

## **ACADEMIC SENATE MEETING December 9, 2011**

In attendance: Julia Norrgard, Brian Bowen, Chris Hall, Albina Balidemaj, Edmond Muhaxheri, Besnik Bislimi, and Sphend Bytyqi.

SBytyqi, Student Vice President, was in place of Student President, Taulant Ramabaja.

### **I. Call to Order**

JNorrgard opened the meeting at 10:05 by welcoming guests and newly appointed senate members. Chair went over rules for guests.

### **II. Announcement**

JNorrgard states that an organization meeting of new and old Senate members was held on November 30<sup>th</sup> 2011, at which the election for the Senate Chair was held and the three new members to the Academic Senate assumed positions as follows; ABalidemaj, Chair of Standing Committee on Student Affairs, BBislimi, Chair of Standing Committee on Faculty Affairs, and EMuhaxheri, Chair of Standing Committee on Curriculum.

### **III. Swearing in of new Senate**

A robed CHall swore in all members, including new Senators, ABalidemaj, BBislimi, at 10:06. Members swear an oath of integrity, honor, and commitment to upholding the policies of the University and the Constitution of the Academic Senate. All members were successfully sworn in.

### **IV. Prior Meeting Minutes**

**October meeting:** Motion set forth to accept the Minutes of the October 21, 2011 meeting by EMuhaxheri, seconded by ABalidemaj at 10:09.

Motion set forth to change the word “impossible” to “cumbersome” in relation to the draft policy by EMuhaxheri, seconded by ABalidemaj.

Motion carried.

Motion on accepting Minutes restored.

Motion carried.

**November meeting:** Motion set forth to accept the Minutes of the November 11, 2011 meeting by EMuhaxheri, seconded by BBislimi at 10:10.

Motion set forth to change the meeting notes from the previous session by ABalidemaj, seconded by EMuhaxheri. The change was to switch the saying “other than” to “would be less” in second to last paragraph.

Motion carried.

Motion on accepting minutes restored.

Motion carried.

## **VI. Comments by President Hall**

CHall’s only comment was to “wish the new Senate well”.

## **VII. Comments by Vice President, RIT Academic Affairs Bowen**

BBowen discussed the Board of Trustees’ interest in adding another classification to the list of AUK Faculty Appointments and Promotions. The Board wanted to add “Senior Lecturer” to the list of appointments. This led to the next section of the meeting, Policy Review. (Read Below)

## **VIII. Policy Review**

**AUK Faculty Appointments and Promotions (additional category to be added):** BBowen submitted the new classification of appointments and promotions. Of special note he expressed that there was a need to recognize an additional position called “Senior Lecturer”. This was specifically created to accommodate and compensate non-PhD holding lecturers, who have been employed by AUK for long periods of time.

BBislimi asked if they knew the criteria used to assess who falls into this new classification.

BBowen informed him that the exact classifications were not decided upon as of yet. BBowen also stressed that there will be a board assembled to work on the exact qualifications required for the position, hopefully by the next senate meeting.

BBowen informed the senate that the summary for pay scales regarding the new Appointments and Promotions policy was now set.

Motion set forth to accept “Senior Lecturer” as a new appointment category by ABalidemaj, seconded by EMuhaxheri at 10:15.

Motion was carried.

## **IX. Old Business - updates**

**AUK Faculty Staff Fund:** JNorrsgard informed the senate that so far only two people have made contribution to the staff fund. This was concerning to her, and it was discussed that this might be due to a lack of advertisement or knowledge of the program overall. JNorrsgard asked if there were any suggestions on how to approach this problem.

ABalidemaj suggested that at the Christmas Lunch this year donations could be requested. However, at the end of the discussion, there was no overall decision reached on how to go about solving this issue. JNorrsgard asked the members to email her if they have any further suggestions.

JNorrsgard also stated that the funds are placed in an account and can be reviewed later.

## **X. New Business**

**National Holidays observances:** CHall expressed his concern about students not showing up for school on non designated RIT/AUK holidays. He stressed that this causes other problems in regard to Friday make-up classes; there are more students present on Fridays, which makes catch-up days crowded and harder to organize. JNorrsgard and EMuhaxheri made the point that when AUK switches over to the semester system then this won't be an issue because many of the conflicting holidays (Flag Day) are included in other breaks which are recognized by the institution.

