

**University of Denver**  
**Faculty Senate**  
**Minutes**  
**March 7, 2003**

President Leon Giles opened the meeting at 12:06

**Agenda**

1. Review and Approval of Minutes for February 7, 2003
2. Report/Demonstration of University “Portfolio” Project—Julanna Gilbert
3. Provost’s Report
4. Committee Reports and Continuing Business
  - Chancellor’s Roundtable—February 28, 2003
  - Sabbatical Policy
  - Course Evaluation Reporting
  - Committee Announcements
5. New Business and Information
  - Criminal Background Checks—Shannon Winkel
6. Announcements and Reminders
  - Chancellor’s Roundtable—May 9, 2003, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.
  - Administrator Evaluations
  - University Lecture: April 3, 2003, 4:45 p.m., Lindsay Auditorium

**Review and Approval of minutes for February 7, 2003**

The minutes were approved.

**Report/Demonstration of University “Portfolio” Project—Julanna Gilbert,  
Director, Center for Teaching and Learning**

*Highlights*

- Overview: DU is the only university in the country to have a system like the Portfolio Project. DU’s project has been demonstrated to groups around the country. It was started with a grant from Don and Susan Sturm. The project began in the School of Communication. Subsequently, two units—First Year English and Political Science--became interested in the project, particularly in its possibilities for assessment. The project was launched in September 2002.
- Features: The personal portfolios maintained by students can be used to facilitate program assessment and student assessment. You do not have to be a registered member of the portfolio community to view the site; however, users can set the level of privacy and limit what others can view. The portfolios can contain images, word documents, PDFs, links, and a search feature. There are more than 7000 items already in the portfolio system after only six months use. The personal portfolio takes very little time to set it up.
- Linda Cobb-Reilly demonstrated what a faculty member sees when looking into the assessment portion of the program. The School of Communications has spent nearly two years developing their assessment plan. They started a pilot program launched this quarter, with 12 courses 248 students involved. Students will

upload various papers to be assessed. Faculty members have developed a rubric for assessment. From the database, the School of Communications will be able to evaluate their progress in meeting their determined goals. The database includes a list of students who have complied with the assessment requirements. Faculty can access students' papers and the rubric. Information uploaded for assessment purposes is completely private. Sheila Summers Thompson works with units to get their assessment programs ready for the portfolio system.

- Gilbert reported that the project has been collaborative, guided by a faculty portfolio committee.

*Questions:* John Holcomb: Do you help the students or is it so easy that they can do it on their own? Gilbert: It is easy for them to do it, but they need help on content. DCB has a course to help students learn how to use the portfolio. Holcomb: How accessible are the contents to the public? A colleague of his did a words-and-phrases search on an MBA student's paper in which he suspected plagiarism and learned that the paper was taken in part from one of his student's papers. Margaret Whitt noted that she didn't think the information was public to the whole world. Gilbert responded that if the information is posted as public, it is accessible. Don Stedman reasoned that if he could put one together, anyone could do it. Catherine Reed asked about the privacy default level. Gilbert reported that the default level is private and invited faculty to let her know if they discover applications that might be helpful. Leon Giles noted that as more students go through the First Year English experience, they will become adept at using the portfolio system. He asked how the project interfaces with Blackboard. Gilbert answered that a group has begun to look into that to ensure its integration.

### **Provost's Report**

*Highlights:* Provost Coombe reported that the budget is nearly done for next year, and DU is in good shape. The endowment is better than it was last year. A merit increase was awarded this year, and investments were made, indicating that the university, in general, is in good financial shape. In terms of planning, UPAC continues its work. Three areas of focus have emerged: Public Good, Academic Quality, and Sustainability/Viability. The Public Good Task Force has planned a Public Good conference slated for May 2, 2003 and hopes to clarify several issues: 1) How do we define "Public Good"? 2) What are we doing now? 3) What should we do in the future? As work continues with the Public Good Task Force, UPAC has broken into two groups: Academic Quality initiatives, 2) Sustainability/Viability. The Sustainability Task Force offered a very fine report a year ago. The current goal is to determine what we look like now and to develop the capability to plan for several years in the future.

