Faculty Senate Minutes

Monday, April 20, 2020

Present: Melissa Anderson, Jeremy Carlton, Paul Condon, Brian Fedorek, Paul French, Andrew Gay, Marianne Golding, Cynthia Hutton, Dennis Jablonski, Laurie Kurutz, Matt Moreali, Jesse Longhurst, Tiffany Morey, Anna Oliveri, Michael Parker, Aprille Phillips, Mark Siders, Ellen Siem, Michael Stanfill, Chad Thatcher, Precious Yamaguchi, Kemble Yates

Absent: Prakash Chenjeri and Justin Harmon

Guests: Sue Walsh, Matt Stillman, Alena Ruggerio, Dave Carter, Sarah Guenther, Lee Ayers, Clay Austin, Jody Waters, Sherry Ettlich, Rattiphon Wuthisatian

Meeting called to order at 4:00 pm.

1. Approval of Minutes from 04/06
   * Fedorek moved to approve the minutes from April 6; Stanfill seconded the motion.
   * Carlton, Condon, Fedorek, French, Golding, Hutton, Jablonski, Kurutz, Moreali, Longhurst, Morey, Oliveri, Parker, Phillips, Siders, Siem, Stanfill, Thatcher, Yamaguchi, and Yates voted in favor. None opposed. Gay and Anderson abstained.**Motion passed.**
2. President’s Report – Linda Schott
   * President Schott was absent because she was attending the Finance meeting of the Board at the same time.
3. Provost’s Report – Sue Walsh
   * Walsh mentioned that she has been at an Academic Affairs meeting with the Board, and that the full Board meeting would be the following day. The next meeting would be on the tuition recommendation for the Board to consider in May.
   * Walsh hoped everyone was doing well. She has been sending out emails. Now that there is a Faculty Forum, it freed up the all-faculty emails.
   * The GSWS major was approved by the HECC unanimouosly at their regular meeting April 9, we are now ready to go forward promoting that and the Transgender Studies Certificate too. Tell all your friends about it.
   * Anderson presented the Student Evaluation Task Force work to chairs and directors; the work was well received and there is some excitement around this new process. People were very interested to see what the program questions would be like--there are universal questions and questions related to program outcomes. There is more to come on that as the task force gets feedback from chairs and directors.
   * We have 207 students living in the Residence Halls. We were down to a few dozen after finals when people were deciding if they were staying or leaving; there less than 30 at one point, but we’ve opened the dorms up to students who are not usually traditional residence hall students since some lost their housing when they left town.
   * They are doing takeout at the Hawk. Walsh expressed thanks to Aladdin [used to be A’viands] for making this work.
   * The tuition advisory board continues to meet. This is mandated by HB 4141; there are four students, two faculty members, and two members of the administration. Walsh chairs it.
   * They are meeting weekly, now is the time when they really start looking at numbers to make a recommendation to President Schott.
   * All of the universities came into the academic year thinking any increase would be below 5%. Anything above 5% needs to go before the HECC and get approval. Due to the virus, there are different conversations being had. Every institution is doing something different from what they planned, and some haven’t decided yet. We’re one of those that hasn’t decided yet. There is not much appetite to go above 7%, but there is a discussion of double digits to address losses due to the virus. But a 15% increase is not where we want to be so we’re doing everything we can to mitigate significant tuition increases.
   * Gay asked if we were getting any direction from the state about if we should set tuition based on virus impacts, and if there was discussion about it at the state level about something they could do so we could go with our original numbers.
   * Walsh responded that Ben Cannon, the executive director of the HECC, sits in on the statewide Provosts Council meetings, along with Veronica Dujon, the university liaison from the HECC. Those meetings are twice a week since the virus hit. Cannon brings information from the governor’s office to those meetings. There has been no overt guidance about what we should do. There is never encouragement to raise tuition but there is some cognitive dissonance about that.
   * From the CARES Act, we should get about 3.4 million for SOU, 1.7 million has to go directly to students--in the form of tuition remission, student jobs, etc. For the other 1.7 million, we don’t have guidelines yet. The governor gets other money that she has discretion over, but it’s for all education, K-12, community colleges, universities--there is maybe $30 million total but it doesn’t go very far.
