

UHD Faculty Senate Meeting

November 15, 2011

Minutes

Present: A. Allen (President), G. Preuss (President-Elect), P. Lyons (Past President), J. Schmertz (Secretary)

J. Ahmad, C. Bachman, R. Beebe, M. Benavides, C. Burnett, G. Evans, S. Farris, J. Hackett, V. Hrynkiw, P. Kintzele, P. Li, C. Nguyen, W. Nowak, A. Pavelich, S. Penkar, R. Scott, A. Sikka, L. Spears, K. Switzer, W. Waller, I. Wang, K. Wright, V. Zafiris

Absent: A. Chiaviello, J. Harned, S. Penkar, K. Wright

The minutes from Nov 1 were passed, with minor corrections.

Christine Ramsey (librarian) announced that the Christmas party would be December 8. She said Staff Council still welcomes faculty participation in planning the event. Please RSVP to the invitation that will be sent out.

Faculty Senate President Allen's Report

At the previous Senate meeting, Senate voted to ask Academic Affairs Council to initiate a policy that would cover the hiring of academic administrators at or above the level of Dean. Allen reported this to Provost Chapman, who read our policies and agreed that we did not currently have such a policy and that we need one. The Provost plans to place this issue on the AAC agenda. Allen is not sure when.

Allen also informed Provost Chapman of faculty's desire to adhere to the System task force deadline with regard to syllabus posting. The following Monday, Chapman sent a clarification that urged faculty to post their syllabi if they were ready to do so. Allen is not sure of the Provost's position with regard to HB 2504 and the System's recommended timelines. He and the Provost seemed to be "talking past each other." Faculty are talking about HB 2504 (posting of syllabi and cv's), whereas the Provost is focusing on HB 33 (posting required texts). Some faculty have posted their syllabi, cv's and required texts; others have not.

Faculty should announce the new online course evaluations to their students. Faculty have a number of concerns and potential problems surrounding online course evaluation, some of which were raised in a DT_Faculty email exchange. During this exchange, Provost Chapman noted, in part, that the faculty side had already been taken into consideration. In fact, Chapman had only discussed the subject of online evaluations with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, not faculty as a body. Allen suggested that the faculty as a whole should continue to research and discuss the issue. The Academic Policies Committee (APC) has also been charged to address it.

Provost Chapman sent out a memo to chairs and deans about creating a system of accountability for course releases. Allen sees this memo as a response to Senate's calls. The Provost mentioned the Senate's resolution on course releases in his memo, as well as P.S. 10.A.09 (Sec 3.1.4, which

discusses temporary salary adjustments). Chairs will write descriptions of specific course releases which will be approved by deans and ultimately the provost.

Pavelich asked about releases that are not departmentally administered, such as releases for Faculty Assessment Coordinators. Allen said he did not know how these would be handled, or other releases such as his own for being Senate president. The memo was addressed only to deans and chairs.

Flores forwarded to Allen an email from Dona Cornell from System's General Counsel about having criminal background checks for faculty, especially new hires. He will see what the response of the other System Universities is when he meets with their Senate leadership (UFEC) on Friday.

Sikka said that the issue of faculty criminal background checks had been around for a few years. When she was president, the topic was raised in the context of inappropriate contact between a faculty member and an underage person. Senate VP Barbara Belbot wrote a memo on the topic which has recently been forwarded to FSEC. Staff are subject to criminal background checks; faculty may be different, as they are a more "closeknit community."

Evans said we need to make sure that if we develop a policy on criminal background checks, it should be system-wide and consistent across System universities. Sikka concurred. Lyons pointed to a SAM (System Administrative Memo) on staff hiring, which states that staff below a certain level are subject to background checks only if there is some pressing need. He mentioned a new "security sensitive position policy." Evans noted that in the past the background checks applied to mostly to staff who handled money. Now that staff increasingly have access to computer databases with personal records, the pressure for criminal background checks is stronger.

Lucy Bowen, Technology Project Manager Office of Academic Affairs

UHD is switching from Blackboard Vista to Blackboard Learn. The opportunity to do so was presented last year, but there were too many kinks in the system for UHD to adopt it at that time. A year later, the problems have been addressed and most universities have made the transition, so we will complete our own transition this spring.

