

**Augusta State University chapter of the
American Association of University Professors
Minutes of membership meeting of Friday, 1 December 2006**

Members Present: Jim Benedict, Angela Bratton, Mark Fissel, Christie Launius, Ruth McClelland-Nugent, Bill Reese, Mike Searles, Ray Whiting

I. The members observed that a quorum was present (20% of 19) and the meeting was called to order at 2:30pm by Chapter President Fissel.

II. Old Business

A. The draft minutes of the 20 October 2006 meeting were edited, and approved as edited.

B. Officers' Reports.

President's Report: Mark Fissel reported on a successful ORP/TRS seminar held on Tuesday, November 14, 2006 from 2:30pm until 4:00pm in UH-170. The panel included Cliff Gardiner and Richard Callan (of MCG), two of the eight persons chosen to be on a state-wide committee chosen to address the ORP problems.

Vice-President's Report: No Report.

Secretary/Treasurer's Report: Jim Benedict reported a balance of \$35.14 in the chapter savings account and \$422.23 in the chapter checking account. All known interested chapter members have paid their dues for the year.

C. The following proposed change to the bylaws was approved by the chapter. The new verbiage will be accepted or rejected by a vote to be taken in the January meeting.

Old:

Article IV - Officers and Organization

Eligibility for office within the ASU chapter of AAUP shall extend to all members except associate members and graduate students. The officers of this organization shall be the president, vice president, and secretary/treasurer. The term of office shall be two years. Officers may serve no more than two consecutive terms. The duties of the secretary/treasurer may at the discretion of the executive committee be apportioned to two individuals.

President: The duties of the president shall include carrying out the policies of the chapter, exercising general supervision over the activities of the chapter, and presiding at meetings of the chapter and executive committee. The president shall be a member ex officio of all committees.

Vice president: The duties of the vice president shall include those usually appertaining to the office and those delegated by the president. In the absence of the president, the vice president shall serve in the president's stead.

Secretary/treasurer: The secretary/treasurer shall keep a record of all proceedings and correspondence of the chapter, certify chapter delegates to the Association's annual meeting, prepare or oversee the preparation of newsletters for distribution to the faculty if such shall be desired, maintain official contact with the Association, and keep an accurate record of all funds received and disbursed. At the request of the executive committee, the secretary/treasurer shall prepare an annual chapter budget and report of finances, and submit them for approval. It shall be the duty of the secretary/treasurer to remit to the Association and/or to the applicable state conference any dues collected on behalf of the Association and/or conference. In the absence of the president and the vice president, the secretary/treasurer shall preside at meetings of the chapter.

When an officer has resigned or is disqualified, the office shall be filled by a special election of the chapter, which shall be held as promptly as is feasible. The executive committee is empowered to fill vacancies in any elective office until a special election is held. The person so elected shall hold office for the remainder of the term.

Proposed new:

Article IV - Officers and Organization

*****CONTAINS NEW MATERIAL*****

Eligibility for office within the ASU chapter of AAUP shall extend to all members except associate members and graduate students. The officers of this organization shall be the president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. The term of office shall be two years. Officers may serve no more than two consecutive terms. The president and treasurer shall be elected in the spring of even numbered years. The vice president and secretary shall be elected in the spring in odd numbered years.

*****END OF NEW MATERIAL*****

President: The duties of the president shall include carrying out the policies of the chapter, exercising general supervision over the activities of the chapter, and presiding at meetings of the chapter and executive committee. The president shall be a member ex officio of all committees.

Vice president: The duties of the vice president shall include those usually appertaining to the office and those delegated by the president. In the absence of the president, the vice president shall serve in the president's stead.

*****CONTAINS NEW MATERIAL*****

Secretary: The secretary shall keep a record of all proceedings and correspondence of the chapter, certify chapter delegates to the Association's annual meeting, prepare or oversee the preparation of newsletters for distribution to the faculty if such shall be desired, and maintain official contact with the Association. In the absence of the president and the vice president, the secretary shall preside at meetings of the chapter.

