Academic Council

Minutes
Monday, December 7, 2015 from 3:30 to 5:00 pm
CNS 200

Faculty Members Present: Professors Mousumi Bhattacharya, Beth Boquet, Dave Crawford, David Downie, Bob Epstein, Shannon Kelley, Alison Kris, Jen Klug, Phil Lane, John McDermott, Rona Preli, Susan Rakowitz (Secretary of the General Faculty), Amalia Rusu (Executive Secretary), Emily Smith, Kraig Steffen, Debra Strauss (Chair), Jo Yarrington, Joan Weiss

Administrators Present: SVPAA Lynn Babington; Deans Don Gibson, Bob Hannafin, Yohuru Williams, Meredith Kazer

Student Observer Present: Jason Abate

Guests Present: Professor Ronald Davidson (Item 5); Professor Stephanie Storms (item 7a)

Regrets: Dean Bruce Berdanier

Meeting Called to Order: 3:35 pm

1. Presidential courtesy

SVPAA Babington reported that Fairfield led the MAAC and ranked among the nation’s best with regard to its graduation rate of athletes. The new Health Studies program had 66 minors. In an example of the partnership between the Dolan School of Business (DSB) and the School of Engineering (SOE) on entrepreneurship activities, the SOE had entered into a partnership with Servo-Robot that will provide graduate student fellowships for the next two years. The School of Nursing (SON) received a CT innovation grant to support simulation learning. The Graduate School of Education and Allied Professions (GSEAP) and Bassick High School had formed a partnership to introduce Bridgeport high school students, some of whom may not have plans to attend college, to learning in a college environment. 80 students come to Fairfield’s campus on Fridays throughout the academic year and have their regularly scheduled Friday classes in Fairfield University classrooms. The SVPAA circulated a copy of the “Vision Statement” for the Marion Peckham Egan School of Nursing and Health Studies.” The School was named in honor of a $10 million gift.

Noting the value of reaching audiences outside of academia, and the positive light that public engagement sheds on the quality of the University and its faculty, the SVPAA outlined recent examples of faculty writing articles for news publications or being quoted in them, including Philip Lane, Michael McDonald, Sharlene McEvoy, Gavriel Rosenfeld, Debra Strauss, and the SON’s Poverty Simulation Day. Noting the positive start to the new “Thought Leadership Blog” on the University’s website, she encouraged faculty to participate and noted that posts appearing on the University Blog, ThinkSpace (located in the
social tile off the Fairfield.edu home page) are also posted to University social networks and channels. In addition, Op-Ed pieces would first be pitched to Tier A/B publications and then published via University channels. Excellent examples to date included: “The Future of Ministry” by Dr. Paul Lakeland; “Teach Children to Read First so they can Read to Learn” by Dr. Margie Gillis; “Reflections on Paris- Before and After November 13” by Klevisa Kovaci ’14; “Retailers Go Dark on ‘Black Thursday’” by Dr. Mousumi Bose Godbole; “The Refugee Crisis in Europe” by Dr. David McFadden; and “What it Really Means to be a Warrior” by Shelby Iapoce ’16.

2. Report from the Secretary of the General Faculty

Prof. Susan Rakowitz (Secretary of the General Faculty), reported that the Executive Committee of Academic Council had attended the November 17 meeting of the senior University administrators and is scheduled to meet next week with Dr. Babington, Mr. Lawlor, Dr. Pellegrino, and Fr. von Arx.

3. Report from the Executive Secretary

a. Approval of minutes:

i. Meeting of November 2, 2015 (attachment)
   The members agreed to change “University Resources” to “Human Resources.”
   Motion [Crawford/ Yarrington]: to approve the minutes, as orally amended, from November 2, 2015. The minutes were approved unanimously.

ii. Meeting of November 16, 2015 (attachment)
   Motion [Weiss/Lane]: to approve the minutes from November 16, 2015.
   The minutes were approved unanimously, with two abstentions.

b. Correspondence. None

c. Oral Reports.

Prof. David Crawford, on behalf of the ad-hoc sub-group examining locker room issues, reported on the group’s meeting with David Frassinelli, Associate Vice President of Facilities Management. The group had informed him (in writing prior to the meeting and during the meeting) that the several university governance documents stated that faculty should have separate locker rooms in the gym and sought clarification if this would be the case in the revised ‘Rec-Plex’. Mr. Frassinelli showed them blueprints and stated that no separate locker rooms had been envisaged and with construction underway, altering the plans was unlikely. Larger, private showers (rather than group showers) were planned for both the men’s and women’s locker room and the sub-group and Mr. Frassinelli discussed the ‘two-curtain’ solution, but no solution was found to create separate locker rooms for faculty.
During the ensuing discussion, several members of the Academic Council expressed significant concern that the revisions had failed to create separate locker rooms. Reasons included, inter alia: the potential inappropriateness of faculty and students showering and changing in the same space; the use of the locker rooms by children in summer camps, while the rooms were also open to adult faculty and students; the use of the locker rooms by members of the community at the same time as students; the disconnect between governing documents and the building plans; the lack of stakeholder input earlier in the process; concerns that the renovated RecPlex will be outdated with regard to increasing standard concerns for privacy and gender issues; and frustration that the planned fix did not, at least on-paper appear to differ from the current situation in the women’s locker room. SVPAA Babington stated that the planned construction of academic buildings had involved, and would continue to involve, extensive consultations with relevant faculty committees and other faculty, staff and administrative stakeholders.

Several members of the Academic Council outlined potential solutions to the locker room issue, including, inter alia: using partitions or other methods of creating faculty-only, or non-student, space within the planned locker rooms; reserving some time-periods for faculty use only; moving the swim team to the student locker rooms and using the swim team locker rooms for faculty (one or more of the swim team locker rooms were originally faculty-only locker rooms); and carving out space in the blueprints for faculty-only locker rooms.

