

FACULTY SENATE
November 12, 2008
REID HALL 101
4:10 PM – 5:00 PM
MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY-BOZEMAN, MONTANA
Minutes

Members Present: Amin, Catoira, Eitle, Fields, Fischer, Fleck, Gerlach, Gipp for Sowell, Jacobsen, Lansverk, Lei, , Lynch, Neumeier, Osborne, Prawdzienski, Versaevel, Watson, D. Weaver, Wisner, Wojtowicz, Zhu

Members Absent: Bangert, Bennett, Cherry, Gee, Igo, Jackson, Jacobs, Larson, Livingston, Maskiell, C. McClure Mokwa, Political Science, Snider for Becker, Varricchio, T. Weaver

Others Present: Warren Jones

Chair Wes Lynch called the meeting to order at 4:10 PM. A quorum was present. The October 22, 2008 and October 29, 2008 minutes were unanimously approved.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

and OTHER ISSUES OF CONCERN TO FACULTY MEMBERS - Chair Lynch,

- Paul Gannon was unanimously nominated to the Sustainability Advisory Committee.
- If FS members have other concerns or questions about the F&A redistribution, please forward them to Chair Lynch.

UNIVERSITY ACCREDITATION

- For MSU's accreditation, data is collected from faculty in two ways; through the faculty survey (recently emailed to some faculty), and through focus groups. Faculty Senate will count as a focus group to provide comments on elements of what the standard is supposed to accomplish. Nine slides will be presented, with several questions.

QUESTIONS (in italics)/DISCUSSION:

- 1. *How well do you feel faculty are involved in academic planning, curriculum development and review, academic advising, and institutional governance at this institution? (Answers may be directed at the college, department or university level.)*
 - At the university level, there are graduate and undergraduate councils and the Academic Affairs Committee. All are involved in academic planning.
- *Do those committees work and have a functional voice, or do they rubber stamp?*
 - Since hiring a vice-provost for graduate education, it was noted that the University Graduate Council (UGC) has a more collaborative membership where all have a voice in how graduate programs are established and function; as a result, the high standards set for the programs are being met.
 - Some FS members stated that the links between the University Graduate Council and Faculty Senate could be stronger.
 - Some thought the ties did not need to be stronger.
 - Do Faculty Senate and UGC functions overlap or not?
 - It was noted that two programs on the BOR agenda we never examined or discussed in Academic Affairs: Master of Arts and Art History and an MS nursing option.
 - It was also noted that the Master of Art History was discussed numerous times in UGC, and that the Faculty Senate rep on the committee may or may not have attended the meetings regularly.
 - FS believes there may a disconnect between what is transpiring on campus and when they are informed of it. They believe information is realized too late for any input from the senate and is more prevalent now than it was 10 years ago.
 - A veteran faculty member noted that the academic planning, curriculum development and review and advising process, from the departments up through the colleges and campus, works well.

- *With President Gamble came his version of shared governance, which was intentionally meant to be transparent, growing, and a more open process. In your view, is that happening or not?*
 - Some departments on campus believe that shared governance is not working. Although the general philosophy is espoused, it is not in practice. Some examples cited included:
 - The chemistry building. The new construction was not brought up before Faculty Senate but was brought before the BOR and approved by them;
 - F&A redistribution which many faculty feel is subsidizing the cost of the chemistry building.
 - At the institutional level, some FS members noted that in the research area, for very highly competitive NSF and NIH grants, MSU submits one or two proposals for predetermined recipients. They believe this is not a transparent process.
 - Some FS members believe that shared governance operates successfully with respect to minor and peripheral issues, but not on the larger ones.
- *Just to play devil's advocate here (and the admin are not here today, interestingly), would you say that faculty are represented on all major planning and budget committees and therefore they play a role in institutional governance through those committees?*
 - Some faculty wonder if the pool of faculty reps was protean, as the same individuals always seem to be on committees.
- *Advising.*
 - Some faculty stated that they do not know how involved faculty are in advising; others noted that some departments had many faculty involved.
 - Faculty queried whether the current model is the correct one. If MSU recruits faculty to be research active, is it appropriate that some have 50 advisees, taking them through the same sets of course decisions, repetitiously?
 - Some noted that under departmental level and on the individual faculty level, there is a fairly significant dedication to advising. On the institutional level, there is rather poor support and resources for advising. Improvement over the years has been sparse; overall, it is lacking.
 - MSU had conducted advising workshops on a regular basis and they have been very informative over the last two years.
 - Like any series of workshops, some are very good; some are marginal. It is a big improvement, but there is still a long way to go.
- *Some different departments use different models; some do it centrally, some divide them up.*
 - Some faculty stated that they don't have many advisees, as it is not a proper use of their time.
 - Another member stated that interactions with the students with the choices they need to make are very positive.
 - I advise 25 students, and I find it very rewarding. I feel like I am helping them out quite a bit even though I am very research active; I value that experience.
 - It's fun at some level, but it takes time away from other stuff you feel you should be doing.
 - I would argue that it is one of the most important things we do.
 - I would say so too.
- *I am curious. If we had not gone through the F&A experience, how much does that color your current attitude towards shared governance?*
 - There have been some very interesting faculty hires within the institution at the president, provost, and VPR level. They decided the areas we are going to strengthen, and it wasn't openly discussed on the outside relative to the mission of this university - a land grant mission.
- *We actually have a slide that talks about faculty hires, so hold onto that thought.*
- *2. How well do faculty workloads reflect the (1) goals of the institution and (2) the talents and competencies of the faculty in instruction and research and creative activity? Is sufficient time and support allowed/provided for professional growth and renewal through sabbaticals and other similar programs?*
 - My concern is that you used the words "land grant." I understand what land grant is and we are land grant, but I think there are many people here who do not know what that means. If they did, we would have a common goal for the institution. People don't, and that is a concern to me.

