2010-09-27 Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate

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Approved
Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate
September 27, 2010; 11 a.m.
St. Mary’s Hall Room 113B

Present: Judith Huacuja, Andrea M Seielstad, Bradley D Duncan, David W Biers, Heidi G Gauder, Joseph E Saliba, Leno M Pedrotti, Corinne Daprano, Paul Benson, Rebecca Wells, Antonio Mari, Katie Trempe

Guests: James Farrelly

Opening meditation: Joseph Saliba opened the meeting with a meditation.

Minutes: The minutes of the September 13, 2010 meeting were approved.

Announcements:

J. Huacuja welcomed to ECAS undergraduate student representative, Katie Trempe, and graduate student representative, Antonio Mari. She announced further that the Senate discussed and approved ECAS’ emergency measure appointing Associate Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies to the Senate for 2010-11.

B. Duncan reported from the Human Resources Advisory Council meeting held Friday, September 24. Open enrollment will begin in a few weeks. UD’s cost went up by 14.7%, and insurance rates will be increasing. For employees only rates will go up by $4 per month. The maximum increase will be $30 per month for employees & families enrolled in advantage plan. Additionally, starting in January 2011, all paystubs have to be filled out online in porches portal, and all faculty and staff will have to enroll in direct deposit. Only 30 employees will be affected by this change. Finally, pay stubs for all employees will be available only online through porches portal.

J. Farrelly announced that the Faculty Board is discussing its agenda for its November session and would like to get advice from Senate on topics to include. He indicated that the Board had raised two (2) issues: governance and diversity. With regard to governance, the Board intends to discuss faculty involvement in university governance, including different faculty statuses and who gets a voice in decision-making across campus. The issue is particularly acute given the loss of the Executive Leadership Council and changing culture in higher academia. Discussion topics will include consistency with constitutional rights granted to Senate to represent faculty, communication between faculty and administrators, faculty rights, university governance structures, among others. The issue of diversity is timely because the university is scheduled to have to give a report in 2011 on diversity to the Higher Learning Commission. The Board will need input in order to finalize an agenda by the middle of October.

Old business:

Subcommittee to Address Constitutional Voting issues: The the following members have agreed to serve on the Subcommittee to Address Constitutional Voting issues:

   Brad Duncan, Chair (Engineering)
   James Dunn (Business)
   Emily Hicks (Library)
   Shawn Swavey (Natural Sciences). (S. Swavey invited after Aparna Higgins declined to serve).
   Stephen Richards, (Education & Graduate School)
The first meeting will be Monday, October 4, 2010, and J. Farrelly will join the group to assist in reconstructing the constitutional history. One issue that will need to be resolved by the committee in addition to the substantive recommendations is whether any proposed amendments would need to be discussed at a general faculty meeting or just forums.

J. Huacuja announced that the subcommittee to review the constitution for bias-free language (Pat Johnson and Sheila Hughes) completed their work and found it to be in good order. Upon further review, it was determined that the document had been updated previously, and included inclusive language. See Senate Document 98-3.

New Business:

Curricular review. J. Huacuja presented for discussion an emerging issue: namely, that a number of undergraduate and graduate courses remain in the bulletin even though they may not have been taught in several years, and there is not a consistent process for reviewing and removing courses. The Provost once had a 3-year rule, wherein courses would be culled if not offered in the past 2 years, but it is not clear how well that is being enforced. The question is whether this is a topic of concern for the Senate, and/or whether there are existing policies and procedures, i.e., through the Office of the Provost, that adequately address this topic.

ECAS members discussed a number of considerations and campus practices. Concerns about truth in advertising for students were raised, especially with respect to graduate students who may be comparing programs based on course offerings. However, other institutional realities weigh against removing courses from the books. The College discussed this issue in recent years, for example, and decided not to move in the direction of culling courses because there are many faculty members who are put on special appointments, i.e., program directors and department chairs, such that their elective courses might not get taught for quite a long time. The department’s concern was that it takes the better part of a year to get a course back on the books under College AAC process and constitution, so if courses are removed from the books it would be difficult to get them back in place once the faculty member returned to full-time teaching duties.

After considerable discussion, A Seielstad moved to send the matter to the APC to explore the matter further and to prepare a report addressing any recommendations they might have in terms of the Senate’s involvement in this matter. Methods of review may include, but not be limited to, interviewing faculty, relevant administrative staff, and students about internal practices and their impacts, reviewing existing policies and practices campus-wide, examine what graduate schools do at other schools. Upon seconding by P. Benson, the committee unanimously agreed to refer the matter to APC for further consideration.

Senate Agenda. Joyce Carter invited but cannot attend. J. Huacuga will announce changes. Will vote on Doc. 10-5. Graduate policies. Report from Nominating and Recruitment Committee but no vote. The meeting was adjourned at 12:15.

Respectfully submitted by Andrea Seielstad