

Minutes of the Student Life Committee for February 10, 2015

Present: Faculty members Jennifer Neighbors, Lisa Fortlouis Wood, David Latimer, Mike Benveniste, Brad Reich (Chair); Library liaison Eli Gandour-Rood; Dean Mike Segawa, and student representatives Rachel Askew, Sam Jenkins.

The meeting was called to order just after 8am.

Student Check In:

As is Committee custom, the Chair asked our students representative to report on any issues of concern around campus. She replied that she had heard about some discomfort on the part of some students who felt that the University was not celebrating Black History Month; they had not seen any official celebration or recognition of the month, and were aware only of student-led efforts, organized by the Black Student Union.

Gandour-Rood, library liaison, noted that a student had approached the library to ask about perceived lack of acknowledgement/celebration of Black History Month by the library, which was received positively by library staff. There is currently a display featuring books related to Black History Month in the library study commons.

Minutes: A motion was **made, seconded, and passed** to approve the minutes from the last meeting on January 27, 2015. Thanks were given to Lisa Fortlouis Wood for her timely circulation of those minutes.

Old Business:

The focus of the meeting was the discussion of the midyear report created by working group four (see Appendix A).

The discussion centered on the work of the Student Life Committee (SLC) and how that work can reflect the voice of faculty and students in the work being done around student life on campus. The midyear report noted some of the challenges to the work of the committee, such as when initiatives that the committee is asked to reflect on are already underway.

An idea was raised to transform the SLC from a standing committee into a pool of faculty available to participate in existing or ad hoc initiatives, task forces, or working group, which do the necessary work on issues as they arise. This would address the feeling that the SLC in its current incarnation spends more time discussing issues and adding additional layers of communication or perhaps bureaucracy than it does getting work accomplished.

There was discussion of how the committee can serve in an advisory capacity to the Dean of Students Office and the Dean of Student Life, and how it can be important for the faculty, students, and staff who serve in that advisory capacity to have the necessary context to feel capable of providing input. It might be difficult to acquire that context without the regular meetings and structure of a standing committee.

Questions were raised about the process of changing the function of the SLC, with general acknowledgement that any plan necessitating bylaw changes would need to go through Faculty Senate and the Board of Trustees, and might be exceedingly time consuming. Discussion then turned to the possibility of changing the procedures of the SLC without needing to make a bylaw change. If a proposal were created to address how the work of the committee could be changed without changing the mission or entire structure, then the SLC could vote to revise committee procedures.

Many questions were raised as to what such a transformation for the SLC would look like. Questions were raised as to how such a transformation would benefit all parties involved in the SLC: faculty members, the Dean of Students Office student representatives, and staff liaisons.

Dean Segawa noted that an important element of the SLC is for it to exist as a mechanism for the faculty to express their approval or disapproval with how the Dean of Students Office is conducting its work, with emphasis on the latter. While currently there is a good relationship, it may be necessary in the future for the faculty to exist as a check or balance to the direction that the Office takes, and the SLC is currently the mechanism for that work. So if the role of the committee were to change, that piece would need to be preserved.

He noted that the other necessary function of the SLC is to provide a pool of faculty to serve on Student Conduct Boards, and while the SLC need not necessarily be the organizing force by which that pool is developed, that pool must also exist.

After additional discussion, the Chair suggested that Working Group Four write up the suggestion, attach a formal motion, and bring it back to the SLC to discuss and vote upon at the February 24th meeting.

A **motion was made** to accept the existing report, which was **seconded and passed**. The Chair thanked Working Group Four (Lisa Fortlouis Wood) for her work, both in preparing the midyear report, and in agreeing to create a write up of the proposal.

New Business:

1. It was noted that the Faculty Senate recently passed a resolution regarding freedom of expression, and a charge from that is expected to be passed on to SLC soon.
2. David Latimer noted that he has moved forward with the efforts of Working Group 2 by contacting the Academic Dean's Office to gather information (via the department chairs) about the faculty's experience with sexual assault issues. Major takeaway is that more information is needed, and it may be useful (though depending on timing, perhaps not possible this year) to add questions regarding sexual assault awareness to the Campus Climate Survey.
3. A question was raised as to whether the University has a specific policy around academic accommodations for students who have been sexually assaulted. Dean Segawa noted that while the University does not have a policy specific to that situation, he believes it would be treated as with any other situation in which students are facing injury, family tragedy, or likewise: his office would advocate on behalf of the student with faculty to serve as 'back up' or verification if necessary. It was noted that the Academic Standards Committee recently made a policy around this issue with regards to bereavement, in order to avoid inconsistency between faculty members, and that policy notes that the Student Life Office will make the final decision as to what is appropriate in a given situation.

The meeting **adjourned** at 9am.

Submitted by Eli Gandour-Rood

Appendix A: Working Group 4 Mid-Semester Report

Here is a list of the proposed interventions related to charge 4, specifically regarding how we might distinguish faculty voices in our work, support and highlight student perspectives, and formalize committee functions by separating consultative role (to Dean of Students) from our role in fulfilling formal committee charges.

I. Broad goals for addressing charge

a. Communications about committee work in all phases and contexts can more clearly distinguish the input and perspectives offered by faculty from those that come from students and administration. This would reinforce the fundamental nature of a faculty committee but would also help to fulfill our mission in supporting students in relation to issues raised through the work we undertake in completing charges from the faculty senate. Our role in consulting with the Dean of Students can be made more explicit and feedback and information from the Dean can be made available to the broader faculty.

b. The committee can work to clarify and focus questions in relation to faculty, student, and admin/staff perspectives, selecting strategically where we can offer a unique perspective (vs. covering areas that other parts of the system are addressing). Similarly, we can work to highlight student voices where we believe that more support would be useful.

II. Specific strategies

1. Meet with senate liaison mid-year and possible at the close of the year to highlight the specific accomplishments of the committee, and to communicate distinctive elements of our work in relation to the varied perspectives we considered in addressing charges.

2. Solicit more feedback from the faculty at large in addressing charges in order to strengthen/clarify/document work undertaken in a given charge. This might occur through meetings with the Faculty Senate, soliciting feedback through the faculty listserve, quick surveys via email or survey monkey, chair's meetings, soliciting departmental feedback directly, focus groups of selected/interested faculty and, when appropriate to a specific decision, faculty meetings as a whole.

3. Make the consultation process with the Dean more transparent in our minutes, with clearer consultation questions and descriptions of feedback and outcomes. Maintain committee process when visitors from Student services present information by keeping presentations to 20 minutes with discussion by committee following and/or having working groups meet with staff before presentations/q & a occur.

4. Have our mid-year and final reports make the committee work more visible in terms of the process of information gathering, specific findings, ways we have sought consultation, decision-making process, outcomes.

5. Ask the Dean of Students to make our consultation process more visible in reports made to the Board of Trustees or Cabinet, especially highlighting the varied "voices" and perspectives that were brought together in the consultation process.

6. Increase dialogue and consultation process with student members of the committee, ASUPS, student groups, and informal student networks. Highlight these elements of our work in minutes and reports.

7. Incorporating Process Sheets in our minutes and reports.

8. Voting on recommendations, decisions, accepted reports, and highlighting these decisions in our minutes and reports.