

Faculty Meeting Minutes 02-07-12

1. President Thomas called the meeting to order at 4:07 PM. Forty-six members of the faculty were present.

2. M/S/P (Neshyba/Breitenbach) approval of the minutes of the November 15, 2011 faculty meeting.

3. Announcements

The basketball games tonight, here with PLU, are “Think Pink” games with a special fundraiser for Stana Landon. Stana is an athletic trainer who has had a recurrence of cancer.

4. President’s Report

President Thomas reported he has been involved in a number of faculty searches and has been impressed with candidates. Regarding admission recruiting efforts, he noted that total applications are flat this year (~7,000) compared to last year. There is a gap of about 7% between the total number of applications begun and the number submitted. This year’s application includes new questions unique to Puget Sound. In addition, this admission cycle includes the Net Price Calculator, an estimated cost calculation tool, and it is unclear what effect this federally required tool will have on applications. Applications are down in many markets as prospective students become more targeted in their applications. Puget Sound experienced the best quarter for fundraising (final quarter of 2011) since the final quarter of 2007 (our largest to date). A gift from the Lillis family represents about 59% of the fourth quarter 2011 gifts. The Puget Sound fund contributions are slightly ahead of last year. The Board of Trustees will be here next week and will focus on the strategic plan review and the budget.

5. Academic Vice President’s Report

Dean Bartanen thanked everyone who has been, and continues to be, involved in the faculty search process. The Classics Department has hired a tenure-line faculty member, two offers were sent out today, and more will be made this week. All search pools have included diverse candidates. Dean Bartanen reminded all that the Albertson and Dolliver nominations are due March 2. She also noted that the Campus Climate survey will be available starting February 13 and encourages everyone to participate in this 10 minute survey that will provide longitudinal and comparison data.

6. Faculty Senate Chair’s Report

Steven Neshyba reported that the Senate has been considering revisions to faculty governance procedures with an eye toward improving effective governance. An impetus for these considerations was a report from two Senators who attended a workshop of the American Association of University Professors in Washington, D.C. (with support from Dean Bartanen and Assistant Dean Sunil Kukreja). The Senate noted that we already have in place a number of procedures that are considered “best practices,” e.g., faculty representation on committees such as the Budget Task Force and the Benefits Task Force. One high-priority practice that has surfaced is the creation of a handbook for faculty governance. The senators also heard a comprehensive report from the Budget Task Force on the upcoming budget, which led to a thorough and engaged discussion. Neshyba commended those who presented to the Senate for their exceptionally good work and well-prepared presentations.

Associate Dean Lisa Ferrari presented information to the Senate regarding the minimum length of summer courses. The matter arose in connection with new immersion study-abroad programs that last less than the nominal minimum of six weeks (some last only three or four weeks, but they are very intensive). Dean Ferrari hopes to assemble a faculty committee to study the matter and will report back to the Senate this spring.

The Senate also heard a report about intellectual property policy from Professor Pierre Ly on behalf of the LMIS committee.

Steven noted that many events associated with searches have been scheduled at the time of senate meetings. He emphasized that we should revisit designating a specific “common hour” for faculty governance. The faculty senate report on this issue noted departmental resistance to this idea; however, we clearly have a need and should set aside a time for governance.

7. Writing Handbook Discussion

Julie Christoph presented information about implementation of a common writing handbook for all students (see memo in Appendix I). She would like faculty input on this project. In the 2009-2010 Curriculum Committee review of the first-year seminars, faculty members teaching the seminars noted they struggle with unevenness in student preparation, especially with sentence-level issues. This assessment raised the idea of having a common writing handbook that students would receive in their first year and keep throughout their time at Puget Sound. In response, Julie coordinated two pilot programs. In a Spring 2011 pilot program, six faculty members and their classes used different handbooks. In a Fall 2011 pilot program, 11 faculty members testing one handbook (*A Writer's Reference* by Hacker and Sommers). Julie thanked the faculty members, Ellen Peters, and Lauren Nicandri for their participation in the pilot programs. Assessment of student response to the programs reveals:

- Spring 2011—59% used the handbook in class; 66% used the handbook on their own; 36% used the handbook on their own without the urging of their professor.
- Fall 2011—69% response rate; 40% used the handbook in class; 42% used the handbook on their own; 40% used the handbook on their own without the urging of their professor.
- Students liked the Hacker handbook: it is geared toward our students and they liked the tab organization.
- Students liked that they did not have to go through writing mechanics discussions in class.
- Do students need a book when they can go to the web? 63% of the spring students, and 44% of the fall students went to the web rather than the handbook. Students report they are more familiar with the internet and think about using it first.
- Students may not know how to use the handbook on their own (some instruction in class on using the book is helpful).
- Students confused the book with being a citation manual rather than a writing handbook.

We can custom-design our handbook, designing the cover and adding 32 pages of our own material. Additional materials could include: listings of campus and local resources; the top ten grammar pet peeves; “Did I miss anything?” poem; examples of writing excellence.

Discussion:

How often are new editions published? Too regularly; however, the customized edition can be published on our terms (not tied to new editions). Sections are consistent among editions, although page numbers may change.

Can students purchase book in electronic format? Yes, when they purchase the print version students have access to the online edition.

What is the price? We talked the publisher down to \$48 per book. Perhaps the college could subsidize part of the cost. Students will not be able to sell the book back due to its custom cover. Therefore, the handbook should be something we, and the students, are going to use.

Will we incorporate the handbook into the first-year seminars? Yes, Julie always uses the handbook when she teaches seminars—not as content but as a guide for how to write responsibly. We rather it was not a required text for seminars because we would rather have students view the handbook as a “supply” rather than a text tied to a particular class.

Does the handbook include a pocket for updates? It could, but this may not be necessary since the online version is updated regularly.

Faculty members like the idea of accountability for students and the ability to reference the handbook in their courses. Some would like to provide the handbook to our students free of charge. Julie noted that many faculty members assign different handbooks so students could be saving money over all. Faculty members who used the handbooks note that it works well to refer to sections of handbook when commenting on papers.

Some faculty members suggested we offer workshops on how to use the handbook. Julie concurred and noted that author Nancy Sommers would come to participate in a workshop, supported by the publisher.

Straw poll: Do you support adopting a common writing handbook on campus? Yes (unanimous)

8. Educational Benefits Discussion

John Hanson and Jill Nealey-Moore, on behalf of the Benefits Task Force (BenTF), introduced a discussion regarding the BenTF recommendation on educational benefits. The BenTF conducted careful study and modeling of many options, including an exchange model; however, the chances of a viable exchange program are slim so the BenTF proposed the current model. The proposed model addresses grandfathering previous commitments but is consistent with the philosophy to add a broader benefit (cash grant).

The current educational benefits budget is ~\$2.5M; the BenTF model is budget-neutral, meaning that it fits within the current budget level. **See** modeling on the BenTF website: <http://www.pugetsound.edu/about/offices--services/human-resources/benefits/benefits-task-force/>. The proposed model represents a switch from an exchange model to a cash grant system. The BenTF is pleased with the feedback provided from the campus community to date. The BenTF members are modeling an immediate Northwest Independent Colleges (NIC) cash grant implementation (in response to faculty feedback). The BenTF is also exploring how we

may shorten the “vestment time.”

Carolyn Weisz noted the proposed model has a gender bias. Faculty and staff members, especially women, would have to come to Puget Sound with children, or have children within the first two years of employment, to realize the full benefit. John responded that the BenTF liked some sort of tiered system as a reward for people who have invested in the institution with longer service. Jill added that John is modeling alternative systems that would address the gender equity issue.

Jill reported that the BenTF recommends implementing an ongoing committee to review this benefit, both financially and philosophically, over time. Bill Breitenbach wondered how a succession of revisions to the policy would affect grandfathering. He hopes that a five-year period would be the “grandfather” period (with the ongoing review model). As the NIC exchange sunsets, more funds will be available for the cash grants. Jill noted the administrative group could keep a roll-over fund, apply smoothing mechanisms, and monitor issues, all designed to provide as much predictability as possible.

