

FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday February 21, 2017

PRESENT: Abbas, Allnutt, Anderson, Baker (Mike Ruoniemi alternate), Billingsley, Bush, Campbell, Corl, Dalloul, Etzkorn, Gaskill, Geyer, Gilmore, Hawdon, Hicok, Lyon, Mackey, McGrath, Martin, Noiro, O'Keefe, Olson, Richey, Rinehart, Robinson, Rosenzweig, Schenk, Shadle, Sirgy, Smith, Sultan, Tegarden, Trogdon, Vogelaar, Watson, Wemhoener, Young.

ABSENT: Agud, Ahmadian, Al-Haik, Amacher, Ashley, Bairaktarova, Balci, Barney, Brewster, Brown, Ducker, Ferris, Gabbard, Gindlesberger, Good, Guynn, Hopkins, Hosig, Jordan, Kaufman, Leon (with notice)Luttrell, Matheson, Merola, Nappier (with notice)O'Rourke, Patterson, Puckett, Reed, Safaai-Jazi, Savla, Seth, Skaggs, Stauffer, Stivachtis, Tavera, Tracy, Viehland, Zhang

I. HOUSEKEEPING

The meeting was called to order at 5:17PM.

The agenda was approved.

The minutes for the February 7, 2017 meeting were approved.

II. OMBUDS RESOLUTION FROM CFA

CFA, led by Vice-President Robinson, strongly approves. A motion to approve and support this resolution to establish an Ombuds Office at VT passed.

III. DISCUSSION ON BENCHMARKING/QUALITY ASSESSMENT TASK FORCE

The taskforce is now operational. Last call for extra volunteers!

The P&T taskforce has also been discussing metrics. Benchmarks pertaining to the budget only partly overlap with the metrics that will be used to evaluate faculty members. The Senate will write a letter to the Provost, Finney and Ken Smith so as to get clarification about the degree of connection or disconnect between the "unit" benchmarks and individual/disciplinary benchmarks.

Discussion:

One concern is that you can game the system, by edging toward the top metrics. Departments could also start measuring faculty success based on the metrics their budget depends upon.

Focus on numbers and dollars is a mistake. It is damaging to the goal to produce quality scholarship. Excellence does not equal higher overhead recovery money for the University. We keep losing talent because of such as narrow outlook.

We really need to generate our own metrics, free of the current constraints – e.g., select 3-5 metrics from a drop-down menu. Metrics can be rebalanced as well, but it is under-advertised. Softer, more customized measures as opposed to abstract hard numbers cannot indefinitely be announced as added "in the future." Where and how can faculty input alternate ideas, unlisted, metrics etc.? This needs to be communicated better.

- ➔ The BENCHMARKING/QUALITY ASSESSMENT TASK FORCE will therefore work on a set of principles, e.g.:
- Quantitative metrics should be used as reference and help inform decisions, not automate or standardize them.
- Avenues for national excellence and long view should be open
- Awards and rewards for faculty, incentives are key
- A culture of excellence at multiple levels

- Transparency of the measuring process; who and why is going to use the data? And with or without contextualization, customization, or expert knowledge?
- What is the new data-analysis unit within the Provost Office for?
- Correlations do not speak of causation
- And other rules outlined in the Linden Manifesto (to be shared on the Senate group site)
- ...

The taskforce is hereby charged work on principles for proper measurement of faculty and departmental success, beyond uniform, rigidly-quantitative, short-sighted metrics. All senators will bring back that draft “manifesto” to each unit for feedback, to make sure it resonates with the faculty as a whole, in all our diversity.

IV. E-FAR SURVEY AND REPORT

A draft version of the report was handed out to senators and uploaded to our group worksite. Discussion:

It is unclear whether this commercial program is customizable or not, while it clearly should be. Secretary Noirot will edit the report, share it on the Senate Scholar site, and, once edited, forwarded it to Peggy Lane, Jack Finney, and Thanassis Rikakis by the end of March.

V. DESTINATION AREAS

Brett Shadle is serving on one of the DA sub-committees, for “Integrated Security.” All meetings are open to Faculty. There will be a Senator sitting in each stake-holder committee starting next Summer, as per Provost Rikakis’s recent promise.

VI. OTHER ITEMS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The CHEGG website is a student coursework database, to upload and download homework answers, whole textbooks etc.

The University, not just Faculty Senate, issued a strong statement against the so-called Trump-Administration “Travel Ban.” The Blacksburg Town Council used our statement to write their own. A new travel ban and immigration executive order is to be issued soon.

Faculty members depending on cut EPA funds are invited to contact the Senate.

The April 1 BOV meeting will be structured like a retreat and include discussion of the presidential travel ban and compression.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:35PM.