

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC SENATE

PROCEEDINGS OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE
November 4, 2024

Present: L. Beale; S. Chrisomalis; L. Clabo; D. Donahue; r. hoogland; P. Khosla; J. Lewis; J. Moss; R. Reynolds; N. Rossi; S. Schrag

Guests: Kelly Dormer, Dir., Academic Programs; Ahmad Ezzeddine, Sr. Vice Provost Academic Affairs

I. POLICY PROCEEDINGS

The proceedings of the October 28, 2024 Policy Committee meeting will be approved via email.

II. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Enrollment: The first winter enrollment report shows enrollments about 2% higher than this week last year. Provost Clabo noted one area of concern is the master's enrollment in the College of Nursing.

SVP for Health Affairs search: Policy members met with the first three candidates for SVP for Health Affairs. One more candidate is expected on campus next week.

III. REPORT FROM THE SENATE PRESIDENT

Report on Research Thrusts Discussion: Linda Beale shared VPR Ezemenari Obasi's report on the research thrusts discussion with chairs and directors in mid-September. She encouraged Policy members to review the report to see if there are any questionable gaps. She raised a concern about bridge funding. With these new thrusts taking more of DORI's focus, it is not clear if there will continue to be a bridge funding resource there as well as whatever the schools or departments do. The provost mentioned that most bridge funding is only for two or three years. Noreen Rossi suggested the F&A that goes to the school/college could be in part earmarked for bridge funding as one way to ensure that there is such funding.

Pramod Khosla raised a concern that had been reflected in the university P&T Committee. Apparently, some schools or departments count bridge funding as funding that has come to faculty to elevate their promotional prospects, whereas others do not. It was agreed that Policy will seek more information on that issue.

WSU First-Gen Fest: Beale mentioned the email announcement about the WSU First-Gen Fest on November 13. It was not clear what kinds of activities are offered for what purpose. The provost replied that it was intended as a "belonging-focused event" that coincides with National First-Generation College Celebration month. It provides an opportunity for faculty, staff and student celebration. She will share more detailed information with Policy about what is planned.

AI in the news: Beale noted increasing news about AI, including the case of a mother suing because her son fell in love with an AI bot and then committed suicide in order to "be with the bot". Members discussed various usages and problems with AI. Robert Reynolds mentioned a recent graduate director discussion of using AI to evaluate students for admission to master's or Ph.D. programs, which seems premature. Stephen Chrisomalis added that was also discussed at Graduate Council, but it received a negative response there because it raises privacy, ethical and quality control concerns. The provost stated there is no current plan to use AI for this purpose,

but it is important to be aware of what other schools are doing. Most Policy members concluded that AI can be useful in doing some of the categorizational work for humans who actually do the prioritization and decision review.

Graduation with Honors: Policy had previously discussed the graduation with honors issue. When Beale receives the data requested from Kurt Kruschinska (Sr. Dir., Registrar), Policy and Faculty Affairs (FAC) committees will review it and decide if the proposal makes sense.

Hearing Panel election: The Hearing Panel election is in progress. The Academic Senate office sent a reminder to the Academic Senate members to vote on the two hearing panels.

Honorarium: Beale reminded Policy that Ken Doherty (AVP, Procurement & Strategic Sourcing) and Dennis Orr (Assoc. Dir., Accounts Payable) will bring back answers to the questions members raised when this topic was discussed a couple months ago.

Institute of Gerontology review: The Institute of Gerontology is in the renewal process and is expected come to Policy before the end of the fall semester.

WSU OPEN announcement: Beale discussed the announcement from President Espy and VP for Economic Development and Innovation Ned Staebler about WSU OPEN, which is intended to further relationships between the university and corporations. The announcement was unclear and worrisome: the language in multiple places suggested a role for the corporate development office to bring corporate preferences to bear in setting curricular and student engagement possibilities. Clabo explained WSU OPEN is not intended to make curriculum decisions, but rather to help make connections between the university and employers who want to fund internships for students. This has the potential to be helpful, but we need to do it well.

Beale noted that the program should be based on an understanding of how curricular and internship/externship arrangements are made by faculty. The announcement requires clarification. Beale will invite Staebler and Danielle Manley (AVP, Corporate Engagement and Advancement) to come to Policy for further discussion.

Free Expression and Engagement on Campus: Beale mentioned a variety of topics that could be included in the December 4 plenary session, including some discussion about free expression and engagement and how to deal with that issue in the future. The provost noted she would like to first incorporate, to the extent possible, the recommendations from the Student Affairs Committee (SAC) memorandum that had been supported by FAC. Policy could consider those revisions and then suggest other areas to address. Beale noted that she considers the too-broad use of the term “threat” the most significant issue remaining.