The Academic Council agreed that interested members would provide additional information to Prof. Crawford who would draft a document and communicate with the Council and Mr. Frassinelli.


5. Petitions for immediate hearing.

a. Petition from the Humanities Chairs of the College of Arts and Sciences to add another faculty member to the Search Committee for the University Librarian

Motion [Preli/Lane]: to consider the petition. Approved unanimously.

On behalf of Chairs of departments in the humanities in the College of Arts and Sciences (Profs. Steve Bayne, Philosophy; Jerelyn Johnson, Modern Languages and Literatures; David McFadden, History; Laura Nash, Visual and Performing Arts; Elizabeth Petrino, English), Prof. Ron Davidson, Chair of Religious Studies and Director of the Humanities Institute, proposed that the Academic Council add a humanities faculty member to the Search Committee for the University Librarian. He emphasized that the humanities rely heavily on library resources, in particular monographs; that deep and broad archives were needed in many fields; that new directions in the humanities, including digital resources, are critical to several fields; that humanities faculty have concerns about the future of the library related to collections and use of space; and that the search committee did not include a faculty member in the humanities. Professor Cecelia Bucki (History) was
nominated in the original call for candidates and Professor Ron Davidson said he was also willing to serve. Professors Bucki and Davidson had extensive experience on the Library Committee and working with the humanities and libraries in the state of Connecticut and nationally. In response to questions, Professor Davidson stated that while humanities faculty could communicate with members of the search committee, direct representation would be a better method of ensuring that important issues were considered in the search.

In the ensuing discussion, several members of the Academic Council expressed sympathy for the concerns expressed by Professor Davidson but they and many other members noted that normal procedures had been followed in both calling for nominations and in voting on members of the search committee. The faculty members on the committee could represent a diverse set of views and specific humanities related concerns could be conveyed to them. To change the composition of the search committee after it had been constituted would not conform to established practice and would set a precedent that would likely raise difficult, unnecessary and unwanted procedural and practical issues in the future for the Academic Council and potentially for other committees. By the close of the discussion, no member of the Academic Council had supported adding another faculty member to the search committee. In response to a question, SVPAA Babington stated that the search would include a designated role for the Library Committee. As noted by the Secretary of the General Faculty, this handbook committee included designated faculty in the humanities.

The Academic Council agreed not to reopen the selection of faculty members to serve on the Search Committee for the University Librarian. The Humanities Chairs would be invited to communicate their views regarding the search and broader library issues to members of the search committee directly, through the Library Committee, and through other consultations that may be established by the Search Committee.


7. New business

   a. Committee on Conference with the Board of Trustees: report on December meeting

   [The meeting approved a re-ordering of the agenda through which this sub-item was taken up immediately following agenda Item 3(a)]

   Professor Stephanie Storms reported that all faculty members of the Committee on Conference with the Board of Trustees had attended the meeting on December 3, 2015. During the meeting, SVPP Babington provided updates on Fairfield 2020, including providing handouts on progress made and next steps; student participation in study abroad and service learning programs and how to increase it; and plans to reach the enrollment goal of 4000 full-time undergraduate students. Professor Nancy Dallavalle, Vice President for Mission and Identity and Associate Professor of Religious Studies had then made a presentation about the Catholic intellectual tradition. Board members and faculty had then
exchanged views regarding the infusion of this tradition, and its role, at Fairfield University. Professor Storms indicated that little time had remained for other discussion before the meeting went into Executive Session.

In response to a question from Professor Lane, Professor Storms said that the members of the Committee on Conference had not told Board members that the General Faculty had not agreed on the enrollment goal. In response to a series of questions (including those from Professors Epstein, Klug, Lane, and Steffen), the SVPAA stated that discussions amongst senior administrators regarding the planned enrollment increase had included discussions of the consequential need to increase educational resources, including faculty. The University had met its undergraduate enrollment budget goal this year due to an increase in transfer students, something that reflected the increasing number of students nationally who apply to transfer. Selectivity had improved and the discount rate had decreased. A variety of measures were underway to understand and meet the increased demand for on-campus student housing, including the master building plan that had been approved by the Board of Trustees. She would outline this plan in detail at the University Town Hall meeting on Wednesday, December 9, but noted that its two phases included the new Health Science/School of Nursing Building (which would break ground in May); a parking garage; remodeling of DSB and some student housing, and a new dorm, and other features.

b. Electing faculty to the Committee on Non Tenure Track Faculty

The Secretary of the General Faculty recalled that after the Board of Trustees had agreed to add text regarding a Committee on Non-Tenure track Faculty to the Faculty Handbook, she had consulted with the Committee on Committees regarding the election of three non-tenure track faculty members to serve on this committee and they had agreed on a proposal to add language to the Journal of Record defining, “Non-Tenure track Faculty” with respect to the membership of this committee. After outlining the proposal, she drew attention to the proposed timeline for the initial staffing of this committee)

Motion [Rakowitz/Yarrington] to add the following text to the Journal of Record:

Defining Non-Tenure Track Faculty for the Election to the Committee on Non-Tenure Track Faculty

Those eligible to stand for election and/or to vote in the election of "three non-tenure track faculty members…by the non-tenure track faculty in an election overseen by the Secretary of the General Faculty each spring" shall be anyone who meets the Handbook definition of "Lecturer," "Adjunct Professor," "Visiting Instructor," "Visiting Professor," or "Professor of the Practice."

The motion was approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 4:57.

David Downie, Recording Secretary