

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Belli, Franco Cruz, Fech, Hanrahan, Minter, Peterson, Vakilzadian, Woodman

Absent: Adenwalla, Buan, Kolbe, Purcell

Date: Tuesday, June 4, 2019

Location: 203 Alexander Building

Note: These are not verbatim minutes. They are a summary of the discussions at the Executive Committee meeting as corrected by those participating.

1.0 Call (*Hanrahan*)

Hanrahan called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

2.0 Director Patty Sollars, Undergraduate Education

2.1 Senate Syllabus Policy

Sollars stated that she was looking for some guidance and clarification from the Executive Committee regarding a statement in the Faculty Senate Syllabus Policy. She noted that the policy states that specific information is required for “traditional classroom setting” courses, but asked if certain courses are excluded from this requirement. Hanrahan stated that he believes the original intent of the policy is that courses taught in traditional classroom style, versus those taught online must require specific information pertaining to the course. Woodman pointed out that he does not think the intent was to distinguish the setting for where a course is taught and he believes evening classes were to be included in the policy.

Sollars stated that the issue is that professors are now presenting some classes in non-traditional settings and questioned whether these courses should be excluded from the policy. Minter pointed out that internships and independent study are courses that are not taught with a group of students, and instructors essentially have a contract with the student. Woodman asked whether not having quizzes or exams qualifies a course as being non-traditional. Sollars stated that the syllabus serves as a contract between a student and an instructor and the syllabus policy should apply. Hanrahan pointed out that the syllabus policy does not pertain to applied instruction. In Music he stated that it is a jury that looks at the work of a student at the end of a semester and assignments vary depending on the individual student’s ability.

Woodman suggested adding the language “when applicable” to the sentence in the policy about required documentation. Sollars noted that students need to be provided with some kind of framework of how their grade would be calculated. Hanrahan noted that in Music the syllabus for courses may not be in one document, but the information may be put into various sections on Canvas. He reported that he tried to clarify the prerequisite for a course, but it was denied by CIM because the course syllabus did not follow the syllabus

policy. Woodman asked if the CIM requires that a syllabus be included with a request for a change in a course. Sollars stated that a syllabus is required. She noted that when ACE courses were recently recertified it was found that only about 25% of the courses complied with the syllabus policy for ACE.

Hanrahan stated that the policy might need to be revisited to accommodate the non-traditional courses. Sollars suggested that the policy could be revised to make it more flexible to the wide variety of how courses are now taught. Hanrahan noted that the Senate should also revisit who owns the syllabus of a course. Sollars reported that there is an effort in Academic Affairs to make the syllabus requirements more accessible and to make it more inclusive, and they are trying to build a templates that could be used by each college. Woodman suggested that language pertaining to academic honesty be included. He pointed out that it needs to be ensured that academic freedom is not violated by any proposed changes.

Latta Konecky noted that the syllabus is for the student so the student can go to the same place in every course to find the needed information. She reported that Canvas has a spot where the information for the course can be summarized. Woodman pointed out that instructors can also upload their syllabus to Canvas. Hanrahan stated that Canvas will also allow an instructor to build a syllabus from the information that is inputted.

Sollars reported that there has been a change to the recommended disabilities statement, but it was not announced to the campus and her office was just recently made aware of it. She pointed out that having a syllabus template would allow for any updates such as this to be included in the template and instructors would be able to provide more accurate information to the students.

Hanrahan thanked Sollars for coming and stated that the Executive Committee will be in touch to revisit the syllabus policy which will need to go to the Senate for approval.

3.0 Announcements

3.1 Interim President

Hanrahan reported that Provost Susan Fritz has been named Interim President by the Board of Regents. He noted that Woodman had asked whether finalists for positions below that of a President could be kept secret, and the response that was received from General Counsel on this question is that if a President resigns suddenly there would not be time to follow the process in the State statute. He pointed out that the Regents Bylaws stipulate that if the President can't fill the duties of that position, the Provost would step in as acting President which is essentially what has occurred with Provost Fritz. He noted that Dr. Linder was appointed several years ago as Interim President under the same process, prior to the rewriting of the State statute and the process was endorsed.

3.2 Vice President of Information Technology

Hanrahan noted that Bret Blackman from UNO has been announced as the Vice President of Information Technology and will replace Mark Askren. He noted that Blackman will remain CIO of UNO and we will begin our own search for a CIO for UNL.

