Minutes of
The Lehman College Senate Meeting
Wednesday, April 1, 2009


The meeting was called to order by President Ricardo Fernández at 3:30 p.m.

Minutes Adopted:

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the minutes of the Senate meeting of March 4, 2009. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Announcements and Communication:

President Ricardo R. Fernández-

1. President Fernández began with some brief announcements and comments. This weekend the Somos El Futuro Conference is taking place in Albany, which will be attended by some students and staff. Earlier today we had the privilege of listening to Ms. Jill Abrahamson,
managing editor of *The New York Times*, as the annual Herbert H. Lehman Memorial Lecture speaker. Prof. Duane Tananbaum spoke briefly earlier at a dedication of some artifacts from the Herbert H. Lehman ferryboat that entered service in 1965 and was retired in 2007. They can be seen in the Lehman Library. Much to the pleasure of the college, members of the Lehman family were present.

2. Concerning the state budget, we have read that there is an agreement, at least in principle, on some of the major features. As for the University, nothing really has changed. The plans for next year, along with the tuition increase, represent relative security for CUNY.

b. Student Conference-

1. Mr. Jason Jeremias, Student Conference Chair reminded the senators that at last month’s meeting, he talked about some of the “malfeasance in student government.” The Student Conference position is not based on animosity toward any administrator or any opposition to the Campus Association for Student Activities (CASA). He asserted that the Student Conference is pointing out these problems, he asserted, because it has a deep concern for the college. He spoke about major difficulties that are affecting Lehman College’s strength in being a cultural, economic, and intellectual center. These difficulties require immediate attention because- he claims- students bear the burden of these difficulties, and the Conference’s belief is that “a healthy student government leads to a healthy campus.” One particular issue is the confusion of students who hold elected positions and the students they represent. Student Conference seeks to study the documents that govern them and how they can be used in a way that promotes transparency and responsibility. “The Student Conference sees these difficulties as opportunities to change our course to supplant disenchantment with encouragement, division with unification, and confusion with clarity. We believe in the final analysis that this will benefit all students and recognize the commonality among our differences.” Mr. Jeremias spoke about an atmosphere of animosity on campus, which prevents students from making an impact. He was happy to announce that Vice President José Magdaleno has formed a committee to meet with the various groups of students on campus and to begin to resolve the difficulties. It will be composed of Conference and CASA members as well as members of clubs and organizations of students, and other faculty and staff.
Mr. Jeremias announced that the Conference held new elections resulting in 14 new members on the Student Conference. The Conference also encourages more students to attend the Senate meetings so they can understand how school policy is made. (President Fernández at this point explained that the student governance is essentially bifurcated—there is the Student Conference and also CASA; the latter requested the opportunity to address the Senate.)

Mr. Jeffrey Valdez, Vice President of CASA, was granted floor rights. He explained that the Campus Association for Student Activities is the student government at Lehman College. He pointed out that the organization has a president, and that he serves on various boards and committees that affect every aspect of the college’s life, and was elected by the students. To enter into discussions with the Conference, he felt that a proper foundation has to be built and a culture of cooperation has to be established. He recognized that the name CASA causes confusion at Lehman College and is part of the problem. In elaborating, he said, “being called the Campus Association for Student Activities suggests we only have jurisdiction over the activities on campus, and this is not the case. Because of this, beginning today, we will put forward a referendum to change the name of CASA to the Student Government Association, as it was formerly known. We look forward to working with faculty, administration, and most importantly students, in reviewing our constitution.”

REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES-

a. Committee on Governance-

1. Prof. Duane Tananbaum presented a list of student nominees for election to the Senate Committees to serve through the end of this academic year. They have been presented by the Student Conference and approved by the Governance Committee. The nominees are:

**Governance Committee:** Mr. Angel Vitiello, **Admission, Evaluation and Academic Standards:** Mr. David Lowenstein, and Ms. Shaumi Akthar; **Campus Life and Facilities:** Mr. Duane Adams, Ms. Mobria Small, Ms. Abisola Olabode, and Ms. Alejandra Bodden; **Graduate Studies:** Ms. Ayesha Lewis and Mr. Justin Simmons; **Budget and Long-Range Planning:** Ms. Hyacinth Bouzalakos; and for **Library, Technology & Communications:** Mr. Cameron Crump. The nominations were unanimously approved as a slate.

