

Faculty Affairs Committee Meeting
February 10, 2021, 3:00 p.m.

renée hoogland called the meeting to order via Zoom at 3:08 p.m.

In attendance: Poonam Arya, Boris Baltas, Linda Beale, Ashley Flintoff (invited guest), Daniel Golodner, Marisa Henderson, renée hoogland, Patricia McCormick, Georgia Michalopoulou, Alper Murat, Thomas Pedroni, Elizabeth Stoycheff, Scott Tainsky, Karin Tarpinning

Ashley Flintoff provided an update on State Hall renovations. WSU previously intended to submit renovation expenses to the state, but COVID-19 stalled state funding opportunities. WSU determined this project was too important to wait for state funding, so it went forth with bond issue with the intent to renovate State Hall. It secured bonds, and is now continuing the planning process, with an estimated budget of \$85 million. This will be a full renovation of the entire building; with the exception of the fourth floor because it was renovated in 2012-2013. Sizes of classroom, amenities, geometry of classrooms will be reconsidered, as will bringing the building up to code with ADA and addressing all deferred maintenance. The elevator project is already complete (as of June 2020) so that will not be part of this project. An advisory committee has been formed – headed by the provost's office, has reps from Academic Senate, Student Senate, OTL, C&IT, facilities, and the registrar's office. This committee plans to conduct focus groups/townhalls to solicit feedback from those who teach/learn in the building.

renée brought up that some renovations on fourth floor are still necessary and also asked whether the design team will be finalized by the end of the semester. Ashley acknowledged fourth floor additions will be made and said that they do plan to finalize by the end of the term; agreed to return to the final FAC meeting of the semester to provide an update.

WSU's ombudsman left during the Fall 2020 semester. One of the things that came out of the last climate survey was that a lot of faculty/staff don't know where to go – outside departments and colleges – with their concerns. renée said that the provost agreed it was a good moment to rethink the ombudsman role – potentially expand it from a student-oriented position to one that also addresses faculty needs; one faculty representative is needed. Thomas Pedroni volunteered.

Linda Beale mentioned the Senate is planning to start a DEI ad hoc committee, which would hopefully convert to a standing committee by the end of this semester. She argued a standing committee makes it clear to the university and students that DEI is a priority, and the Senate has been derelict in not having a standing committee already. Requested volunteers from FAC to serve on this committee. renée and Scott Tainsky self-nominated.

Georgia Michalopoulou asked how this committee would work in relation to existing departmental/college DEI efforts. Linda said the Senate DEI committee would hopefully develop

collaborations with departmental/college DEI committees. renée emphasized how conversations about DEI need to involve everyone, not just underrepresented groups.

Next, the FAC has been tasked with examining the ways in which emeritus status is defined across the university. Currently, criteria are wildly divergent across departments/colleges, where some departments view it as nearly automatic, whereas others believe it should only be bestowed to those who make sizable contributions to the university. It is also currently unclear how emeritus status works for academic staff. The purpose of the FAC's charge is to derive a shared definition for the provost on what should constitute emeritus status.

Discussion ensued. Patricia McCormick noted that the perks of emeritus status - access to parking structure/email/library access, and most importantly, remaining part of WSU community even after retirement – are free and should be extended to all. Boris Baltes noted that there is no difference in benefits between emeritus and retirees; also observed that different universities have different models. Mentioned MSU uses a more automatic model, whereas UoM is different. He knows of only one instance where someone was denied emeritus status, and it came from the department had not recommended it. Thus, local input is important. Linda noted that extending emeritus status widely will help morale, which currently has problems at WSU.

Currently, the provost must sign off on emeritus applications, thus offering discretion in rare cases where it may be inappropriate or should be denied. FAC should describe the boundaries of that discretion. Scott and Patricia will meet outside of FAC to decide what those boundaries should look like and report back at the March meeting.

The last item of business was to discuss what the university should look like post-pandemic, based on the comprehensive document assembled by the Policy Committee. Elizabeth Stoycheff, Scott, and renée discussed how we should tackle the many items on the list that involve faculty. Patricia noted that many of these issues existed prior the pandemic and many of them have to do with a lack of clarity about WSU's brand/identity.

Linda asked the FAC where do we want WSU to go post-pandemic? And what does it mean to be a "premier public research university?" Patricia noted that while these are good questions, the pandemic has brought about more good faith administration-faculty collaborations, and renée applauded the job WSU has done managing the pandemic relative to other universities.

Remaining discussions surrounded how to balance the tension between WSU's valuable local connections with wanting to be an institution that could cater globally to students online. Are both up to a WSU standard? Also discussed were the tensions between faculty/admin on the role of teaching in a post-pandemic world. How do faculty balance teaching responsibilities alongside other commitments? And how do we communicate to administrators all that faculty do? renée will send an email soliciting more feedback before the next meeting.

Meeting was brought to a close at 4:36 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Elizabeth Stoycheff.

