

University of Puget Sound

Minutes of the Meeting of the Faculty Senate

April 5, 2010; 4:00 PM; Misner Room

Senators Present: Rich Anderson-Connolly, Bill Barry, Kris Bartanen, Dan Burgard, Douglas Cannon (chair), Kelli Delaney, Fred Hamel, Suzanne Holland, Zaixin Hong, Rob Hutchinson, Lisa Johnson, Dan Miller, Steven Neshyba, Marc Phillips, Mike Segawa, Keith Ward, Seth Weinberger

Guests Present: None

The meeting was called to order at 4:04 PM.

Approval of the minutes of March 22, 2010: The 3/22 minutes were approved with minor typographical changes.

Announcements: Doug Cannon announced that university elections were in progress; he had gathered a list of nominees and was in the process of obtaining consent to run from the nominees. He expected elections to commence the following Monday or Tuesday.

Special Orders: Steven Neshyba stated that the Sustainability Advisory Committee was preparing its report to the Senate and wondered if the SAC should make a formal report about the assessment scheme it was developing. Rich Anderson-Connolly noted that it was time for committee liaisons to remind their committees to prepare their year-end reports.

Reports of Committee Liaisons: Cannon echoed Anderson-Connolly's remark, noting that there are only three more schedule Senate meetings, including one during exam week; committee liaisons should urge their committees to complete their reports as soon as possible to avoid stacking up reports at the end of the year and perhaps obviate the need for the final meeting. Bill Barry wondered who is supposed to contact the committee chairs for the reports; Cannon responded that it was the Senate chair's responsibility, but that committee liaisons should nudge the committee chairs as well.

Anderson-Connolly, reporting on the International Education Committee, noted that the subcommittee on the PacRim program is considering moving towards using more regular teachers on the program.

Keith Ward reported that he had left messages with Bill Haltom regarding the status of the Professional Standard Committee's work on the question of open/closed files at tenure reviews but had received no response.

Neshyba, reporting on the ad-hoc committee for benefits, noted that the survey was closed and that the committee was preparing to post results. Three open forums to discuss the results have been scheduled: 4/27 from 3:00 – 4:00 and from 4:00 – 5:00 and 4/29 from 8:00 – 9:00 AM (all meetings will be in the Murray Boardroom). Cannon asked if the Senate wanted the committee to report to the Senate; Suzanne Holland responded that as the Senate had initiated the committee the committee

should report back. Neshyba stated that the committee would not be ready to report until closer to the open forums, perhaps by 4/26, and asked what the Senate would like to see in the report. Fred Hamel asked if there was an Executive Summary that could function as the report; Neshyba answered yes and that the Summary was finished. It was determined that the committee could report to the Senate on 4/19.

Cannon asked if the Senate was going to be able to act on the question of alternative faculty evaluation forms before the end of the year. Rob Hutchinson noted that the issue had to go to the Professional Standards Committee first and that their feedback had not yet been received.

Cannon asked if there was any other pending business that needed to be concluded before the end of the year. Neshyba responded that an outside advisory group will be assessing the impact of federal health care reform on Puget Sound's health care benefits, but that the analysis will not be available until June.

Appropriate Use of Independent Study: Seth Weinberger stated the concerns of the Academic Standards Committee: First, the ASC was concerned about its ability to judge several issues that seemed to belong under the purview of the Curriculum Committee: Whether proposed Independent Study proposals were appropriately assessed for credit (i.e. .25, .5, 1.0); whether the proposal was replicating a class offered in the regular curriculum; whether several similar proposals were sufficiently similar to constitute a "class" being offered without CC review. Second, the ASC wanted guidance or reassurance that its interpretation of the "spirit" and purpose of IS was correct as this would impact several issues including whether a proposal was truly a piece of independent research or merely a student trying to fulfill graduation requirements. Third, the ASC wanted to ensure that some more appropriate body, either the Senate or the full faculty, would address the issue of how Independent Studies impact the teaching loads of the faculty.

Dan Miller noted that though he agreed with the need to change the IS process, he urged that any changes be implemented gradually so as to not adversely impact students approaching graduation.

Anderson-Connolly asked if the single paragraph about IS in the Academic Handbook was all the guidance that the ASC had; Weinberger responded that it was. Lisa Johnson wondered why the ASC was uncomfortable interpreting the Handbook by itself; Weinberger responded that the ASC wanted to ensure that, given the serious impact of this policy, it was acting according to the wishes of the faculty. Additionally, the ASC believes the current process is responsible for some of the problems, as it does not have broad oversight (the ASC only sees IS proposals from students petitioning to take an IS despite a low GPA) and that infringing on the current process involves curtailing departmental freedom, a step that the ASC was uncomfortable taking without higher approval. Hamel noted that while there may be a need to change aspects of the policy, there are also good reasons to keep some flexibility in the process, to ensure students are not hemmed in by overly strict requirements.

Zaixin Hong emphasized the issue of faculty workload and asked who was supposed to control such problems? Kris Bartanen responded that, currently, that responsibility lay with the department chair,

but that the issue of faculty workload was a broader and fundamentally different issue than that of standards and procedures.

After much discussion, the Senate expressed its desire that, following on the motion that was passed at the previous meeting, the Curriculum Committee would review all recent Independent Study proposals to determine whether they were fulfilling the spirit and intent of the IS policy (the Senate also expressed confidence that the CC would do this without much urging).

Weinberger noted that the ASC was, if it was deemed appropriate, ready and willing to both reinterpret, and restate if necessary, the policy on Independent Study and to review all IS proposals. However, the ASC, feeling that many of the questions at issue here are better suited for Curriculum Committee review, would prefer that either a sub-committee of the CC or a joint sub-committee of the CC and the ASC be tasked with approving all IS proposals.