Treasurer: The treasurer shall keep an accurate record of all funds received and disbursed. At the request of the executive committee, the treasurer shall prepare an annual chapter budget and report of finances, and submit them for approval. It shall be the duty of the treasurer to remit to the Association and/or to the applicable state conference any dues collected on behalf of the Association and/or conference. In the absence of the president, the vice president, and the secretary, the treasurer shall preside at meetings of the chapter.

*****END OF NEW MATERIAL*****

When an officer has resigned or is disqualified, the office shall be filled by a special election of the chapter, which shall be held as promptly as is feasible. The executive committee is empowered to fill vacancies in any elective office until a special election is held. The person so elected shall hold office for the remainder of the term.

D. Jim Benedict reported as the representative from Faculty Policies on Customer Service Implementation Committee (CSIC). The CSIC has met one time since Benedict's appointment to the committee. Benedict gave his impressions as to the efficacy of the CSIC given the points of views of various members of the committee. No further progress has been made on the report Benedict intends to write, using Chancellor Davis' own words, that describes how faculty are Agents of "Student Transformation" (Educators, Coaches, Cheerleaders, Mentors, Guild Masters, etc.) who often are actually hindered in their task when their students feel they are empowered "customers".

E. The chapter approved a letter, drafted by Fissel, thanking the participants of the ORP/TRS Panel. It is included here as appendix A.

F. Dr. Angela Bratton provided an update on AAUP support for a campus-wide international event. The spring program is still under development.

III. New Business

A. The chapter agreed that it made good sense to not have a meeting on the third Fridays of November and December and to instead have a single meeting on the first Friday of December in their stead.

B. Cliff Gardiner and Rick Callan (of MCG) and the rest of the eight faculty selected statewide have had the committee meeting at the state level that will hopefully start the cure of the ORP/TRS inequities. At that meeting, it was decided that AAUP would be the conduit for the release of information to the faculties of the various institutions. Bill Reese will coordinate this release of information. At this time, many of the decisions made are confidential. Mark will coordinate with the state AAUP. Mark should plan on addressing the faculty in a meeting. Eventually, information will be made available on our website.

C. The chapter's response to Vice-President Sullivan's letter of 4 October 2006 was approved. That letter is included as Appendix B.

D. Ray Whiting has duties concerning student retention. To this end he has found a program known as the Pathfinder Attendance Program. The chapter endorsed the principle that faculty would be involved with this program to assist in better student retention. Information on this program is included as Appendix C.

IV. The meeting was adjourned at 4:45pm. The next meeting will be held on 19 January 2007.

Respectfully submitted

James M. Benedict
Secretary/Treasurer
AAUP@ASU

Appendix A

LETTER THANKING ORP/TRS PANEL PARTICIPANTS (sent to Whitfield, Alexanderson, Gardiner, Basciano, & Callan).

Dear _____:

Please accept grateful thanks from the Augusta State University Chapter of the American Association of University Professors for your participation in our fall program 2006 concerning ORP and TRS. The program yet again demonstrated that university administrators and faculty can collaborate to solve complicated problems. Your unselfish hard work will pay dividends (literally and figuratively) for retiring faculty.

With best regards,

Mark C. Fissel
Professor of History
Augusta State University chapter of the AAUP
2500 Walton Way
Augusta, GA 30904



Appendix B

Academic Freedom for a free Society

AAUP@ASU

Established Fall 2005

15 December 2006

Dr. Samuel Sullivan
Vice President for Academic Affairs
Augusta State University

Dr. Sullivan:

This letter is in response to your letter of October 4, 2006, which we found to be collegial and carefully researched. Your quoting of the relevant passages of the Faculty Manual was enlightening and helpful. That document was hammered out and agreed to by the Faculty at ASU many years back. Thus, there is no doubt that ASU Faculty provide, willingly and freely, to the best of our abilities, to our students and to the surrounding community, those services spelled out in the faculty Manual. Interestingly, nowhere in that document do we find students referred to by the term "customer."

