Minutes of March 8 were approved.

President’s remarks

Dr. Patton welcomed new members Phillip Mitchem of Staff Advisory Council and Don Reitzes of Executive Committee.

Dr. Patton encouraged use of vacation days this summer.

Dr. Patton stated plans to visit legislators during the summer months to garner support for salary increases, MRRF funding, the Humanities Building and the Henry County center. Dr. Patton emphasized that the message to legislators would include all six colleges, and urged others interacting with the external community to do the same.

Dr. Patton reminded that commencement ceremonies would be May 13, and requested indications of the number of faculty who would be attending each ceremony in order not to exceed the seating capacity of the faculty section.

Humanities Center

Dr. Adamson presented a proposal to establish the Humanities Center in the College of Arts and Sciences. She noted the proposal had gone through a number of iterations resulting in a highly structured center, but with opportunities to branch out to more units.

Dr. Cheshier, the first director of the center, stated the purpose of the center, to intensify support for humanistic research. He observed that humanities faculty had historically relied on informal connections to funding agencies, but the new center would be better positioned to address interdisciplinary, external funding initiatives based on topics rather than individual disciplines. Dr. Cheshier also pointed to opportunities for the center to engage in fund-raising efforts for the Humanities Building and to work for enhancing the humanities experiences of undergraduates and graduate students.

Dr. Carson pointed out that the proposal did not show participation by the School of Music or the Ernest G. Welch School of Art & Design, but included the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and the High Museum as potential partners. Dr. Cheshier responded the intention was to encourage networking with other disciplines.

Dr. Bahl asked about parameters on which the center would be evaluated in three years. Dr. Cheshier cited (1) a wide range of campus programming featuring guest scholars and showcasing Georgia State faculty and (2) leveraging of external funding.

Dr. Bahl asked about staffing for fund-raising. Dr. Cheshier replied that humanities faculty were accustomed to pursuing funding on their own. He added that if external funding efforts reached a level requiring staff, those costs would be absorbed without additional state funding.

Ms. Hurt encouraged use of open source publishing.

Dr. Adamson made a motion to approve the center as proposed. Dr. Kaminshine seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Staff Grievance Procedures
Ms. Jones and Ms. Giles presented proposed revisions of the grievance procedures. Ms. Giles indicated there had been broad participation in development of the procedures with particular attention to removing ambiguities from the current version. She cited consistent use of “business days” instead of “days” in stating deadlines and timelines, more time to allow administrators to review cases, definitions of matters which are grievable, encouragement of informal resolution, Employee Relations involvement, Legal Affairs review of decisions prior to release, and a standing board of trained review committee members.

Dr. Kaminshine asked for clarification of the nature of the reviews, de novo or reasonableness of decision. Dr. Marshall replied that the review was determine appropriateness of the decision with the burden of proof on the appellant.

Dr. Kelley questioned the use of the term “adverse action” rather than “alleged adverse action”. Dr. Marshall responded that “adverse action” was acceptable language in such documents.

Dr. Colarusso asked about the provision for a non-attorney advisor allowed to be present during mediation. Dr. Heyward commented that this provision was intended to foster settlements in a friendly environment.

Dr. Adamson inquired about the applicability of “practice” as stated in the document well as policies and regulations. Dr. Marshall stated considerations should be limited to policies and regulations.

Dr. Adamson asked about the route for discrimination claims, grievance process or ODEP. Ms. Giles replied that ODEP would continue handling discrimination matters. Dr. Adamson asked how employees would know which route to take. Ms. Giles indicated Employee Relations would advise employees with such questions.

Dr. Moore suggested clarifying the section on applicability to differentiate between departmental reorganization issues and demotions. Ms. Giles responded that Classification and Compensation would be involved in these cases.

Mr. Roth observed that the document had addressed the timeline issues raised by auditors.

Dr. Patton asked that the staff grievance procedures document be revised in light of the discussion and brought back for the June meeting.

Commencement

Dr. Patton stated that further consideration of the previously proposed changes in the commencement schedule had led to the conclusion that individual ceremonies could not be held in conjunction with the big event, because of the lack of auditorium space. He also noted experience at other institutions that attendance at the big event suffered when scheduled after the individual ceremonies.

Ms. Erskine handed out a revised schedule. She pointed out that (1) summer commencements would be eliminated; (2) fall commencements would have individualized recognition for PhD graduates only (i.e., no names called for undergraduates and master’s graduates), no commencement speakers, eight tickets per graduate rather than four, and diplomas mailed within two weeks; (3) spring commencements would have only the big event with individualized recognition of PhD graduates only, a major internationally recognized speaker, no tickets required (in the Georgia Dome), and diplomas mailed within two weeks.

Dr. Patton added that the proposed schedule would be implemented in summer 2007.

Dr. Bahl commented that having the graduates walk across the stage without calling their names would cause even more crowd noise. Dr. Henry questioned why it was necessary to have the graduates walk across the stage rather than being recognized by standing where they were seated.