3.3 President's Search

Hanrahan reported that he submitted his name and Belli's name for the President's search committee. Woodman pointed out that we need a very strong faculty presence on the search committee and we should be pre-emptive in notifying the Regents if there is inadequate faculty representation on the committee. Hanrahan noted that the Faculty Senate Presidents have sent a letter to the Regents stating what they feel the attributes should be for the next President and requesting a meeting.

3.4 Executive Committee/Administrators Retreat

Hanrahan noted that the retreat will be held on August 15th, from 1:00-4:00 and there has been a request to have a facilitator, possibly someone who understands how the university operates. Woodman suggested having some strong guidelines on what needs to be discussed. Latta Konecky suggested that the retreat focus on what shared governance is and how the faculty and administrators can help each other collegially and work together. The Executive Committee agreed to have an internal facilitator for the retreat.

3.5 Non-tenure Track Faculty Forum Follow-up

Belli reported that he and Woodman reviewed the non-tenure track faculty forum and sent a document summarizing the forum and the issues raised to Associate VC Walker. He noted that in a meeting with Associate VC Walker there was discussion about improving compensation for non-tenure track faculty members, particularly lecturers, and she was optimistic that some improvements would be made for these faculty members given the comments made by EVC Plowman to the Faculty Compensation Advisory Committee. Hanrahan stated that the Executive Committee needs to ask the Chancellor and Interim EVC Moberly when they meet with the committee how the new dean of Arts & Sciences will deal with temporary instruction.

3.6 Update on Services Delivery Initiative

Hanrahan reported that the SDI is in hiatus right now and VC Nunez plans to reconstitute the committee in the fall with plans to have more faculty involved.

4.0 Approval of May 21, 2019 Minutes

Griffin noted that she is still waiting to receive revisions from VC Boehm, Professor Lee and Director Tetreault on the minutes. Approval of the minutes was postponed until the next meeting.

5.0 Unfinished Business

5.1 Non-Tenure Track Faculty Survey

Belli stated that the results of the survey need to be reviewed and asked that there be a subcommittee to help with this. Peterson moved to have Belli chair a subcommittee. Motion seconded by Vakilzadian and approved by the Executive Committee. Minter

stated that she is willing to serve on the subcommittee. Several other faculty members were suggested.

5.2 Online Course Evaluations

Woodman reported that a summer pilot for the online course evaluations is being conducted. He stated that there are currently 12 standardized questions on the evaluations, although two still need to be revised. He noted that the goal is to have the evaluations completed and available in spring 2020 and for guidelines to be available for how the colleges and departments can add questions. He stated that he hoped that there will be some flexibility with the questions at the college level. Hanrahan asked if the questions need to be approved by the Senate. Woodman reported that the plan is to have the questions vetted by the Faculty Senate and ASUN.

Hanrahan noted that the Executive Committee will be meeting with Associate VC Goodburn, Associate VC Walker, and Assistant VC Tuttle on June 18th to discuss the online evaluations.

Peterson stated that in his honors course he used hard printed evaluation forms and had a 100% response rate, but when he used an electronic evaluation the response rate was not very good. Woodman stated that compelling students to respond to the evaluation will affect the data. Peterson pointed out that you would not get a representative sample if you do not compel students to participate. Hanrahan noted that participation drops significantly when evaluations are conducted online.

Woodman stated that the issue is who would have access to the information that is obtained through the online evaluations. He noted that it is important that the faculty not only be involved with the development of the tool, but ensure that the data gathered is not abused. Hanrahan stated that guidelines on how the evaluations should be used are fine, but it needs to be made sure that the information obtained from the evaluations gets to the department level. He stated that the faculty in his department voted to include all course evaluations in annual faculty evaluations. Woodman stated that in the College of Arts & Sciences evaluations are required at the college level.

Minter pointed out that research has been conducted that shows the outcomes from course evaluations minimizes the opportunity for underrepresented faculty to be fairly evaluated. Woodman stated that Iowa State looked for biased evaluations, particularly for women. He noted that Iowa State wound up including a paragraph saying the students should be aware of bias. He suggested that faculty should ask for comments first, before standard questions are asked. Hanrahan suggested that questions be randomized because students have a tendency to work in a group to answer the evaluations. Woodman pointed out that all of the techniques for obtaining feedback are flawed in some way.

