

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Baesu, Bearnese, Billesbach, Buan, Eklund, Gay, Herstein, Kolbe, Krehbiel, Weissling, Woodman, Zuckerman

Absent: Minter

Date: Tuesday, October 26, 2021

Location: City Campus Union, Chimney Rock Room

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 (*Kolbe*)

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

2.0 Guidelines and Best Practices for Peer Evaluation of Teaching (AVC Walker, Director Monk, and Professor Balschweid)

Kolbe noted that a taskforce was formed to work on developing the guidelines and best practices of peer evaluation of teaching before the pandemic, but efforts had to be postponed due to the amount of work that needed to be done related to the pandemic.

Walker reported that initially former EVC Plowman had formed a student course evaluation taskforce to not only move the evaluation process online, but to also have a common set of questions. However, student evaluations are just one part of teaching evaluations with the other parts being peer evaluation of teaching and self-evaluation. She noted that each of the Deans of the undergraduate colleges approved of this three-prong approach and pointed out that the colleges really want guidance on peer evaluation because the evaluations are part of the promotion and tenure process. As a result, the taskforce was formed with Monk and Balschweid as co-chairs. She noted that there was substantial faculty representation on the task force and Faculty Senate had input on who those faculty representatives were.

Walker stated that Monk and Balschweid are providing an overview of what the report covers and can answer any questions the Executive Committee might have, but she is not seeking the Committee's endorsement today of the guidelines. She noted that they would be happy to meet with the Committee again if there are further questions.

Monk reported that the taskforce included faculty members from across the undergraduate colleges to get a broad perspective. He stated that the taskforce conducted significant research on the extensive literature on peer evaluations and then looked at the existing practices within the university. He noted that there is a wide range of existing practices in peer observation and evaluation across the schools and colleges, and even within the colleges.

Monk stated that the taskforce felt strongly that peer observation should be part of the evaluation process and there was significant discussion focusing on the face-to-face teaching observation and online teaching. He pointed out that the taskforce felt very strongly that observations should be formative and *not* to be used as a management tool. He reported that the taskforce developed a peer observation form and guidelines that could be used for in-person observation and another form was created for online teaching evaluation. He stated that an observation pilot was conducted and the highlights from the pilot are available in the report. He noted that the response from the pilot study was very positive.

Balschweid stated that the objective is to get to a point where those who have teaching responsibilities have the chance to engage in self-reflection of their teaching. He noted that the idea is to keep peer observation less threatening, and some people want some tools that will assist them with this. He stated that the hope is that the guidelines will help initiate discussions about what is effective teaching.

Billesbach stated that the draft guidelines are helpful on how to do peer teaching observations, but he did not see any guidance regarding who would be doing the observation and how these people would be selected. Kolbe stated that this is an issue in his college because previously the observer used to be assigned by the chair, but it has now morphed into faculty asking other faculty members to be their observer. He stated that he preferred a more random assignment of the observer. Buan suggested there be a pool of people who could serve as an observer. Walker stated that the taskforce felt the decision should be left up to the units because there are some units who want observers who know the discipline. Eklund stated that there are a very small number of people in some areas that have expertise, and while he likes the idea of local control, there are some people in a unit that might have unreasonable expectations.

Zuckerman stated that her department is Educational Administration, and they teach school principals and other school administrators, and she feels the guidelines are missing many important points. She stated that if a faculty member knows the self-reflection evaluation is go into a promotion and tenure file, the faculty member may not be as forthcoming with it. Walker pointed out that only the peer observations are intended to be informative. She stated that ideally it would be perfect if every faculty member would get observed at least two times during a year. She noted that there is a distinction between peer observation and peer evaluation and the taskforce made a conscious decision not to include peer evaluation.

Zuckerman asked what training observers would have and what unit would they be coming from. She noted that there are pedagogical differences in different fields. Walker stated that it is the responsibility of the unit to have peer evaluations, and in accordance with AAUP, faculty have the right and the responsibility to evaluate each other. Monk stated that the guidelines are there to assist peer observers and for faculty to reflect on the aspects of teaching. He stated that he would be happy to collaborate on a training program in consultation with Zuckerman and faculty in her department. He noted that the overall goal is for faculty members to engage in reflecting on their teaching

to try to improve it. Kolbe reported that when he was pre-tenured, he was observed four times by different people not necessarily in his department and they provided valuable feedback which helped improve his teaching.

