

# Stony Brook University Senate Bulletin

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Is this the winter of our discontent?  
Our mocking Sun shines feebly in the south,  
A traitor to its summer self. But wait,  
For since the solstice she has ris'n one eighth  
The arc from Capricorn to Cancer. Yeah!  
Bring out your shades! 'Tis spring in seven weeks.

January is a time for resolutions, and for taking stock. We hear the state of the Union, and the state of the State. There is a state of the Senate too. Budgets appear, like daffodils pushing through the last snows. Budgets, like flowers, are too often ephemeral. Certitude is over-rated. Think how much more interesting our discussions are when we do not know whether there is money in the SUNY budget for critical maintenance, or for paying salaries, or for startup costs for the hundreds of new faculty.

The directions forged by States and Universities are also capricious and oscillatory, though not as predictably as the seasons. Fads come in like weather fronts, demand our attention, and then moderate. Udacity is now out of the MOOCs business - not that there ever was a business there - raising even more doubts about the concept. Lecture halls in Javits are still bustling.

Like the cold fronts building strength in the arctic, Open SUNY and Seamless Transfers cloud the horizon. Middle States? It's coming. The Stony Brook Curriculum? It's here. Perfect storms? Passing fancies? Time as always will tell, but meanwhile we batten down the hatches and prepare, just in case. What else is there to do? Research? Scholarship?

Inertia is often under-appreciated. Like January, it gives us pause to think. It prevents us from rashly diving in over our heads. The early February Sun is as potent as it was in mid-November. Beneficial changes come slowly, after much thought and deliberation, and are worth the wait.

Since the last Bulletin in November, much has happened.

The ARC Survey has been posted to the Senate Web Page. It's long, but revealing of attitudes on campus. Almost nobody is happy with it. That means it has served its purpose. Perception often trumps performance. Read it.

The Survey dinged the Senate too. The majority of the respondents do not know that we exist, or what we do. This is not a new problem, but it is one we have never seriously attempted to solve. We must solve it if we are to retain the credibility of faculty/staff governance. Suggestions are welcome.

Since we last met, there has been considerable administrative turnover. We have an interim VPR and an interim AD. Searches have been announced for Deans of Arts & Sciences, Global Studies, and the School of Dental Medicine.

And the University Senate has a President-Elect, Ed Feldman. I can now count down the number of Senate meetings I have responsibility for - that number is 4. I will miss some aspects of the position... but not the endless meetings.

There is good news on the Senate front. The administration has acceded to our request for a budget. We can now plan activities without having to make specific requests to the President or Provost for everything we want to do. First order of business is to buy Laurie a new desktop computer and printer, to replace the museum-piece and paperweight she was using. Beyond that, the budget will fund biennial retreats for the Executive Committee and Standing Committee chairs, the semi-annual ARC survey (with followups in alternate years), and an annual award to recognize a "Friend of the Senate".

This means that the Senate needs a Treasurer. The Executive Committee has decided to revise the By-Laws to redefine the Secretary as a Secretary-Treasurer. This position, one of the two elected positions in the Executive Committee, becomes vacant in June with the accession of Ed Feldman to the Presidency. We are looking for new blood. Nominations will be taken at the March Senate meeting, and an election will be held at the April meeting.

Club Red has been a success, but still requires nurturing. Let's make a concerted effort to grow it. The Club will continue to be open Thursdays and Fridays from 4:30-6:30 at the Hilton Garden Inn. Please attend if you can. Bring your visitors and guests; bring your students; bring someone who has never attended the Club.

The next Senate meeting, on Monday February 3 in Wang LH2, promises to be a jam-packed and entertaining time.

- Assoc. Provost Robbins will present an update on the Middle States reaccreditation process. The text written by the working groups has been slashed from many hundreds of pages to about 100 - and it is still too long. Of course nobody is happy with the document. The Senate Executive Committee is particularly upset with the current tenor of the section on governance, and intends to respond.
- StartUP-NY is a state-wide program designed to foster innovation and entrepreneurship by allowing some startup businesses to establish themselves, with tax incentives, on SUNY properties. Although aimed more at upstate campuses, this is a potential boon to Stony Brook as well. The law states that governance (that's us, folks) has 30 days to comment on our campus's proposal before it can be submitted to the state. We got it on January 10, and a joint subcommittee of CAPRA and the Research Committee, chaired by Maria Ryan, has reviewed the the proposal carefully. Matt Whelan, VP for Strategic Initiatives, will present the proposal to the Senate, and Tom Roberatazzi will follow with the Senate's take on it.
- Strong universities have strong alumni associations. Stony Brook has never excelled in this category, but things are changing. Alumni associations are strengthened when alumni feel connected to the university. Matt Colson and Janet Masini from the Alumni Association will talk about the "Great Minds" program - a way for faculty to connect with alumni when we travel.

- Sr. VP for HSC Kaushansky will present a proposal to start a School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences.
- The State-wide University Faculty Senate met last week in Albany. The UFS passed a resolution on Seamless Transfer Paths. We will get a report on their deliberations.
- There will not be a report from the UUP because the UUP is holding their Winter meeting at the same time we will be meeting.

This semester, as always will be rife with consequential issues. Middle States will pre-occupy us for the next couple of months, while at the same time the Provost will be unveiling his Strategic Plan, and we are being asked to approve the School of Pharmacy.

An issue that should concern us all is the increasing costs of both textbooks and journals. Textbook publishers now crank out new editions every year with minimal changes. Why? Obviously it is better for the bottom line than if students purchase used texts on-line. Do we as faculty have a responsibility to save our students money? How is this best accomplished? In my field, any of the last 4 or 5 editions of the introductory book I use suffice, and some can be obtained for \$1 on-line. Do we self-publish our own lecture notes? How does the Open SUNY Textbook program play into this? And what about Elsevier? The Library Services committee will be working with the Dean of Libraries on such issues We will air some of this later in the semester. Stay tuned.

There are issues involving promotion and tenure that the Senate is beginning to worry about. Do we need better guidelines detailing expectations for faculty with joint appointments? How do we deal with the decline in Federal support for the pure research in the basic sciences, including biomedical research? As good as they may be, new faculty will find it harder and harder to establish externally-funded research groups. Should the University, and the Senate, be preparing for a future far different from the past half-century? This is a change bthat may blind-side us very quickly. How does on-line teaching come into play in the promotion and tenure arena? We are considering repopulating the Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee, with the charge of looking at the faculty of the future. Volunteers?

The Senate does suffer from interia, but it cuts two ways. Once you get us moving it is hard to stop us.

Fred

### **Contacts**

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