6.0 New Business

6.1 Graduate Student Health Insurance Increases

Hanrahan reported that he had a meeting with Associate to the Chancellor Zeleny, GSA President Ratcliff, and Professor Clarke from APC to discuss the changes to the graduate student health insurance. He stated that he learned that the decision to make the changes was made by the same committee that chose to switch the faculty/staff health insurance from BlueCross/BlueShield to UMR, and the decision was made over a year ago. Belli asked who was on the committee. Hanrahan stated that it was mostly business people. He reported that Chancellor Green and VC Boehm met with Central Administration and recommended including graduate students on any committee that would make any changes to the graduate student health insurance.

Hanrahan noted that the health insurance increases for graduate students amounted to a 25% increase in the total cost with the largest increase being in the out-of-pocket costs. He reported that the committee that recommended the changes felt that the basic cost for most graduate students would be low. He pointed out that several years ago a decision was made not to require graduate students to enroll in the health insurance plan. He suggested that the option to enroll may need to be revisited to help increase the pool of insured. He noted that some other Big Ten universities require their graduate students to enroll in the health insurance plan. He pointed out that faculty are very concerned that the increase is going to hurt graduate recruiting.

Hanrahan stated that the graduate student health insurance is a purchased product from an insurance company which happens to be UMR which bears the burden of covering costs and therefore it can set the rates, unlike the faculty/staff health plan which is self-insured.

Woodman wondered how many of the graduate students may still be enrolled on their parents' health insurance. Hanrahan stated that this could be a factor in why the number of graduate students enrolled in health insurance is lower than anticipated. He noted that the graduate student could also be on their spouse's plan. He pointed out that the problem is that the pool is small, and the costs have been up.

Hanrahan reported that the Chancellor is aware of the situation and was concerned with the impacts. He stated that the announcement about the changes was supposed to be done in a strategic way, but an email was sent out to the students ahead of time.

Hanrahan stated that he has asked the other Senate Presidents if they are hearing any concerns. He reported that none of the other Senate Presidents had heard any concerns from faculty or students on their campus which may be due to the nature of each campuses graduate student culture. He pointed out that the Board of Regents needs to be made aware of how the increases will impact the different campuses.

Minter asked if Dean Carr was asked if Graduate Studies had any input into the change. Hanrahan reported that Dean Carr only found out about the changes about a month ago.

Minter noted that any changes to the health plan could not be made immediately. Hanrahan stated that there will be some meetings on what can be done to fix the health plan, but the Graduate Student Assembly needs to lead the way with making sure this issue is addressed, and the Executive Committee will help support them.

Belli pointed out that it is important to get proper representation on committees that make these kinds of decisions. Hanrahan stated that he has pushed this idea forward and noted that people who have experience in dealing with health concerns need to be included on these committees that deal with health insurance issues.

6.2 Professional Code of Conduct

Hanrahan stated that the Senate's Professional Ethics Statement is good, but it does not address some principles pertaining to code of conduct. He stated that the question is what constitutes an obvious violation of a code of conduct and what is considered acceptable behavior. Belli pointed out that our nation has a history of non-violent civil disobedience, and questioned whether this type of action would be considered a violation of a code of conduct. Hanrahan stated that we need to say what is and isn't considered acceptable behavior and he would rather the Senate decide this than an administrator.

Peterson pointed out that the Academic Rights & Responsibilities Committee has procedures for adjudicating cases of professional misconduct. He stated that if a code of conduct is created language would need to be included in the code stating that an ARRC investigation would automatically be triggered if there is a violation.

Hanrahan stated that it is unclear if administrators can put in a personnel file a letter of reprimand or take action against a faculty member if they violate a code of conduct. He suggested that the Executive Committee consider some principles that could be used to develop a Professional Code of Conduct, and pointed out that protection of free speech is one principle that needs to be retained. He suggested having a subcommittee that would work on the document. Peterson pointed out that creating a document will be difficult to do. Minter noted that as state employees we are subject to state regulations, but academic freedom and free speech are essential to academia. Fech suggested that this would be a good topic to discuss at the Executive Committee retreat in August.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:28 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, June 18, 2019 at 2:30 pm. The meeting will be held in 203 Alexander Building. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Joan Latta Konecky, Secretary.