The transition from Blackboard Vista to Blackboard Learn will affect online courses, hybrid courses, and face-to-face courses that incorporate Blackboard. Faculty who use Blackboard only to post syllabi are the only faculty whose courses will not need to migrate. Web techs from the colleges meet every afternoon to migrate courses and then meet with faculty to train them on how to navigate their migrated courses. The procedure is for faculty to submit a form asking for a maximum of two versions (semesters) of each course and type of course. The webtechs implement the requests and follow up with the faculty member to make sure the migration has been successful.

IT will not operate dual platforms or fix any problems with Blackboard Vista once the transition to Blackboard Learn is complete; therefore, faculty will need to retrieve any content from

previous courses that they think they might need in the future. There will be special computer stations set up in academic computing labs through Spring semester. Faculty can work with IT personnel to back up their files at these stations.

Evans noted that faculty who are posting new syllabi will need training in Blackboard Learn to do so. Bowen said that if faculty get their syllabi ready, they can bring them in to the web techs and post them “on the fly.” All faculty are asked to attend Blackboard Learn training.

Sikka noted that faculty save materials for up to a year in case of grade appeals. Faculty should save any papers, emails, and grade books stored in Blackboard Vista during the past year.

Evans asked if department committees and shared files that had been stored on Vista would need to be migrated. Bowen said IT would automatically migrate them; faculty only need to worry about their own courses.

Evans and Scott asked when the last day they could access Blackboard Vista would be. Winter term classes will remain in Vista. December 23 will be the last day faculty will have access to any Vista courses.

Switzer asked when the spring course shells would be available. Bowen said IT would work on this after Thanksgiving break. Meanwhile, if faculty need a blank shell to play with, ask and she will create one for you.

Election of Members for the Teaching Excellence Task Force

Faculty Senate Executive Committee solicited nominations and came up with a slate of members for this committee: Leigh Van Horn (chair), Tim Redl, Paul Mandell, Aimee Roundtree, Whitney Morgan, Chuck Jackson, Robin Davidson, Adrian Gil, Carolyn Ashe, and JoAnn Pavletich. Senate approved the slate 25-1.

Discussion on a Faculty Handbook

Allen stated that we need a faculty handbook; the question before Senate was how to go about getting it. Sikka had prepared a proposal which was distributed to Senators prior to the meeting (attached to the minutes as Appendix A).

Sikka stated that the need for a handbook has been discussed for at least 10 years. There was once a “blue book” faculty could go to in order to learn about general institutional operations.

Sikka provided a background on how faculty handbooks typically function in universities. They guide new faculty with regard to university policy and institutional operations (e.g. travel reimbursement), but they also provide a sort of “code of conduct” educating new faculty on the roles, rights and responsibilities entailed in being a faculty member. A handbook would also contain university policies that apply to faculty, as well as such things as state policies and System Administrative Memoranda (so that it is not up to administration alone to interpret and enforce these). Sikka mentioned that she had a folder containing procedures that she had marked as appropriate for a handbook.

National best practice is for handbooks to be “living documents” that are handled by Senate subcommittees which create and maintain them in an ongoing way.

Pavelich said he was enthusiastic about the handbook but was concerned about whether it should contain roles and responsibilities, as faculty have differing views on these. He suggested the handbook should be fact-based more than value-based. It could include things like descriptions of what Faculty Assessment Coordinators do and how our shared governance committees operate.

Preuss suggested the handbook could function better as a “living document” if it were a website that was accessible and easy to update.

Sikka called Senate’s attention to San Francisco State’s faculty handbook, which she liked because it balances administrative procedures with faculty culture. The handbook is available on the following website: <http://senate.ucsf.edu/facultyhandbook/FacultyHandbook-UCSF.pdf>. Faculty Handbooks placed on the web have the benefit of being accessible to the public so that the public can see the “inner workings” of universities—what faculty do and how much of it they do, helping to reduce “town-gown” misunderstandings.