2. Prof. Tananbaum also reported that nomination ballots for the Standing Committees went out to faculty. They were received about a week or ten days ago. The deadline was extended
through today because the ballots were not received as promptly as the Committee would have hoped.

3. The Governance Committee is meeting at 2 p.m tomorrow in Shuster 325 to make up a slate for nominations for faculty seats on the Senate Committees.

4. Another nomination ballot is going out for faculty Senators At Large, part-time faculty, administration representatives and Gittleson staff. These are due back by April 22.

5. The Committee is continuing to work on various amendments to the governance documents. We’ve had a number of successful meetings having an agreement on the language which now needs to be drawn up.

b. Committee on Admissions, Evaluations and Academic Standards-

1. Prof. Kevin Sailor reported that the Committee was asked to consider the effects of Blackboard outages on the academic integrity of online courses this semester:

   a. Credit for conventional courses is defined in terms of the number of hours of instruction that are offered. One 50-minute hour per week over 15 weeks is one credit. If this amount of instruction is reduced then the integrity of the course is jeopardized.

   b. The calculation of credit in online courses at Lehman has been done in terms of the equivalence of the workload of such courses to conventional courses. This formulation makes it more difficult to determine to what extent interruptions in service affect instruction because instruction is not assumed to take place uniformly over the course of the semester.

   c. Evidence about the extent of the disruption and their impact is hard to obtain. Most experts seem to indicate that the disruptions have created significant problems but these problems have been managed by extending deadlines for assignments and using alternatives to Blackboard.

   d. One disturbing situation is that we have no guarantee or sense that the delivery problems of Blackboard have been solved. Planning needs to take place to determine the best course of action should disruptions continue or get worse.

   e. Historically, there have been disruptions in instruction such as during the protests of the early seventies in which accommodations were made to remedy the reduced amount of instruction that was given during the semester.
2. CAEAS discussed several mechanisms for trying to accommodate the effects of service disruptions in Blackboard:

a. **Incomplete grades** (INC) could be offered to students in online courses if the instructor feels that it is impossible for the work to be completed within the time course of the semester. This course of action has several drawbacks. First, these incompletes would delay graduation for some students. Second, it might require instructors to render services beyond the contractual time period. Third, incompletes can affect the eligibility of a student for financial aid.

b. **Pass/Fail.** In 1970, Lehman offered students the option of taking a letter grade or opting for a pass/fail grade if they didn’t like the letter grade. This option was offered to try to ameliorate the disruptions caused by unrest on the campus. The rationale was that enough instruction occurred to grant credit and the pass/fail prevented students whose performance suffered from being overly penalized. Drawbacks: Exemptions of the pass/fail prohibition for courses in Gen-Ed and the major would have to be waived. Students who took courses on E-permit would be subject to the rules of their home institution.

c. **Z grade.** As a very temporary measure, a Z grade might be assigned, but it is unclear how such a grade would be resolved.

3. There is no easy solution if further disruptions of Blackboard occur. A plan needs to be developed for a significant disruption. For example, how would we handle a disruption during the last week of classes or during finals week? Online instruction at Lehman is growing and we should at the very least use the current situation to develop better plans for various contingencies. Discussion followed.

4. The next Committee meeting will be held on April 6 at 3:30 p.m.

c. **Undergraduate Studies**-

1. Prof. Barbara Jacobson submitted proposals from: the Department of African and African American Studies; the Department of Art; the Department of Economics, Accounting and Business Administration; the Department of Environmental Geographic & Geological Sciences; the Program in Linguistics; the Department of Latin American and Puerto Rican Studies; the Department of Middle and High School Education; the Department of Physics and Astronomy; the Department of Political Science and the Department of Sociology. Prof.
Jacobson noted that the proposals included a Mexican and Mexican American minor in the
Department of Latin American and Puerto Rican Studies; and a proposal to establish a
program in Interdisciplinary Environmental Science. The proposals were unanimously
approved.

d. **Committee on Graduate Studies**

1. Prof. Timothy Alborn reported on proposals from: the Department of English; the
Department of Music; the Department of Sociology; from the Department of History; the
Department of Environmental, Geographic, and Geological Sciences; the Department of
Middle and High School Education; the Department of Languages and Literatures; and the
Department of Counseling, Leadership, and Special Education. The proposals were
unanimously approved.

2. The next meeting will be after the spring break—room and time to be announced.

e. **Committee on Academic Freedom**

There was no report.

f. **Committee on the Library, Technology and Telecommunications**

1. Mr. James Carney was given floor rights. He reported that the Committee met on
Tuesday, March 10 in the Library Conference Room, and he was elected chair in a
unanimous vote. The composition of the committee will be confirmed shortly after
conference with the Governance Committee.