Rich Anderson-Connolly reminded the group that the ad hoc educational benefits committee proposal calls for an exchange, with one other partner to start. He asked about the process used to determine that there were no other willing institutions to participate in an exchange and noted that a cash benefit will get weaker over time. John replied that the BenTF consulted with the Associated Colleges of the Midwest consortium and the NIC schools. Whitman can grandfather everyone with a 100% cash grant. Willamette may be interested, but the problem becomes a one-on-one exchange between the institutions—we therefore don’t have the predictability for a given year and balance issues would still be in place. We have more control if we pay for our own dependents. Sherry Mondou talked with other west coast schools but none are interested in an exchange: no one has the funding to establish or maintain an exchange. Sherry Mondou reported that a lot of effort was put into maintaining an exchange with the NIC schools; however, we could not reach common ground. Sherry also worked with the Pacific Conference group CFOs (who have been meeting for 20 years and partner on many issues). A number of those schools do not have as rich an educational benefit as we have; everyone is dealing with financial challenges; this issue is not among their institutions’ priorities. Ron Thomas reported on conversations with the NIC presidents whose responses included: 1) not interested because they have a robust benefit, 2) committees are pursuing their own processes—bringing recommendations on a different time-line, and 3) may be interested in an exchange but not without caps (current problem). The presidents are deferring to their faculty committees, CFOs, and/or Human Resources departments.

Steven Neshyba thanked the BenTF for their hard work on this issue. He suggests merging a new standing committee with the Faculty Salary Committee. He fears the grandfathering option creates a two-tiered system within the faculty: faculty members who would not receive the exchange benefit are not here yet. Steven would like to explore an exchange system that could be implemented with a cash grant, even if it is a binary system with Willamette. He noted that the ACM overcame these kinds of obstacles when it established its successful consortium. Steven reports that Whitman wanted to join the ACM (but were turned down) and faculty members at Willamette are interested in an exchange. John likes the idea of the benefits and salary committees working together. He noted that a two-tiered system has precedence on this campus (e.g., one was in place when John arrived at Puget Sound). He knew what his benefit

was. The grandfathering option was established based on faculty input. Jill reminded us that the BenTF is genuinely interested in feedback and reminded us to send back the feedback form.

Julie Christoph noted the grandfathering and vestment issues may affect planning and recruitment: candidates for faculty positions who have older children may not come here if they can get a better educational benefit at another institution. John noted that the proposed cash grant model is in the middle of our NIC partners (two have a better grant, two have worse).

Rich noted that faculty members were promised an exchange when they were hired. He is concerned that benefits go down over time, not up, and that our educational benefit will not recover when the financial crisis abates. He urges the faculty to fight austerity measures such as this and to encourage other colleges to do the same.

Brad Dillman noted the NIC exchange is now limited to Lewis and Clark so there is no choice for the grandfathered group. Puget Sound tuition remission costs the university full tuition and, therefore, it would be less expensive for the institution to send students to another school on a 75% benefit. He wondered what the “real cost” is for dependents to attend Puget Sound. The \$38K figure is an “accounting number” that may not reflect the actual costs. Therefore, the figure used in the modeling may not be the actual cost. John replied that the educational benefits budget is based on the “accounting number” of full Puget Sound tuition (the benefit budget would be less if we looked at Puget Sound “real” tuition). Kris Bartanen confirmed we have a university operating budget with fixed costs-that are not adjusted based on whether a dependent student is in a Puget Sound classroom. John added that the cash grant is actually a win-win solution: even if a small percentage of dependents attend Puget Sound on tuition remission, they move out of the more expensive benefit option. Furthermore, some dependents may want to attend a state school, for example, but may not be able to under the current model.

Bill Barry asked what the modeling shows for the educational benefits budget after the grandfathering period has ended. John replied that the budget would be available to offer \$20K cash grants if the grandfathering was not implemented. Bill asked about the effects on the budget of implementing a 75% cash grant to recipient colleges. John responded that this has not been modeled and Jill confirmed that such a model would have to include many assumptions about what colleges dependents will attend. He is hesitant to set policy when we do not have good data to model the effects; therefore, the current model is conservative but not too conservative model. Rich noted there is unpredictability in the exchange model as well.

