WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC SENATE

PROCEEDINGS OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE

February 3, 2020

Present: L. Beale; P. Beavers; V. Dallas; r. hoogland; D. Kessel; C. Parrish; B. Roth; N. Simon;

W. Volz; K. Whitfield; A. Wisniewski

Guests: Boris Baltes, Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs and Associate Vice President of Academic Personnel

The item marked with an asterisk constitutes the Action of February 3, 2020.

1. Report from the Chair:
2. Provost Whitfield will meet with administrators in the Division of Facilities Planning and Management to discuss repair of elevators. He thinks the delays to repair the elevators may be due partly to the university’s business practices. We have to be more aggressive with the company with which we have a contract. Ms. hoogland asked the Provost to update Policy on the progress to replace the elevators in State Hall.

b. The Provost has received about 20 nominations for the position of Associate Provost for Faculty Development and Faculty Success. The nominees are in the process of submitting a formal application.

1. Professional Ethics Policy: Mr. Baltes had asked to meet with the Policy Committee because recent cases have demonstrated “the potential need for a professional ethics statement and a misconduct policy which would allow for the identification of, and process for an investiga-tion of any reported misbehavior.” Recently there have been cases of mistreatment of graduate students and faculty as well as bullying that do not fall under current university policies. Not having a policy may have led to underreporting of such incidents. Mr. Baltes suggested that a committee be formed to develop a code of professional ethics that outlines expectations, how to report violations, and how the alleged violations would be investigated. The policy would affect all employees.

Ms. Beale said that there have been two attempts to adopt a universal code of conduct, urged by the administration with significant penalty provisions, including termination. She is opposed to such a code because she believes it would limit academic expression and freedom of speech. She disagrees with having a statement that would deal with any reported misbehaviors. The prior discussion at Policy supports the development of a much narrower statement of university policy on bullying and intimidation, issues that were raised as important in the Climate Survey. Mr. Roth agreed that a policy should be narrow. There are legal definitions of harassment, but it is difficult to define bullying. Mr. Parrish stated that the AAUP-AFT would strongly object to a policy that would try to apply sanctions or punishment to its members since the union would be reluctant to hand over more power to the administration.

Mr. Baltes responded to these criticisms by suggesting that a statement might list the kinds of behavior that are expected, stating what is unprofessional and is not acceptable. He acknowledged that a policy would have to be within the bounds of the collective bargaining

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agreements. PC members questioned if there was a statement in the AAUP-AFT’s contract that speaks to unacceptable behavior or if the national AAUP had standards for identifying and dealing with bullying. Mr. Baltes suggested that the committee develop a policy that would be composed of faculty, administrators, and staff. The policy would be a general set of ethics. The AAUP’s professional ethics is a good place to start.

Ms. Beale again disagreed, noting that the Policy committee is not interested in setting up a committee to develop a “general statement of ethical conduct” but a narrow statement about bullying and intimidation. It should not be binding. Any sanctions would have to be in the existing contract or be negotiated. Intimidation and bullying are a fairly universal problem. She thinks it is occurring for junior faculty, for people of color, for women, and for students. The first step to deal with the problem is to develop a statement that identifies undesirable bullying behavior. The next step to tie that into sanctions would have to go through the bargaining process.

It was decided to form a committee of administrators and academic personnel. Mr. Baltes will appoint the administrators. Policy Committee will select the faculty and the members of the academic staff. Mr. Baltes and the Policy Committee will collaborate on writing a charge for the committee. The Provost suggested that a representative from the AAUP-AFT serve on the committee.

1. Grade Appeals Procedure: Faculty in the College of Engineering brought issues regarding the grade appeals process to Ms. Beale’s attention. The university does not have a policy that applies to all schools and colleges. Procedures across campus are inconsistent and some colleges that have a policy do not follow it. Two Engineering faculty gave PC infor-mation about recent cases in their college. The question before Policy Committee was whether the process could be improved. It was thought that a university-wide policy should be developed and that it probably should be included in the Student Code of Conduct and in the Board Statutes.

