees are sufficiently strong. Prof. Bills stated his belief that the situations arguing against awards can be managed, but there should be a positive reason for changing the current policy (for example, the requirement of tangible advancement of the University's mission).

Prof. Cox stated that if there were a motion on the floor he would vote no but he was prepared to be persuaded. The spirit of the report is excellent but the tie of such awards to fund-raising or political considerations is real and strong, so avoiding it would require more than a mere statement. Even if our honorary degrees were awarded only for academic excellence, it wouldn't be understood outside the local environment since it is so out of step with others' customs.

Prof. Burmeister asked whether there were any statistics on the number of potential awardees that turned down the offer of an honorary degree because they are not academic, or appear to be too linked to fund-raising or politics. Prof. Bills responded no.

Prof. Tachau confessed to being an alumna of an "odd undergraduate college" that awarded an honorary degree to Pete Seeger, who certainly did not donate money. She agreed this was arguably a political decision but showed the possibility of awarding honorary degrees not chiefly for fund-raising reasons. Prof. Tachau pointed out that universities have for a very long time given degrees for outstanding scholastic and artistic achievement; a fear of their being politicized shouldn't deter us. In any case, honorary degrees were a better use of money than spending \$12-20,000 each for speakers' fees.

Prof. Pincus stated that the fourth principle in the report ("... any policy to award honorary degrees has to both tangibly and symbolically contribute to the publicly stated mission of the University of Iowa. We are unable to see the benefits of a plan to award honorary degrees unless than (*sic*) plan is formulated with reference to the core values, strategic plan, and overall mission of the University") seems to allow anything; what does it mean? Prof. Bills stated that it was not intended to mitigate the earlier principles and pointed out that while the University's strategic plan talks about fund-raising and good relations with alumni and potential donors, the earlier principles in the report were meant to avoid that. Prof. Pincus asked whether national or international public figures were eligible. Prof. Bills responded, they would not be; the committee wanted to start off with awards only for academic or artistic merit;

other criteria could be added by amendment.

Prof. Wasserman noted the lack of any connection of an honorary degree with the University of Iowa. Prof. Wasserman wondered why give it; who would get one? why not Bill Cosby? Prof. Wasserman asserted that nominations from various faculty are likely to be very variable, likely with no overlap. Prof. Bills responded that the committee was persuaded by the earlier Nelson report, which suggested that the University of Iowa not limit its mission to the state but serve a wider national/international constituency. He pointed out that we have a speaker's bureau that coordinates suggestions from multiple departments and that works; endowed chairs are chosen. Prof. Wasserman pointed out that the universe of potential nominees for honorary degrees would likely be much larger than for speakers or endowed chairs.

Prof. Kline, playing devil's advocate, asked what was the harm in awarding an honorary degree to Bill Cosby? he has advanced the cause of education. What was the harm in rewarding those whose fund-raising benefited, whose life achievements were consonant with, the mission of the University? Prof. Wasserman riposted that "no harm" is the wrong standard; the university needs a positive reason for such an award. He asked who has gotten honorary degrees around the country? If we granted an honorary degree to Bill Cosby would we be merely recapitulating honors already conferred by many other institutions? Shouldn't one of our own graduates who has high achievements in the arts or sciences be rewarded? What are we trying to do with this award? Prof. Kline pointed out that an Iowa stamp would be likely if awardees were chosen by University of Iowa faculty; there would be no need to legislate this. Prof. Bhattacharjee stated that if other universities honor someone, there should be no reason to avoid that individual if the University of Iowa benefited also. He stated his belief that degree recipients who take unusual academic paths are good role models for our students. These individuals can bring good cultural values to our students and our institution. What is the principle used to forbid such awardees? Prof. Cox asserted that an air of political or financial influence peddling attaches to honorary degrees and has for some time. He felt the same reluctance toward them as felt earlier when the State started a lottery, or at least when it advertised one on television. A reward attached to a degree seems to debase other degrees. There probably is no great harm done but this isn't a compelling reason.

