

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT LITTLE ROCK
University Assembly Meeting

Thursday, April 26, 2012 • 2:00 p.m.
Dickinson Hall Auditorium

Minutes

I. Call to Order

President Laura Smith-Olinde declared it to be 2pm and opened the meeting.

II. Review of Minutes

President Smith-Olinde invited comments on the draft minutes of the August 16, 2011 meeting, which had been posted on the web site. Rosalie Cheatham moved, and Brian Minton seconded, that the minutes be approved. The motion passed on a voice vote.

III. Remarks by the President

You will be happy to hear I have no remarks really [applause] – except to express my appreciation for your understanding of my learning curve during my year as a new Assembly President.

President Smith-Olinde thanked the other members of the Executive Committee (Vice President Estes, Secretary Clausen, and Parliamentarian Yanoviak) and bestowed plaques, pronouncing them “an amazing group of folks to work with.”

IV. Remarks by the Provost: Sandra Robertson

I too will be brief. I cannot believe it’s been 10 months since old whatshisname left [laughter]. He must have realized it’s the Assembly meeting today, because he sent a cartoon for comforting those who get upset over grammar errors (Just pat them on the shoulder and say “there, their, they’re.”).

The names you saw on the screen as you entered are the faculty excellence winners at the campus and college levels, as well as those who received promotion and tenure. We need a forum of some kind for getting the word out about the interesting things you all are doing.

I will repeat what I said at the Faculty Excellence Ceremony: For nearly 25 years we’ve been giving faculty excellence awards, staff awards almost that long, and student excellence awards forever. We could give administrator awards – the best dean could be the one with the most associate deans, the vice chancellor with the most policies published, the chair with the faculty who were the most brilliant” The Provost then listed her top ten reasons for

proposing administrator awards, such as: it would give them more padding for their resumes, preparing the nomination packet would give them something to do, without administrators, how could we promote bureaucracy? and, administrators need love too. “I plan to start an endowment for this award; each of you should write a check for the amount you consider your administrator to be worth.”

It’s been a full year. I want to comment on several initiatives.

1. The Student Research Expo –there were 109 students who exhibited their research – very impressive.

2. The Undergraduate Curriculum Review Task Force (you see their names of the screen – a big thank you to them. There’s a reason why we do this only once every 25 years! It’s a tough job. Take some time to thank these people who have spent two years on this initiative.

3. The Faculty Governance Committee – Every department is revising their governance documents, and the Governance Committee has protected your interests with vigor. It’s a thankless job but it needs to be done, someone has to protect faculty interests.

4. The Faculty Senate, which has grappled with some tough decisions -- the 120 hours for the baccalaureate degree, an earlier drop date as a student success initiative, a conflict of interest policy.

Laura, please come forward. Thank you for your leadership this year. Rumor has it that Laura may run for a two year term, and [handing President Smith-Olinde a plaque] you will get another one of these at the end.

V. Remarks by the Chancellor: Joel Anderson.

I was very taken by Sandra’s proposal that we have administrative excellence awards, very much taken by the idea that administrators need love too – and she should look for it in discussion of curriculum review.

I will comment on the proposal for a fall break in the academic calendar – I met this morning with the Academic Calendar and Schedules committee, and that recommendation is still on my desk. Remember that it is for 2013-14, so we would have more time to reach a decision. I’m not sure we’ve investigated all aspects thoroughly.

Concerning the change of the drop date to the end of the 8th week – I will sign off on it. I’m supportive but I have some reservations as to whether it will really work. We need to watch and see if it’s serving our purposes. I have some governance documents that I hope to work through in the next few weeks.

To the Undergraduate Curriculum Review Task Force: I appreciate the work the Task Force has done, and remind all of you of the two standards: simplicity and flexibility, by which I will evaluate it.

One of the main things I want to do [showing slide of success of Campus Campaign] is to say thank you to everyone who contributed to the success of the campaign. I cannot say too many good things about Bob Denman and the Development Office staff. Inferences that can be drawn from the success of the campaign – there are people out there who really believe in this institution and people are putting their money where their mouth is. Some people may say, Well I haven’t gotten any of that money. But you have. Because of this campaign, we’ve been able to pay for some of the things that could not be paid for by state appropriations, for example, the Stella Boyle renovations, scholarship funds, and much more. I want to emphasize the number of donors – there 18,675 donors – some of them are small but they are all important. Some donors

made multiple gifts over the years. The purposes for which the money was raised are programs, facilities, scholarships, and faculty support.