We in AAUP@ASU find "customer service" to be a term having a connotation that tarnishes the educational services we provide as college professors. We find it troubling to refer to students as "customers." We find it inappropriate to bring a business model to the educational part of the academy. We find it troubling that a document that diminishes our mission as faculty members can be created by the Customer Service Implementation Committee (CSIC) outside of the governance procedures that include passage by the Faculty Policies Committee, passage by the University Council, and ultimately passage by the Faculty at a meeting of the Faculty.

To this end we are pleased that a representative of the Faculty Policies Committee has been placed on the CSIC. We insist that those charged at ASU with the implementation of the new Chancellor's "customer service" notion delineate more carefully than has been the case hitherto between the business and the educational side of things.

Sincerely,

AAUP@ASU
James M. Benedict
Secretary

cc: Prof. Joseph Greene
Members of the CSIC
Dr. William A. Bloodworth, Jr.
Mr. Dan Whitfield
Dr. Joyce Jones

Appendix C

University: **Mississippi State University**

Program of Strategy: **The Pathfinder Program**

Contact Person: **Dr. David McMillen**

Title of Contact Person: **Professor of Psychology**

Address: **Dept of Psychology, PO Box 6161, Mississippi State, MS 39759**

Telephone: **662-325-3936**Fax:

Email: d1m@RA.msstate.edu

Website for program or more information:

The Pathfinder program at Mississippi State University began in the fall semester of 1998. It was funded as an internal research project in 1998-1999 and 1999-2000 by the Office of Academic Affairs. The purpose of the program was to enhance the academic performance of freshmen and to increase the number of freshmen continuing their education the sophomore year. The program was an outgrowth of academic performance research conducted by a professor of psychology and several of his graduate students. After two years as a research project, the program was sufficiently successful to convince the university president and provost to make Pathfinder a continuing program.

The Pathfinder program is based on several assumptions that are supported by research at Mississippi State University and many other institutions:

• Many freshmen who make poor grades have good or outstanding qualifications (ACT or SAT scores and high school grades).

The difference in standardized test scores and high school grades between freshmen continuing in the sophomore year and those not continuing is small.

The difference in college grades between continuing and non-continuing students is large (at MSU, 2.8 vs 1.7 for the freshman year).

Most freshmen who make poor grades get into academic difficulty very early (first 4 - 6 weeks of freshman year).

The best early indicator of academic difficulty the institution might have available is class attendance.

The general purpose of Pathfinders is to assist freshmen in becoming personally responsible and self-directed in an environment that is academically more demanding and less regulated than high school. We attempt to achieve this purpose by promoting responsible class attendance. Special emphasis is placed on the first 6 weeks of the freshman year because this is the time most academic problems begin.

1. During Freshman Orientation, group leaders and the Vice President for Student Affairs emphasize to incoming freshmen and their parents the importance of regular class attendance.

2. At the beginning of the fall semester, the President of Mississippi State University sends a letter to the parents of all entering freshmen. The importance of class attendance to academic success is stressed in this letter.
3. Faculty teaching freshmen are asked to monitor class attendance and inform Pathfinders via e-mail or our website of freshmen missing two or more classes during first six weeks of the semester. Weekly reporting by faculty is requested.
4. Pathfinders' staff working with Residence Life Academic Assistants contact freshmen having attendance problems after the student is reported to Pathfinders. For on-campus freshmen the contact is in the student's dormitory room; off-campus freshmen are contacted by telephone. Contact is brief (approximately two minutes) and positive but designed to encourage class attendance and consultation with the teachers concerning academic difficulties.