Bartanen wondered if a motion was necessary to require the CC to send the issue back to the ASC for revision of the existing IS guidelines and policy. Hutchinson noted that, as liaison to the CC, he would ensure that the CC was aware of these concerns. Anderson-Connolly noted that as the year is coming to a close, the Senate should prepare relevant charges to the committees for next year.

Ward asked about the issue of faculty load, to which Bartanen responded that data was being gathered for presentation to either the Senate or the faculty (or both). Neshyba reiterated the need to protect faculty members, and particularly junior faculty members, from excessive workloads and expectations.

Holland raised another ASC-related issue: Pass/Fail grading. She noted that she would like to discuss the issue before adjournment.

Extra-Departmental Resources for Faculty Being Evaluated: Cannon called attention to an old discussion in the Senate by an ad hoc committee on evaluation and that two issues had never been resolved: 1) The duties of the PSC and the duties of addressing grievances were at odds and that dealing with the latter often interfered with the business of the former. However, Cannon noted that this issue was too big to be addressed in the remaining time and would be set aside for future consideration. 2) The creation of extra-department resources to assist and advise faculty preparing for tenure evaluation. The concern here was that faculty members in “dysfunctional” departments may not feel comfortable seeking advice on the tenure process from their departmental colleagues. The ad hoc committee recommended the creation of some kind of standing consultation process or advice mechanism to which faculty members could seek help outside of their departments. Two possible mechanisms were raised: an ombudsperson or a pool of former members of the Faculty Advancement Committee who would voluntarily make themselves available for consultation. Lisa Johnson stated that while she saw the value of such advice, she questioned the need to create a formal process.

Neshyba moved (seconded by Holland): That a roster of former members of the Faculty Advancement Committee, subject to their consent, be maintained and publicized by the Dean of the University, and that those listed be available for consultation with faculty being evaluated under the Faculty Code.

Holland supported the motion, noting that junior faculty members might not know people outside of their departments with whom to speak about the review process; Dan Burgard agreed, noting that, other than their departmental colleagues, junior faculty are most likely to know other junior faculty, especially those in their cohort, who may or may not be a credible source of information.

Ward approved of the spirit of the motion, but worried about the creation of a formal process. In particular, he worried about the quality of advice that could be obtained, given that departmental standards can vary widely. He also noted that Dean Bartanen runs a series of workshops for junior faculty on the review process. He also worried about potential legal liabilities that could arise from the establishment of a university-approved consultation process. Holland responded that the university shouldn't get in the business of defining what could and could not be a topic of discussion between the former FAC members and the advice-seeker. Rather, she suggested that the university should trust its faculty to provide reasonable and accurate advice and believed that establishing such a formal process would cut down on gossip and misinformation.

Anderson-Connolly wondered if Ward's concerns were in the word "consultation". Ward agreed, stating that it was essential to clarify the role of the adviser.

Hong noted that he agreed with the spirit of the motion, but that it was important to note that there are numerous informal opportunities for faculty to consult with one another, such as the Faculty Club.

Neshyba wondered if providing formal advice in such a way created liability issues

Anderson-Connolly proposed a friendly amendment to the main motion to replace "for consultation" with "to meet." The amendment was accepted.

Barry agreed that there should be less formality in the process and wondered if the list of potential advisers should come from a source other than the Dean. **Barry proposed a friendly amendment to replace "the Dean of the University" with "the chair of the Faculty Senate". The amendment was accepted.**

Hamel returned to the issue of what advice should be provided, asking if the FAC veteran would be allowed to provide direct feedback on things such as personal statements. Ward agreed with Hamel's concern, noting that different FAC veterans might provide different advice. Bartanen noted that the ad hoc committee's report seemed to address this issue by stating that the advice should be about the process of evaluation, not the substantive assessment itself.

Holland moved to call the question on the main motion; the motion was defeated.

Burgard and Berry agreed on the need to clarify both the advice being offered should be understood to be informal and only concerning process.

Holland moved to call the question on the main motion; the motion was defeated.

Hamel proposed a friendly amendment to amend the main motion to include the following language from the ad hoc committee's report: [those listed be available] to answer questions and hear concerns of process and the Faculty Code, not ones having to do with professional assessments of teaching, professional growth, and service." The friendly amendment was rejected by Neshyba and Holland.

Neshyba noted that the more specific language might increase the university's liability if the adviser violated the language. Ward voiced his support for the amendment, noting that without it the language is too broad and creates dangerous possibilities in which different faculty members could receive different types of advice. Anderson-Connolly spoke against the amendment, not wanting to restrict the kind of advice that could be provided. Hamel said he would vote against the main motion if the amendment was not accepted.

Barry moved to call the question on the motion to amend. The motion was defeated.

Weinberger worried that faculty members seeking advice on the review process would most likely be seeking substantive, rather than procedural, advice, which is more likely to create problematic situations. Anderson-Connolly noted that this was a good idea and was unlikely to create problems. Hamel stated that the ambiguous nature of the main motion and its official nature were dangerous.

Hutchinson proposed a friendly amendment to add the words "regarding the evaluation process" following "to meet". The friendly amendment was rejected by Neshyba and Holland. The amendment was seconded by Ward.

Barry, noting that this amendment was not different from the previously rejected amendment, moved to call the question on the amendment. The motion passed. The amendment was defeated.

Mike Segawa moved to call the question on the main motion. The motion was defeated.

Ward noted that he agreed with Weinberger's previous comment and that while he appreciated the spirit of the motion he was uncomfortable with its ambiguity.

Holland moved to adjourn. The motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:31 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Seth Weinberger
Scribe of the Meeting

Richard Anderson-Connolly
Faculty Senate Secretary