

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC SENATE

PROCEEDINGS OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE
February 12, 2024

Present: D. Aubert; L. Beale; S. Chrisomalis; L. Clabo; D. Donahue; r. hoogland; P. Khosla; J. Lewis; N. Rossi; B. Roth; S. Schrag

Guests: Dhruval Bhatt, Student Senate; Rob Davenport, AVP FP&M; Ashley Flintoff, Dir. Planning and Space Mgmt; Issa Hosari, Student Senate; Hayden Johnson, Student Senate President

I. APPROVAL OF POLICY PROCEEDINGS

The proceedings of the February 5, 2024 Policy Committee were approved as revised.

II. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Update on searches: Acting Provost Clabo announced that she expects to bring three finalists for the vice provost for enrollment management position to campus. There will be an opportunity for Policy to meet them.

Visits of four finalists for the University Relations Officer/Chief of Staff (URO/COS) position are ongoing. Policy is meeting them. Linda Beale noted that Policy will do a consensus memo as usual.

PhD report: The provost expects the preliminary report by end of week.

Interdisciplinary program guidelines: Clabo will work with Beale to draft a charge for the working group on interdisciplinary programs. She would like this to move quickly in order to have recommendations, if possible, by the end of the winter semester. Beale added that the idea is to have a clear and consistent process, so that interdisciplinary programming is not delayed by unnecessary hurdles but also is reasonably consistent across undergraduate, MA, PhD and certificate interdisciplinary approval processes and designation of faculty 'home'.

III. REPORT FROM THE SENATE PRESIDENT

Senate representation for Board of Governors (BOG) Student Affairs Committee: Policy agreed to move Steve Chrisomalis up from alternate to voting rep for the Senate on the BOG Student Affairs Committee. Damecia Donahue agreed to be the alternate.

Policy recommendations for URO/COS candidates: Beale reminded Policy members to send her comments as soon as possible after the Wednesday meeting with the last candidate so that she can prepare a draft of the consensus memo to be shared for further edits and finalization hopefully by noon Thursday.

Center for Study of Citizenship: Saeed Khan (CLAS) has been appointed as the new director of the Center for Study of Citizenship. Beale noted that a new director should reinvigorate the center. Brad Roth pointed out there were many initiatives post-9/11, with the idea of considering what it means to have a national political community. There were Citizenship Day/Constitution Day talks every fall and annual conferences involving researchers from all over. The center had engaged in less activity in the last few years.

Bidet memo: Beale reported sending the memo requesting bidets to be installed in most campus buildings to AVP FP&M Davenport. He has responded by indicating that FP&M will investigate the possibilities and keep Policy updated.

PhD preliminary report: As a member of the PhD task force, Beale mentioned the problem the working groups faced regarding lack of data on various key issues. We need a more systematic method for collecting data on doctoral students by field from start to finish, including what financial aid they receive each year and the source (especially for those that may move between grants and GTA/GRA/GSA positions for funding), whether and in how many years/credits they finish the degree and what jobs they ultimately take (the last being information often acquired at other universities through exit interviews and/or various graduation forms). Clabo agreed on the importance of such data, so that decisions can be made within understanding of the overarching framework.

Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) call for nominations: The UROP call for nominations of those interested in participating in the UROP steering committee went out to faculty. Beale asked Policy members to encourage faculty they know to think about volunteering. There will be an Article XXX-like process where Policy with the provost chooses faculty within each of the five general field categories.

Quality Matters Initiative Committee: A committee is being created for the Quality Matters Initiative required for the HLC accreditation. Beale suggested Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee chair Marisa Henderson (CLAS), Faculty Affairs Committee chair renée hoogland, and Policy member Donahue serve on the committee. Policy members supported those recommendations. Donahue and hoogland agreed to serve; Beale will contact Henderson to see if she is willing to take on this additional task and then provide the relevant information to AVP Darin Ellis.

IV. DRAFT OF MARCH 6 SENATE PLENARY AGENDA

Beale informed Policy members that President Espy, Acting Provost Clabo and Bethany Gielczyk (CFO and Interim Senior VP) will not be available to present at the March plenary due to the conflicting BOG meeting. It would be difficult to move the March plenary to another date because of spring break, the regular meeting of the Graduate Council and other conflicting meetings. Policy members agreed the plenary should be canceled and the agenda deferred until the April plenary.