Sikka said that a general approach to differing views on what it means to be a good faculty member would be starting with what we have consensus on and placing that in the handbook. The conversation could continue from there. Schmertz added that if the handbook were a “living document” maintained by Senate, this would keep the conversation about our shared values “front and center,” enabling discussion of them to be ongoing.

Sikka made a motion that Senate create a committee to work on a faculty handbook. It would report to Senate and be comprised of senators and faculty outside Senate. Evans seconded.

Pavelich was concerned that turning the handbook over to a committee would slow things down unless the committee set specific deadlines and was very small. He moved to limit the committee to four members. Sikka accepted this as a friendly amendment. Evans noted that friendly amendments do not need to be voted on as long as the person making the motion agreed to the amendment.

Schmertz asked what could be done to ensure the committee was renewed from year to year and that there was a procedure for appointing it. Evans said this was a concern of hers as well; perhaps FSEC should be asked to develop a charge for the committee that spelled out the committee’s composition as well as the process by which the handbook should be approved (e.g. by what percentage of faculty).

Lyons said having this handled by FSEC sends the wrong message; we want this to be handled by faculty themselves. He suggested a faculty-based “steering committee” that would do a “quick turnaround” on a proposal setting these guidelines in place. Sikka said a team of four Senate presidents could be appointed. Pavelich said Senate should vote on the charges and the

committee should be elected by Senate; otherwise Senate is not doing its job as a representative body.

The motion, as amended to restrict the committee to four, was passed unanimously.

Discussion on P.S. 10.A.02 (Grievance Policy)

Faculty Affairs chair Michelle Moosally announced that the grievance policy was brought to Academic Affairs Council for minor changes involving references to other policies and title changes. At Academic Affairs, other changes were discussed, and the policy was sent back to Faculty Affairs (FAC). FAC felt the changes were non-substantive and clarifying in nature.

The changes included defining who “respondents” are, how committee member terms are staggered, and clarifications in how existing timelines are phrased. (Previous wording could have been interpreted in such a way as to enable grievants or respondents to submit materials at the last possible moment.) Evans asked that it be made clear that “days” referred to “working days,” preventing a last minute Friday onslaught of documents for a Monday grievance. Pavelich suggested a wording change from “of” to “before” to ensure the timelines could not be misread.

Changes from AAC also included clarifying language on the time limits for opening statements (5 minutes) and presentations (45 minutes). These limits refer to the total time allowable for each party of grievant and respondent, even if multiple parties are subsumed under one category.

Evans expressed concern that a set amount of time given to each party (grievant vs. respondent) might lead to unfairness in complex cases with multiple respondents. Farris also suggested that flexibility in the time allotments was more important than limits in order to make sure all parties had a fair hearing, and that in her experience on these committees, nobody wants the hearings to be dragged out indefinitely. Moosally noted that the policy already gives the grievance committee the power to modify the time allotments in advance.

Moosally meets with FAC on Friday morning and with AAC in the afternoon. If FAC agrees the changes are non-substantive, Moosally will let AAC know.

With regard to the Rank and Tenure policy, Moosally said Faculty Affairs had received much useful faculty feedback on that policy by the November 15 deadline. This feedback will be discussed at Friday’s meeting. FAC will develop a proposal and cycle it back through faculty. The Academic Appointments policy is currently on the agenda for FAC; Moosally hopes to have more to report soon. More substantive changes to the Grievance policy, as well as consideration of a course release policy, will occur after the committee has completed their work on the policies currently on their plate.

New Business: New Core Curriculum and Low-Producing Programs

New Core Curriculum: Sikka reported on the recent Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board meeting (THECB) during which a new TX core curriculum was approved. She, Moosally, and Schmertz attended it prior to attending a meeting of the Texas Council of Faculty Senates (TCFS).

The new core reduces the number of objectives from 30 to 6. These objectives are as follows: critical thinking (required in all courses), communication skills (also required in all courses), empirical/quantitative skills, teamwork, social responsibility and personal responsibility.

The number of hours required for the core is 42. These are being divided into Foundational Area Components that condense more than one academic field. Each Foundational Area Component is expected to fill specific objectives in order to be considered to count as a Foundational Area Component area.