*Questions:* No questions came from the senate.

### **Committee Reports and Continuing Business**

- *Chancellor's Roundtable:* Giles reported on the Chancellor's Roundtable, held on February 28, 2003. He noted that the Chancellor's comments offered no surprises. Ritchie commented on the application pool for next year and noted that Colorado applications are down, he thinks about 9%, due in part to the local economy. Giles noted that faculty attendance was down from previous years.

- *Sabbatical Policy*: Giles recalled earlier discussion of possible change to the sabbatical policy. He reported that a small group has met to discuss the policy. The chair of personnel committee is leading discussion on the issue. Don Stedman reported that there are both controversial and non-controversial issues. He reviewed earlier discussion and explained that initially there was a possibility of an additional quarter of paid leave for sabbatical. After the Board of Trustees became interested in assessing the effectiveness of such a change in enhancing scholarship, the situation changed. The senate learned of the possibility that there might be enough money to enhance only half of the applications. The ad hoc senate committee worried about the effect of making the applications competitive in this way. He reported that there is a proposal circulating that suggests that there be an enhancement for travel rather than the one-quarter addition at full pay for half of the applications. The non-controversial issue is to determine a way of improving the quality of proposals, reports and record keeping. To that end, Stedman offered a motion from the committee (See Appendix A.) The motion was moved and seconded. Discussion was opened with the understanding that voting will take place during the April senate meeting. Stedman expressed his concern that sabbaticals will be uneven. He suggested that the quality of applications might improve if a departmental committee reviewed them prior to their being submitted to the deans and ultimately the senate as is done in DCB. Ann Mahoney expressed a concern regarding adding another layer of evaluations that might not be necessary in some divisions. She suggested that if deans pay careful attention to the applications, the additional layer might not be necessary. Stedman agreed but noted that applications are uneven and the senate needs a way to remedy that problem. Giles reported that the DCB committee was established several years ago by the dean and management group of the college to have a positive effect on the applications, not to turn them down, but to strengthen them. The committee was not intended to be another hurdle. Coombe offered to clarify some of the controversial issues. He said that it is not true that the board decided there was not enough money for full pay for two quarters. The question really is whether this is the best way to improve scholarship. The idea is not to spend less money but to get a better idea of whether extending the sabbatical to two quarters would have the impact on the level of scholarship university-wide. If we're going to make an investment in scholarship, is this the best way to make an impact on the entire environment? Stedman said there is a huge difference between enhancement and extended entitlement for everybody with strings attached and this "in-between" proposal. Enhancements for half the applicants require someone to make a choice since not everyone gets them. Who is qualified to choose between a cello performance and collection of automobile emissions? He does not think the committee is best qualified. Coombe reiterated that the goal is to determine what is the best way to improve scholarship, and we need to think in terms of accountability. Giles called for ideas from the senators. Catherine Potter commented that if the goal of partially funding the extended sabbatical is to test effectiveness, the best way to do it would be random assignment. John Holcolmb asked what other institutions are doing. He suggested that "small steps" or "half-steps" are not effective. The notion of half win/half lose is unfair and opens the

door for criticism. In terms of incrementally going forward, if finances allow it, we should go forward and see if our experience meets that of other institutions. Dennis Barrett said that the senate was charged with developing a proposal and bringing it to the provost. He asked the chair where the proposal stands. He asked whether the senate would get the proposal for review before voting on it. Stedman said that the only motion so far is for minor changes. We have no proposal on the controversial issue. However, Susan Sadler authored a proposal, and if she agrees, he can circulate it. Barrett suggested that the senate receive what ever comes out of the meeting scheduled for later today. Giles agreed to circulate any document that results from the meeting. Sam Kamin commented that one quarter with full pay should be sufficient for a large project, say to write a book or do extensive research. Giles concluded that the senate will have to revisit the ½ pay for three quarter policy. The goal is to get the issue wrapped up by the year's end.

