

# USF FACULTY SENATE

## NEWS 2003-4

### ***Toward a Proactive Senate***

*S. Elizabeth Bird, President*

***Constitutional Changes; New policies;  
Pressure on salaries; Reversing Violation of  
Collegial Governance; Creating New Forums  
for Faculty Voice***

Since taking over as Senate President, my goal has been to move the Senate from a reactive to a proactive stance, and to reclaim our role as the representative voice of the faculty. We began last Spring, with the insistence that the new personnel rules be created in partnership with faculty. In writing the USF policy on academic freedom and responsibility, I aimed to write into the university's rule book a commitment to shared governance. Everything since has worked toward the goal of changing USF culture so the faculty voice is routinely sought – and heeded. We have some way to go, but consider our progress:

### ***Shared Governance Initiative***

In September, we wrote the Principles of Shared Governance, and began discussions with administration on how to disseminate them among the USF community. Progress was slow, but finally the document was sent to all departments, with a request from the Provost to discuss how the principles should operate at the departmental level. Replies are in, and there is strong agreement that the principles are sound. So how does that translate into action?

We have drafted a Senate response, with recommendations for minimal standards of departmental governance. The Provost's office has pledged to seek more consultation – then share their vision, and work with us to implement consistent guidelines. *It must become USF policy and practice that departments function according to governance documents that are endorsed and maintained by faculty.*

### ***Salaries***

The Senate initiated the dialog on faculty salaries, by requesting up-to-date figures and soliciting opinion from faculty about the dire effect of salary compression on USF's competitive ability to recruit

and retain faculty. Many faculty shared their stories and their frustrations. Failing state funds, money must come from university reallocation. We are told that action will begin very soon. USF must raise salaries, to meet the benchmarks in its Strategic Plan, as well as to have any hope of competing with aspirational peers.

### ***New Emeritus Process***

Early this year, the Senate created a new process for awarding Emeritus status to retired faculty. It brings us in line with national standards by rooting the process in the academic department, and formalizing the rights and roles of emeritus faculty as honored members of the community of scholars.

### ***Reversing violations***

Last Fall, two tenure-track professors at USF-Lakeland came to the Senate for help, having received non-renewal notices. While the Senate cannot address personnel conflicts as such, our concern was that academic principles of shared governance may have been violated, in that the termination had been made at the level of the Provost and the Campus CEO, without consultation at the departmental level. The administration considered the matter closed.

I formed an ad hoc committee, chaired by Distinguished Professor and Senator Jim Strange, with retired mathematics professor and former Senate speaker Fred Zerla, and vice president Susan Greenbaum. After exploring the consultation issue, the committee concluded that indeed there had been, and "an egregious affront to collegial governance."

We brought the report to the Senate, Provost and President, pointing out the serious implications. After discussion and consultation with the department, both faculty members have been offered reinstatement on the Tampa campus, with the choice of whether to count this past year toward tenure.

We are delighted. This was the right thing to do: I thank President Genshaft and Provost Khator for realizing this and making it happen. And it's a good sign for the future of the Senate and faculty influence – finally, we are being heard, and taken seriously.

***Visit the new, improved Senate web-site: <http://www.lib.usf.edu/usf-fs/>  
For full details of issues, reports, resolutions***

## ***Inter-campus Operations***

Events on the Lakeland campus clearly resulted from confusion about academic decision-making on the non-autonomous regional campuses. The Senate tackled the larger issue through a committee on inter-campus relations, in response to a 2003 proposal that would codify a reporting structure that disadvantaged faculty. As a direct result of the its work, USF began a committed effort to rethink inter-campus relationships, clarifying the role of faculty as members of one community, and placing the departments at the center of the academic mission on all three linked campuses – Tampa, Lakeland and Sarasota/ Manatee. New operating procedures, developed by faculty and administrators from all three campuses, will safeguard both faculty equity and accreditation standards. Again, the Senate made a real difference.

## ***Policy Innovations***

We enacted some significant amendments to our Senate constitutional and committee structures, again with the purpose of strengthening the senate as a Faculty body with the right to speak about any issues of concern to the university, and the expectation that we will be heeded.

We created a new standing council – the Council on Educational Policy and Issues, whose charge is to review, propose, and act upon any issue of concern to the educational mission and climate of the university. USF has been rare among major universities in lacking such a Council, resulting in haphazard policy-making and significant policy gaps. The council begins work this Fall, but has already discussed issues they may tackle -- from a review of student course evaluations, to the impact of large classes on educational mission, to inadequate policies on exploitation of students, staff, and faculty. This council should become a crucial forum for concrete change, working closely with the Provost.

## ***Joining State and National Initiatives***

As a member of the state-wide Advisory Council of Faculty Senates, I and Vice-President Susan Greenbaum have participated in the activities of faculty leadership across the state. I have brought back reports on state-wide issues, and our Senate has joined others in resolutions about issues that could affect us all, including salaries, new, impoverished standards for high school graduation, and recently, standardized testing and proposed

new rules about “excess” credit hours and out of state tuition for non-degree-seeking students. While passing resolutions can seem abstract and futile, a concerted faculty voice does have an effect, especially when joined by our administrations and Trustees. Having the voice of the faculty on local BOTs has helped, especially when those 11 faculty representatives reach consistent positions. Latest news is that standardized testing is all-but dead (though possibly replaced by something equally alarming!), and that the tuition measures are being moderated.

At the national level, the Senate has joined many other Division 1 schools in signing on to the *Framework for Comprehensive Athletics Reform*, developed by the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics, a network of faculty governance structures concerned with the relationship between athletics and academics.

## ***Does the Senate Represent You?***

For some time, we have been exploring the question of Senate representation. Should the Senate be restructured, so smaller voting units elect senators? Are there ways to rethink the way we do business? This discussion will continue next year – share your thoughts with senators and senate officers, by emailing us or visiting the Web site and posting in the Comments box. One day we hope to reach a point where faculty believe the Senate represents us – that it matters who’s on the Senate, and what decisions are made. And we need it to become second nature for all administrators to involve faculty at every stage of decision making, not after the fact.

But we have come a long way, and the Senate has made a difference. Good things have happened because we acted, and bad things have not happened – also because we acted. We have made progress in healing rifts between faculty and administration, although the relationship between Senate and administration should not necessarily be cozy. We must disagree sometimes, we must debate any issue of relevance, and we will speak up in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

**Next year’s Senate will continue a proactive stance, led by our new elected officers:**

**President:** Susan Greenbaum (CAS)  
**Vice President:** Steve Permuth (COE)  
**Secretary:** Kathy Whitley (Library)  
**Sgt-at-Arms:** Michael Barber (COM)  
**Sen.-at-Large:** Christopher Phelps (COM)