Prof. Bills in response to a question from Prof. Wasserman, gave an incomplete list of past recipients of our honorary degrees. University President Boyd was the last honoree. Others included President Herbert Hoover, some supreme court justices; there were no clinkers on the list. Recipients included people in arts and sciences, but very few whose claim to fame was only public service; all had a connection to the University. The custom lapsed when former University President Bowen engineered an award for one of the Reuther brothers and later for someone associated with the

Atomic Energy Commissioner.

Prof. Carlson averred that there may be no harm, but there would be a serious potential for bitter fights. In the past there were nasty demonstrations here against supreme court justices even visiting campus. Offering a podium for speech or a degree from the State of Iowa, even to very accomplished people if their politics aren't right, invites nasty politicization. It isn't good for the reputation of the University. Prof. Carlson confessed that personnel in the Law School feel persona non grata at the US Supreme Court because of treatment accorded to justices by students and members of the community. "Why go to Iowa when this is the treatment?" He recalled that some 200 local protesters pounded on the walls of the auditorium and rushed the podium to prevent a justice from speaking; it was not a good atmosphere. Honorary degrees might become a similar target of politicization.

Prof. Bills, in response to a question, listed some awardees from other institutions, including lots of examples from public service, business, science, music, etc.

Prof. Tachau thought it a little bizarre to worry how honorary degrees would debase real degrees with such a long history among prestigious universities of awarding both. She recalled that Robert Kennedy wrote one of his funniest speeches for an honorary degree ceremony at the University of Pennsylvania. Political recipients of honorary degrees have also made intellectual contributions; Oxford; Harvard and Pennsylvania degrees are still respected.

Prof. Carlson stated his reaction was opposite to one asserted earlier; the reasons not to do it are compelling. Nothing he had yet heard persuaded him it was a good idea; the risks outweigh the reward. There is no principled reason to avoid such awards but none to make them either.

Prof. Kline said this was an excellent report. There are important reasons for such awards: it's an honor! These degrees would give us an ability we don't now have. An honorary degree is the "gold standard" of service. We will, or not, cheapen ourselves by our choices of recipients for these degrees.

Prof. Curto noted that the report called for eight of eleven positive votes to make an award; he would be comfortable with such a majority vote.

Prof. Carlson verified that regents approval would be needed for an honorary degree. Prof. Bills responded yes. Such a provision was found in the report (p. 11).

Prof. Wasserman asked whether they were doing this at Iowa State University. Prof. Bills and Provost Whitmore responded, yes; among the honorees were ISU alumni, agribusiness leaders and Simon Estes.

Prof. Tachau moved, seconded by Prof. Curto, after discussion and friendly amendments, that the Council pass the report along to the Senate for approval of its concept, especially its four principles.

Prof. Stone asked, contrary to the report's recommendations, shouldn't we pay for the awardee's travel? Shouldn't they give a speech at commencement? Why should awardees be separate from University of Iowa? These are not good ideas.

Prof. Menninger asked if not the Council, then who will refine the final proposal. Pres. Wiley stated that another group will work out the details of policy and procedure after Senate approval of the concept of the report.

The vote was nine in favor, four opposed.

- D. Prof. Bhattacharjee moved, seconded by Prof. Kline, approval of the proposed agenda for the 22 September 98 meeting of the Faculty Senate; the motion passed unanimously.
- E. Prof. Tachau moved, seconded by Prof. Kline, that the Council move into executive session; the motion was approved unanimously. Prof. Bhattacharjee moved, seconded by Prof. Carlson, that Ms. Mary Mathew Wilson be present during executive sessions of the Faculty Council; the motion passed unanimously.

The Council went into executive session. Compensation principles at the University of Iowa were discussed and the President was directed to appoint an ad hoc committee to further consider the matter. A brief discussion of issues before the library committee was also held. – Carlson suggestion for official report

VII. The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

John R. Menninger, Secretary