Weissling stated that it would be helpful if the Executive Committee could see the data from the pilot study. She pointed out that it is not clear how the online evaluation form fits with asynchronous teaching. She noted that her department has teaching mentors and suggested units having these mentors first before conducting peer evaluations. Monk stated that the report includes a link to the data that was gathered from the pilot study. He said he agrees with the idea of having mentors, but the taskforce was told not to impose too much work on the units. He reported that he would look more closely at the online form to see how it would fit with asynchronous teaching and would get back to the Executive Committee about it.

Herstein noted that the faculty own the curriculum and the faculty need to make sure that the curriculum is being delivered carefully. She stated that she regularly has peer evaluation conducted and said that it provides great, valuable feedback. However, she noted that faculty members are already overwhelmed with work and requiring them to be peer observers could increase their workload. Buan agreed and asked how often peer observations would be expected, would it be conducted annually or is it just for those going up for promotion and tenure. She asked whether these guidelines apply to graduate courses also and whether the guidelines have been sent to the Graduate Council for consideration. Walker stated that the taskforce report suggests peer observation at least once a year. She noted the point about graduate classes and stated that it should go to the Graduate Council. She stated that the form being offered is just a template and it is not intended to be required and used for data.

Baesu pointed out that the peer evaluation and observation are intended to improve teaching and she thinks having an observer from outside the unit is of great value because it provides a different perspective. She noted that we can all learn from other disciplines. Monk stated that the taskforce did not want to intrude too much into how the individual units do peer observations, but he agrees that it is preferable for instructors outside the departments of those being observed to undertake the better to use cross-disciplines for observations.

Woodman stated that he has a number of concerns with the evaluation process and asked what we are trying to fix by having a non-departmental process rather than a departmentally generated process. He asked how formal the process is going to be, will there be different standards for contract teaching faculty versus tenured faculty, would the faculty member be notified that they will be observed, and who selects the observer. He also observed that in the evaluation of research many standardized or external measures, such as the citation Index, and grant dollars are used to substantiate research efforts not just the opinion of single observers. He asked whether there is current baseline data that can be looked at five years down the road to see if the proposed evaluation process is actually working given the amount of time faculty would put into this effort and noted that when a process becomes a top-down mandate it creates

problems, and it is just a matter of time before the evaluations are used for summative information.

Walker stated that we need to evaluate the faculty in a way that recognizes the work that they do. She pointed out that faculty members send their research work out to be reviewed by experts in the field. She stated that the reason for the peer evaluation and for it being in the promotion and tenure file was to ensure that people were paying attention to the teaching apportionment and that faculty members were getting credit for the work that they do. She noted that many departments have only been relying on the student evaluations. Kolbe noted that the peer observation is meant to help faculty members improve their teaching, but a faculty member does not have to listen to the recommendations that the observer makes. Walker stated that the taskforce provides an example of a form that units could use, but it is not a top-down mandate. She noted that when faculty are annually evaluated, more than student course evaluations should be used to evaluate teaching.

Weissling asked if graduate teaching assistants would be evaluated. She stated that there needs to be consideration about equity and diversity issues as well. Zuckerman questioned how this is not a top-down mandate when units are being charged to develop a plan of how they are going to conduct these processes. Kolbe pointed out that now that we have widely spread ways of teaching the evaluation process becomes more challenging. He asked about courses that have co-teachers. Buan asked what about courses that have numerous guest speakers. Walker stated that in these kinds of situations peer evaluations are needed, not peer observations. Examining the structure of a course, who the guest speakers are and what they are trying to accomplish in the course would be considered part of the peer evaluation.

Krehbiel noted that most of the discussion has revolved around evaluation of formal education, but Extension Educators are heavily involved with informal education and asked how peer observation or evaluation might look for these faculty members. Walker stated that the peer evaluation of teaching for promotion and tenure is clearly required only for people who have a formal teaching apportionment so this would not be relevant to Extension. Balschweid asked if there is a space in the Extension evaluation process for observations and evaluations on teaching or presentations. Krehbiel responded that it is not part of the Extension evaluation process but suggested that it might be good to have a conversation about this. She noted that Extension Educators have heavy interaction with the community, and they want to do a good job of educating the people they encounter. Bearnes stated that she has been in a variety of roles in Extension and has taught many courses in various settings but there has never been a formal evaluation on an Extension Educator's teaching techniques. She noted that many Extension Educators are involved in joint programs where they have a team teaching and if the program is presented in a school the team would be evaluated by the teachers at the school.

