

Faculty Affairs Committee Meeting
March 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 Baltes, Krista Brumley (invited guest), Stine Eckert (invited guest), Daniel Golodner, Marisa Henderson, renée hoogland, Lars Johnson (invited guest), Sara Kacin (invited guest), Thomas Pedroni, Patricia McCormick, Ekrem Murat, Elizabeth Stoycheff, Huda Syed, Karin Tarpenning, Ellen Tisdale.

Poonam moved to approve the minutes with the correction of adding Ellen Tisdale to the list of attendees. Patricia seconded.

Patricia and Scott will serve on the emeritus subcommittee and report back to the FAC at our next meeting.

Regarding *The Post-Pandemic Future of Higher Education at Wayne State University* charge, renée suggested the FAC primarily focus on following points: #4: Online Education, #6: Faculty and #7: Research. The following faculty volunteered to serve on subcommittees to address each area of concern. FAC members not in attendance will be assigned to a committee. renée, Elizabeth, and Ellen will coordinate the groups and report back at our next meeting. Patricia was concerned about student preparedness for online learning and it was suggested she reach out to Naida Simon on the Student Affairs Committee to further discuss this concern.

Online Education: Marisa, Elizabeth and Poonam

Faculty: renée, Thomas and Daniel

Research: Ellen, Ekrem and Huda

Next, Krista and invited guests presented an overview of the NSF-funded project: WSU-GEARS, which aims to hire, retain and promote women and underrepresented groups at WSU. The primary goal is to gather data to build new programs and expand existing programs that assist these individuals. This project builds on an ESCALATE grant that ended 10 years ago and still left a lot of progress to make at WSU. The GEARS team has presented their plan at various departments and groups across campus.

renée asked why the program just includes STEM. Krista noted that this was an NSF-mandate, and it is indeed just STEM, not STEAM, but it still includes social and behavioral sciences. However, Krista noted the GEARS goal is to be as inclusive as possible; for example, the survey will be administered campus wide and workshops will invite attendees from across the campus. Krista hopes departments and colleges across campus will continue this work once the grant concludes.

Stine noted that members of the GEARS team are in consultation with the union. Boris then mentioned that this is an opt-out system; it is faculty driven with the hope data can be used by faculty and departments to look at hidden workloads. The team's social scientists: Stine, Krista and Lars are the only people who will have access to raw faculty data.

A discussion also ensued about how this project only applies to FT faculty and does not address these same concerns among academic staff and graduate students. The team said they would like to be able to replicate their endeavor with these groups in the future.

renée was reassured that this project would be as anonymous as possible and said it looks "safe enough" to participate in. Wants to "stay in touch" with the team and invited the GEARS team back to the FAC next semester to share their initial findings. Boris and Sara were asked to leave before the FAC meeting commenced.

The committee also discussed the Career Insights Widget that is now offered to incoming students on the WSU website. renée completed the questionnaire and regardless of which answers provided, was directed to engineering or business majors. Expressed concern students are being guided only to these fields and are actively directed away from the humanities. Has observed that students in English classes – particularly non-majors – struggle with the ability to think abstractly.

Thomas said he is concerned about the widget as well. Expressed concern that STEM is being used at university as an organizing concept. Mentioned he found it "dangerous" to ignore the political, social and cultural understandings of problems. We need to try to protect these skills through a robust gen ed program, which provide foundational conceptual/critical thinking to all students, regardless of major.

Poonam is disturbed that focus is narrow and hoping some action will be taken to remedy that.

Huda has noticed that many medical students don't have ethical understanding and focus solely on medical diagnoses and treatments. Mentioned she is also a criminal justice minor where she gets to explore these sociological questions and said it's scary to think WSU is focusing all its resources toward STEM.

Patricia said the widget should either be removed or changed. renée said it should be removed and students should instead be directed to talk to their advisors.

Lastly, Poonam asked why Boris and Sara were not invited to the FAC's regular meetings. Believes it's important for people in administration to hear some of these things from the faculty. renée will check into it and make sure Boris is invited next month.

Meeting was brought to a close at 4:35 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Elizabeth Stoycheff.