- *We've got five year plans. What about part two of the question: How well do faculty workloads reflect the talents and competencies of the faculty in instruction and research and creative activity?*
 - I found that the best awards are some of the buy out awards that have been really effective, at least in our college, in reducing teaching loads for research-active faculty. I have been personally pleased and so have a number of my colleagues. Lots of people have had a one-course buy out award because they proposed research projects and so I have found a lot of support for the part 2 of question 2.
 - We get reduced workloads when we are research active, and the plan has been well implemented. In my department we do not get many outside grants. They are very very rare, so we have the internal grants we apply for.
- *How about the sabbatical side? Any opinions on sabbaticals?*
 - Even though Faculty Affairs has worked on it and made improvements, there still are not many offered compared to other universities. Is our funding enough?
 - There is a program that supports professional development, short-term, which I think is very much appreciated by a lot of faculty. The program allows people to go outside their area with a one to two-page proposal and attend workshops in a peripheral area to gain expertise.
- *Is there campus-wide encouragement of sabbaticals, like there are at other institutions, and an expectation, after seven years, you should/must take a sabbatical?*
 - Sabbaticals are very limited on this campus.
 - A few years back, a faculty member was successful in getting a MONTS grant for \$25K (without IDC's) to generate data. Now, for some unknown reason, it is no longer available. This is very strange because NIH and NSF grants usually want data before you can receive their money.
 - Some faculty believe total dollar support for faculty who take advantage of short-term professional development and sabbaticals, as compared to other places, is not adequate.
 - Some faculty believe they are discouraged from taking sabbaticals, especially a year long, because department dollars cannot cover their position and the return would not be enough. One semester might work, but not a year. Warren Jones noted that faculty get their full salary for a semester; 2/3 salary for a year. The department pays for those classes from the vacancy savings from the position. The process usually ends up benefiting the department.
- *We have a workload policy, but I am just curious what your perception is about your departmental workloads?*
 - In physics, the amount of teaching and research are in good balance.
 - In the college of Ag it is fine.
 - There is variability across the institution which is not to everyone's liking and is never handled or discussed and goes back to the institutional governance question. It is not ever brought out into the open to discuss fully among the faculty in the various departments or colleges; the fairness issues or the equity.
 - So, according to the institution, there is another change in policy; the sick leave reporting. According to the policy, we have a 40-hour workload and we are to suppose to use sick leave to go to the doctor and the extra hours we are putting in for preparation, grading, research, etc., are apparently non-existent. What will happen is that our instruction will suffer; the institution won't get grant money, etc. I don't think there is an appreciation of the administration on how much extra time the faculty puts in to make this institution work
 - In our small department, we are overwhelmed with the amount of students, especially in the particular section, and also with advising. I am a junior faculty member, and I serve on 3-4 committees. I am also on our P&T committee in my department and it is extremely stressful.
 - In my experience, there are relatively fewer women than men on this campus and young women faculty get called upon, more than men, to serve on committees. Workloads for women faculty may not actually be appropriate. It is good we have the service requirement, but it hurts the other side.
- *(3.) How well does the institution provide for regular and systematic evaluation for faculty performance in order to ensure teaching effectiveness and the fulfillment of instructional and other faculty responsibilities? (This question addresses more of the instructional side.)*

