

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY  
ACADEMIC SENATE

PROCEEDINGS OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE  
February 19, 2024

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

Absent with Notice: J. Lewis

Guests: Dan Hanrath, Co-Chair AAC, Academic Adviser, Music Dept, CFPCA; Marisa Henderson, Chair, DEIC; Andre Iadipaolo, Member, AAC, Academic Services Officer II, Social Work Research; Margaret MacKeverican, Co-Chair AAC, Academic Adviser, Public Health Dept., CLAS

I. APPROVAL OF POLICY PROCEEDINGS

The Policy Committee proceedings of February 12, 2024 were approved as amended.

II. ACADEMIC ADVISING COUNSEL MISSION AND VISION

Academic Advising Mission and Vision Committee Co-Chairs MacKeverican and Hanrath, committee member Iadipaolo and Academic Senate DEIC Chair and Academic Advising Council (AAC) member Henderson shared with Policy the formation and working process of the group that developed the new mission and vision statement.

The committee was formed from the results of the Excellence in Academic Advising (EAA) initiative, a multi-year project between Wayne State's University Advising Center (UAC), AAC and the Gardner Institute and NACADA. A recommendation was to develop a new strategic plan for academic advising to replace the former statement developed administratively without advisor input, with the first step development of a mission and vision statement. This statement relied on significant input from advisors across campus.

Policy members applauded the statement. Members noted that a few terms ("self-advocacy" and "autonomy") might be misunderstood, especially by students. Steve Chrisomalis and Linda Beale both suggested the group should likely be prepared to explain how those were intended to be interpreted in this context—i.e., not that students are to be left on their own, but that advising's role is to help students develop their sense of autonomy and ability to make decisions with appropriate information.

Beale asked whether students have commented on the new statement. She thought it might be helpful to share with students at orientation, so they are aware of the student-focused philosophy of advising. MacKeverican explained it was presented to associate deans and senior leadership just last month, and there are plans for an announcement in *Today at Wayne*. She noted Kate Bernas (UAC) plans to include it in the level-one certification for the Advisor Training Academy.

III. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

University Relations Officer/Chief of Staff (URO/COS) update: Acting Provost Clabo informed Policy that an announcement of the appointment of a URO/COS is expected this week.

Depersonalized emails: Clabo and Beale had discussed depersonalized emails sent from university offices, particularly Academic Affairs. Clabo discussed the concern with provost senior staff to ensure that future emails come from a person, not just an office. Efforts to foster community are hampered when

people receive a message from an office without a signature from the person sending it. On the academic side of the house there will be a person who authors the email so that people know to whom to address questions.

Vice Provost for Enrollment Management: There are three candidates for the vice provost for enrollment who will be visiting in early March. Policy Committee will receive a copy of the profile. The candidates will meet with the Policy Committee; the Council of Deans; President Espy; Cathy Kay (Sr. Dir., Financial Aid) and financial aid staff; Erica Matthews-Jackson (Sr. Dir., Admissions) and admissions staff; and the other members of the provost's senior staff team. Beale will work with Chanay Peterson (Exec Asst/Chief of Staff, Provost) to try to find times that work for as many Policy members as possible, depending on class schedules and other commitments.

Clabo seeks a leader who can assess our rather generic strategies and use contemporary data to develop improved marketing of the university as an academic enterprise as well as of specific academic programs. For example, enrollment fairs, in which we pay people to sit at a table, have not been systematically evaluated to determine yield/effectiveness. We also do not maintain consistent information on yield, making it difficult to evaluate strategies. Other concerns include how best to package financial aid, including the timing for use of endowed scholarship money. Effective and contemporary enrollment processes are existential to the future of the university and to ensuring the best use of resources. If this pool does not yield a suitable candidate, we will restart the search, even though of course we are hopeful that this search will be successful, and we would like to hire someone who could work through the summer.

Policy discussion with Student Senate leadership: Clabo thanked the Policy Committee for the careful management of the discussion with Student Senate leadership last week. She considered it a great example of how to have a conversation with emerging leaders that respects their perspective but also helps them grow.

PhD report: The PhD Committee submitted their report to the provost, which will be shared with Policy and the Council of Deans. She suggested Policy be prepared to discuss it at the next Policy meeting.

Fall Opening: Last year, Fall Opening was largely led out of the Provost's Office, but Clabo hopes a broader group can be involved in planning for this year. She asked Policy members what they thought worked or needed change. Policy members indicated the faculty brunch was a great success: it worked well holding it on the same day as the convocation ceremony and Festifall. Faculty attended with families, which made for a festive time with many people talking to colleagues that they did not know well before the event. Clabo and members thought there should be three to four brunch events like that during the academic year. renee hoogland also suggested that the various events with food should provide more vegetarian selections—those options were quickly exhausted, so many could not find suitable food.