   * We need to report how much we’ve lost since the virus hit; those costs are being documented; loss of revenue and virus-related costs; we’ll be reporting them to the state and federal government
   * Fedorek asked if money could be used to reduce tuition. Walsh responded that tuition remissions would effectively do that, but maybe not all students would be eligible. There will be conditions for that money, like Pell eligibility, need, etc. Fedorek noted that the fact that we’re using this money to reduce tuition is a good talking point and good for PR.
   * Walsh noted that they’ve also been talking about student behavior; we’re about 7% down from where we were last year. We’ll be able to see a little more fall term activity soon. Walsh doesn’t think it will be like it usually is, where we know by the end of August where we’ll be.
   * We’ll be doing remote Raider Reg, you’ll find out about that. The division directors were in the call with Neil [Woolf] and Danielle [Mancuso] about Raider Reg.
4. ASSOU President’s Report – Britney Sharp--Sarah doing it instead
   * Sharp was absent so the ASSOU report was given by Sarah Guenther.
   * ASSOU is starting the Elections process; there is not much to update other than every other campus leadership is trying to talk to their members about funds
   * The SFC process was just passed through the Senate and then will go before the Board.
5. Advisory Council Report – Chair-Elect Kemble Yates
   * Yates had two main things to mention. First, there is an issue came up first in Senate about what sorts of allowances we need to make for P&T during the “virus time.” Part of this is about evaluations and will be discussed today. AC talked about finding ways to mitigate impact on performance reviews on faculty;
   * This is for future years, this year’s P&T decisions were already underway when the virus happened
   * The rest of the conversation about mitigating the impact of the virus is “all else,” like canceled conferences, speaking engagements, etc., as well as people who’ve had to put a lot more into teaching and had less time for scholarship and creative activity.
   * Yates, Gay, Walsh, and David Bithell of the FPC met in a smaller group after AC met last week. They would like FPC to take the first stab at some proposals at how to address these impacts, keeping it flexible. Bithell will take this to FPC, then come up with draft recommendations.
   * Also Waters and Stillman attended and talked about grade options; they finally landed on recommendation that will be discussed more today
   * Gay added that they wanted everyone to know we are thinking about the P&T issues really carefully; and asked for faculty concerned about unique situations to reach out. All are committed to making sure it is addressed in an equitable way. He added that this year’s FPARs would be a great way to address how COVID 19 has impacted your work
   * Fedorek said that Jessica [Piekielek, of FPC] asked the Social Sciences division about it; they suggested maybe an addendum saying something like “this is the RONA effect on my teaching, scholarship, service…” explaining the impact it had, how they tried to keep working on scholarship, teaching, and service while this was happening
   * Yates mentioned that one thing AC and the smaller group were wrestling with was the need for top-down and bottom-up evaluation and standards. We need elements of both in how we implement what we do. It is already ingrained that individual programs set standards for scholarship, and sometimes service, and we want to balance it so it’s not too varied between programs. If Senate makes some recommendations, then programs can work on them afterwards.
6. New Graduate Curriculum (Vote)
   * Gay asked if the catalog copy was approved; Waters said it was
   * Oliveri made a motion to approve the new curriculum; Kurutz seconded
   * Anderson, Carlton, Condon, Fedorek, French, Hutton, Jablonski, Kurutz, Moreali, Longhurst, Morey, Oliveri, Parker, Phillips, Siders, Siem, Stanfill, Thatcher, Yamaguchi, and Yates voted in favor. None opposed. Gay and Golding abstained. **Motion passed.**
7. New Undergraduate Curriculum (Vote)
   * Fedorek made a motion to approve the undergraduate curriculum; Kurutz seconded.
   * Anderson, Carlton, Fedorek, French, Golding, Hutton, Jablonski, Kurutz, Longhurst, Morey, Oliveri, Parker, Phillips, Siders, Siem, Stanfill, Thatcher, Yamaguchi, and Yates voted in favor. None opposed. Condon, Gay, and Moreali abstained.**Motion passed.**
8. New Academic Policy Proposal Re: Spring Grade Mode Options (Request to Waive the Two-Week Rule)
   * Waters explained that there were concerns about which courses should be pass/no pass, and how that would affect faculty and students. The committee looked at 5 different options with various scenarios.