Beale expressed her concerns about how difficult it is for faculty to participate when the BOG change times and dates so that it is hard to avoid conflicts with classes and other academic business, such as Academic Senate committees and plenaries. Beale suggested that Policy send a memo to Governor Shirley Stancato as the new BOG chair to share with her the complications that such shifts cause and request that the BOG avoid having its meetings conflict with key Senate schedules in the future. It would be ideal if the Board would return to consistently holding meetings on a Friday, so that faculty could regularly attend, and Senate representatives and alternates would be able to participate appropriately.

V. BUILDING COORDINATOR STEERING COMMITTEE SENATE REPS

There have been a number of complaints about the building coordinators such as information not being easily available, most of the building coordinators not knowing they are building coordinators and lack of clear guidelines for building coordinators, et cetera. A new steering committee will update information, meet regularly (probably monthly or four times annually) to review any problems and recommend actions. Policy suggested three faculty; Beale will reach out to determine their willingness to serve.

VI. W MASCOT WORKING GROUP SENATE REP

Policy has been asked for a recommendation of a faculty member to represent the faculty in a work group charged with creating a new mascot, replacing the existing Barney-like figure. Danielle Aubert noted Cheryl Turski (CFPCA) is interested and loves mascots. Beale will confirm her willingness to serve and notify Carolyn Berry (Sr. AVP, Marketing).

VII. DISCUSSION OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION COMMITTEE (CIC) CONSIDERATION OF WAYNE EXPERIENCE (WE) REQUIREMENT

After the earlier discussions at Policy regarding the need to develop a proposal, possibly working together with the General Education Oversight Committee (GEOC), and for the one-year suspended WE requirement, CIC formed a working group including Pynthia Caffee (UAC and serving both on GEOC and CIC) to consider potential next steps. Caffee suggested that the Senate generate ideas to share with GEOC.

Jennifer Lewis shared a list of potential topics mentioned at earlier Policy discussions and within the CIC working group. A significant challenge is determining content for such a course. Beale noted that other important questions include whether it should be expanded to more than one credit and whether it should remain a mandatory course. She noted the second question raises the issue of funding to offer sufficient sections so that entering students can take it when it will benefit them (at the beginning of their college experience), else they will find themselves as seniors ready to graduate except for that course (the circumstance that led to the temporary suspension of the requirement). This is currently an unfunded requirement without a true academic home or responsible faculty.

Lewis noted that the working group also learned that many other universities handle the typical content that was in the WE course as part of a more robust orientation experience. It is not clear whether that can be an option for Wayne State or whether it must remain a standalone course.

Pramod Khosla suggested students who are seniors could be asked to lead the WE course because they have been through the experience of being new to a college campus. It would be helpful for new students to hear from other students who have figured out how to succeed. Lewis noted that is an approach among the universities whose programs the working group had reviewed: those sections were coordinated by faculty but taught by seniors.

Beale mentioned the discussion Policy had regarding the Faculty Affairs Committee (FAC) proposal for a seminar on critical reading/critical thinking/critical analysis: perhaps there could be various options that fulfill the WE requirement, from the 1-credit course to the 3-credit seminar. Hoogland explained that most topics included in the prior WE requirement such as navigating the university, how to study and use time wisely, academic integrity—all those are wonderful things to provide students at an orientation. What they need in terms of coursework is preparation to do college-level reading and writing. Hoogland noted that many institutions offer 150 sections of such a seminar per semester across all schools and colleges: students take that class in the first or second semester. Hoogland suggested the university should try a pilot with eight sections next year to see how that works out. It would also fold in neatly with the civil discourse initiatives that will be on the agenda for next year. It is relatively easy to organize with support and coordination. We also need to find an incentive to have faculty teach this class as one of their classes. Beale noted this is why the question of funding sources must be determined.

Lewis wondered why the proposed seminar would not be best instead as an option for the GEOC reading and writing requirement. Hoogland stated that the content and structure is markedly different because unlike the 1010 or 1020 composition classes, the seminar addresses critical thinking, learning how to read

critically and learning how to write critically. Steve Chrisomalis added institutions with such a seminar generally have them taught by regular faculty, whereas our composition courses are mostly taught by GTAs or academic advisors and do not teach critical thinking. The difficulty in combining the discussion of the seminar with the WE requirement is that WE is both a narrower and a broader vision—it focuses on a narrow range of study skills and information about expected conduct but also provides information about support that are outside of the FAC proposal. Clabo thought perhaps a pilot of the seminar could be offered as an alternative to Comp 1010 for a selected group. She suggested coming up with a framework to pilot a small number of sections for a year and then do an evaluation of that pilot. Another question is whether it should be optional or required.

