Present: Kyle Bruner, Doris Derby, Chip Gallagher, Christine Gallant, Tazar Gissentanner, Chuck Marvin, Lois Mohr, Cora Presley, Fernando Reati, Tim Renick, Mary Ann Romski, Hazel Scott, Debra Snell, Sally Wallace, Carol Winkler, Julia Marks Young.

Absent: Barry Chung, Marion Etzel, Paula Eubanks, Valerie Fennell, Steve Harmon, Kathryn Kozaitis, Gayle Nelson, Linda Nelson, John Peterson, Sandeep Purao, Steve Rapp, Joe Rau, Susan Talburt, Maria Valeri-Gold, Tracy Van Voris.

After members introduced themselves, the March minutes were approved as read. The meeting opened with the election of next year’s chair, and Christine Gallant was re-elected as chair.

John DeCastro, Chair of the Senate Executive Committee, was our guest speaker, and as the committee waited for a quorum he commented that with the large size of some committees this year the usual rules regarding quorums might be relaxed somewhat. Christine added that our committee already has 31 members, so that it might be wise if needed to conduct business with a few under the quorum.

John discussed matters relating to staff in the Senate. He said that since our motion on staff membership was sent to the Statutes and Bylaws Committee in March, the issue has gotten very complex. It will need to be addressed as part of the larger picture of committee restructuring that he wishes all committees to consider next year. He has learned that there is no Senate bylaw that establishes Staff Advisory Council (SAC) representation on Senate committees. When SAC was created by the Senate in 1992 their representatives were not intended to be voting members of Senate committees, but only liaison members from the Senate back to SAC. On checking the present practice of representation, he discovered that some staff on Senate committees are ex officio members (for Directors count as staff), some are appointed by committee chairs, and some are appointed by SAC. This in turn raised the question of which staff would get Senate voting rights, if staff are given Senate membership. Would the new senators replace the present SAC members?

John stated that he himself supported staff membership in the Senate, for he thought that it would strengthen the influence and power of the Senate to be able to claim that it represented all segments of the University. He also had seen that staff members contribute a valuable dimension to committee considerations. However, he said that the fact needed to be faced that there is definite opposition by many of the faculty to the admission of staff into the Senate. A new committee member asked the reasons for this faculty opposition. John said that the Senate considers many items relating to academic matters, and many faculty did not want non-academic senators voting on academic matters. Christine added that some faculty fear that the non-tenured staff will vote with their administrative supervisors.

Discussion followed of the new enforcement by the Nominations Committee of the University Statute requiring that 75% of committees should be elected senators. A member asked whether faculty senators felt that their voting power has been diluted by the presence of staff now on committees. John responded that many felt that some of the committees had become overweighted with staff. Our committee, for example, has three SAC representatives, as well as three ex officio members who were Directors. Christine added that there also were six students, only two of whom were elected senators, and that last year only 11 of the 21 committee members were faculty. John added that this year all the Senate committees will need to consider their structure and composition of membership.
In other business, Christine announced to new members that last year the committee had voted to allow electronic voting with a 72-hour turn-around if there was a matter needing immediate review. She asked present members to consider whether or not they wished to allow voting in absentia for those with an unavoidable professional conflict, such as a scheduled class. Some felt that with the large number of members, this might be a good idea; but others thought that committee discussion was very important in deciding how to vote. The committee voted unanimously not to allow absentee voting.

Christine asked the committee if they would like to cancel the scheduled May 14th meeting, and the committee decided to cancel it unless there was business to discuss.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:01 pm.