The performances and generally shorter speeches and more participatory nature of the convocation ceremony went over well, though the location was problematic both because of the direct sun on all of the audience and the overlarge space that made it appear that few attended. Clabo noted the provost senior staff thought the Keast Commons location did not work as well as McGregor, since people could too easily wander away and into Festifall. It may work best to move that back to McGregor: members thought the platform party lining the walkway towards Festifall, with the band leading the way, worked especially well in prior years.

Clabo also wondered what could be done to thread student engagement throughout the first month of the semester and what other faculty events should happen regularly throughout the semester. Some of the Office of the Provost staff suggested the block party was not essential, while Policy members thought some frolicking at the opening is not a bad idea. As for faculty, Pramod Khosla suggested having some events hosted by different faculty engagement groups that relate to their culture, their interests and their

food. Clabo noted that sponsored social and intellectual events could be an appropriate tie-in to the annual theme of civil discourse. Hoogland noted that faculty want to feel like they belong to something larger, which is why the Faculty Affairs Committee (FAC) continues to explore the possibility of a faculty club. Clabo acknowledged that sometimes the administration overlooks that faculty also desire a strong sense of belonging.

#### IV. REPORT FROM THE SENATE PRESIDENT

Policy liaison to Facilities, Support Services and Technology Committee (FSST): Naida Simon retired last month, and a Policy liaison is needed on FSST. Damecia Donahue agreed to serve.

ABA free speech policy requirement for law schools: Beale noted that the American Bar Association (the law school accrediting body) is likely to pass a somewhat worrisome free speech policy requirement for law schools in August. It includes language, as currently drafted, that suggests that students should not “interfere or disrupt” speech. Protesters, however, are also protected by free speech rights, and the intent of protests is to interfere in some ways. Brad Roth added that the draft requirement includes “public talks” among a list of things with which students might inappropriately “interfere.” It is unclear what the implications of this requirement might be, particularly in the law context for which there are character and fitness requirements for the bar: that is, getting in trouble in law school is likely to be harmful long-term for a law student. People who protest certain speech events do assume the risk of certain kinds of punishments, but the prospect of disproportionate punishment is high under these circumstances. Beale added that the law school is also currently discussing establishment of a “professionalism code” for students, something apparently pushed by the General Counsel’s office as well. The law dean is clearly aware of the potential problems with such codes or requirements, but it continues to be a concern that such rules stifle speech in the name of free speech and can lead to reputational harm for law students.

Curriculum and Instruction Committee (CIC) focus group session: With the cancellation of the plenary in March, the CIC would like to invite Senate members to attend a voluntary focus group discussion about the Wayne Experience (WE) course in Bernath Auditorium on March 6 from 1:30 to 2:30. It is Policy’s goal to help push towards a good solution of the temporary suspension of the requirement. Beale suggested CIC as well as the Student Affairs Committee (SAC) and FAC should hold discussions about replacing the original WE course requirement.

The Senate Office will send out an email this week announcing the cancellation of the regular plenary and including an invitation to participate in the WE focus group.

#### V. REPLACEMENT OF KIMBERLY HUNTER ON SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH (SPH) STUDENT SERVICES WORKING GROUP

Kim Hunter (CLAS) was appointed to the student services/space utilization sph working group but has since taken a non-rep position. Policy requested a list of the other members in the working group in order to choose a replacement. Clabo will request a full list and meeting dates already undertaken from VP Mark Schweitzer for this purpose.

#### VI. DISCUSSION OF GRADUATE SCHOOL ADMISSIONS AT SAC

Chrisomalis reported that SAC met last Wednesday with Sherry Quinn (Director, Graduate Admissions). He noted Quinn was extremely professional with SAC and emphasized that she has a difficult job with limited staffing. In what would seem to be good news, she noted that applications are up 200-300 percent. Chrisomalis noted, however, that this increase in applications is not likely to lead to higher enrollments, in part because the processing still is handled mostly by hand, resulting in a substantial

administrative backlog. Responses to some student email inquiries take a month or more, and similar time delays apply before the applications in SLATE are processed. For several departments, there are tens of applications from December 2023 still waiting to be processed by the Graduate School, in part because the Graduate School answers emails in order (first in/first out) and processes applications on a first in/first out basis. Chrisomalis noted that he was taken aback by the somewhat cavalier attitude towards that backlog. It has a substantial effect on applicant morale, aggregate recruitment losses due to competition from other programs and a generalized sense among the faculty, especially graduate directors, that the Graduate School does not function well or care to support department work. Even if a department is able to identify a student for admission, the admission may be late and getting visas and finances worked out for international students means that the departments may lose even those they want to admit because of the delays in processing. This is all in addition to the problems that the use of GradCAS caused for many fields.

