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2020-04-20 Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate

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Approved Minutes
Special Session of the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate
April 20, 2020
9:00 am – 10:15 am
Zoom meeting

Present: Joanna Abdallah, James Brill, Anne Crecelius, Shannon Driskell, Deo Eustace, Mark Jacobs, Denise James, Leslie Picca, Fran Rice, Andrea Seielstad

Absent: Paul Benson, Jason Pierce

Guests: Janet Bednarek (Faculty Board representative)

This special session focused on how the faculty can and should be involved in campus conversations, committees and/or taskforces responding to the impact of COVID-19. Some decisions are outside of faculty purview, but philosophically faculty should be involved in decision making.

- ECAS must be at the table during these conversations. ECAS must continue to meet during the summer.
- Consider curating and sharing with faculty what higher education is facing as a result of COVID-19; similar to the budget “road shows” provided earlier this year.
- We must be given more information about decisions that are being made. For example, healthcare, give us the budgetary numbers. Ask for more information on administration’s decision-making model; how was it decided who was essential and who was not. Faculty in each unit need to be consulted to identify what courses are priorities in their curriculum.
- Decisions on workload and the division of labor are being made quickly. It is unclear the methods used for these decisions. Processes that are already in place are not being used. There will be more women with service level workload responsibilities. Inequities will deepen. It is troublesome that higher level decisions are being made with input from only 4 faculty. What is the plan to gather feedback?
- Need to push ELC for transparency in what they know now and what is being considered.
- Need more information on what the “New normal” group will address? What criteria was used to select faculty for this group?
- What makes UD distinct is not the classes, instead it is the social aspects, hanging out with friends and faculty. That will be hard to replicate online. Marketing efforts need to be stepped up to keep current students engaged and attract new students.
- If fall classes are all online, I would consider waiting to see if the spring term returns to face to face classes. Online learning is more challenging and not as effective for me. My parents would support my decision if I chose to take a semester off.
- Other institutions, like the University of Cincinnati, are receiving petitions demanding tuition reductions. Should we consider tuition reductions?

What is the best way to move forward? What needs to be conveyed to ELC?

- More faculty collaboration in decisions being made.
- Advocate for a well-designed survey to gather the students’ perspectives.

- Communicate what efforts are being made to retain current students.
- Even though decisions are being made by administration, it is the faculty that need to execute them. Until administration learns what is possible, the decisions they make won't have the results they want. More information from more sources will result in better decisions.
- What does administration think the university will look like after COVID-19? What will restructuring look like, what portion is being laid off, what portion is being furloughed. We should be in a much stronger competitive position to attract better stronger students. How will faculty engage in this endpoint?
- Instead of arguing we want to be involved in decision making, simply start doing things towards that end. Leverage the expertise that is on campus and in the community. Ask administration to identify what needs to be accomplished, and the Senate will try to get faculty involved. Instead of one group working on an issue, have three different groups working on the same problem to get a variety of solutions.
- Perhaps approach committee structures similar to the structure of the budget alignment committees.
- The COVID-19 crisis has short circuited shared governance in repeated ways, there needs to be a greater amount of consultation and communication.
- Need to think of models on how to get input from faculty.
- Ask for concrete updates on planning; how much money is being saved with the decisions being made, especially with decisions being made about lecturers.

At ELC we will:

1. Articulate we want greater transparency around how NTT appointments will be handled.
2. Want to discuss the lack of senate involvement in decision making at large.
3. We want to highlight that faculty have a tremendous amount of expertise and the faculty should be engaged in areas that are consistent with their expertise.

At Friday's ECAS, we will continue this discussion, with the intent of expanding exactly how we can be involved over the weeks and months ahead. We will also discuss including time on the agenda for the students to voice their concerns and for a strong statement from the Faculty Board.

Adjourned: 10:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted, Fran Rice