IV. RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE GUIDANCE

Beale summarized a meeting of the University Leadership Council (ULC) in which Donyale Padgett (Interim Vice Provost for Inclusive Excellence) brought up a request from a working group that she had established to discuss the Student Senate's resolution on religious holidays. The Policy Committee had responded to that resolution in October 2023, noting they felt it would be inappropriate to select a few religions and create a rigid policy regarding exemption from any penalty for class absences or for rescheduling of exams or other assessments because there are (i) a large number of other religions that people may practice, and (ii) having such a rigid policy would result in educational chaos for many courses that faculty teach, especially those that are dependent on a certain time sequence of class exercises. The result of the discussion in the ULC had been the suggestion that the Academic Senate develop some areas of guidance—not policy or rules—that could be posted on both the OMSE website and the provost's website and perhaps

incorporated by faculty if desired. This would include three areas: 1) some potential syllabus language options that faculty could adopt to describe their handling of religious and other observances; 2) a brief paragraph describing a student's responsibility to provide faculty with adequate notice if they request a religious accommodation and why that accommodation is needed; and 3) a brief paragraph of guidance for faculty including information regarding the calendar resource that will be created on multiple religious holidays, the syllabus options available, the student responsibility statement and the encouragement to be as flexible as possible in providing reasonable accommodation to schedules for their classes.

Beale suggested that Curriculum and Instruction Committee (CIC) work on syllabus options, SAC work on the student responsibility statement and FAC work on the faculty guidance. These would come back to Policy and likely go to the plenary for approval.

Reynolds noted a further complication regarding the number of different religions that our students may follow. Religious holidays for international students may extend several days. For many Catholics, All Saints Day is a religious holiday. Policy pointed out the range of potential disturbances per class if there were a rule that faculty must accommodate. Several members noted that one of the most difficult items for the university is how the exams are scheduled in the academic calendar. Clabo supported the idea of guidance versus policy and a link to a religious holiday calendar.

V. UROP/FORAGERONE UPDATE

Sr. Vice Provost Ezzeddine noted that the position that Matt Orr had held has now been upgraded to Program Manager for Undergraduate Research and High Impact Learning. The person hired should be engaged in creating connections between faculty and students and ensuring that programs like UROP serve all students rather than just those who are better prepared. The program should also help faculty connect with students. Beale indicated some uncertainty on the role an administrator would play in helping faculty develop a research program in which students could participate or help in connecting faculty to students. Ezzeddine and Clabo both suggested that the role would “partner” with faculty. Beale thought it was more likely that the role could facilitate faculty use of ForagerOne and other means of reaching out to students, rather than helping to develop a “research program”. She suggested it would be helpful to have a faculty member on the search for the position, because it will be important for this person to be able to communicate with faculty. Chrisomalis reiterated that more faculty input is needed to build ongoing trust. He agreed to help review the applications. Rossi noted the importance of reaching out to students so they apply to do research projects rather than passively waiting for students to apply. Beale noted it is important to market the program appropriately among students.

Ezzeddine then suggested the purpose of the role will be to tell the UROP story. Advisors also need to encourage student interest. Reynolds noted that first-generation students often do not recognize UROP as the opportunity it is: he suggested the WSU First-Gen Fest could be used to tell students about the program.

Dormer recently helped a few students familiarize themselves with ForagerOne. They looked at the few projects currently posted and practiced how to do outreach to a faculty member. She noted students often like to do research on their own and try to find an answer before they reach out, so a robust offering of projects can open students' perspectives to the types of research they can consider. There is opportunity to use ForagerOne in student recruitment.

Ezzeddine announced they are ready to go public with ForagerOne now that the technical issues have been resolved. That will be shared with faculty through the Office of Teaching and Learning. The UROP website has a link on the menu bar to the ForagerOne website as well as

training videos. The web team is working on FAQs about editing faculty profiles. There will be a robust demonstration schedule throughout the semester that will show people how simple it is to add a profile and put projects up. The next UROP cycle will open in February, so the goal is to push this out to students after the new year. They should be able to log onto the system in January to see what projects are up for the coming cycle. Dormer will re-engage the Student Senate group as well. ForagerOne is on Get Involved. An events calendar was created with postings to keep students aware. Dormer noted they could sign up now, but they do not want to push it hard until more faculty profiles are added.

Beale noted it might be worthwhile to schedule a presentation on ForagerOne and UROP for the December 4 plenary. Chrisomalis emphasized this will not work unless there are both a critical mass of faculty with research programs offered under ForagerOne and a critical mass of students interested in doing the research. Rossi suggested using the free Google Cloud AI project available to the university in January to do a podcast about ForagerOne and UROP. Damecia Donahue suggested getting library and archives involved in holding workshops connected with UROP.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

CIC members would like to send an email to each of their respective units as an initial step in surveying faculty about Canvas issues and concerns. The draft of the email seemed fine, although it is asking at a very broad level rather than any specifics, so Beale questioned who would take that survey data and convert it to something usable. Jennifer Lewis suggested this will be a project the whole committee would take on. Policy thought it was a good idea for the CIC members to do the initial survey of their units and then go from there.

Approved as submitted via email November 13, 2024.