An essential part of the program has been the cooperation and assistance of Student Affairs staff. At Mississippi State University over 90% of the freshmen live in dormitories. By working with residence hall academic assistants employed by Student Affairs, it was possible to make face-to-face contact with most freshmen with attendance problems. Student Affairs allowed Pathfinder staff to train residence assistants regarding how to conduct the intervention and to supervise the residence assistants in this activity during the academic year. Student Affairs also allowed Pathfinder staff to train freshmen orientation leaders in how to emphasize the importance of class attendance while conducting their small group sessions with incoming freshmen. In practical terms this approach enabled the Pathfinder program to function without hiring additional personnel. In human terms, the approach led to positive, enthusiastic, caring upperclassmen delivering the attendance message to freshmen.

Pathfinder's focus is clearly on class attendance; however, the brief intervention conducted by residence hall academic assistants has several other functions. Students are told of the concern of their instructors and encouraged to talk to their instructors if they have questions or academic problems. Students are also encouraged to talk to their advisor about problems. In addition to the message about academic issues, the student is left with the feeling: "although this is a large university, there are people that care about me as an individual". One of our goals is to make the student feel more connected to the university.

A significant challenge was convincing department heads and faculty to co-operate in the early and frequent reporting of absences. It was necessary to talk individually to each department head and many of the faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences (because of the University core curriculum, most courses freshmen take are in this college). I do not believe faculty could have been convinced to co-operate if a long time faculty member with a solid teaching and research history had not been in charge of Pathfinder. Getting faculty to do what we wanted was not easy - the phrase "herding cats" is quite descriptive of the effort. Undoubtedly the task was made easier by our development of a web site procedure which made it easy for faculty to report absences weekly; however, I believe faculty becoming convinced the program would help students was the primary reason for cooperation.

Summary

There has been significant improvement in freshmen retention and freshmen academic performance since the fall of 1998 when the process of early reporting of freshmen absences was instituted. The success of the process is due in large part to the cooperation of instructors in reporting freshmen absences and the intervention efforts of residence hall academic assistants. We have a system of working with freshmen that has improved each year. Beginning during orientation and continuing throughout the freshmen year a great deal of effort is made to impress upon freshmen the importance of regular class attendance. The difference in GPA between freshmen with and freshmen without attendance problems by midterm in the fall semester has remained large and

constant; however, the number of freshmen with attendance problems has decreased. In 1997, before this effort began, 28% of the freshmen had attendance problems (more than 3 absences in one or more classes) by midterm. Each year since that time, this percentage has decreased. In the fall of 2001 only 9% of the freshmen had attendance problems by midterm. Although other factors could be operating, we believe that retention and academic performance have increased as a result of the improved class attendance.

FRESHMAN ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AT MSU_

	Baseline Year	Pathfinder Year 1	Pathfinder Year 2	Pathfinder Year 3	Pathfinder Year 4
Freshman Class	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Mean ACT	23.4	23.3	23.3	23.1	23.5
1st year GPA	2.52	2.58	2.57	2.61	2.67
Percent above 2.00 after 1st year	74.1%	76.3%	75.9%	77.7%	79.0%
Percent retention to Sophomore year	76.2%	78.2%	79.1%	80.0%	-
Percent retention to Junior year	67.5%	68.1%	71.4%	-	-
1st Year GPA for students WITHOUT absence problems	2.74	2.68	2.68	2.74	2.76
1st year GPA for students WITH absence problems	1.97	1.81	1.67	1.83	1.73
Percent of student WITH absence problems	24%	11%	11%	13%	9%

We define a midterm absence problem as missing four or more classes in one or more courses as reported with midterm grades. In 1997, when we were collecting baseline data, approximately 24% of freshmen had absence problems by midterm. In 2001, the figure had decreased to 9%; this decrease is probably a conservative figure since reporting of absences was substantially more conscientious and accurate in 2001 than in 1997.

Concerning midterm grades, in the baseline year of 1997, 41% of freshmen were having problems compared to 19% in 2001.