**Faculty Senate Minutes**

Wednesday, April 14, 2021

Zoom Meeting, 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

**Attending Senators:** Taylor Acee, Rebecca Bell-Metereau, Stacey Bender, Janet Bezner, Dale Blasingame, Rachel Davenport, Jennifer Jensen, Lynn Ledbetter, Vincent Luizzi, Benjamin Martin, Roque Mendez, Andrew Ojede, Michael Supancic, Nicole Wesley

**Guests:** Laure Brimbal, Kiana Burkes (University Star), Tina Marie Cade (Senate Fellow), Joni S J Charles, Shannon Duffy, Michel Haigh, Angela Jones, Jennifer Lamm, Scott Pope (Library), Sean Patrick Roche, Aimee Roundtree, Christine Sellers, Karen Sigler, Vedaraman Sriraman, Lucia Summers, Debbie Thorne, Bob Edward Vasquez, Dana Willett

Meeting called to order at 4:02 p.m. by Senate Chair Bezner

**Faculty Hiring Processes**

Dr. Debbie Thorne, Associate Provost, met with the senate to discuss faculty hiring processes. Senators were concerned about potential discrepancies between policies and procedures related to faculty vs. chair and dean hiring processes. Additionally, some senators were concerned about discrepancies between the faculty hiring policy and procedure statement compared to guidance included in the search committee toolkit. Some senators voiced a preference for increased shared governance by increasing faculty and personnel committee (PC) participation in the hiring process, while other senators voiced concerns that increased faculty or PC involvement could result in increased workload or non-expert faculty making hiring decisions for specific positions. Dr. Thorne expressed that the policy can be changed if necessary but to consider how to attain shared governance and include collective wisdom without overburdening the process. Overall, the university is trying to create equity and consistency in the way that faculty and administrators are hired. Dr. Thorne recommended that the senate meet with Dr. Stella Silva to hear her expertise and knowledge of the law prior to recommending policy changes, if any.

**Presidential Excellence Awards**  
In a prior meeting, the senate discussed inconsistencies in the nomination and review process for Presidential Excellence Awards. Senators Bezner and Wesley communicated recommendations to improve the process including a standard template or format for nominee exhibits, representation from a nominee’s college to speak about the nominee and their qualifications, a longer term (e.g., 2 years) of service for selection committees to facilitate consistency, and potential limits on the length of the nomination materials. Dr. Thorne requested the recommendations be sent to her so she can meet with Drs. Cavitt, Wuest, and Horton to collectively review the policy and determine the best pathway forward to make improvements.

**Policy on Academic Freedom**

The senate asked Dr. Thorne for feedback on the draft Academic Freedom Policy created by the Academic Freedom Committee. Dr. Thorne began her response by raising awareness about the Academic Freedom statement posted on the Provost’s website and concluded by stating that overall, she is in favor of the draft policy and will recommend to the Provost that he accept it as a permanent policy. However, if the policy is made permanent a senior reviewer would need to be identified. Dr. Thorne solicited input from the senate regarding who they thought should be senior reviewer for the policy. Senators were encouraged to consider who should be senior reviewer for the policy and be prepared to discuss the topic at the next senate meeting.

**Faculty needs regarding online courses**

Dr. Vedaraman Sriraman, Associate Provost and Mr. Dana Willett, Asst VP, ODEL joined the senate meeting to discuss faculty needs regarding online courses. Senator Davenport summarized some of the findings from the recent Faculty Senate survey and initiated a discussion about how Dr. Sriraman and Mr. Willet can support faculty teaching online. Questions and suggestions from senators included:

* Importance of technology and lack of strategic plan and infrastructure for an institution on path to R1 status.
* How to obtain information about services available to all faculty.
* Costs associated with captioning and proctoring.
* Providing credit toward certification for faculty that have taught semesters online.
* Interest in Zoom rooms (not conference rooms) for teaching.
* Increased off-campus software access/licensing and virtual desktops.

Mr. Willett suggested that faculty come up with a broad plan of what faculty see as future needs as part of a long-term strategic plan. He explained that an RFP related to captioning is being developed for solicitation to try and find a different provider and that an RFP was solicited recently for exam proctoring and there has been an initial selection of two vendors (for different needs and services). In terms of credit toward certification, Mr. Willett said that yes, faculty can test out of specific courses and that ODEL is creating new methods to provide certification including badging, alternative certification, micro-certification, etc.

A senator asked for perspective from Mr. Willett about survey responses ODEL has received. Mr. Willett said the surveys have informed their operations and provided insight on increasing class size, one-on-one questions, etc. Mr. Willett will provide additional feedback on survey responses and actionable items in the future.

**Faculty Handbook Committee**

Dr. Michel Haigh joined the senate to report on activities of the Faculty Handbook Committee. The committee was charged with comparing the Faculty Handbook (FH) and Virtual Binder (an orientation toolkit for faculty and staff). The committee found the content in the FH was relevant but that not all faculty are aware of its existence. The committee recommended increased promotion of the FH and to retain the current interactive format. They suggested adding a link/information about the Equal Opportunity/Title IX office as well as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

**Update on Restorative Justice Process**

Senators briefly discussed who would move forward as a senate representative for the next step in the restorative justice process facilitated by Life Anew. Senators Bezner and Ledbetter both volunteered to serve and will come to an agreement to determine who moves forward in the process.   
  
**Summary of Faculty Recommendations to Improve Morale**

Senators discussed and approved the summary of recommendations provided by faculty as well as the senate’s prioritization of what administration can do to improve faculty morale. Senators discussed coordinating recommendations with Staff Council and decided to wait until meeting with Staff Council prior to submitting the recommendations to university administration.

**Policy Review**

UPPS 04.05.17 Research and Teaching Involving Recombinant or Synthetic Nucleic Molecules and Biohazardous Materials, Agents and Toxins. Due April 23 (Senator Martin)

**Adoption of Minutes**  
Senators voted to adopt the minutes of the March 31, 2021 and April 7, 2021 meetings.

Meeting adjourned at 6:14 p.m.