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Student Academic Policies Committee Minutes of the Academic Senate 2003-04-02

University of Dayton. Student Academic Policies Committee

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Student Academic Policies Committee
University of Dayton
Dayton, Ohio
Minutes
April 2, 2003

Time: 8:00 am – 9:00 am

Location: KU Rm 253

Senators Present: N. Beck, G. Doyle, R. Gorton, R. Kearns, A. Kocoloski, M. Telfair

I. April 1, 2003 ECAS Meeting Report

Megan Telfair informed the SAPC of the following issues discussed at the ECAS meeting:

A. Strategic Planning: Megan informed the committee of the ECAS's continued effort to encourage faculty and students to take on a more active role in the strategic planning of the University. To gather ideas and opinions, the executive committee invited faculty across the campus to submit their vision for UD, while Megan brought this opportunity to the attention of senators and SGA members. After receiving feedback from a handful of people, 2-3 faculty members and 1-2 students will be invited to share their views, after which the floor will be open for discussion with the entire Senate on the Friday, April 4, 2003 meeting.

B. IT server down-time/UDiT: Per request of concerned faculty and staff, Megan relayed the information that both Tom Skill and Tom Danford are working to better the communication between fac/staff and UDiT regarding server down-time by implementing a 3 step process that will include 1) the development of a 1 page, monthly newsletter describing the issues, concerns, needs, and accomplishments of UDiT 2) the creation of a web-site providing up-to-date information that fac/staff can access with information about why a server is down at a particular time 3) and a document stating the new vision and strategic plan for UDiT written with the help and input of members from the senate.

C. Copyright Policy: Megan also mentioned that Harry Gerla and those selected to help him will work to develop a task force geared toward the creation of a website stating UD's policy regarding Copyright issues and the use of Intellectual Property on campus. A senate document is also in the process of being drafted for the senate to approve perhaps during the next academic year. The intention is to provide faculty and administration with a better understanding of the legal limitations placed on them by copyright laws, and to establish better protection from acting in violation of these policies.

II. Old Business

A. Update on Summer Course Schedule Revisions: George briefed the SAPC on the latest developments concerning his proposed changes to the summer course schedule, and provided documentation of a few of the responses he received from various departments. Overall, he stressed the concern expressed by the Math Department that the new schedule conflicts with when the department wants to hold classes. However, after researching the issue, George found that the changes will not affect the times that its courses are typically offered. On the other hand,

Elizabeth Gustafson of the Business School presented George with an entirely new idea of providing an “Alternate A” and “Alternate B” schedule for 6-week courses. While each department is entitled to create their own schedule of when courses are to be offered, George simply argued that this will only deter or even prevent certain business students from taking courses offered in other departments that adhere to the standard course schedule.

A final consensus was reached that a document will be presented to members of the Academic Senate highlighting the major changes, as well as *non-changes*, that the revised summer course schedule would include. Perhaps department chairs and faculty are too bogged down on the logistics of the plan that the point and simplicity of it is being overlooked. George plans to address the senate on April 4th to update everyone on his proposal so that the issue can be brought up again and possibly voted on by next Fall.

B. Policy Regarding Dean’s List Eligibility for Part-Time Students: Megan provided the SAPC with a copy of the University’s policy regarding part-time student eligibility for Dean’s List, taken from the UD Bulletin 2002 Ed. After discussion, the SAPC decided that this does not appear to be that big of an issue in terms of overall fairness or advantage over full-time students. The rationale is that part-time status *implies* a student is taking a lighter course load as compared to a full-time student, and the student’s transcript will reflect under what conditions the student earned “Dean’s List” credentials, either PT or FT. Therefore, the SAPC would like to investigate whether by changing the current policy we would be solving a problem for anyone, because at this time we don’t see it as one.

C. Feedback on Student Assessment of Instruction Form: Megan reported at the March meeting that each student Senator sent out a letter informing department chairs and deans that the latest edition of the Student Assessment of Instruction forms were up for re-evaluation per request of the Winter 2000 SAPC. Megan received a response from David Wright which described the concerns expressed by the Faculty Development Committee, in particular the significance these forms have in determining faculty promotion, tenure, and salary decisions. The FDC would like to see alternative and more effective ways for teaching to be evaluated, such as a “peer review” where faculty members observe each other teaching. Rather than professors being penalized by students in his/her evaluation for enhancing the academic rigor or standards of the class, a peer might have a better insight as to whether the teaching style is *too* advanced, or if it is appropriately challenging for the course level. The SAPC agreed to the logic behind an alternative/additional method of evaluation, seeing as how a student is more likely to rate a professor poorly if he/she is not doing well in the class. The bad rating, in such a case, may not be legitimately fair for determining the faculty’s promotion just because a student(s) uses the assessment as a means of “getting back at” the professor. The SAPC is worried about how frequently students do misuse the assessment the forms, and is receptive to ways that might prevent such activity.

In addition, Adam received feedback from Kevin Hallinan who commented that evaluations should be shorter, asking only that broad, universal question applicable to most all courses be asked. The SAPC understands that length of the evaluations *is* another problem with the forms, and that often times the questions do not even remotely pertain to a particular course. Therefore, students may absent mindedly mark a response even if it does not apply and skew the rating.

Next, the business department voiced concerns dealing with students' accountability on the assessments. The SAPC feels that students should be made more aware of the significance of these forms and the seriousness of completing them *honestly* and *completely*. To prevent students from rushing through the forms to leave class a few minutes early, faculty might consider distributing the forms at the start of lecture, thereby allowing ample time for their completion while precluding the temptation to hurry through the process.

Overall, we also felt that faculty should not have to wait until the end of the semester or longer to receive feedback on the course, when clearly this is too late to address the issues students had during the previous term. George mentioned that the university has a system called MID George to help new faculty or professors teaching new courses whereby outside faculty come into the classroom and ask the students taking the course a few questions pertaining to the class, and obtain an overall consensus of the way things are going. The feedback is then given to the faculty member teaching the course with the intention that he/she can make necessary improvements to benefit the students *before* it's too late. This not only provides the faculty member insight, but also places value on the students' opinions.

After this discussion, Megan met with David Wright and notified him of the SAPCs views on the matter. Because this issue directly affects faculty members, Megan agreed to meet with the Faculty Development Committee on April 7 to begin working with them to develop ideas that may enhance the overall process of faculty evaluation for both the students and professors.

Submitted by Megan Telfair