2. Members of the committee will be receiving copies of the student survey in order to cull
relevant questions for the faculty survey. Members will recommend three or four questions
to revise and include on the survey. A subcommittee to address the faculty survey was
created to be chaired by Prof. David Fletcher. The subcommittee will meet prior to the next
committee meeting.

3. A discussion was held on security measures on new acquisitions for the Media Center and
the progress in equipping the center with state of the art production equipment purchased
from Sony at a significant discount. The Journalism, Communication and Theatre newsroom
is now in use. Integration of the production equipment for the center will go out to bid
shortly with installation during the summer months.
4. The Committee discussed the outages of the CUNY portal and access to Blackboard. Prof. Robert Whittaker, Associate Provost for Online Education, was invited to the next committee meeting to determine the reason for the recent outages and the steps that will be implemented to avoid this problem in the future.

5. The next meeting is scheduled for 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 7 in the Library Conference Room.

g. Committee on Campus Life and Facilities-
There was no report.

h. Committee on Budget and Long-Range Planning-
There was no report

i. University Faculty Senate-
1. Professor Manfred Philipp reported that the March 31 plenary featured Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer, Allan Dobrin and Associate Vice Chancellor and University Chief Information Officer, Brian Cohen, who discussed the problems concerning Blackboard. They are planning an off-site backup which will be outside the city. This way it will have a separate power supply and separate everything. But it will not be a backup that can jump in at frequent intervals. So the current interruptions will unfortunately continue. Various complications were involved between using Blackboard 6 and Blackboard 8. Vice Chancellor Dobrin had been under the impression that campus faculty governance groups had requested the update to Blackboard 8 from Blackboard 6, since the administrative representatives from most of the campuses had (apparently) advocated such a change. This was given as the reason why Blackboard 8 was not first tested on a smaller number of campuses before being made the standard for all but three campuses.

2. Nominations were conducted for the five at-large positions on the University Faculty Senate Executive Committee. All of the incumbents: Prof. Stefan Baumrin of Lehman College and the Graduate Center), Prof. Sandi Cooper of the College of Staten Island, Prof. Anne Friedman of Borough of Manhattan Community College, Prof. Leslie Jacobson of Brooklyn College, and Prof. Philip Pecorino of Queensborough Community College, were re-nominated. Prof. Michael Barnhart of Kingsborough Community College, Prof. Terrence Martell of Baruch College, and Prof. Rishi Raj of City College of New York, were also
nominated. The nomination period remains open until the election takes place at the May 5 plenary.

3. The plenary heard reports on presidential searches at Brooklyn College, Hostos Community College, and Medgar Evers College. These reports were delivered by faculty members at these campuses.

4. For the third successive plenary, a discussion was held on the PSC-CUNY awards process. This time the panel consisted of Prof. Kathryn Richardson of New York City College of Technology, chair of the University Faculty Senate Research Committee, and Prof. Jim Gordon of Hunter College. The panel was introduced by Prof. Friedman and a resolution endorsing the Joint Resolution of the University Committee on Research Awards (UCRA) and the University Faculty Senate Research Committee was introduced by Prof. Pecorino. The resolution passed unanimously.

5. On March 10, Prof. Philipp and Prof. Martha Bell lobbied in Albany on behalf of more funding for the university. This was the occasion of the CUNY/SUNY Legislative Luncheon, attended by legislators who are also CUNY and SUNY alumni.

6. The Chemistry, Biology, Biochemistry, and Physics Discipline Council resolved that the CUNY Advanced Science Research Facility, located on the City College of New York campus, establish a governance body that includes elected faculty representatives. It also asks that the Graduate Center Executive Officers of those disciplines be part of that governance body. At the present time, academic planning for the facility, which is under construction, has, for the last two years, apparently been done entirely by Vice Chancellor Gillian Small’s office, with the advice of those faculty members selected by that office. There has been no participation by University Faculty Senate bodies.

7. Planning for the CUNY School of Pharmacy continues under the leadership of Dr. Alexandra Logue, Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. This school has been a long-standing agenda item of the University Faculty Senate. A steering committee is expected to be announced soon. The proposed location at York College will allow for participation by the staff of the United States Food and Drug Administration Regional Center, which is based on that campus.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.
NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Esdras Tulier