CHall made note that most US holidays are not recognized by AUK. Therefore, accepting holidays that are ethnic based, like Flag Day, would conflict with current policies that exclude such holidays already. CHall also expressed that he wants to respect the communities' holidays, but that there are legal complications that must be observed first. Specifically there are some conflicts regarding the legal status of many of the ethnic holidays that the Kosovo government lists. As of now there are nine legal holidays on that list. BBislimi informed the members that the government was in the process of changing the current list of holidays. Apparently, Flag Day is under consideration for being added to the holiday list; it will be submitted under a different name, reflecting another holiday that is on the same day.

Despite this, BBowen expressed his concern about adding more holidays. He stressed that most private entities and institutions don't celebrate all, if any, ethnic/government holidays. JNorrsgard agreed with the statement, stating that although we have to follow The Constitution of Kosovo there are specific instances where even schools start on holidays; one example being in the states when school started on a national holiday, Memorial Day. This stimulated a further discussion regarding other ethnic holidays, such as Serbian and Orthodox holidays. CHall expressed that if we accept certain Albanian holidays then why shouldn't we accept other minority holidays as well? There was agreement among BBowen, CHall, and JNorrsgard that it would be unfair to respect one ethnic holiday over another.

There was no consensus on the matter. It will be held for further discussion at the next meeting.

**Minimum number of students required to proceed with a lecture:** EMuhaxheri expressed his concern regarding the minimum number of students required to be present to perform a lecture. BBowen stated that students that are not present for lectures should be counted absent. EMuhaxheri stated that this would be unfair for the other students that miss out on the lecture because the students that were present would have a natural advantage over the students that weren't present. BBowen countered that the students that were present should have "that advantage" because they actually showed up for class. There should be no compensation for the absent students.

ABalidemaj informed EMuhaxheri that there doesn't have to be a certain number of students present to perform a lecture. If there are a questionable number of students in a class, then the lecturer has the sole decision on whether or not to continue with his lecture.

**Define the minimum number of students required for a section to proceed as planned:** Attempt to clarify the question in regard to the average section size of various sections. EMuhaxheri was concerned that if a class had fewer than 15 students, would it be canceled or considered acceptable? He stated that there should be an "average" of 15 students per section overall. Therefore, if you have 30 students in one section, 20 in another, and only 12 in the last one, what happens to the section with only 12 students? ABalidemaj said that there shouldn't be any fear of the class getting canceled because the average is greater than 15. This is in accordance with RIT policy, which stipulates that the block/limit on sections is 15. Also, she stated that with transfers there will be more students in that one particular class; they will eventually even out naturally.

CHall made the statement that some lecturers teach classes for free, and does this make a difference in regards to whether or not RIT charges for these courses even though they are free? ABalidemaj informed them that RIT still charges AUK for these sections.

BBislimi asked what happens to the sections that are closed since many students try to plan their schedules out over the year, and if one of those classes is canceled then conflicts arise. BBislimi suggested that those courses be either spread out over the year or given again in a later quarter to compensate it being canceled in the first place. ABalidemaj stressed that there is a set schedule but it could be modified to accommodate these canceled courses. She made the point that there are already a small number of classes offered each quarter and it would only be fair to add these courses which were unexpectedly canceled. Also, if the courses of various concentrations were spread out over the quarters then this would widen the options available for students to choose from. Furthermore, lecturers are limited to a particular number

of classes that they may teach. If new courses are added to replace canceled ones, then it's important to make sure that no one exceeds their set limit of classes for which they are responsible in their contracts. This would be a violation of RIT policies.

**Student Grievance Procedures:** BBowen addressed the issue regarding student complaints. Recently, there has been an influx in the number of grievances presented to the administration regarding grades, behavior issues, and other discrepancies. BBowen stressed that the standard RIT policy, named "D17", would be of great help in setting boundaries on how particular complaints should be handled. BBowen consequently asked that the D17 form be submitted for review to Academic Services.