Billesbach suggested that there be a follow up to the peer observation evaluation where the instructor could indicate what resources they are lacking that would help improve their teaching. Walker stated that this could be part of the self-reflection evaluation.

Balschweid pointed out that addressing resources for teaching and learning was outside the scope of the taskforce.

Monk stated that the task force tried to keep the guidelines as open as possible and noted that anyone contracted to teach at the University should be engaged in the process. He stated that the process is mostly to help faculty improve their teaching. Buan stated that it would be helpful if the faculty member had the discretion of whether to use the evaluations in their promotion and tenure file. Monk stated that the form has been designed to have two parts for precisely this purpose. Buan pointed out that these evaluations should not be taken by a chair and used as a punitive measure. Woodman noted that the taskforce that worked on the online student evaluations specifically stated how they could be used and that the evaluations could not be used for data purposes and hoped that the committee also made recommendations about how these data would or would not be used. Kolbe pointed out that the evaluations belong to the instructor. Zuckerman stated that there needs to be a clear distinction between when the evaluations can be used and who decides when they want to use them.

Woodman stated that he is concerned that faculty members would eventually be ranked on the basis of these evaluations. Monk stated that he did not think that departments would use the evaluations to rank faculty members. Woodman pointed out that this is what is done every year in departments. Kolbe agreed that this does occur, and salary increases are determined based upon this ranking. Monk stated that he was not aware that this occurs.

Kolbe thanked Walker, Monk, and Balschweid for meeting with the Executive Committee and stated that the Committee would provide feedback and may schedule another meeting with them.

3.0 Announcements

3.1 Committee to Work on Revising the Guidelines for Faculty Evaluation

Kolbe reported that he and Walker spoke with EVC Spiller about the need to revise the Guidelines for Faculty Evaluation and a committee is being formed to review, update, and make some revisions to the document. He stated that he is seeking the names of three faculty members in each of the following positions to serve on the committee: tenured associate professor recently promoted; tenured full professor; professor of practice (associate or full); research faculty (associate or full); Extension Educator (associate or full); lecturer.

3.2 Upcoming Agenda Item

Kolbe stated that for discussion next week will be whether to keep the fall attendance policy or to revert back to the attendance policy that was in place prior to the pandemic. Buan noted that she has been hearing a lot of complaints from faculty members about the fall attendance policy.

4.0 Approval of October 19, 2021 Minutes

Gay moved for approval of the minutes followed by Eklund's second. The minutes were approved by the Executive Committee.

5.0 Unfinished Business

5.1 Proposal for Incentivizing Service on the Faculty Senate Executive Committee

Gay reported that he has written the first draft of a proposal to help incentivize service on the Executive Committee by providing some form of compensation to Committee members. Eklund noted that some Committee members have a very low service apportionment and asked if the proposal addresses this issue. Gay stated that honest, appropriate assigning of service apportionment for individuals on the Executive Committee is needed and their work should be recognized in their annual evaluations. He noted that the implementation of the proposal will probably be challenging. The Executive Committee then reviewed and suggested revisions to the proposal. Gay stated that he would revise the draft document for the Committee's review.

6.0 New Business

6.1 November 2 Faculty Senate Meeting

The Executive Committee reviewed the tentative agenda and Buan noted that she could make a presentation on the action plans of the IChange initiative.

6.2 Spring Executive Committee Schedule (Griffin)

Griffin asked the Executive Committee when it wanted to start meetings in January. The Committee agreed to begin meetings on January 18 but would meet prior to that date if needed.

6.3 Non-Tenure Track Faculty Forum (Woodman)

Item postponed until the next meeting.

6.4 Apportionment Statement (Woodman)

Item postponed until the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:43 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, November 2, 2021, immediately following the Faculty Senate meeting. The meeting will be held by Zoom. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Kelli Herstein, Secretary.