   * There were a couple of different considerations; what this meant for Enrollment Services, and what makes most sense for students and is most responsive. Weighing all those things, nobody is going to be completely happy but this proposal seemed like the most responsive institutionally. It allows us to protect well-being of students; gives faculty and SSCs ability to negotiate with students, and it is consistent with what has been happening nationally around this issue
   * The proposal is to take all classes that are grade only and make them grade or P/NP option. Students don’t have to decide right away, since the policy gives them until 30 days after a course is over to decide.
   * The committee thinks we’ll be able to manage this with advising to make sure students don’t make a decision that will hurt them later; no graduate programs thought this was an appropriate option for grad students so it only applies to undergraduates
   * This is a temporary policy; it only applies while we are doing remote delivery or extraordinary circumstances
   * If folks want to make this a permanent change, they can bring this back to academic policies for a full discussion/decision later
   * Yates stated that he is going to vote for it, and thinks it is reasonable considering we are 2-3 weeks into term, but he is concerned--he would like programs to be able to make a course be p/np and not have a grade option. Some people have concerns about being able to evaluate student performance on an A-F scale. Some programs might want to make some adjustments to give programs more say if remote learning continues. Waters agreed, and said that this is a rapidly evolving conversation
   * Fedorek asked if there is anything preventing programs from saying to students, “I know this is an option, but be aware there could be repercussions; you have that option BUT we want you to be aware that there are issues if you select it.” Waters said they were hoping aggressive advising would take place to make sure students understood. She explained that we are not encouraging pass/no pass, we are enabling it. It is an additional option available to students concerned about being able to perform academically the way they usually would
   * Stillman noted that as a matter of practice, students come to him after a term is over saying they need a letter grade, and he honors it in case by case scenarios.
   * Waters said we would encourage faculty to keep grade calculations that are relatively precise in case a student makes a determination that they need to have a letter grade later
   * Jablonski asked if this would apply to summer too; Waters said it would
   * Jablonski also asked if there was a common sense of what grade was considered passing; it was confirmed that it is C- in the catalog
   * Siders noted that instructors teaching don’t know who is taking a course pass/no pass, so they can’t give students good advice. Stillman said he would look into it. Siders wondered if faculty could get an email when someone changes their grade option
   * Waters also noted that there will be a COVID notation on transcripts
   * Sherry asked [via chat] for confirmation that this only applies to undergraduates, and it was confirmed. Waters suggested that a sentence or amendment be made clarifying that it is only a policy for undergraduates.
   * Fedorek wanted to second Siders’ idea; he’s had students ask about this option. It would be beneficial to faculty/chairs. Many CCJ faculty aren’t fans of pass/no pass.
   * Waters said that they would work on language to share with students if this passed
   * Thatcher asked how students would know this is an option, and Waters noted that the information would be on the campus coronavirus page.
   * Kurutz moved to waive the 2 week rule; Yates seconded. Anderson, Carlton, Condon, Fedorek, French, Golding, Hutton, Jablonski, Kurutz, Moreali, Longhurst, Morey, Oliveri, Parker, Phillips, Siders, Siem, Stanfill, Thatcher, Yamaguchi, and Yates voted in favor. None opposed. Gay abstained.**Motion passed.**
   * Kurutz moved to approve the policy change; Oliveri seconded. Anderson, Carlton, Condon, French, Golding, Hutton, Jablonski, Kurutz, Moreali, Longhurst, Morey, Oliveri, Parker, Phillips, Siders, Siem, Stanfill, Thatcher, Yamaguchi, and Yates voted in favor. Fedorek opposed. Gay abstained. **Motion passed.**
9. New Bylaws Waiver Proposal Re: Use of Spring Teaching Evals in Tenure/Promotion Applications (Discussion)
   * Gay stated that the bylaws language for this came that day and is in the Senate drive
   * We talked about a few different options: do no evaluations; change nothing and count them as always; some options in between, such as a pilot of the work of the student evaluation task force. President Schott thought using the same tool might give better comparison info--and switching tools might give us an incorrect view of new tool. The feeling at AC was that best option was to give faculty the option to use them or not
   * Oliveri mentioned a concern of a STEM faculty member: if the faculty member opted not to use them, then the chair evaluation would be the only evaluation of spring teaching and that could be biased. There would be no second way of being evaluated. Is there another way you could be evaluated?