Last year the Curriculum and Instruction Committee and the Faculty Affairs Committee discussed the student code of conduct and other issues regarding grade changes. When the student code of conduct is updated statements need to be inserted to better define the role of faculty in any review by the person designated to make the determination. There is nothing in the student code of conduct that prevents faculty being overruled without knowing about it. Before a chair or dean changes the grade, the instructor should be consulted. The adminis-trator could not know all the issues on which the instructor based the grade. The student should have to talk first to the faculty member about changing a grade. If the faculty member refuses to change the grade and the student appeals to the chair or the dean, the faculty member should be consulted before the administrator makes a decision.

It appears that the existing policy in Engineering was not followed in the cases brought to the attention of the Policy Committee. The decision of the dean was appealed to Associate Provost Baltes. He explained the reasons for his upholding the dean’s decision. There were conflicting statements by the parties involved. There is evidence that the chair told the students they had to talk with the faculty member first. The students claim they sent an email to the instructor, but he did not reply. The instructor said he never received the email. Three members of the College of Engineering’s undergraduate committee reviewed the appeal and

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approved the change of grade. Ms. Beale stressed that faculty always should be able to give their perspective to any review committee. Mr. Baltes said that only the College of Education requires the chair or dean to contact the faculty member.

Policy Committee believes the university should have a policy with simple procedures that apply to all schools and colleges. Mr. Baltes agreed. Also discussed was the possibility of writing a Board statute regarding changing grades.

Members wondered if it was common practice for deans and chairs to change a grade to appease the student. Mr. Baltes suggested that a survey could be conducted to find out.

The Curriculum and Instruction Committee and the Faculty Affairs Committee will meet to discuss how to proceed and whether they should recommend wording for the student code of conduct that would apply to every college.

[Mr. Baltes left the meeting.]

1. Report from the Senate President:
2. Ms. Beale confirmed with members their participation in the April commencement ceremonies as representatives of the faculty.
3. The University Foundation is considering sending to the university community a call for proposals that are transformational, that build on our strengths, and that are compelling and distinctive. People would submit a description of their idea and answer some specific questions. The people who submit the most promising ideas will be asked to provide more detail.
4. The Graduate Council met on January 15. There was considerable interest and chagrin about the way Bartleby Learn works.
5. The Trump administration’s new travel ban announced on January 31 will likely impact enrollment of international graduate students, even though students from those countries are still ostensibly eligible for student visas. Some of the countries in the ban have good long-standing relationships with the U.S. Nigeria, for example, is one of Africa’s most important economies.
6. Bartleby Learn: The Curriculum and Instruction Committee has looked into the functioning of the Bartleby Learn website. Mr. Roth said that the more people look at the website the more they are appalled by it. It gives students a shortcut to answers they can copy. The answers on demand can be a source of academic dishonesty. Because the university bookstore is promoting Bartleby Learn, it appears that the university is encouraging students to use it and that it is okay to copy the answers. The answers to some questions that were submitted were not academically respectable. Given the extent to which the university’s name is associated with Bartleby Learn—including on the site where students have to order their textbooks—make it appear to be an approved source. Ms. hoogland reminded the commit-tee that Jodi Young, the director of the bookstore, had said that the essays on the website were written by experts in their field. A student wrote the first essay that she accessed. It was poorly written; she would give the student a failing grade. Policy Committee will invite Ms. Young, Associate Vice President for Student Auxiliary Services Timothy Michael, and Richard Pineau, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Mathematics, to a meeting to discuss the use of Bartleby Learn.

