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Role of the Senate Moderator

Patricia Humphrey
Georgia Southern University

Senate Executive Committee

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Debra Sabia has asked that I provide a declarative statement on how I see the role of the Senate Moderator. She has also made numerous charges about the manner in which Jeanette Rice filled this position – including misuse of the listserv and subversion of the office. If she did misuse the listserv, she has already apologized for it. As for subverting the office, having worked with Jeanette as a member of the SEC for the past year, I can honestly say her motivations were consistent – promoting the welfare of GSU, the Faculty Senate, and trying to move forward in a positive manner. I don't know Debra's definition of subversion, but this is not it (at least according to my dictionary).

Having said that, I will make the following statement first. I was not so much *elected* to the office of Moderator, but *drafted* by the SEC and the Senate. I did not actively seek the position; however, no others were willing to serve. What does this fact say about our Senators?

To whom does the moderator report? Debra seems to believe it is to the administration. I do not believe this is in fact true. In my view, a person reports to those who installed them in a position (or those who have the power to keep them there). This means the Senate moderator reports to the *Senate*.

What is the primary role of the moderator? The moderator conducts the Senate meetings in an orderly manner according to Robert's Rules of Order so that business may be conducted expeditiously (not getting bogged down in petty details) and fairly. Jeanette has been the best "meeting general" I have ever seen. I hope I do as well.

What other roles does the moderator have? Many.

1. As Chair of the SEC, the moderator conducts the SEC agenda setting meeting each month. The SEC has a duty to examine each agenda item request to ensure that it is based in fact, generally affects more than one college/unit or is in the interest of the University as a whole, and that it is within the purview of the Senate. We cannot, for example, override BOR policies or dictate to the Foundation (an affiliated but *independent* body). If senators want to protest decisions made by these bodies, they are free to do so as individuals. Bear in mind (section 108.02 of the Faculty Handbook) "...it is the official faculty *advisory* body to the President. *Subject to the approval of the President*, the recommendations of the Faculty Senate become the academic policy of the University to be implemented by the administration." (italics mine.)
2. The moderator serves as a conduit of information between the faculty and the administration. This is a two-way street. Faculty want answers to questions (RFIs, for example). Administrators want to know faculty sentiments.
3. The moderator reports to the Senate actions taken by the SEC, as well as final dispensation of passed motions. (Were they approved by the President? See #1 above.)
4. The moderator attends many meetings and consultations each month to accommodate the above roles.
5. Other duties as assigned: attend all graduations, serve as a member of the Physical Planning Committee, participate in textbook forums, etc.

What *can't* the moderator do?

1. Introduce/sponsor a motion. This is a right all other senators have.

2. Vote (normally). In most situations, the moderator can vote only to break a tie.
3. Enter into debate (normally) except to bring the assembly back to salient points.

What does the moderator get for doing the job?

1. One course release per semester (if approved by his/her unit chair)
2. Senate-related secretarial help from Ginger Malphrus
3. “Runny Eggs” with the Provost during the week before each Senate meeting.
4. Probably a better appreciation for how the university does (and doesn’t) function.

We’ll see.

Finally, please let’s put this contentious year behind us. There are important issues still before us.

1. Roles and Rewards. The Senate discussed the report at the October, 2004 meeting. This has been approved by the Administration. We must now implement the system and work to ensure it is recognized by all members of the faculty and administration – both at annual review/raise time and promotion/tenure reviews.

2. Raises for Promotion. The committee to study this issue has been formed. We’ll hope to hear from them soon.

3. Faculty turnover/temporary faculty usage/teaching loads. Certain proposals for teaching loads for temps have been rebuffed in the past. Turnover is composed of natural elements (retirement, those who would leave anyway) and those discontent with issues such as pay, teaching loads, etc. If lecturers are implemented (necessary in some departments in my view), we must work to ensure they do not become second-class citizens, but are valued highly for the necessary roles they perform.

4. Re-accreditation. Work remains to be done in anticipation of and reaction to the final report in December.

5. Limits on unlimited forgiveness of poor student performance (the adjusted GPA). This was brought to the Senate in February 2004 and returned to Academic Standards and Enrollment Management for more information. We have been working on the question and believe we have found a reasonable compromise. Look for this to resurface in September. If we’re “moving to the next level” of “academic excellence” we should hold our students accountable.

6. Senate By-laws. At least two issues need to be clarified. How are officers of the Senate elected? Apparently, this has not come up before (only one candidate per office). Also, I have found at least one inconsistency between the By-Laws of the Senate and the University Statutes. According to the By-laws, the President has 15 days to approve/veto a Senate motion; in the University Statutes the period is 30 days.

Finally, for those of you not returning – best of wishes for your future. For those of you who are – let’s hope for a cooperative, positive year. We’re all well-educated, supposedly rational people. Let’s put that brain power to work to solve problems, not create them.