

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY  
ACADEMIC SENATE  
PROCEEDINGS OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE

November 21, 2016

Present: L. Beale; V. Dallas; D. Kessel; C. Parrish; L. Romano; B. Roth; A. Rothe; N. Simon; W. Volz; K. Whitfield; A. Wisniewski

The item marked with an asterisk constitutes the Action of November 21, 2016.

Guests: Monica Brockmeyer, Associate Provost for Student Success; Thomas Fischer, Associate Professor of Psychology, Liberal Arts and Sciences

1. General Education Reform: Ms. Brockmeyer and Mr. Fischer co-chair the General Education Reform Committee (GERC). They updated the Policy Committee on the work of the GERC. Mr. Fischer said that the proposal is a starting point, an aid for discussion. The goals of the reform proposal are student success and student engagement. The University community needs to determine if the elements in the proposal can be delivered. Many faculty use the elements in the proposal. The GERC formed subcommittees to bring those faculty into the discussion to leverage their expertise. Mr. Fischer distributed the list of the members of the GERC and of the subcommittees. The subcommittees will discuss resources, teaching needs, and the facilitation of teacher training. They are to determine if we currently have the resources to implement the program with the courses we currently have and if we have the resources for the courses that would have to be developed. Ms. Brockmeyer said that the cost implications will be worked out before a proposal is submitted to the Academic Senate.

Policy Committee members voiced their concerns about the proposal and the way in which it is being reviewed. The proposal lays out a specific structure that the subcommittees have to address. The first issue that should have been tackled was to learn the obstacles that prevent students from completing their degrees in four years. Those obstacles then should have been addressed incrementally. The GERC should determine if the proposed structure is feasible and if it is the right structure for Wayne State. New administrative oversight will be needed to develop and schedule the signature courses, the student community courses, and the oral and written composition courses.

Ms. Brockmeyer said that the committee has been charged to investigate if the proposal is feasible. Mr. Fischer said that the subcommittees are not bound by the structure; they may change the components. Policy Committee believes that more full professors are needed on the subcommittees.

A member of the Policy Committee advised that the GERC carry out systematic consultation with Department Chairs to learn how a revamped general education program would affect their programs. Mr. Fischer acknowledged that the departments needed to be engaged in a more structured way than they have been to this point. Mr. Fischer will send a message to the departments soliciting their

input. However, one member of the PC recommended that the Chairs be invited to a meeting of the GERC for thorough discussions.

Another member of the Policy Committee spoke to the fact that what makes Wayne State distinctive is our having scholars who are nationally and internationally renowned who engage with undergraduate students in mid- and upper-level courses. He thinks that relationship is threatened with the proposed changes. He also objected to the downsizing of the general education program. Ms. Brockmeyer noted that our current program is larger than most comparable institutions. Fewer general education credits opens the possibility for students to have a minor.

Ms. Beale asked for data to support the claim that the proposed framework addresses issues of student engagement and student success. Mr. Fischer said that they did not have specific evidence but that increasing the sense of belonging increases student success, which is one of the goals of the program. The large introductory courses that we have now are barrier courses. That is why universities have first-year experiences. Wayne State is too large to have first-year seminars, but the proposed program would introduce students to topics in an engaging way. Linking the different courses creates cohorts of students who would work on fundamental skills using a common topic and common experience.

One member of the Policy Committee mentioned that when graduate assistants teach topics courses, they have a background in the topic. As proposed, it is likely that a graduate assistant would not be knowledgeable about the topic to which he or she is assigned. Ms. Brockmeyer said that even a loose collaboration by the instructor of the signature course and the foundational course enhances the learning environment.

Policy Committee members recommended that the GERC contact the Undergraduate Admissions Office to ask if the proposed program might be attractive to prospective students. Members also were concerned about the affect of the change on transfer students.

[Ms. Brockmeyer and Mr. Fischer left the meeting.]

2. Report from the Chair: Provost Whitfield raised the question of student unrest on college campuses across the country. He mentioned the need to act appropriately in the face of unrest. Public Safety has handled the situations here very well. Marquita Chamblee, Associate Provost for Diversity and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer, has held conversations to give students an outlet to express their concerns. The administration continues to monitor the situation.
3. Nominations for the University-wide Faculty Tenure and Promotion Committee: Policy Committee raised concerns about the lack of diversity among the nominees and the large number of associate professors on the list of nominees. Policy Committee asked that the Provost's Office revisit the nominations that were submitted and to consult with the Deans to broaden the number of nominations. The Deans and colleges make their nominations in a vacuum. They do not see the

entire slate and do not know that there may be no minorities and few women on the slates of some committees.

4. Report from the Senate President:
  - a. Budget Planning Council: Ms. Beale, Mr. Volz, Mr. Romano, and Donal O’Leary (Physiology, Medicine) serve on the Council, which will perform a comprehensive review of tuition (undergraduate, graduate, resident, and non-resident tuition) and financial aid.
  - b. Sesquicentennial Committee: The Sesquicentennial Committee accepted the idea of holding a Presidential Symposium as part of the celebration of Wayne State’s 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It was submitted to the President and the Provost and will be taken to the Council of Deans for input, as well.
  - c. University Foundation: Mr. Romano expressed concern that some members of the University’s Foundation Board apparently do not understand the purposes of faculty endowments. The endowments are used to support faculty research and graduate students and post-doctoral fellows.
  - d. TravelWayne: It is five months since a committee was formed to review TravelWayne. The committee has never met. Mr. Romano has contacted Vice President for Finance and Business Operations William Decatur and Associate Vice President for Fiscal Operations James Barbret. He asked Provost Whitfield for assistance in getting a meeting held.
  - e. Re-chartering of the Institute for Environmental Health Sciences: Mr. Romano received a message from the Research Office that Policy Committee soon would receive the information it had requested about the funding for the Institute.
- \*5. Proceedings of the Policy Committee: The Policy Committee approved the Proceedings of its meeting of November 7, 2016, as submitted.
6. Agenda for the December Senate Meeting: Policy Committee selected topics for the agenda of the December 7 Academic Senate meeting.
7. Graduate Council Meeting: Policy Committee received the agenda and the materials for the Graduate Council meeting of November 21, 2016.
8. Presentation: Policy Committee will invite Professor Donyale Padgett to a meeting for her presentation “*Lift Every Voice*” *Using Student Narratives to Develop Strategies to close the Achievement Gap.*” Ms. Padgett’s research is in retention of minority students.

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Approved as submitted at the Policy Committee meeting of December 5, 2016