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## Faculty Senate Minutes, Mar. 8, 1999

Eastern Kentucky University, Faculty Senate

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The Faculty Senate of Eastern Kentucky University met in Special Session on Monday, March 8, 1999 in the South Room of the Keen Johnson Building. Senate Chair Karen Janssen called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

The following members of the Senate were absent:

J. Adkins	M. Baxter*	J. Beck*
S. Black*	M. Chambers	K. Dilka*
P. Elrod*	W. Farrar*	K. Johnson
S. Jones	M. LeVan*	J. Levine*
C. Lewis	C. Melton-Freeman*	M. Thompson*
R. Thompson	J. Vance*	

\* denotes prior notification of absence to the Faculty Senate Secretary

Visitors to the Senate were:

Joseph Biesinger, History; Richard Chen, Accounting; Kirk Jones, Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Science; Paula Kopacz, English; Stephanie McSpirit, Anthropology, Sociology and Social Work; Thomas Myers, Student Affairs; Robert Rogow, College of Business; Alyssa Bramlage, Eastern Progress.

### **Report from the President: Senator Kustra**

President Kustra commented on the impact on the actions the Faculty Senate will be taking today. He mentioned that the current debate and its outcome will affect Eastern's credibility throughout the state and region. Eastern has a basic mission to produce top quality graduates. The faculty has perceived that there is a problem with grade inflation and its affect on academic quality. The Ad Hoc Committee has spent considerable time in developing a series of recommendations to address the problem. Senator Kustra urged all Senators to consider carefully the implications of the recommendations. He stated that whatever the Senate approves will be sending a message to current and prospective students and employers that Eastern is very serious about producing well-prepared graduates. He felt that the plus and minus grading system is a fairly precise way to determining grading, but if the system is accepted, that does not mean it can not be changed some time in the future. The President also mentioned that there must be some improvement in the campus promotion and tenure system. There is a need to look for alternate ways, such as peer review, to measure and evaluate faculty progress in promotion and tenure and a need for more uniformity in the system.

### **Report from the Senate Chair: Senator Janssen**

Senator Janssen briefly reported that the Rules Committee is working hard on numerous revisions to the **Faculty Senate Rules** and the **Senate Internal Procedures** booklets, which will be discussed at the Senate's April meeting. She also thanked the Ad Hoc Committee on Grade Inflation for its diligent work.

## **Ad Hoc Committee on Grade Inflation: Dr. Kirk Jones**

Dr. Jones presented a recommendation from the Ad Hoc Committee on Grade Inflation. Members of the Ad Hoc Committee were present and responded to numerous questions. The Ad Hoc Committee recommended that the University implement "**the 12 point +/- grading system:**

- Multi-section courses where the course content, the sequencing of material, and the examinations common to all sections are required to use the +/- scale or not uniformly across all sections. The utilization of the +/- scale is to be determined by majority vote of the involved instructors for a given multi-section course for a given term.
- For single-section courses and multi-section courses not covered by the above, the use of plus and minus grading is at the sole discretion of the course instructor.
- Instructors are required to state in their course syllabi whether the +/- scale will be used in the determination of official final course grades."

Senator Rink moved approval of the recommendation. Senator Yoder seconded the motion. Considerable debate ensued in which both positive and negative positions were presented. Issues discussed included how the system would be implemented, the view that indexing is a good idea that will present a more accurate assessment of student's work to a prospective employer, whether a division of the faculty might develop with two grading systems, and whether dual grading system would be difficult to monitor and would lead to chaos, and the need to clarify at what level the grading system will be implemented. On a standing vote of 16 to 28 the motion was defeated. Senator McCord moved that "**the straight-letter grading system be reinstated and the plus/minus grading system not be implemented.**" Senator Dunston seconded the motion. Senator McCord elaborated on reasons for proposing the motion, which include confusion about whether faculty could opt out of the new system, no substantive guidelines have been provided for implementation of the new grading system, some senators have received expressions of surprise and confusion from faculty about the new system, there would be a significant rise in student grade appeals if the system is adopted, and the need to discuss more fully all the implications of changing the grading system. Senator Feltus stated that over 90 % of the College of Business faculty oppose the plus/minus system. Senator Smith wondered if grade inflation will affect performance criteria for state budgeting purposes. Senator Kustra responded that the Council on Postsecondary Education has not considered grade inflation for funding decisions. Dr. Jones emphasized that the plus/minus system will have a mild impact on grade inflation, but clearly there is a need to take some action on a real problem that has grown significantly in the 1990s. Mr. Back mentioned that the faculty is split on the new grading system and that the real problem of grade inflation is on the shoulders of the individual faculty members. He called for more accountability of faculty rather than implementing a new grading system which really does not solve the problem of grade inflation. After further discussion the motion was defeated.

## **Reconsideration of Ad Hoc Committee on Grade Inflation Recommendation 4**

The Ad Hoc Committee on Grade Inflation Recommendation 4, which was postponed at the Senate's February 1, 1999, was reconsidered. The recommendation reads that the University **Institute grade indexing (the process of appending to each student's official University**

**transcript the average GPA for each course taken as well as exhibiting the percentage of the time the student's grade exceeds the 'typical' grade) for classes enrolling eight or more students."** Senator Goodwin suggested a clarification be made to the motion so that the word "section" be inserted between course and taken. The Senate agreed to the clarification. Senator Huebner wondered if the institution had the technology to implement the recommendation. Senator Anderson questioned how the recommendation would be funded. Senator Kilgore asked if "W" would be considered in indexing. Dr. Jones responded that "W" was not considered. Senator Flanagan moved to amend the motion by inserting "undergraduate" between each and student's. Senator Butler seconded the motion, which was approved. The Senate then approved the amended motion by a standing vote of 23 to 21.

### **Adjournment**

Senator Davis moved that the Senate adjourn. It adjourned at 5:26 p.m.