

USI Faculty Senate Minutes

14 October 2016

Senators present: Nick LaRowe, Peter Whiting, Brett Long, Jason Fertig, Chad Milewicz, Wes Durham, Sheri Keenan, Chuck Conaway, Charlotte Connerton, Erin Reynolds, Mary Arvin, Sang Woo Heo, Brandon Field, Rex Strange

Visitors present: Ron Rochon and Shelly Blunt (Provost's Office), MT Hallock-Morris (Core Director), Amy Chan-Hilton (CETL), Kat Draughon and Jeannie McAlister (OPRA), Nita Musich (Staff Council)

- Called to order 2:31pm.
- Minutes from Sept 30 Meeting, with small typos corrected, approved unanimously.
- Chair's Report, Nick:
 - Nothing to report to the faculty from recent University meetings.
 - Next Board of Trustees meeting is November 3rd. Nick would like to pass on good things that have been happening, so if you have anything, please send it to Nick soon.
- Moved one item of new business up to accommodate Kat Draughon: Extreme student incivilities on student evaluations.
 - The problem, as stated in the charge, is that the instructors see the negative comments, and that causes problems with future treatment of classes, especially when the classes are in cohorts. The problem described in the charge was not that the negative comments appear in the instructor's dossier for tenure or promotion.
 - Could the problem be fixed or addressed with a change in the evaluation formats?
 - Could there be a definition of *ad hominem* attack that the instructor could either ask to have something formally struck from the record? [No, there is no way of striking anything from the scantron record, short of deleting entire pages from the .pdf report generated.]
 - Student evaluations *must* remain anonymous. There is no way to identify particular students from their responses from the software. However, if there are threats reported, there are other avenues of inquiry that can be used to determine the source of the threat, and an instructor should contact the chair, dean, or provost.
 - Has this been more of a problem since moving to the online format? The quality of the responses seem to be worse since moving to online format, but there is no comparison that can be made.
 - In the context of the charge, the claim was made that this could foster a hostile work environment, which is a legal term. Dr. Rochon will reach out to the instructor who originated the charge to get clarification.

- If a faculty member is feeling threatened or attacked, they should contact their chair or dean with concerns.
- The instructions could be changed to include a sentence about not to use foul language. This could be inserted in for the rest of the semester.
 - Dr. Reynolds and Dr. Durham will develop wording for this.
- Provost's Report:
 - Asked the Dean of Students to develop a list of the religious holidays for all the different religions that could be circulated in a memo to all the faculty.
 - Not a mandate or a suggestion to cancel classes, just an informational circular.
 - Asking us to endorse the memo. Nick will send out colorized version and will put it on agenda next meeting. (Suggestion: perhaps a memo intended to be circulated to all the faculty shouldn't rely on color so heavily?)
 - Thanks to all the faculty who attended the Cornel West lecture this week.
 - Carter Hall was full to capacity, two overflow rooms were also used.
- Old business
 - Vice Chair election: Peter Whiting was nominated, and won by acclamation.
 - Assessment Day charge from Jason Fertig:
 - Effectiveness and efficiency of Assessment Day testing. Are there better ways of doing this that is more faculty-favorable?
 - The Math department uses the day to meet with the different faculty members to do assessment. So does the Engineering department.
 - The library is used during Assessment Day for students to study.
 - From the Provost's perspective, Assessment Day has been helpful with the HLC accreditation. Of the questions that were asked on this visit, the common theme was assessment.
 - Jason will discuss with the Dr. Khayum regarding the RCoB's use of the day.
 - Summer obligation of Faculty Senate wording for the nomination of Senators:
 - The summer meetings have been informal, but the original intent was to have a body of faculty who were able to endorse things. It was desired that prospective Senators be made aware of this prior to their agreeing to run.
 - Proposed version was edited to read:
 - "Please note that the Faculty Senate has an Ad Hoc Committee that meets periodically over the summer in order to remain informed of and engaged in university business. Typically, these meetings are held once per month and last approximately an hour. Thus, service on Faculty Senate may include an obligation to meet over the summer. The tentative summer schedule will be determined by the final Faculty Senate meeting of the academic year and will be posted on the Faculty Senate webpage."
 - Motion to approve this wording was unanimously approved.
- New Business:

- Review of the course evaluations charge:
 - Questions on the Student Evaluations of Teaching were not relevant to the online classes.
 - The rest of the questions should also be evaluated.
 - Should we come up with a committee of people to look at this, or should we carefully define the problems that we identify: incivility, online vs. face-to-face modality, increase the response rate, etc., and then determine a specific charge on the topic?
 - Will be considered at the next meeting.
- Meeting adjourned, 4:34pm.