- For teaching in my college, it is 99.9% Knapp scores. Is it regular and systematic? Yes, and the Knapp scores tell the story. I don't think it works very well and doesn't help to improve teaching effectiveness. It is an appropriate, but narrow measure. And I'm not sure the questions on the Knapp are that great anyway, but that is another discussion. But just having a single data point from students, especially for new or struggling faculty members, is not beneficial. Faculty don't have peer evaluations, or people who go into classes, to evaluate or provide feedback during the semester. Therefore, if a faculty member is failing in the classroom, they do not get their results from Knapp until they are a month into their next semester.
- I would like to speak to more uniformity in both the systematic nature of student evaluations of teaching and in the old methods for advising. There is no uniformity across the institution in either of those regards and personally, I believe Knapp is not effective as an instrument for useful data. The comments may provide useful information, but the Knapp itself is nothing more than a popularity measure and it may not even be that. It certainly isn't as good as other instruments available and, if used institution-wide, would give us a lot more information about what we are doing right and what we are doing wrong.
- There is no credible way of talking about how good a graduate advisor you are. For those who have active research programs, this is important. This university does zero to make any evaluation of that whosoever. You don't even get credit for the research credits a student takes and a faculty member's instruction load. For the annual evaluations, third year and the P&T thing, you could say, "Yes, there are things that happen."
- *You are saying there is a process, but it could be improved.*
 - Yes.
 - The Aleamoni forms were not a good idea. And our department uses other sources of evaluation.
- *Consider this statement and now apply it to the adjuncts you know and work with and contribute to the mission of the college. How well does this statement apply to them?*
 - Annual reviews of adjunct faculty are not required, as I understand it. I believe it depends on the department.
 - Knapp scores apply to our adjunct faculty; they have a review with the department head annually; they are assigned to a faculty member who supervises them, and it is noted by the department head.
- *What incentive is there for an adjunct to do an adequate job to move up to the next step? Is there any incentive?*
 - In the nursing department, adjuncts are given merit raises as are faculty. However, we have full-time adjuncts, and that may be different than part time adjuncts.
- *We have heard people criticize the Knapp form. Is that the universal view in this group?*
 - My summation of this question #3 is that the first half of it, we do it reasonably well: We do have regular and systematic evaluations. I am not sure the second half of the statement follows from that.
 - Another thing we don't have, and is somewhat related to the adjuncts, is a method to systematically check the grade levels in classes; the grades professors are giving. We have some concerns that adjuncts were not teaching as intense a level as tenure track faculty and that the grades they are giving consisted of a lot of A's. But the students love them. And then they get the merit raises, because they get the good evaluations. As a result, some faculty would like to review the grade reports. Faculty then stated that there could be a counterpoint discussion: If a course returns a lot of C grades, is it because a good instructor is giving a hard course and testing the students - or because the instructor is not very good, and both may get poor evaluations.
- *Does anyone's department keeps grade distribution data that is communicated?*
 - I think that our chair keeps data, and I don't know how much it is used. I know we have an assessment plan. I have been the chair of the assessment committee in our department, and we discuss which students are doing well, and which are not. It may not be an individual student evaluation, but we do examine: how effective we are, and came up with our own measures of what are goals are; what students should get out of our program; and, where we might fall short. We compare capstone work and earlier work

- and, if they are improving over time, that is telling us something; it is unassociated with the systematic evaluation, but it is being done nevertheless, and that is good for students.
- We have people who are rewarded with salary increases, promotions, honorary chairs, etc., that are great grant givers, write a lot of research papers but do not excel in teaching. It is something that should be investigated.
 - The counter argument is there are great teachers that are evaluated higher than very successful researchers.
- *4. What is the general attitude regarding academic freedom on this campus? Does MSU foster and protect academic freedom for faculty in the classroom? In research and in creative activity?*
 - It was noted that a faculty member at MSU left because of a write-up in the paper about the substance of what they were saying in class, and it was believed by some students that the lectures were reflecting values that they did not have. It is believed that the faculty member felt a lot of pressure and believed students have representation at the legislative level and the faculty have none. That is a big concern. What can we do about this? Students voice their position and faculty who present research in class are attacked publicly.
 - There is concern about academic freedom as MSU moves to common numbering of classes.
 - *“Common outcomes” is the language; you are not required a common content.*
 - Some believe there is a potential for lack of academic freedom with the concept of “common content.”
 - Within MSU we do have academic freedom; I think the external system funding, BOR, political system, is what drives this, and there could be some concerns there.
 - I think that whenever the content of a course gets into areas that are considered “value” issues, there is a very strong constituency outside of MSU in the political system that wants to have some say in whether those values/issues ought to arise in the classroom or not; whether alternative values ought to be expressed, and I think that is a very big threat to academic freedom. There are many disciplines in the university where values are part of the discipline.
 - *How do we do at MSU in this regard compared to other places? Other land grant institutions? Western PhD university? Nationally? Interplay with the BOR, legislature?*
 - At the University of Wisconsin, with regard to teaching political science, the BOR mandated a teaching policy, as did the University of Illinois. So their BOR come between the professor and what he/she is teaching.
 - This is related to the last issue about how faculty are being evaluated. When you are teaching sensitive material that students perceive as value-laden, it can earn you less than stellar evaluations. I think MSU tries to protect against that. There is a lot of understanding of that in our department; about who is teaching those types of classes, and that they are challenging students to think about different issues.
 - In research and creative activity, are we allowed to do what we need to? Is there an animal facility?
 - *5. Are part-time and adjunct faculty qualified by academic background, degree(s) and/or professional experience to carry out their teaching assignment and/or other prescribed duties and responsibilities?*
 - Yes.

The Faculty Senate meeting ended at 5:00 PM, as there was no further business.

Signature
Wes Lynch, Chair

Signature
Gale R. Gough, Secretary