Lewis noted that CIC is not necessarily suggesting that all items on the distributed content list be included in the new WE. If this were a one-credit course, it could be handled in as few as six class meetings (as at University of California at Berkeley). The CIC working group would like to explore various options and get input, possibly by sending out a survey. Beale noted that any survey would require careful thought since good surveys are not necessarily easy to design, even for relatively simple topics. A survey might include questions around different options for number of credit hours, content and instructional faculty. If WE is a one-credit course focused on skills to succeed in college, a key question is also whether it should be optional or required. Some students would likely resent being required to pay for a course they do not need. Lewis indicated she preferred a looser survey that would go to *all* students, advisers and faculty across the university just to gather ideas to use in developing options. Beale suggested no decision be made yet. If CIC drafts a survey, Policy can discuss that in more detail at a later meeting.

VIII. DISCUSSION OF AN UPDATE TO THE CAMPUS MASTER PLAN

Davenport and Flintoff came to Policy for an initial discussion about the re-evaluation of the existing campus master plan. The DumontJanks consulting firm that assisted with the earlier master plan space utilization analysis and planning for big ideas that might be considered has returned to help conduct a reassessment with more realistic goals.

Policy members noted that it would be important to get perspectives from stakeholders and to build buy-in for ideas, especially regarding the likely suggestions for different uses of Manoogian, General Lectures, AAB and Maccabees, for which there had been suggestions for facilitating interdisciplinary or field-specific interactions among faculty. It will be important to understand the ideas and rationales about each building's use before they are solidified.

It was agreed that Beale will invite Davenport, Flintoff and perhaps also CFO Bethany Gielczyk to come to Policy in a few weeks to discuss key individual buildings and the ideas mentioned here. After that further meeting with Policy, she suggested the group also talk with the Research; Facilities, Support Services and Technology; Faculty Affairs; and Student Affairs Committees.

IX. DISCUSSION OF THE STUDENT SENATE RESPECT RESOLUTION

Student Senate President Johnson and Senators Bhatt and Hosari were invited to Policy for a discussion about the background and their expectations for the Student Senate resolution and appendix on respect.

Johnson thanked Policy for the invitation for an open dialogue. The Student Senate thought it would be important to consider the possibility of adding respect as a core value of our university. First, students consider it important to the way the university markets itself, the way that we attract new students, the way that we share what it means to go to Wayne State, what it means to be a Wayne State warrior, and how we apply the core values in our daily life in and outside of the classroom and in the workforce. Second, student senators thought that these values can set the framework for instructors to conduct

courses with open dialogue by having these values as guidelines from the beginning—what it means to be respectful within a large section discussion or in a small group setting; what is the best way to handle a discussion-based course; how an expectation of respect within a course can work to ensure productive and respectful conversations.

Johnson noted that a driver for the resolution was the Student Senate's own difficult discussions among its 30 members around opposing viewpoints. The Student Senate members struggled to respect each other when strong disagreements occurred. The idea of finding a way to ensure a productive conversation inspired the resolution: if a group of 30 students have a difficult time allowing opposing viewpoints to be heard and respected, it seems likely that a similar struggle takes place in large courses and in interactions among our thousands of students. The idea was not to limit allowed speech or penalize expression but rather to encourage dialogue within the classroom. Some students may not have had an opportunity to have a meaningful exchange of ideas within courses before they move from traditionally large-lecture first-year course formats to upper-level elective and core courses that encourage discussion. The Student Senate's goal was to encourage respectful dialogue within the classroom and to set out guidelines for how an instructor can facilitate such dialogue.

Bhatt noted disagreement will always be present in a university context of exploration, so respect helps discussions be productive. Students consider having respect as a university value will not only help students but also will facilitate a greater exchange of information. Hosari added that ultimately, the Student Senate is a representative body of students that want to learn and be advised by faculty and recognize that understanding flaws that may exist in their consideration of issues is an opportunity to learn. Students' hope is to create a campus that is safe, open and respectful for everyone.