   * Anderson responded that the faculty member would have fall and winter term evaluations, and those could be weighted more heavily if spring wasn’t used. Also, nothing is stopping the faculty member from doing their own evaluations, polls, or surveys using tools like Qualtrics. These can be used for formative assessment already, and the task force would be talking more about recommendations for that going forward. The faculty member could do those and include them if they felt they needed another voice besides that of the chair for this term.
   * Yates noted that the narrative you write as part of your P & T application could address this, and you could mention it in your FPAR too. Even if a chair did try to hold it against you, you can respond to that as well. And including your own evaluations would add weight to this also.
   * Jablonski asked if this would apply to summer too; Gay said that as written it was for spring term only for now, so it wouldn’t unfairly affect people who had to redesign whole courses in 2 weeks. Senate could discuss if it should apply to summer too, although instructors have had longer to redesign summer courses.
   * Jablonski noted that if a summer course was being done by remote delivery for the first time, the person would still be in that “novice” period.
   * Oliveri noted that especially at the early part of the summer, you really don’t have more time.
   * Thatcher asked if summer evaluations were even included in P&T. Walsh confirmed that summer evaluations are included in P&T, but that a lot of summer classes are taught online as a matter of course. Gay wondered if Stillman could tell us how many courses were usually taught face to face in the summer.
   * Longhurst said that MAT program is an intensive 8 weeks face to face. She said that part of the rationale to not include evaluations was to insulate faculty against disappointment about mode of delivery even for good classes
   * Gay said one difference was that students were already enrolled in the spring courses and the mode of delivery changed, whereas they would know ahead of time for summer. However, it’s true they still wouldn't have a choice for something like the MAT program.
   * Phillips seconded what Longhurst said, and noted that that students choose the Leadership program at SOU because it is face to face; the pedagogy will be really different in remote delivery; she’d like to see this option extended into summer
   * Gay asked if anyone had thoughts on the wording of the resolution. The goal was to remove hidden bias on the part of the committee--no discussion of why evaluations are not included is allowed
   * Yates noted that several people have brought up extending this option to summer. We’re not voting for two weeks anyway, and so he suggested a; straw poll. A straw poll was done, and no one voted against it. All who voted were in support of it.
   * Oliveri suggested that it should be extended until “this is over” [until remote delivery due to COVID-19/executive orders/etc is replaced with usual delivery mode]
   * Gay noted that we might have a totally different system in the fall anyway if the task force proposal is approved. It’s a very different model and does away with the whole quantitative evaluation.
   * Oliveri thought it still could be biased if the experience is not what students expected
   * Anderson explained that the proposal will make it more clear when it is presented, but it’s not just a new formula for “scoring” teaching, it’s a whole new way of looking at feedback.
   * Gay asked senators to take this proposal back to their constituents. He would make the change and apply it to summer as well.
10. Announcements/New Business
    * Walsh corrected an earlier statement; we are down 6.3% in enrollment, not just under 7.
    * Thatcher said that for OAL this was supposed to be spring immersion, 40 days in the field with the students. They are having a pretty amazing time bringing everyone together to study the way the outdoor industry is being gutted. They are having amazing conversations and discussing redefining what adventure is, and he can see applying it to the next spring immersion
    * Gay said he could relate to that; this term was supposed to be the Digital Cinema spring immersion, and they have changed it to career design instead. They have had amazing guests because the industry is shut down. It doesn’t replace what they were going to do, but students have been giving really positive feedback about this
    * Anderson asked everyone to let their students and colleagues know that math, science, and writing tutoring is available. It is virtual, but tutors are available and ready to help. And it’s free!
    * Stillman said that faculty should have gotten an email from Waters about reporting no-show students; there was also a line about spring grades--they are due a day later, so spread the word about that.
    * Walsh noted that Stillman and Luke [Williams] and the Navigate team have really ramped up the download ability. They made a herculean effort to make it available to all students. Please remind your students about this. Some people are putting it in their signature lines, as a reminder. This is a great retention tool
    * Stillman thanked Walsh for the reminder, and noted that Navigate has been very useful. If folks aren’t using it already, he thinks they’ll find it really useful in this remote environment. He asked people to encourage their students and faculty to use it
11. Meeting adjourned at 5:21 pm.