The biggest discussion at THECB involved 6 hours of a Component Area Option (also known as an institutional area option). Universities could use this option to require certain courses of students, as long as those courses met the objectives required for a Foundational Area Component. For example, if UHD decided to add 3 hours of Creative Arts as part of their institutional option, they would have to make sure that any course being proposed to fit that slot met the four objectives which the THECB has required for the Creative Arts Foundational Area Component.

Preuss asked if courses could add objectives not required—e.g. quantitative skills are not required for history courses under the new rules, but could they be added? Sikka said yes, as long as the required objectives were also met.

Universities will submit their proposals for their new cores to THECB in November 2013, for implementation in fall 2014.

Pavelich asked when the committee to discuss these changes will be formed.

Ahmad said her dean had already asked her to be on it. Evans concurred that her dean had already submitted names.

Schmertz asked if those who had already been notified knew what this committee would be called (since it will clearly not be the old Gen Ed committee)

Moosally said it was important to have a Senate representative. Sikka agreed. Allen said he had put his name in to his dean, but had not heard back.

Pat Williams (chair of the previous Gen Ed committee) said the committee is now called the Core Curriculum Task Force. The provost has nominations from all the deans and he will choose the membership.

Low-Producing Programs: At the THECB meeting, there was a “brutal” session in which university provosts and presidents came before the board to make cases for keeping programs that had not met state enrollment requirements. Particularly hard-hit were science and math programs at minority-serving institutions; the board asked pointed questions casting doubt on their ability to boost enrollment. Sikka feels this underscores the importance of minority recruitment in these areas.

Pavelich noted that UH had requested and gained exemptions for some of its low-producing programs. What had been done to save our low-producing programs? Why had we not heard from administration about programs on the cutting board? Sikka said she had asked for information on what reports of low-producing programs had been filed on behalf of UHD. She never heard back. There was general agreement that faculty should not have to wait for a THECB report to learn about program closures at UHD. (Natural Sciences' microbiology program was closed.)

Schmertz asked what Senate could do to ensure faculty got status updates on efforts made on behalf of low-producing programs. Sikka responded that until recently, university leadership at UHD has reported about their efforts on behalf of the institution to Senate on a regular basis. Senate should ask administration to come to Senate regularly to report on what we need to know. This enables Senate to respond in useful ways and be "responsible citizens of the university."

Allen said he would ask Provost Chapman and President Flores to attend our next meeting and provide updates on both low-producing programs and the new core curriculum.

Respectfully submitted,

Johanna Schmertz, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of English

Faculty Senate Secretary

Appendix A
A Proposal to develop a Faculty Handbook
To UHD Faculty Senate

Why Faculty Handbooks?

These handbooks are in addition to existing policy and provide guidance to new and existing faculty about the operations of the university, including standard practices, resources for faculty, important dates, and issues not addressed in policy (e.g., how budgets are determined, list of university committees, expectations of faculty participation in governance, role and limits of academic freedom).

General principles about Faculty Handbooks

The final institutional authority lies with the Board of Regents. The Board hands over the day-to-day operations of the university to the President, who delegates specific decision-making power to faculty in their area of expertise (e.g., curriculum, subject matter, research, methods of instruction, faculty status, those matters of student life which relate to educational process, etc.). It serves as a general contract between the faculty body and administration. The handbook is a “living” document and should include a timeline for review/revision by the faculty.

What do these typically contain?

While the content may vary, most handbooks contain the following

- Role and make-up of the Faculty Senate
- Faculty responsibilities (e.g., role on university committees)
- Faculty involvement and role in university governance (areas of policy-making, policy-influencing, advisory roles)
- Amendment procedures

In addition, these may contain

- procedures for grant development, submission, management
- procedures for faculty searches (beyond policy), determining faculty appointments when hiring, post-tenure review, grievances, etc.
- procedures for program development, review, and termination (we have policies on these also)
- general information about university culture, mission, and partnerships

Procedures for writing the Faculty Handbook

Generally, faculty handbooks are written by the faculty (usually the Senate or a subcommittee). An example of one such handbook is <http://senate.ucsf.edu/facultyhandbook/FacultyHandbook-UCSF.pdf>. It is recommended that a standing committee of the Faculty Senate be established to develop and later, revise/amend, the handbook.