

Faculty committee studies proposed grade change

By Gordon Johnson

The UNL Faculty Senate has "dilly-dallied around" in resolving charges that the university administration interfered with agricultural economics faculty freedom, according to a professor in that department.

Loyd Fischer said the senate has not moved fast enough in determining the facts behind possible change of a graduate student's grade. "They have not done a thing," Fischer said.

Glen Vollmar, chairman of the agricultural economics department, acknowledged he has heard complaints from instructors in the department about the senate's progress.

The Faculty Senate's Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee has been appointed to investigate charges that UNL administrators assigned a grade to a student without faculty permission.

The investigation is the latest in a controversy that began in January when a professor of agricultural economics charged an African graduate student with cheating. The student then alleged that the instructor gave him a "C" for a course because the professor was prejudiced.

Other investigations concerning the same issue are being conducted by the Federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare and the UNL Professional Conduct Committee.

The Professional Conduct Committee is looking into charges filed by Sen. Ernest Chambers that the same professor acted unprofessionally.

Faculty members and documents provide the following scenario.

A MONTH AND a half after the initial charges an agreement was made between the student and the professor stating that both would drop the charges. It was agreed that the student's "C" grade, which he received in Agricultural Economics 852, would be changed to a "B" once the student satisfactorily completed his comprehensive examinations.

But the student apparently became dissatisfied with the agreement and went to Chambers for help.

A second agreement, dated May 21, was drawn up by NU General Counsel Richard Wood, following a meeting between UNL Chancellor Roy Young, Martin Massengale, vice chancellor for the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Chambers and some faculty members.

The new agreement raised the student's grade to a "B" for other than academic reasons. Allowance was made for the student to take his comprehensive examinations in Los Angeles, where he now lives.

Final oral examinations were waived, the student was given a graduate assistantship of \$417 a month and the university paid for round trip air fare for the student to travel between Lincoln and Los Angeles to consult with his adviser.

Fischer said the agreement was drawn up without the knowledge or consent of the faculty.

After agricultural economics faculty learned what happened, they submitted a resolution to the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate, Fischer said.

THE RESOLUTION CALLED for censure of Young, Massengale and Agriculture and Natural Resources College Dean Ted Hartung because of alleged interference in academic matters.

The proposal also charged that the three administrators coerced faculty members to change the student's grade, and that the administrators submitted to political pressure from members of the Legislature.

The senate did not approve the resolution, but did succeed in July in getting the administration to rescind portions of the May 21 agreement.

Fischer said the agreement violated university bylaws because a grade cannot be awarded for other than academic reasons and oral examinations cannot be waived unless the student has been doing superior work.

In a letter dated Aug. 17 to the student, attorney Wood withdrew the second agreement. The letter said the student would receive a "B" for the course only after he satisfactorily completed his comprehensive examination. The waiver of the oral exam was also withdrawn.

Fischer said that at the meeting between the administrators and Chambers that Chambers threatened the administration if the student did not pass his comprehensive exams.

"I AM WILLING to go on the witness stand and swear that Chambers threatened us if he (the student) failed," Fischer said.

Only July 24, the Faculty Senate's Executive Committee accepted a letter from Young stating that administrative efforts to have the student's grade changed for other than academic reasons were inappropriate.

The executive committee also ruled that this was an inadequate response and that it would pursue no further action.

At the Sept. 11 Faculty Senate meeting, the Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee was appointed to determine which administrators were responsible for the grade change.

However, Fischer said he doubts this investigation will find anything new because the executive committee has already studied the matter.

Fischer charged that the executive committee decided not to pursue further action because it did not want to confront the administration. But Faculty Senate President William Campbell said more information would be needed before the matter can be pursued.

He added that the committee is not designed as an investigative body.

THE INVESTIGATION BY the Professional Conduct Committee is not expected to produce any significant results, according to Campbell.

The committee will have to examine events that occurred before the original agreement, but the terms of the agreement specify that the professor involved cannot comment on events that happened before the agreement.

The professor (not Fischer) said he was able to cooperate with HEW officials in their investigation of discrimination filed by the student.

After the second agreement was withdrawn, the student hired a local attorney, Larry Ruth. Ruth would not comment on whether legal action is planned, or the status of any agreement.

Ruth said the student "is considering a number of options," and litigation could be one of them. Ruth, who is retained as a lobbyist by several groups, added that he has met with Chambers on the matter.

Campbell said he thinks the original and last agreements offered to the student were fair, but resolution of the matter "is a long way off," because of pending investigations.

Bookstore computer offers convenience

An in-house mini computer will be the newest addition to the staff of the University Bookstore. According to manager Larry Behrends, the computer system is designed to help bookstore personnel provide students with books quickly and economically.

The computer system will process all data for ordering and unkeep of textbooks. The computer will process about 300 words per minute, increasing the efficiency of the entire textbook department, Behrends said.

"Most people can't type that fast," Behrends said. The textbook department currently is operated manually.

Data used to order and take inventory of textbooks include author, title, publisher and price. Data for the course the textbook is to be used for, such as instructor, call number and section number, also is included.

Besides processing and managing textbook ordering, the computer system will print purchase orders, automate returning unsold texts to publishers, analyze textbooks usage for future ordering and provide more responsive customer service with immediate access to all textbook data.

Behrends said the benefits of the computer system include earlier ordering, improved faculty-student communication, and reduced inventory processes.

The computer was ordered recently and will arrive in January 1980.

Behrends estimated it will take one year from the time installation starts until the computer is running at capacity. The long-term goal of the system is to control all data for the entire bookstore, he said.

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