Faculty Affairs Committee Meeting
November 17, 2009; 3:00 pm
1270 FAB

Present: A. Acsadi, S. Calkins (Administration liaison), W. Crossland, P. Jarosz, K. Padmanabhan, E. Puscheck, M. Sengstock (Policy Committee liaison), R. Yamazaki.
Absent with notice: F. Florkowski, E. Golebiowska (AAUP-AFT liaison), J. Mateika, R. Parnell, I. Walker (Student Council liaison).
Absent: M. Horn, S. Putatunda.

Agenda

1. *Call to order*
    Meeting was called to order at 3:04.

2. *Approval of minutes of 9/29/2009 meeting*
    Approved.

3. *Providing feedback on merit review at department and college level – Jason Mateika*
    Chair for Prof. Mateika: Prof. Mateika is concerned that materials submitted for merit review might be lost and this loss would go undiscovered until the faculty member did not get a raise (several months later). In the event some materials were lost, is there some way of getting feedback on results of submissions for merit raises from each level rather than having to wait to see whether a raise was obtained.
    Prof. Calkins: There are two issues: 1) Should feedback be provided at each stage of the merit review process, 2) How can the accuracy of documents submitted for review be verified at each stage of review?
    Profs. Sengstock and Jarosz: There is a wide variation in the customs followed by different departments/schools/colleges during merit review.
    Prof. Puscheck: Submission of materials electronically would avoid problems that arise during photocopying or due to loss of pages submitted. The electronic file could be returned via e-mail at each stage of review to verify its completeness. Alternatively, a secure web site could be created to store the documents for all stages of review to which the individuals would have access to their own materials for verification.
    Several committee members remarked on the variations in whether or not the department provided feedback on merit review.
    Profs. Calkins and Sengstock: It would be an enormous burden on the higher level committees (college and university) to provide individual feedback on merit scores, especially if this involved a rationale for the scoring of each category (research, teaching and service) to each person submitting merit documentation.
    Prof. Calkins raised the question of whether this problem falls under the committee's purview. The Chair understands that so long as the committee is not dealing with a procedure

        specified in the contract, the committee is free to make recommendations on merit review procedures.

4.   *Is Blackboard performing up to needs and expectations?*

        Chair: The Chair heard an Academic Technology Advisory Group presentation by Darren Hubbard (C&IT) about the problems with Blackboard (Bb). C&IT is aware of many of the shortcomings and problems. The system crashed because of an unexpected surge in usage (planned for 7% increase and got a 27% increase). They did not test the new version of Bb properly and are requesting faculty volunteers to thoroughly test the new versions. Are people still having problems with Bb or have they been corrected?

        Prof. Jarosz: Asked Darren Hubbard if faculty could go back to previous version of Bb because it worked better than the new version. Unfortunately, the vendor will no longer support the old version.

        Chair: Another problem is that we do not have direct contact with Bb vendor to ask for advice on correcting problems.

        Committee members voiced other Bb and Pipeline problems including:

- Students are having trouble accessing grades.
- Although the Bb administration is very good about answering questions, the long delays in answering questions are an immense problem to faculty.
- It is not possible to submit large PDF files from home.
- How can projects which include pictures be submitted by students in the new version of Bb?
- Why was rollout of new version done at the beginning of the Spring/Summer term?
- Why did C&IT not anticipate increased usage of Bb instead of discovering the problem when it crash at the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year – isn't the expected use of Bb 100% of faculty and students?
- Why doesn't new version allow uploading of videos?
- Which browser(s) and versions of browsers should be used? It seems that each has a different capability and all seem to interfere with different Bb functions.
- Why is vendor unresponsive?
- Why does Bb change the format of files?
- Why was the new version not checked out adequately? Why is registering students so difficult in this version?

        The committee discussed whether or not to invite someone from C&IT or Bb administration to talk to the committee about problems and solutions. One member suggested that this topic might be more appropriate for the Facilities, Support Services and Technology Committee (FSST) or at least might be shared with FSST in a joint meeting. The Chair will discuss this with Prof. Artiss, Chair of FSST.

5.   *Other business*

        Chair: I will send out list of possible topics for committee detailed consideration to be prioritized.

        Prof. Acsadi: Regarding the items 3 & 4 on Topics list [3. Review and comparison of faculty salary at hiring and promotion. 4. Further consideration of mentoring (list distributed at

meeting)], both are focused on mentoring. We are trying to hire and retain good faculty. How do WSU salaries compare with those offered by other institutions when hiring or promoting faculty? Salary is one component for hiring and retaining faculty and mentoring is another. The university needs to develop faculty, keep them happy and productive. How can we find outcomes to measure how successfully people are progressing whether or not they are mentored? For example: Papers published, years required to get promoted, merit reviews?

Prof. Sengstock: How would you measure quality of mentoring?

Prof. Puscheck: There is some literature on this. We could start with a survey: Have you been mentored? Was mentoring effective? For which aspects of professional life would you like mentoring? What can we do to help?

Prof. Sengstock: May be problem defining mentoring.

Prof. Puscheck: There is an effort in SOM to develop mentoring program including developing workshops to train chairs as well as faculty. Same approach may not work for the entire university because conditions differ among schools & colleges.

Chair: Another possible topic is behavioral problems in the classroom – do we want to pursue this further.

Prof. Sengstock: No one is interested until they have a problem, then it is too late.

Prof. Padmanabhan: How do you motivate students to come to classes and pay attention?

Prof. Yamazaki: What is item 6 about? [Compensation in SET scoring for classes with low interest to student.]

Chair: A faculty member wrote in concerned that there is no allowance in SET scoring to compensate for lack of student interest in a course. Low interest would lower a faculty member's SET score. But an Academic Senate Student Evaluation of Teaching (ASSET) committee (1995) recommended (Recommendation 18) interpreting the score based on initial student interest in taking the course in a formal way. This has never been implemented and the concerned faculty member urged implementing this recommendation.

Chair: Another potential issue for consideration relates to disseminating grant information.

Prof. Yamazaki: There is a faculty committee to study SPA and recommend changes, it might be interesting to hear what they have to say.

6.   *Next meeting: Tuesday, December 15, 2009; 3:00 pm*.

7.   *Adjourn.*
Meeting adjourned at 4:08 pm.

Approved at the Faculty Affairs Committee meeting of December 15, 2009