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1. University Research Opportunities Program: Mr. Roth presented the preliminary report of the Academic Senate Advisory Subcommittee on Undergraduate Research Funding. An announcement for applications for support for the spring/summer term has been released. The due date for applications is in March but the decision for funding may be as late as May 7. Policy Committee reviewed the recommendations of the UROP. The recommendations are: maintain the competition for the program and the funding; recruit students from a wide range of backgrounds; expand the financial resources with support from the Development Office and the Office of the Vice President for Research; find ways to mitigate actual and perceived adverse impacts on students’ financial aid packages; establish a standing faculty committee to oversee the UROP competitions; and continue to coordinate the undergraduate student research programs of the units. Provost Whitfield is supportive of undergraduate research and wants us to articulate the importance of research for our students. Mr. Volz believes the university should track our undergraduates who participated in research programs and use the information in our recruitment efforts. Ms. Beale suggested that we have an exit email for students to report their plans. Policy Committee will invite Senior Associate Provost for Student Success Monica Brockmeyer to a meeting to discuss the recommendations and future plans.

1. Transparency: Policy Committee convened the Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Transparency to look at the use of proprietary databases and algorithms by administrators as part of their decision-making process. The committee submitted its report. Mr. Beavers, a member of the ad hoc committee, will present the report and a resolution to the Senate at the February 5 Senate meeting. The Senate will be asked to vote on the resolution at the March 4 meeting.

 8. Reports from Liaisons:

a. Ms. Simon and Ms. Dallas attended the Warrior Vision and Impact Program (VIP) informational town hall on January 29. The VIP is a learning community that supports incoming students. The key theme of the town hall was “Student Success as an Equity Practice.” Kenya Swanson, who is the coordinator of the program, said there are two themes: (1) listening to students from day one, and (2) working with a coalition to make sure there are no silos. Retention and graduation rates have improved for all demographics but the gap remains fairly constant at 30% between white students and under-represented minority students. All the students have the same concerns: do they belong on campus, will their major help their career goals, and how will they pay for college. The Warrior VIP reaches out to students in January and February, after they have been admitted but before they begin taking classes. They are put in a learning community with a peer mentor. The peer mentor ratio is six to one. In other peer mentor communities the ratio is ten to one. All VIP students must take the first-year seminar. They take it as a cohort unless the student’s classes interfere with the time. Then they are in a mixed group. The first year retention rate is 82%, higher than the first to second year retention rate for the university as a whole. Black students in the Warrior VIP outperformed white students who were not in the program. The VIP is in its third year. The retention rate has declined because the program has not been able to increase its staff. Seventy-four students participated in the program the first year, 132 the second year, and 154 the third year. Students are identified by their ACT/SAT scores. Students who are first-generation, low income, low high school GPA are invited to join. The peer mentors return to their high school to encourage students to join.

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Ms. Brockmeyer estimated that if we have 2,500 to 3,000 first year freshmen every year, 1,000 of them would need the program. Ms. Dallas added that Ms. Brockmeyer said that financial support would come from philanthropy, Wayne funds, and writing grants.

The students who took the first year seminar had a higher GPA than the FTIACS who did not take the FYS as their Wayne Experience course. Underrepresented minority students react to problems differently than white students. If white students experience a problem, they do something to solve the problem. Under-represented students, facing the same problem, walk away thinking they might not belong at the university because they don’t know how to solve the problem.

The attendees at the town hall learned that participation in the RaiseMe program has been waived for the students admitted for fall 2020 as part of the Heart of Detroit Tuition Pledge program. This is different from what Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management Dawn Medley told the Policy Committee on January 27.

1. Facilities, Support Services and Technology Committee: Ms. Dallas, the liaison from the Policy Committee to the FSST Committee, reported that Robert Davenport, the Associate Vice President for Facilities Planning and Management, met with the committee.

 c. Student Affairs Committee: Mr. Roth, the liaison to the SAC, said that the committee dealt with the Student Senate’s resolution on LGBTQ+ issues. Curriculum and Instruction Committee dealt with the resolution regarding queer studies and hiring a faculty member specifically to focus on those issues. Also discussed were quality of life issues. Both Student Affairs and Curriculum and instruction unanimously supported the Student Senate resolution on LGBTQ+ issues.

1. Faculty Affairs Committee: The FAC also unanimously supported the resolution on LGBTQ+ issues, Ms. hoogland said.

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Approved as submitted at the Policy Committee meeting of February 17, 2020