Dr. Henry noted some universities have college ceremonies on one day and the big event on the next day. Dr. Colarusso added that some have the big event in the morning and the college ceremonies in the afternoon. Ms. Erskine replied that the lack of space made it impossible to adopt such a pattern at Georgia State. She pointed out that the Georgia Dome did not have smaller assembly areas for the college ceremonies. Dr. Bahl suggested using the Student Center ballrooms. Dr. Henry responded that the ballrooms were not large enough for students to bring guests. Dr. Patton reiterated the concern of the students that they be allowed as many guests as possible.
Dr. Adamson questioned what the fall ceremony would be like with no speaker and not calling the names of graduates. Dr. Patton commented that an objective was to encourage students to march in the spring. He added that the School of Music would be asked to provide more substantial live music for the fall ceremony. Dr. Adamson suggested eliminating the 5:00 p.m. fall ceremony for graduate students, and having all graduate students march in the spring. Dr. Patton observed that having PhD students recognized individually was inspiring for undergraduates and master’s graduates.

Dr. Kaminshine spoke in favor of having graduates stand in groups rather than walk across the stage. He asked if elimination of the summer commencement would delay conferring degrees for students finishing their degree programs in the summer. Dr. Patton replied that degree completion would be recorded at the end of the summer term.

Dr. Adamson suggested using a video screen to roll the names of graduates in lieu of calling their names. Dr. Patton agreed this was an option to explore and added that there would also be an upgrade of the printed program. Ms. Erskine indicated the program upgrade would include notations for honors.

Mr. Mitchem asked about the projected number of spring graduates. Ms. Erskine answered approximately 2,500. Mr. Mitchem questioned readiness to handle the larger crowds for the big event in the spring. Mr. Marshall replied that the Georgia Dome staff would be available as stipulated in the contract.

Dr. Huss commended the big event approach and urged elimination of fall and summer commencements in favor of one spring commencement. Dr. Patton noted Commencement Committee discussion of such options had shifted back and forth as its membership changed from year to year. Dr. Kaminshine commented that fall commencements were more common for campuses with non-traditional enrollments and the culture of Georgia State did not view fall commencements as bizarre. Dr. Colarusso voiced support for the suggestion by Dr. Huss and added that culture could be changed. Dr. Patton observed that the guaranteed tuition policy would drive more students toward regular, four-year enrollment with spring graduations.

Dr. Adamson spoke of the importance of smaller gatherings for students to interact with fellow students, family and friends. She suggested college-based convocations. Dr. Patton responded that honors days, pinnings, etc. could be enhanced to serve this purpose.

Dr. Colarusso suggested a phase-in approach by keeping the fall commencement, moving the PhD graduates to spring, and seeing how the spring commencement worked before eliminating the fall. Dr. Fritz urged the opposite; that is, eliminating the fall commencement, seeing how the spring commencement worked, and returning to the fall commencement if necessary.

Dr. Marshall pointed out that the demolition of the Courtland Street bridge would be a reason to move all commencements from the Sports Arena. Mr. Sheheane added that the project could take as long as 30 months. Dr. Patton concurred that the bridge project timing would fit the spring 2008 implementation of the one big ceremony at the Georgia Dome.

Dr. Adamson asked if the university could fund college-based events in conjunction with the big ceremony. Dr. Patton responded that the savings from eliminating the summer and fall commencements would be offset by the cost of the Georgia Dome rental and the speaker fees. Ms. Erskine added that there was also the issue of space on campus for college-based events.

Ms. Rupp commented that the current schedule of commencements required a lot of staff support to shepherd people to the right positions. Ms. Erskine agreed that the one ceremony approach would reduce the annual demand for such support.

Dr. Huss made a motion to eliminate summer and fall commencements beginning with summer 2007 and fall 2007 and to institute the big ceremony at the Georgia Dome in spring 2008 with undergraduate and master’s graduates recognized in groups and PhD graduates recognized individually. Dr. Fritz seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Dr. Dabney emphasized the need to discuss the change of schedule with the Commencement Committee. Ms. Erskine noted the Commencement Committee had discussed and endorsed the scaled down fall commencement, but not the elimination of same.
Announcements

Ms. Hurt asked about known plans for the Courtland Street bridge project. Mr. Sheheane reported a campus task force was working on an impact study and developing stipulations for the project contract to be issued by GDOT. He noted on-going consultations with GDOT and the City of Atlanta regarding the project. He cited issues such as access to the Courtland Building and service deliveries. He indicated vehicular and pedestrian traffic could be affected for 18-30 months for the full length of the bridge. Dr. Patton noted efforts to get GDOT to expedite the project given the danger of falling debris.

Dr. Huss announced the J. Mack Robinson College of Business Hall of Fame event would be May 11.

Dr. Adamson announced the 100th birthday for Ernest Welch for whom the School of Art & Design is named.

Dr. Colarusso announced a public broadcasting event at the College of Education on May 9.

Dr. Kaminshine announced 40% giving by the graduating College of Law class.