You have probably seen my posts about the progress of the Provost Search [on Facfocus] – I had been cautiously optimistic that we would be bringing in a couple of promising candidates yet this semester, but it didn't work out. We might be able to get them at a later time. Administrator searches just don't work the way they used to. The two I was referring to, we would never have found them without John Hicks, our consultant. I'm disappointed that we don't have someone for the beginning of the fall semester. But as John Hicks said, when you have a failed search is when you hire the wrong person. So it may be necessary to go the next round.

I want to say a big thank you to Sandra – one of the reasons for wanting a provost is there are many other things she needs to do and she only has so many hours in a day – though there is no one else except Ann Anderson who can manage their time better.

We do have approval and we are buying Coleman Place, which will be called University Village. We will take possession in about two weeks. We will focus that facility at least initially on juniors, seniors and graduate students.

Let me return to the subject of distance education. I want to emphasize how important that is becoming. UALR has been a leader in this respect for the last 10-15 years or longer. We were out in front for a long time but other institutions have caught up. If we didn't have the online classes, we would be a smaller, poorer institution than we are today. Those SSCH have generated revenue for us that we wouldn't have any other way. In a time when performance funding is becoming more of a reality, it's important to continue along these lines. Last Friday System President Bobbitt hosted a system-wide symposium on our campus. There were about 200 people in attendance. Here is an approximate quote from his address to the symposium: We cannot sustain our universities in our current mode of operation, which is based on an agrarian calendar and on state appropriations. This is true in Arkansas and across the country. It's one of the reasons why we made our commitment to a \$75 mill campaign in 2005. You can make an analogy between the first movies and distance learning: If you go back to the time when movie cameras first came along, the first movies were simply the filming of a play on stage, but before too long, the technology advanced, shutter speeds became faster, it became possible to add sound and cameras became more portable – so people started to notice that there's a different way to tell the story. You only read Romeo and Juliette in one way, but now you can see so many things that were not possible on the stage. Most important: it made the story that had been told on the stage widely available to many more people, you could not have built enough stages. Basically the same thing is going to be happening in Higher education. – we have to recognize that and not be passed by. The diversity and nontraditional nature of our student body – all of those things (part time students, older students, transfer students, etc) are becoming a reality all over the state and nation. Universities are going to have to find a way to increase flexibility and access. Bobbitt made the point that the for-profits are grifting the system but have a huge dropout rate. We need to take the lead in Arkansas by providing a great on-campus experience but also high-quality online experiences. – It's not about what the others are doing but what's good for us and our students, if we serve those values, things will turn out right for us. Here, faculty really do control the content, unlike the University of Phoenix, because they are about making money and marketing while our commitment is to quality and content. If you don't have a good story, it's not going to work if it's on stage or on screen. I make these comments because I know there are concerns among some of you about the push forward in distance education and I ask you to look at the big picture.

Other things: one area that I want to put on your thinking agenda: our Appeals Processes on this campus need to be all overhauled at once. Today we live in a much more litigious society, it's a mentality they come with that affects interactions between faculty and students, and student behavior issues. We've got appeals processes in place for all of these but they are complex and hard to administer; case law changes over time and we need to keep pace. Tenure and promotion will remain the province of the faculty. But there are many other things that come up. One of the issues we have is that it's very difficult to get a group assembled to hear an appeal. The composition of the group may make all the sense in the world on paper but is not easy to implement. Another thing to think about is curriculum governance. We ought to think about the way most universities of our size have gone – I think we need to give the faculties of the colleges more control over the curriculum and graduation requirements than we have here. In my judgment, it was a lot harder than it needed to be to get some of the changes that needed to be done in Engineering and Technology, for example. One of the advantages of more autonomy at college level – you can have more experimentation going on. It's harder to bring all the colleges along together than to have maybe one of them take the lead, be more innovative. To put a summary point on these comments: higher education is changing, that's always been true but maybe the pace has picked up – there are many things in the environment that drive us to change. Let me close the circle on that by saying: Why not lead? All of these challenges present great opportunities for growth and for serving the people who pay us for what we do.

VI. Election of New Assembly President

President Smith-Olinde thanked the chancellor for his remarks. “You gave us many things to think about”

She then opened the floor for nominations for Assembly President/ Presiding Officer of the Faculty Senate.

Rosalie Cheatham moved and TomMcMillan seconded that Laura Smith-Olinde be elected by acclamation. The motion was approved and Laura was elected.

VII. Open Forum

President Smith-Olinde invited topics for Open Forum. There were none.

VIII. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:49 p.m.