Carolyn Weisz wondered if recipient universities would consider a cash grant in need-based aid calculations. John reported this varies by recipient institution. Carolyn encouraged us to make sure this was made clear to job applicants. John noted that a cornerstone of the proposal is to have some body to review the efficacy of the policy. Sherry Mondou elaborated that institutions have to consider cash grants and may or may not subtract the cash grant from need-based aid calculations based on institutional policies. Bill Barry noted this is a social justice issue where the wealthy may be able to make better use of this benefit. Keith Ward agreed that this concern results in variability of the “benefit” while an exchange model is more in our control. Jill responded that we could, therefore, explore an exchange with one institution and encouraged all to return the feedback forms and/or attend a forum (two are scheduled for next week).

9. Faculty Meeting Parliamentarian Discussion

We did not address this agenda item due to lack of time.

10. Other Business - none

M/S/P to adjourn at 5:28 PM.

Upcoming Faculty Meetings (all meetings will be held in McIntyre 103):

Monday, March 26, 4-5:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 17, 4-5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Alyce DeMarais.

Appendix I – Writing Handbook Memo

Date: January 28, 2012

To: Puget Sound Faculty

From: Julie Christoph, Director of the Center for Writing, Learning, and Teaching

Re: The possibility of adopting a campus writing handbook

In the Curriculum Committee's 2009-10 assessment of the first-year seminars, faculty in all disciplines commented on the challenges of meeting the widely varied writing needs of students in the seminars. And faculty have commented informally about Puget Sound students demonstrating difficulty with grammar, punctuation, and style—beyond the first year of college.

In response to these faculty comments, in 2010, Julie Neff-Lippman and I began looking into the possibility of adopting a common writing handbook on our campus, to be introduced in the first-year seminars but to be available to faculty and students at all levels. We hoped that having a common writing handbook would make it easier for faculty across the curriculum to hold students more accountable for addressing sentence-level issues in their writing, and that it would limit the amount of time faculty need to spend in class and in marginal comments addressing fairly straight-forward sentence-level errors.

In Fall 2010, a committee of faculty members who teach in the first-year seminars (Derek Buescher, Denise Despres, Eric Orlin, Kent Hooper, Kristin Johnson, and Sunil Kukreja, Julie Neff-Lippman, and I) looked at most of the handbooks now on the market and chose several to pilot in first-year seminars in the spring. Of the three we piloted, Diana Hacker/Nancy Sommers's *A Writer's Reference* was the handbook that we think best meets our campus's needs, based on our own assessment and on student feedback from the Spring 2011 pilot. This handbook includes advice on standard grammar, punctuation, and style; MLA, APA, and Chicago documentation styles; as well as sections on constructing and evaluating arguments. *A Writer's Reference* also has an online version that would be available to students and faculty. More seminars piloted this handbook in Fall 2011 and more faculty and students offered feedback, from which I will offer highlights at the faculty meeting on Feb. 7.

Now we would like to get input from the faculty as a whole about whether it is desirable to adopt this handbook as a campus. Would faculty find it useful to know that students have the handbook? Would faculty be likely to refer students to it?

If we choose to adopt this handbook campus-wide, the publisher will print a special customized edition for our campus, with a custom cover and specialized content that we create (such as information on academic resources on campus and a list of Puget Sound faculty's top-ten pet grammar peeves). Students would purchase a copy of the handbook, for use throughout college. As the handbooks become well established, faculty teaching courses across the four years would be able to count on students having a handbook and could, then, easily refer students to relevant pages and topics—even in courses where writing isn't an explicit focus.

Faculty would in no way be expected to plan lessons around the handbook, and the handbook is not intended to replace discipline-specific style handbooks that departments already assign. The idea is that students could be expected to have a common handbook to which they can easily refer for advice on grammar, mechanics, and style—and to which faculty could easily refer students.

Many thanks go to the faculty who participated in the two pilot phases of this project. We look forward to talking with the faculty as a whole about the possibility of adopting the handbook campus-wide.