

**Indiana University School of Social Work**  
**Faculty Senate Minutes**  
**April 25, 2008**

Attendance: McGuire, Adamek, Khaja, Luca Sugawara, Patchner, Bell, Howes, Gass, Bennett, Weiler, Barton, Hostetter, Daley, Byers, Boys, Quinn, Williamson, McAllister, Thigpen, Sullivan, Satre, Larimer, Omoragyo, VanVoohris, Fitzgerald, Kim, Moffett, Ouellette, Vernon, Duggan

In Kokomo: Mello

In South Bend: Ramsey, Newcomb, Mischler, Brandon, Nicholson

In Gary: Mark

**Call to order:** Bob Vernon called the meeting to order at 10am and asked for a moment of silence in support of Cathy Pike for the loss of her son.

David Westhuis thanked the faculty for the support in responding to volunteers for housing and food. Cash donations were used to purchase food for last night and today. Many faculty thanked David for coordinating this effort.

Williamson moved and Byers seconded the approval of the minutes from 3/28/08. They were unanimously accepted.

**Items for consideration:**

1. Conferral of Degrees

Westhuis reported that we were planning to graduate: 254 MSWs from IUPUI (including 37 from Ft. Wayne); 36 MSWs from IU Northwest and 34 MSWs from IU South Bend. Westhuis moved that we confer these degrees and McGuire seconded. The motion passed with 1 “No” and no abstentions.

Queiro-Tajalli reported that we were planning to graduate: 13 Associate and 9 BS degrees in Labor Studies; 3 Associate in Human Services; and 86 BSWs (IU East, IUPUI and Bloomington combined). Queiro-Tajalli moved and Byers seconded that these degrees be conferred. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Dean's Update

Dean Patchner said he would make his report at the School Assembly immediately following this meeting.

3. Strategic Planning Update

Vernon set the gavel aside to speak as a member of the Strategic Planning committee. He reported that the committee as a whole is continuing to respond to many concerns and that there appears to be a confluence of issues that are highlighted in the SWOT analysis.

Barton reported that there were a few specific issues but in general, there were common themes. These included: communication (both internal and external); growth, size and expansion (seen as both a threat and an opportunity); lack of research infrastructure; collaboration; morale; leadership (again, both a strength but need for more structure); adequacy and distribution of resources; and concern for the reputation of the school. These themes were translated into 4 strategic goals (see report for specifics).

Cournoyer raised a concern that none of the four goals was specific to education, and those sentiments were discussed by many faculty members, including McGuire, Van Voohris, Sullivan and Queiro-Tajalli. McGuire moved and Howes seconded to accept the report of the committee and to ask them to continue to build on these efforts with adding wording to highlight our educational mission. The motion passed with one opposed.

#### 4. MSW Committee Report

Bennett gave a report on grade inflation which was produced by an ad hoc committee of the MSW committee. The MSW committee had previously voted to accept the recommendations of the report, citing concerns that as a School, we give too many A's. The average GPA for MSWs is 3.7. Students seem to have a sense of entitlement to As. The report suggested ways to get back to a more reasonable situation, such as modifying our grading practices and using more rubrics. Hostetter thanked Cournoyer and the rest of the committee for their work, but posited that there was little evidence from the literature on higher education that there is grade inflation at the undergraduate level. She expressed concern about setting up a forced grade distribution. She suggested that evaluating students on their subsequent employment, or even in the practicum is a better measure of their achievement than grades. She also suggested that we have a workshop for methods to more accurately assess student outcomes.

There was continued discussion on students' rewriting assignments to get improved grade. Quinn mentioned that this is done with undergraduate field process recordings. Luca Sugara commented that students expect to be able to do rewrites. Hostetter mentioned that this was an issue of teaching style and opportunities (or not!) should be listed in the syllabus. McGuire expressed concern that we are developing policies about a small number of students who do not achieve adequately and that we may need to focus our efforts on this small group of students. Byers discussed concerns about students who are graduating but are not competent and grades may not be an adequate way to address that issue. The discussion moved to concerns about field instructors rating students more effectively and challenges in improving field assessment.

Bennett suggested that we need a committee of the faculty senate to explore these challenges. Barton suggested that we need to be careful not to confuse rigor/quality of

students with grading – they are both important but separate issues. Adamek cautioned that at U. Of Illinois, a policy of no more than 1/3 A's was instituted and it caused many problems. Queiro-Tajalli expressed concern that this was more of an MSW issue. Cournoyer clarified that he began from the beginning position that CLIENTS are our primary constituency, NOT students and that this issue concerns everyone. He pointed out that in the MSW program, 80% of grades given were A's (A+, A or A-) and 19% were B's. Only 5 grades were given that were not passing. Newcomb reminded that we do measure outcomes in the field and Satre mentioned that Faculty Liaisons have responsibility to ensure that these outcomes are adequately met.

Sullivan pointed out that this is not just an issue for “bad” students but a way to challenge and encourage good students as well, to advance the quality of work for everyone. The MSW committee report is a statement of our intent to increase the rigor of all MSW classes. Hostetter asked if this meant we were agreeing to give C-'s; many faculty responded “no”. Bennett clarified that with new EPAS expectations moving from outcomes to competencies, what happens in one of our programs impacts the others and called for a Task Force from all programs to look at this issue. Hostetter moved that the MSW Task Force open its membership to the other programs and Williamson seconded. Cournoyer mentioned that the MSW Committee would have to agree. Dugan commented that it would be a good opportunity for faculty to work together. Queiro-Tajalli clarified that she wanted to make sure that the committee focused on education broadly, not just one program; she lauded the faculty for a very enlightening discussion. Bennett said the Task Force could invite others to join if they wanted; the motion was called to a vote, but failed.

Barton mentioned that this was an issue that Strategic Planning might deal with as well. After additional discussion, Pat Sullivan moved and Carmen Luca-Sugawara seconded a motion to endorse the MSW Committee report on Grade Inflation and encourage the committee to proceed with their efforts as outlined in the report. The motion carried, with 1 “No” and 1 “Abstention”.

## 5. Announcements

McGuire announced that Robert Vernon was reelected as Chair of the Faculty Senate, Margaret Adamek was elected Secretary and Khadija Khaja was elected Treasurer. McGuire also announced that Patrick Sullivan and Cathy Pike were elected to a two-year term (Fall 2008 through Spring 2010) of the Promotion and Tenure Committee.

The meeting was adjourned for the School Assembly to begin.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa E. McGuire  
Faculty Senate Secretary