

ORAL ROBERTS UNIVERSITY
FACULTY SENATE
Minutes
March 23, 2015

Senate President Carlos Chale' called the Senate meeting to order at 11:01 a.m. in GC 4112 and offered a prayer to begin the meeting.

The minutes of the February 23, 2015 meeting were displayed on screen. A motion was made and then withdrawn to amend the minutes. Minutes were approved as presented.

Senate President Carlos Chale' reminded each of the colleges to submit their nominees for Senate for the 2015-16 year. Only one dean has responded to an e-mail request for nominees. Carlos reminded the Senate that all terms of service will be for two years if the board approves the changes in the Senate bylaws which were approved by the Senate and the entire faculty.

Lori Kanitz, chair of the general education committee, brought a proposal from the Communication Arts department to allow the 3 hour Debate course to count as the Oral Communication class in general education for Communication majors. A motion for acceptance was made by Denise Miller and seconded by John Korstad. Discussion by the Senate focused on the precedent this might set for other majors to allow a second course within their major to substitute for the current general education requirement. The Senate was asked to discuss this issue within each of their departments. The Senate was then reminded that an official Senate vote would be conducted on this item at the April meeting.

Mark Roberts, chair of the Christian World View committee, announced the details of the Healing Gospel Academic Conference and Healing Crusade scheduled for April 6 – 10. All faculty members were invited to register for the events and asked to encourage their students to attend. Classes will not be cancelled for this event which includes an outstanding lineup of internationally renowned scholars and speakers, including several PRU professors.

The Senate meeting was then turned over to University President, Dr. William Wilson, and Provost, Dr. Kathaleen Reid-Martinez, to discuss the proposal from the Task Group on the Role of Faculty in Shared Governance which had been chaired by the Provost. Dr. Wilson stated that there is a need to continue to build trust between the faculty and the administration. In November of 2014, the board of trustees passed a resolution to consider the area of faculty governance again. A major reformation in faculty governance took place in 2008-09. The board asked the President to appoint a Task Group to review this area again and provide a proposal by their 2015 spring meeting. The board now meets in November (rather than October), so this provided a short time frame for consideration.

The Task Group gave the President a written report on Saturday, March 14 (first Saturday of spring break), so today's Senate meeting was the earliest chance to discuss with the faculty. The

President said that he has been working diligently for the future with a real desire to be transparent. The Task Group worked independently of the President, but worked in conjunction with the trustees.

The Task Group originally presented a lengthy report, so the President asked them to streamline it for presentation to the board. The President asked the Senate to please email or call him today or tomorrow with comments and questions. It was understood that this will generate lots of questions, not all of which have been answered, but this is an ongoing process.

Dr. Wilson admitted that this is a big change in the culture and a significant move from the past 50 years. It is very important to work as a team. The President pledged to work with faculty in the future. Dr. Wilson said “With unity, ORU has a bright future but without cooperation, the future is shaky.” No written form of the Task Group report will be provided until after this proposal is presented to the board.

The Provost then read the report from the Task Group. President Wilson shared that he has to now decide what to do with the report. He has seen several other documents used by the Task Group. He then reiterated the four recommendations contained in the report before opening the floor for comments and questions.

Senate President Carlos Chale’ made a motion to allow all faculty members in attendance at the Senate meeting permission to speak during the meeting. The motion was seconded by Marshal Wright and approved by a verbal vote of the Senate. Dr. Wilson commended Carlos for the wisdom in this proposal.

Dr. Wilson continued his presentation by stating there will be changes in the Faculty Senate and he is not sure what it will look like in the future. There will continue to be elected representatives so the change is primarily in leadership. Recommendation #4 in the Task Group report to consider revision of the academic calendar to allow the four academic units (Departments, Colleges, Faculty Senate, and the University Faculty) to have ample unobstructed time to carry out their business was based upon the concern that one hour per week was not enough, so we will consider expanding that time.