It is difficult to get yield information, in part because there is no coordination between IRDA (Institutional Research and Data Analytics) and those in the Graduate School processing SLATE applications. These backlog problems have existed for some time, even before the increase in applications from fee waivers. For example, graduate directors end up being contacted by students for help with transcript processing. When graduate directors contact Graduate School staff, they tend to get a quicker response than students do; but that gain in response time is because work is offloaded to graduate directors, without that clearly being arranged and provided for in the functioning of graduate admissions.

At the most recent Graduate Council meeting, the dean suggested one solution to the backlog would be an ‘inversion’ of ordinary processes: i.e., she suggested that while items entered into SLATE wait to be processed by the Graduate School, perhaps departments should just look at the applicants and decide whom to admit. Ones not admitted by the department could become denials, without full processing. Chrisomalis noted, however, that this results in increased faculty workload reviewing applicants that may end up inadmissible and, even for those that the department wants to admit, still having to wait until the Graduate School has done its review. If instead the department writes to the students on departmental letterhead to indicate planned admission but later it is found that the student’s degree is not a full four-year degree or the TOEFL score is too low or some other requirement was not met, then there is a problem. In other words, the “inversion” suggested is counterproductive by offloading work onto faculty and potentially resulting in legal problems when a department has to rescind an admission offer.

Quinn suggested that the increase in applications was likely due to changing economic conditions. It is likely, however, that the fee waiver (through 2025) and TOEFL waivers are the primary cause of so many more applications, especially from Anglophone West Africa and East Africa, Ghana and Nigeria but also Kenya, Uganda and even Bangladesh. Although Ahmad Ezzeddine (VP Academic Student & Global Engagement) has traveled to Ghana to recruit graduate students, these applications do not appear to be a result of information about Wayne State. Many applications do not appear to be applying specifically to Wayne State and have no sense of what programs are offered. Many of those applications are not likely to be students ready for our programs and may even be inadmissible for one reason or another. That increases the workload for graduate directors because the Graduate School does not check for program appropriateness. There is no way to estimate any increased yield, especially given that many applications have not been timely processed and that most of these students would need funding. Chrisomalis noted as an example that in winter 2024 there were 12 applicants for a linguistics master's only program; 11 of them were from Anglophone West Africa; 8 were admitted, but none came, primarily because of lack of funding. Quinn’s response to the question whether the Graduate School was aware that most of these applicants would require funding was that some programs do fund master’s students, but it is not clear that any do so at this time.

Danielle Aubert noted that it would be amiss to assume that good applicants cannot come. For example, her department is interviewing a number of serious master’s degree applicants from Iran. Noreen Rossi suggested that the funding issue needs to be clarified in the application process, since there are

mechanisms for funding for PhDs but generally very little, if any, funding for master's programs. Beale noted that this problem goes back to her terms as graduate director in law as well but was made much worse by the sheer number of applicants. Chrisomalis added that the Graduate School seems to ignore the issue of funding, but that is because the funding that the students may receive will generally be some graduate assistantship handled by departments and schools/colleges. Getting applications up does not help if there is no funding to support admitted students and applicants do not have any funding of their own.

Another concern pointed out by Chrisomalis was the Graduate School's focus on doctoral recruitment, holding small events that may attract five to eight admitted doctoral students to campus, even though deans and the Office of the Provost have urged increasing focus on master's enrollments while maintaining or only slightly increasing doctoral enrollments. Similarly, events like the graduate open house have a historically low yield. It appears that few doctoral applicants have been successfully recruited through the graduate students open house. Money for those events could likely be used more productively by schools/colleges that have a better sense of priorities.

Khosla noted a disconnect in CLAS, where there are directives now to cut the number of GTAs. Chrisomalis responded that, while a separate discussion, funding is a part of the issue. One of the challenges discussed at Graduate Council is the need to increase the GTA stipend, which is below that of our peer institutions. That affects recruitment, because five years at \$20,000 in the current Detroit housing situation does not go as far as it did 10 years ago. If you increase stipends, you have to decrease student numbers. Beale noted that several years ago, the GTA/GRA funds were in the Graduate School. It was moved to the schools/colleges, with the understanding that it could not be used for anything other than graduate student assistantships within the school. Clabo agreed that was the understanding.