- *Course Evaluation Reporting:* Helga Watt circulated a policy regarding teaching evaluations that the senate approved in 1998 (See Appendix B). At the time that the policy was passed, on-line evaluation did not exist. Evaluations were provided first to the department chair and then to the faculty member. The Student Relations Committee proposes that results be forwarded to the faculty at the same time that chairs receive them now that technology makes this possible.

**Motion to adopt the following as and addendum to the 1998 policy:**

5. *If course evaluations are conducted on-line, the Office of Assessment will provide a summary of numerical responses and the written comments to the course instructor at the same time that his/her Chair or Unit Head is informed.*

The motion was seconded. Jim Hagler said he either opposed the motion or offered a friendly amendment. Because the assessment forms are easily accessible and therefore easily altered, Hagler suggested that there should not be on-line assessment without a method of authentication or protection. Ron Delyzer said that each log-in is course specific. Gilbert said a solution might be to work with the Office of Assessment to ensure that once a student enters an evaluation for a course, he/she would be blocked from entering another. Delyzer noted that there was a motion on the floor. Watt suggested that Hagler's concern be addressed as a separate motion because it needs to be investigated before a proposal could be offered. Giles pointed out that the senate cannot vote on the motion officially until the April meeting. Rick Leaman asked if administrators wish to have the evaluations before the faculty member gets them. Potter asked if the provost objected to the simultaneous distribution of the evaluations. Coombe stated that he does not object. Discussion ensued regarding the accessibility of on-line evaluation forms, the use of banner ID numbers to ensure anonymity, and the senate's role and responsibility in determining the use of evaluations. Watt noted that use across the university is not uniform. In reference to the 1998 policy, Dave Cox stated the he did not think that item 3 (publication of numerical data) is still being done. Stedman said that it is being done. Watt said that a major issue is that evaluations are being used for promotion and tenure in AHSS and in several units/divisions places for merit increases when there is no uniform

- evaluation scale. The evaluations are not taken very seriously by students or faculty but are important to administrators. Giles will ask the executive committee to sort out jurisdiction and send the issue to committee. Barrett asked if there is some virtue in running a few courses for winter quarter—as a pilot project—to see how it works. Giles said if there are no objections, we will do that. No objections were offered.
- *Other Committee Announcements*: No additional announcements were offered.

### **New Business and Information Items**

- *Criminal Background Checks*—Shannon Winckel, Associate Director, HR. Giles reported that the issue of background checks for faculty came up at a deans meeting. Winckel provided a brief history of the policy. When she came to the university in 1991, checks were being done only on custodial staff. She found the policy problematic so approached administration and proposed to do checks on all employees. Administration agreed to checks on staff and administration but not on faculty. HR thought that now might be a good time to propose this to senate that faculty be covered by the policy as well. Giles asked Winckel to explain what the background check entails: Winckel said that new employees must sign a waiver for a background check. She noted that the waiver does say credit check. DU does not employ felons or those with violent misdemeanors. Winckel shared an aside that her office sees a number of DUIs, which are not grounds for employment ineligibility. HR does check with the person to ensure that the information they receive is accurate. Arthur Best asked Winckel to define “criminal background check.” Winckel said that the state provides information from their database that covers federal criminal records. Best asked how HR handles a person who has been pardoned. Winckel said she was not sure. If a problem comes up that her office cannot address, they consult DU legal counsel, Paul Chan. She will find an answer to that question and get back to the senate. Holcomb stated that Winckel’s example regarding DUIs raised the question of what HR looks for in the background check. He was concerned that DUIs are not grounds for ineligibility. Winckel said the persons with such a violation can be employed unless the job involves driving a university vehicle. Best asked if the policy is written down and whether free speech convictions are considered. Winckel said that HR makes decisions on a case-by-case basis. Hagerty asked how long the checks take. Winckel said that different states have different timelines and costs that are charged back to departments. Most take two to three days. International checks are more difficult. In countries where police can provide information, HR uses them as a resource. Other universities are doing similar things. Giles added that the concern raised in dean’s council addressed the fact that we have minor students on campus, and the risk to the university is substantial. Divine said the policy is very troubling. Winckel said that HR knew that it might be. Potter suggested that the personnel committee might like to spend some time thinking about the issue and might wish to argue for more specificity regarding what makes someone ineligible for employment. Winckel explained that in cases where there are questions HR brings in other parties to assess the case. They try to limit such instances to protect privacy. Normally