The D17 form specifies the layer in which complaints should be organized. There are 3 steps in which were discussed. The first being complaints regarding grading or class work should be discussed with the teacher who gave the grade/work. Secondly, if there are behavior/fairness issues then these should be taken up with the unit head. Lastly, the AUK Conduct Committee will step in and review the grievance. BBowen commented that the Conduct Committee is well structured, but could be more readily available. Also, the Committee's terms of reference might need to be restructured.

JNorrgard stated that students can get much of this information from the bulletin that is currently distributed. Despite this information, she was concerned that many students are not informed about the process. BBowen expressed again that a clearer understanding of the preliminary process of grievances should be reconstructed around the D17 form and made more accessible to students.

**Equivalency section for Senate participation:** EMuhaxheri wanted to know if senate participation could allow you to be excused from teaching a section. CHall's response was that this was "outrageous!" BBowen agreed that this would be a clear misuse of power. There was mutual agreement among JNorrgard, ABalidemaj, and CHall to reject this idea.

BBowen used this opportunity to raise the question: what does fulltime faculty mean? He expressed the need to reconsider how many hours are devoted to being in a committee and whether or not they should be compensated.

**Faculty Donations to Library:** JNorrgard expressed interest in getting Senate backing regarding new books for the library. The suggestion was to ask teachers vacationing in the United States or elsewhere to bring back at least one or two books, which pertain to their classes, for the library. This would broaden the library's genres. CHall added that the library has been growing at an exceptional rate, from 3,000 to nearly 5,000 books in a year. He stressed that there is always a need to continue the growth. JNorrgard stated that even though the library has grown,

do these new contribution reflect the needs of students? It was an open ended question and she asks members to submit their thoughts via email.

**Meeting with Student Government:** SBytyqi wanted to address the new grading policy that was under consideration. BBislimi expressed the students' concern regarding this new policy. BBislimi claimed that they were misinformed. SBytyqi further explained that the students were under the assumption that there would be strict grading distribution put in place which would in turn lower the overall GPAs of students and consequently reduce student scholarship opportunities. BBowen addressed this concern by stating that this change was in discussion to strengthen the students' degrees, not hurt them. BBislimi agreed with this statement, and went on to further explain that these percentages for grades would not affect each individual course; so much as it would be used to regulate the difference in A's granted from various disciplines. BBowen went on to explain that the university was still in the process of forming the grade policy. He stated that before now there was no policy at all in place. So, in order to create a more definable outline for professors in regard to grades, there must be a policy in place.

SBytyqi informed the members that the students claimed that they heard various professors saying that this policy would be strictly enforced upon each section. In response CHall stated that these professors were misinformed as well and do not truly grasp the policy presented. JNorrsgard expressed interest in having BBowen issue a statement to students explaining the new grading policy.

**12:00 Student Government Meetings:** EMuhaxheri urged student government to move their meetings from Thursdays at 12:00 to Friday at 12:00. He stated that he had several students who were late to his 1:00 class because they attended the meeting. This was a clear disturbance to his lesson. SBytyqi stated that the meeting would remain on Thursdays because students were more willing to show up, at that time, on that day because Fridays were what many students think of as off-days. EMuhaxheri countered that it was held in the students' interest and if they were truly concerned then they would show up on Fridays as well. The issue was not fully resolved.

**Guest Lecturers:** BBislimi raised the question regarding guest lecturers. He stated that he has had to end several guest lecturers earlier than planned because they would conflict with another class. He asked if the time for classes could be changed to better accommodate this issue. BBislimi pressed to have classes changed in the evenings so that guest lecturers could have an additional hour to present. Also, the Kosovo government has changed their working hours to end at 4pm instead of 5pm. The new class times would be from 2-4, 4-6, and 6-8. With this in mind, BBislimi said students who worked could make it to these new times. Students would also be able to get home an hour earlier as well. The idea was postponed. BBowen didn't want to enforce another drastic change with the new semester changeover approaching.

## **XI. Call to Adjourn**

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:01 by EMuhexerh, seconded by BBislimi.

Motion was carried.