Aubert reminded Policy members of an earlier discussion with Provost Kornbluh who noted that Engineering was working to increase international applications since those students could often get a visa that allowed them to earn money for a few years in this country in OPT training after receiving the degree. Khosla noted that those students can also emigrate to Canada easily, since it has a more open immigration policy. Chrisomalis indicated that such students also have to establish that they have sufficient money to get the degree before they can get a student visa. Middle-class students from Africa, a small elite, can likely afford the degree if they are in the applicant pool, but it is not clear at this point.

Nevertheless, the real issue here is the Graduate School backlog in processing applications: 8000 received is not the same as 8000 processed applications waiting for review. The SAC members asked Quinn about her budget, and she indicated that she could not provide us any information about the budgetary priorities of her division since she either does not know what money she can spend or was not able to share that with our committee.

Donahue suggested that much of the workload could be alleviated with improved use of technology. Rossi added that use of technology would also make it easier to aggregate useful data. Chrisomalis noted that transcript review seems to be a significant part of the backlog for international student applications, though Beale noted that in the past, students were responsible for sending their transcripts to accepted third-party reviewers as part of the application process. Though contracts with those companies can be costly, they are likely less costly than hiring people to process transcripts by hand or losing applicants because of time delays.

Clabo suggested that the university needs to arrive at a permanent solution around handling master's degree enrollments. Kornbluh thought master's enrollment should be moved from the Graduate School into the schools, colleges and departments. The process appears to be yielding promising results in those colleges that have taken on that responsibility, though we do not yet have a year's data to show yield.

Clabo added that she had been asked to extend the application fee waiver for another year. Since we do not yet have a full year of data, she agreed to do so. The deans are interested in taking responsibility for master's admissions with some assurance that they will be appropriately staffed to do so, but there are schools/colleges that want to leave master's admissions in the Graduate School and others that want a hybrid function. Kornbluh had thought it would be possible to allow each school/college to choose, but this discussion suggests that may not work well in the long run. A decision likely must be made whether graduate applications all funnel through a process in the Graduate School, and if so, how that will be supported or whether graduate recruitment is treated as a faculty-centric issue requiring control at the school/college and departmental level. Some schools/colleges have faculty template emails to ensure responses within 24 hours. It takes some upfront investment. Our hope is that we can use those successful models—i.e., chemistry, nursing, engineering—to transfer across schools and colleges. It does require calling the question: where does master's admission belong? Should additional resources be given to the Graduate School, or should some of that resource be moved to schools/colleges/departments to handle admissions? Beale added that there is also a question whether the funding of doctoral recruitment can be put with the faculty and fields to which they will be admitted, with the Graduate School providing only the service support function of tracking data and setting/ensuring basic requirements are met and providing some of the doctoral courses currently housed there. Clabo noted that the Board statute gives the Graduate School responsibility for doctoral programs, though not for master's degrees or graduate certificates.

Chrisomalis voiced a concern that, while Chemistry has managed to handle recruitment well, CLAS does not have decanal staff working on graduate-level programs, with the result that graduate directors have to do the work, at a time when there are fewer staff positions in humanities and social sciences than there once were. Clabo acknowledged that making it work will require upfront investment, primarily one-time in automation for long-term benefit. Automation needs to be built to work with the needs of the program, the graduate program directors, the faculty and the admissions committees. One of the best experiences we had was working tightly with CIO Rob Thompson's team on integration, bringing them into the discussion and saying, "no, this does not work for us. We need to do it this way instead." It was painful and took, again, one-time investment in intellectual time, too, but we got to a system that works.

Chrisomalis summarized that he appreciates the discussion but is also concerned about doctoral recruitment because the backlog, lack of response, visa and other issues are there also. Since at least part of that is statutory, there are things that cannot simply be removed from the Graduate School in an easy way, but it is worrisome to see how priorities are set there for doctoral students, the lack of a sense of urgency and the tendency to see failure to attract students as a departmental problem.

Members briefly discussed the possibility of a discretionary waiver of TOEFL for students whose English was satisfactory to the department even if not satisfying one of the automatic TOEFL waiver requirements. Beale mentioned that the provost did override the Graduate School in allowing waivers in some cases in the past, such as for law LLM applicants from India who used English in their education. Chrisomalis noted that Canadians who are Quebec residents or whose education was in Quebec are considered by default francophone requiring a TOEFL score.

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*Approved as amended at the Policy Committee meeting of February 26, 2024.*