Chrisomalis acknowledged that the same kinds of difficulties that students sometimes experience in the meetings of the Student Senate are experienced even in Policy or at the Senate plenary or in any other deliberative body. In full transparency, some of the background for Policy members' views is having experienced such difficulties and having seen what can happen if there is a reactive response that goes against those principles underlying open dialogue. Restrictive rules like speech codes do not emerge in a vacuum: they emerge because an incident occurs where some people seem to engage inappropriately in discussion, and the reaction is to attempt to corral them to prevent further similar incidents. It is not like students are bad and faculty are saints: that is clearly not the case. Institutions, committees, plenary sessions and the like are just incredibly difficult to manage, but restrictive responses can cause more difficulties.

Roth added that this is all part of the real world. If faculty have any advantage, it is just that we have been around long enough that we have participated in these various kinds of conflicts, on different sides at different times, so we can imagine more things going wrong with attempts to impose more order to prevent such difficulties than students have yet had the opportunity to see. Part of the question that arises from a discussion of respect is the difficulty in identifying what is and is not respect. It is likely that this resolution comes from a perception of disrespect that students felt needed to be addressed. Maybe the students here could share more about what kinds of perceptions there are about disrespect that need this kind of attention.

Johnson reported disagreements in the classroom when students with opposing views do not try to understand where the other is coming from or even want to hear an opposing perspective, resulting in shouting or just blatant lack of acceptance. The Student Senate thought about how these smaller examples of heated dialogue within the classroom could, if facilitated well, prepare students for the future when they are out in the "real world." Johnson added that he considered a key part of respect to be the concept of "transparency"—which he understands as being transparent about one's views and viewing others with open minds.

Chrisomalis noted that the opening remarks used classrooms as an example, and that was also the response to Roth's attempt to better understand the disrespect that the resolution is attempting to address. He asked whether the concern is about these kinds of course-related experiences of students or is it concern about several incidents in the past—such as how *The South End* was treated, or the use of the student listserv and other Wayne State actions related to student organizations or general student life, or perhaps about both? Johnson responded that this primarily comes from the student experience of sitting in classrooms when sometimes uncomfortable dialogue exchanges occur. Part of what they hope to gain from the discussion today is the faculty perspective on the resolution's ideas and the elevation of incidents from the classroom up the chain to departments, deans and provost.

hoogland asked further whether the students' sense is that situations in classrooms take place when students are speaking in ways not very respectful to each other and the instructor does not intercede to say, "this is not the way we are going to have this conversation." Johnson responded that this was the situation he witnessed in a class when two students with opposing views started yelling at each other. The instructor let them talk for a minute or but did step in; the disagreement seemed to fizzle out when they realized that they each had very strong opposing views on the matter. hoogland noted that is part of conversation and debates, which can become a bit edgy but usually do resolve. Beale asked what it was that Johnson thought should have happened in that situation. Johnson suggested that the instructor should have facilitated a learning opportunity by pulling something positive from the opposing views rather than merely allowing students to agree to disagree. Noreen Rossi noted that it may be possible to do more to help instructors learn how to mediate or diffuse a situation that can arise in a classroom where students are shouting past each other.

Lewis stated her appreciation of the resolution, though she is aware colleagues are concerned about the ways in which such statements are easily weaponized against the culture of open dialogue the students desire. Attending college is about students hearing views that they do not like and have never heard before, even when those views make them uncomfortable. Lewis considers that learning how to discuss disliked views and sometimes to change one's own thinking can only happen with respect—meaning that each listens no matter how upsetting a particular idea is. That seems to be what the Student Senate is attempting to support. What ways did the Student Senate find to have more respectful dialogue upon encountering the difficulties among Senate members?

Hosari responded that his co-sponsorship of the resolution was because of the Student Senate's difficulties rather than classroom instances. Because members come from different backgrounds and may not understand why someone is advocating for a certain idea, it can be difficult for one to share an idea because another is not willing to listen. That is disheartening and not effective for student senator leadership. It seemed that this resolution could establish a foundation of respect among all members that would help the group engage in better dialogue and get work done, rather than just shouting at each other. Beale noted the idea appears in large part targeted at encouraging *listening* as an important skill.

Clabo noted that both the Student Senate and Policy share the concern that the university community be able to engage in useful dialogue around controversial issues where people have strong opinions. She questioned, however, whether adoption of a new respect core value would achieve the desired outcome and suggested members discuss the concerns around the unintended consequences of adoption of the resolution's recommendations.

