

To the Faculty Senate:

At its regularly scheduled meeting on September 8th 2009, the Faculty Senate took up and acted upon a "resolution to encourage a meeting between the Interim Provost and faculty in the College of Science". This resolution was not included in the agenda for the meeting. It was taken up only after a motion to suspend the requirement specified in the Operating Paper of the Faculty and Faculty Senate precluding action on resolutions not distributed at least five days prior to the meeting at which the resolution is presented for action.

The precipitous actions of the Faculty Senate at its September 8th 2009 meeting and subsequent media attention given to those actions have contributed to an inaccurate perception of disarray within the College of Science. In so doing, the Faculty Senate has contributed to damaging the reputation of the College of Science and by extension the reputations of its entire faculty. In point of fact, by objective measures of performance, the College of Science is performing well. Both graduate and undergraduate enrollments are up; grant activity has increased, both in terms of applications submitted and funds received by College of Science faculty, and scholarly publications by College of Science faculty and students continue to be strong and well regarded. Students considering enrolling in courses or degrees offered by the College of Science can continue to be assured of a high-quality educational experience.

There are a number of aspects of the events that transpired at the September 8th 2009 Faculty Senate meeting that are deeply troubling. Firstly, no justification of the need for urgent action by the Senate was offered by either those bringing the resolution forward, by the President of the Faculty Senate when the item was added to the meeting agenda, or by the senator who moved to waive the requirement for 5 days advance notice of a resolution for action. In fact, the motion to waive the requirement for advance notice was offered by a senator who later in the meeting acknowledged that they were "unaware of the whole history behind [the] situation". It is improper to suspend bylaw-stipulated procedural limitations imposed on the Faculty Senate by the faculty, without due cause and proper justification.

Secondly, the petitioners who brought forth the resolution in question have provided no explanation as to why other faculty in the College of Science, including the Faculty Senators representing the College of Science, were unaware of the issues described in the resolution. Surely if the issues raised in the resolution were of such deep concern to the faculty involved, over such a protracted period, they could have made an effort to make other faculty in the College of Science aware of their concerns. Certainly the senator who introduced the resolution, who is himself a member of the faculty of one of the departments involved, could have at least made his fellow senators aware of the issue at some point in the five months that transpired between the departmental votes in April 2009 and the bringing of the resolution before the Faculty Senate for urgent action on September 8th2009. Bringing an issue of this magnitude forward for urgent action by the Faculty Senate without allowing adequate time for discussion and deliberation is a serious matter and it is beholden on those seeking urgent action to explain why they were unable to communicate their concerns in a more timely manner.

In short, not only were senators asked to act without opportunity for adequate deliberation, but they were also asked to act on an issue that they had not previously been made aware of, despite the fact that this issue had been developing for more than five months.

Faculty of the College of Science are deeply concerned, and in many cases angry, that the Senate has acted without taking into consideration the views of the majority of the faculty of the College of Science. There are 123 tenure/tenure track faculty in the College of Science, affiliated with 9 departments and 3 centers. Of these, 40 faculty members from 3 departments voted no confidence in the current dean. The remaining faculty members justifiably feel disenfranchised by the actions of the Faculty Senate and disrespected by the faculty in the Departments who brought forth this resolution, (i) without informing their colleagues of their intention to do so, and (ii) in a manner that did not allow an opportunity for their colleague's views to be considered.

There were also parliamentary irregularities in the manner in which the resolution was brought forward. Specifically: The Operating Paper of the Faculty and Faculty Senate specifies that Robert's Rules of Order prevail at meetings of the faculty unless suspended by a vote of the Faculty Senate. Since no such suspension was enacted, Roberts Rules were in effect at the meeting of the Faculty Senate on September 8th 2009. Section 25 of Roberts Rules of Order, dealing with motions to suspend the rules, requires that "if a motion to suspend the rules is adopted and its object is to allow consideration of business that could not otherwise have been considered at the time, the chair should immediately recognize the member who moved the suspension of the rules, or make the appropriate motion that will bring up the desired business". This was not done. A motion to waive the requirement for 5 days notice was introduced at the beginning of the meeting, (without even description of the business to be acted on). The business of consideration of (and later action on) the resolution in question did not come up until much later in the meeting, by which time several senators had already left the meeting.

It has also not escaped the attention of those negatively affected by the actions of the Senate that virtually all of the principles involved in bringing this resolution forward to the Senate, adding it to the agenda, and opposing delaying action to allow due deliberation are presently, or have been in the past, officers of the faculty association. We find this situation to be, curious.

Because of the unintended negative impact of the actions of the Faculty Senate on the welfare of, and on the harmonious collegiality between, the faculty within the College of Science, concerned faculty from the College of Science respectfully offer the following resolution to amend the Operating Paper of the Faculty and Faculty Senate. This petition is offered in accordance with the procedures for amendment specified in Section III of the current Operating Paper of the Faculty and Faculty Senate. The purpose of these proposed amendments is to clarify and codify circumstances under which resolutions may be brought before the Faculty Senate for urgent action. The proposed amendments make the provisions of the Operating Paper of the Faculty and Faculty Senate more consistent with widely accepted parliamentary practices for suspension of the rules and requests for urgent action.

Respectfully submitted by

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