

UHD Faculty Senate Meeting

November 19, 2013

Minutes

Present: R. Beebe (President Elect), G. Preuss (Past President), S. Henney (Secretary), M. Duncan, R. Johnson, J. Johnson, F. Khoja, J. Davis, K. Hagen, A. Lopez Pedrana, J. Quander, R. Sadana, P. Simeonov, S. Koshkin, J. Tito-Izquierdo, U. Bose, C. Stewart, J. Herrera, G. Lund, S. Zhou, M. Portillo, A. Lopez Pedrana, C. Rubinson,

Absent: T. Hale (President), HM. Wang, P. Mandell, T. Chiaviello, S. Penkar, P. Deo,

Minutes

Minutes of 11-5-13 approved unanimously.

Announcements

President pro tempore: Ron Beebe

Update from FSEC:

- Hale and Beebe will be attending a meeting tomorrow with the BOR Chair; issues to be discussed include summer salary and child care. Also, an important issue is asking the BOR to consider differential tuition increases, so UHD can increase its tuition to be comparable with other Texas campuses.
- The Writing Center is underfunded and understaffed and, as such, has not been supported by the University in a way that meets the needs of the entire University community. Considering the writing issues evident in many of our students, we should be able to use Writing Center services as a retention and graduation tool. It is also a high impact experience for the tutors themselves. The University should support a Writing Center that is appropriately funded for use by the whole University.
 - Dagmar Scharold introduced herself and expressed willingness to receive feedback on aspirations for the Writing Center.
 - Senator brings up the Budget and Planning process, suggesting that an evidence-based argument be made for increased funding (or alternate funding). Suggests development of a white paper outlining needs and costs.
 - Senator states that funding doesn't have to come from tuition/general funds. What about a student services fee for this? We have few fees; we could surely afford an across-the board fee to fund this type of center, and perhaps even the math center. Reminder that BOR has to approve fees.

- Audience member points out that the Common Core requires written communication as a fundamental skill. Points out that Senate in past years has put forward budget priorities, so this is something the Senate might consider.
- Beebe points out that the last executive committee meeting focused on barrier courses, and some of the issues with these courses center around writing and communication. This is important as a retention issue.
- Senator points out that the 2010 Strategic Plan includes issues pertinent to Writing Center. Also look at “Report Card” issues that may be affected by improved writing among our students.
- FSEC has spoken to Provost about a new leadership committee to look at all of the survey data we have (NSSE data, climate survey, technology survey, etc.) so that we can have a more comprehensive understanding of university issues from multiple perspectives.
 - Audience member states that Gen Ed committee is also looking at NSSE data.

Faculty Senate Business

Salary Study: Meeting with FSEC to discuss results was cancelled and has not been rescheduled.

Intellectual property task force is being formed. Dr. Stewart has agreed to chair this committee.

Proposed charge for the task force:

In light of increasing national challenges to intellectual property rights of faculty, the Faculty Senate charges the Intellectual Property Task Force to address the following:

- Review current literature on intellectual property rights of faculty, including research products and online course delivery instructional material;
- Investigate and review existing University of Houston system, University of Houston-Downtown, and policies of other institutions nationally, to determine the development of policy statements; and,
- Produce a draft Intellectual Property Policy for Faculty Senate review prior to forwarding to the Faculty Affairs Committee by the 3 March 2014 Faculty Senate meeting.

Motion to approve and second.

Discussion:

- How would this committee be formed? Dr. Stewart is contacting people with relevant interests to serve.
- Senator gives an example of video lectures a colleague has produced. Colleague is concerned that he will lose control of his intellectual property, and thus puts his videos on an outside website to protect his content.

- Beebe will put out call to faculty for committee members.

Motion carries unanimously.

Report from APC: U. Bose

APC was charged with 11 policies to revise this academic year, with four due for fall. Several were very far along (almost complete) and only had to be “cleaned up” by the current APC.

- Six Drop Rule Policy and Admission of Students Policy have been approved by AAC.
- Grading System Policy: Changes include credit by exam (i.e., AP tests). Has been sent to AAC.
- Curriculum Support Committee Policy: These committees are required by Interdisciplinary Programs (i.e., BAAS); any program outside of a regular department requires a curriculum support committee. Has been sent to AAC.
- Majors and Minors Policy: In an effort to improve the six-year graduation rate, it is beneficial for students to have a declared major as soon as possible. APC is still working on this.
- Graduate and Commencement Policy: APC is working on calculation of Honors hours and residency hours (last 30 hours at UHD requirement) issues.