As a follow up, Pramod Khosla asked whether having the respect value identified in documents would have made the situation in the Student Senate discussion less difficult. Who would have made a decision (and at what point) that there was disrespect? Hosari responded that it would mainly be used in orientation and other materials intended to "infuse respect within our university"—i.e., a first step

towards respectful conversations. Khosla countered by asking whether infusing materials with the resolution's wording about respect could have the opposite effect—i.e., that people would decline to participate because of fear they would be labelled as disrespectful.

Hosari indicated that the hope was that it would not limit speech or open dialogue but would be a matter of maintaining decency, not upsetting someone by disrespecting their values or beliefs. Beale noted that the fact that someone is upset by something said does not mean that the speaker had been disrespectful of them: controversial issues with which one disagrees are often upsetting, even when the dialogue is not intended maliciously. It is important to be able to address such controversial topics even when there are deep disagreements that can result in people on both sides being upset simply because they do not want to hear something with which they disagree.

Bhatt said that it is not respectful when a speaker does not explain the speaker's perspective underlying the statement but instead makes it personal, so it ends up being two speakers "going at each other." Beale agreed that an ad hominem attack (where a speaker irrelevantly targets their adversary's personal characteristics rather than the arguments their adversary makes) is disrespectful. There are times, however, when recognition of each other's personal backgrounds may be relevant: i.e., it is not disrespectful per se for a speaker to point out that the two speakers' different backgrounds provide a relevant context for understanding the two perspectives. A view that 'respect' forbids speakers to reference the personal contexts from which perspectives derive may also tend to dissuade people from participating in discussion.

Rossi added another problematic aspect of the use of 'respect' to ensure open dialogue—that the sense of being disrespected is a subjective sense of the one to whom the speech is addressed. No matter how hard one tries, one's opponents may still perceive the speech as disrespectful—especially in a diverse group with people from many different places, each bringing their own 'baggage'. Respect is not something that can be easily defined for everyone and then used as a rule for guiding discussion.

Lewis suggested that the Student Senate might want to adopt working norms for their meetings that would include the concept of respect. She noted that meetings and classes that she directs start with a set of working norms, including the idea of treating each other with respect. She believes the working norms encourage all to think before they speak but also to feel encouraged to participate. Hoogland added that she includes a reference to conducting conversations in a respectful manner in her syllabi because there are discussions of controversial issues in her classes. Respectfulness is a mode of behaving in relation to others with cooperation and collaboration, but it does not seem to function well as defining a core value. It works really well as a working norm (as Lewis suggested). That might be a way for you to actually use it in a way that does not also bring in the other can of worms—the ways in which the term can be weaponized.

Roth noted that there are a variety of issues that can still be discussed, but a core question is what the limits of appropriate disagreement are. First, it is difficult to identify 'respect' outside of the specific issues that arise. When a particular about a principle or policy comes to be understood as a disrespectful disaffirmation of someone's identity (whether it is or it is not), the disagreement about respect collapses back into the dispute about the principle or policy. What counts as respect or disrespect depends upon where one stands on the underlying issue. Further, we live in a political context that tends to be disdainful of the higher education enterprise. We have just seen three university presidents get roasted by Congress, and there is sentiment bandied about that our BOG might find persuasive without realizing its deeply controversial nature. There is a particular concept of respect that has current political substance. Moreover, treating respect as a core value appears intolerant of efforts to make the point that some things are normalized that should not be. For example, sometimes treating people who are brought to campus with disrespect is not the wrong thing—it depends on the broader circumstances. Sometimes it is the

treatment of people with respect who do not merit being treated with respect that is the offense to which students respond: even if students are wrong about that, the impulse to make an example of students by punishing them in various ways, even excluding them from the university, is a reality in this political climate. Roth is nervous about pushing the question of respect because it can get hijacked in a way that none of us would like.

Beale thanked the Student Senators for the discussion, noting that it would be helpful to plan to have another discussion in a few weeks when the three Student Senators can return after having some time to think further about these matters and discuss with their peers. It has really been helpful to hear those perspectives and the scenarios the Student Senate hoped to address. As discussed here, the Policy Committee generally is quite worried about the potential weaponization of respect as a core value, including the idea that the BOG might not understand the harmful way that such context-sensitive terms can be weaponized against those pushing for changes. That weaponization in a time of the kind of political environment facing us is generally *against* diversity, equity and inclusion types of respect, and for respect for "the old way" things were done in the past. Let's continue thinking about whether there might be some amendment that could work better or some interpretation that would not as readily lead to that result.

Approved as amended at the Policy Committee meeting of February 19, 2024.