A faculty member expressed concern about merging the functions of administration and faculty. Some of the previous administrations at ORU have been authoritarian and leadership was often hurtful. In that environment, having a separate faculty organization was beneficial and allowed for mutual respect. So the question was posed, why are these changes necessary? Is there a lack of trust? Dr. Wilson responded that there is concern about the lack of alignment of the current university structure with the university bylaws.

Another Senator expressed that the faculty understand that we do not have line authority to make decisions, only the power to recommend to the Provost and the President. Final authority rests in the Board of Trustees. There is some value in having an independent body to encourage open discussion for objective independence. Dr. Wilson responded that Dr. Robert Cooley told him our current structure was not the long term intention for ORU, and Dr. Cooley knew it would need to be revisited. Organizing the board was the highest priority at the time. A close relationship between the faculty and the President and Provost is critical. Dr. Wilson believes in the wisdom of faculty. This proposal will definitely require more work for the President, but the university bylaws were written to push the President into the academic world.

The University Planning Council (UPC), formerly called the Global Task Force, did a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis. In that analysis the number one threat identified was the faculty. Dr. Wilson wondered how that could be true with such a great faculty. That brought a realization of the need to be closer with the faculty.

Concern was expressed at the cumbersome load this would be with Dr. Wilson's busy schedule. Dr. Wilson responded that it would be a sacrifice, but this is worth it. A member of the Task Group stated that trustees said the faculty do not need more places to have a voice, they need a place for a louder voice and this model has that potential. Dr. Wilson said he understands there is still concern about fear of reprisal if voicing strong disagreement.

Another concern was raised about the possibility of a tyrant as University President somewhere in the future. Dr. Wilson said it would really be no different with the proposed model than it is under the current structure because all decisions of the faculty currently have to go through the Provost and the President before going to the board.

A question was asked how it was determined that the line between faculty and administration is an artificial distinction, because this distinction is normal at most schools. Dr. Reid-Martinez responded that she had served in previous administrative positions which allowed such a merging of the two because she was allowed to keep tenure status and her publications were put on hold with permission.

A concern was expressed for the need for an instrument to measure effectiveness of the new model. Dr. Wilson said that the Task Group included a rubric in their report which can be used, but no formal system has been developed yet. We know there is a need for a self-correcting mechanism and for the definition of the specific roles and duties of each authority structure.

A question was raised about the tenured faculty and the future of its existence as a separate organization. Dr. Wilson said that no decision has been made yet. Tenure will not be addressed in this report, but it will be considered when we look at committees needed in the new structure of governance.

Another question was asked about how common is this model and how it has been accepted at other institutions. Dr. Reid-Martinez said that Dr. Cooley and Dr. Splitter expressed they had seen this model implemented successfully at many other Christian institutions. ORU has a wide variety of programs so the intent of this model is to be more collegial and collaborative. Dr. Wilson stated that the President's role is to be servant of all. There is a long list of questions which still need to be addressed.

One Senator stated that their college had expressed concern over this model and asked if other colleges within ORU have expressed similar concerns. The response was pretty much the same across the board. Dr. Wilson indicated the goal is to keep the distance between the faculty and the administration short. Dr. Wilson then invited additional comments and questions to be sent to him at either his office email of wwilson@oru.edu (which is viewed by his administrative assistant, Lois Newman) or his private email of wilsoncog@aol.com.

Dr. Wilson encouraged faculty to contact board chair, Rev. Rob Hoskins, who was present at the Senate meeting. Rev. Hoskins shared that he has enjoyed a rich time to interact with the faculty on the UPC and the Task Group. He sees the real richness of ORU is in the faculty. The board does not want a sick University and we must be transparent. He realizes that the faculty is the greatest strength but can also be potentially the greatest threat. We must change our spiritual DNA. The role of the faculty in shared governance will be discussed for two hours in Trustee's meetings later this week. All four recommendations contained in the report of the Task Group are important. The board must realize the great value in continued collaboration.

Rev. Hoskins then closed the meeting with prayer at 12:25 p.m.