Five more policies to take up in the spring.

Audience member commented on 03.A.12. Wonders how APC came to have the policy, which is a combination of five other policies? Changes are non-substantive, but fact that it combines five other policies is substantive. Has this policy been circulated through the process?

- This policy was revised last year by APC, which indeed took five policies and made them one. This year’s APC was asked to review it again. Will be presented to AAC this week as a new policy.

Faculty Affairs Committee Update: M. Duncan

FAC is still working on the rating scale. There is no forced average in the current draft.

Concerns communicated to the committee by faculty are centered around the lower end of the scale. The “area of excellence” has been retained in the current draft, and a rating of three is still in the “area of excellence.”

- Senator expressed concerns about including a numerical rating of three in the “area of excellence.” As a seven-point scale, the midpoint or average would be “excellent” in this scheme. Excellence implies being above average. This rating scale should have no implications for “excellence” in terms of whether someone goes up for tenure. The applicant’s department should determine the criteria for excellence.

- Currently the numerical rating of one includes “dereliction of duty” and “misconduct.” Senator suggests that there be a rating of zero for these characteristics, as they do not deserve any merit points.
- The range of the scale doesn’t matter; the anchoring of the scale matters.
- Senator encouraged the committee to tease apart 3, 4, and 5 [Note: Senator is referring to the 4-6 category that is labeled “Exceeds Expectations”] and make 4 an anchor point for the scale. The “4” rating needs to be well-defined so it can serve as an anchor point from which other scores deviate.
- Senator indicates that terminology matters in scaling; current scale is a nominal scale. It seems that we have the desire to have two things be bad—you have abandoned your job and you need improvement. Might be better to actually reduce the range of the scale and have a five-point scale, with two “bad” ratings and a definable midpoint.
- Senator points out that the distribution is the most important aspect. Need to move away from everyone having the best rating. Must define everything very well via a well-defined rubric, because this is what will keep people from being clustered at the top.
- Senator agrees that we need to move away from 3, 4, and 5 being together. Middle ground is important to define well; this is where the disagreements occur.
- Senator concurs that we need to define our anchors for the scale better.
- Senator states that, if can’t separate out 3, 4, and 5 with good strong anchors, we should go to a 5-point scale. Also need standardization of language across category description (i.e., activities of “teaching” should be defined same at low end and high end).
- If the scale is not useable by the departments, then is useless. The scale is the basic standard or template, and then should be operationalized within the department with a strong rubric.
- Senator suggests that we are being required to evaluate “relative merit,” not “absolute merit.” Suggests that an “average” rating could be excellent in this conceptualization.
- Audience member said that there is no longer any percentage requirement for any particular numerical rating. The word “excellence” is linked to our R & T requirement. We should not define this without reference to the departmental R & T requirement. Suggests we not define what an “area of excellence” is in the policy.
- Another Senator wonders why “area of excellence” is on this scale at all? Wonders if FAC can explain why this description is there? Suggests that “area of excellence” designation is not appropriate for this policy.
- Senator agrees that if excellence doesn’t have anything to do with getting merit, why is it on the annual evaluation scale? If it has something to do with R & T, then it should be a matter for the disciplines, not the University policy.

Update on Academic Appointments Policy: This policy is going to AAC on Thursday. Many new categories of faculty were added at the request of the administration.

Old Business

There have been many questions from the faculty about the Disability Services presentation, particularly the “parenting” requirement. Since so many of our students are parents, this is a big potential issue for faculty and costly in terms of resources and time.

- What is “parenting”? What accommodations are “reasonable”? What resources are available for students who are parenting, including technology?
- Senators suggested that we need a follow-up visit from Disability Services focusing just on this issue.

New Business

Senators had previously charged FSEC with developing new language for the Senate Constitution on key issues. Language for two of these changes—including Lecturers in the Faculty Assembly and combining CEC and COC—were distributed this week. Senators are to look at these and develop responses.

Motion to put amendments to the Constitution on the agenda for the next Senate meeting passes unanimously.

Adjourn at 3:54