only two staff members view the records. Giles suggested that the issue be referred to committee. Stedman said the personnel committee would rather not do address it. Barrett moved that executive committee examine the issue. Giles agreed.

- *Other New Business*: No additional business was offered.

**Announcements and Reminders—Leon Giles**

- Spring Quarter Chancellor's Roundtable—May 9, 2003, 1:00 The Chancellor wanted more time to meet with executive committee so will meet with the executive committee from 11:00 to 1:00 p.m. prior to the roundtable.
- Administrator evaluations will go out soon.

**Adjournment**

Barrett moved that the meeting be adjourned. President Giles adjourned the meeting 1:45.

Respectfully submitted,  
Barbara J. Wilcots

**Appendix A:**

Proposed Sabbatical Policy Change from Personnel Committee

Senate guidelines and policy manual should uniformly use the words “Teaching and Scholarship” when describing what should be performed and reported on sabbatical.

Policy 4.20.030 5b and guidelines under “reporting” should add words to the effect that:

A statement should be included of the ways that this sabbatical has strengthened the teaching and scholarship of the recipient.

Two other policy and guideline changes are suggested in regard to enhanced assessment/accountability.

Schools should establish a faculty committee (or charge an existing committee) with the responsibility for reviewing, suggesting enhancements, and making recommendations concerning sabbatical applications between the Chair’s review (if available) and the submission to the Dean.

The application form and relevant guidelines and policy should be amended:

A one-page self-assessment of any previous DU formal sabbatical in light of the ways that the previous sabbatical has strengthened the teaching and scholarship of the recipient is required from all applicants who are requesting their second or subsequent sabbatical. This one page would be accompanied by a copy of the report that was filed upon return from the previous DU sabbatical.

## **Appendix B:**

### Notice of Motion from Academic Planning Committee Re: Teaching Evaluations

Passed May 8, 1998

1. Teaching evaluations will be jointly administered by the Faculty Senate and the Office of Assessment. The Senate will set rules covering the application of the evaluations and the dissemination of their results. The Office of Assessment will be responsible for the design of the instrument and its administration in classes, under the guidance of the Senate.
2. Teaching evaluations will be administered in every class taught at the University of Denver, using forms designed or approved by the Office of Assessment. Instructors and units may also freely use additional assessment instruments of their own design.
3. Numerical responses will be treated as public information. The Office of Assessment will provide a summary of numerical responses for every class to the instructor and the instructor's unit head early in the following term. In addition, the numerical results will be published by the Office of Assessment in paper and/or a readily accessible electronic form (e.g. Office of Assessment web page).
4. Additional written comments will be treated as intended primarily for the instructor, but may be made available to relevant academic officers and committees. After tabulation, the forms or transcriptions thereof, including written comments, will be sent by the Office of Assessment to the unit head, who will, after examining them, forward them to the instructor, whose property they become. After discussion with the instructor, the unit head may share the written comments with the Provost, the academic Vice-Provosts, the instructor's Dean, unit and divisional tenure and promotion committees, and unit or decanal advisory, personnel, or teaching committees.