WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC SENATE

PROCEEDINGS OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE

February 10, 2020

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

K. Whitfield; A. Wisniewski

Absent with notice: W. Volz

Guests: Monica Brockmeyer, Senior Associate Provost for Student Success; Darryl Gardner, Director of Operational Excellence, Student Success; Matthew Orr, Program Coordinator for the University Research Opportunities Program

The items marked with an asterisk constitute the Actions of February 10, 2020.

1. University Research Opportunities Program (UROP): Mr. Orr said that the Provost’s office had decided this year to hold one competition per year for UROP. As a result of the negative reactions to the change, they have re-instated two competitions, one for the fall/winter awards and the other for the spring/summer awards. The call for applications in the fall was meant to cover the fall/winter 2019-2020 terms and the spring/summer 2020 term but that was not clear in the call for applications. The final date for notifying students if they received funding is May 7. Members noted that this is very late for student planning. Ms. Brockmeyer’s office will try to get the reports from the faculty reviewers earlier so they can report the results to the applicants earlier. Mr. Gardner said that the subcommittee’s report showed that the white ethnic category is more heterogeneous than realized. To make the program more diverse they have to look at all the data. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds. More and more students identify as two or more races. Mr. Gardner is trying to get more information about diversity. Our underrepresented students do not access the UROP as they should. In the last five years only 10% of the applicants have been Black or Latinx. Our undergraduate population is 15 to 17% black and our Latinx population is 7%.

Mr. Gardner is looking at all the undergraduate research programs with the goal of broadening research opportunities for students in general. Undergraduate research has increased with cooperation between UROP and the Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation (LSAMP). Wayne State sub-contracts with the University of Michigan which receives an alliance umbrella award from the National Science Foundation. The purpose of the program is to increase participation of underrepresented minority students in the STEM disciplines and their progress-ing to a profession in the STEM fields. Wayne receives $100,000 in funding annually. That money is not just for undergraduate research since it can support any activity for STEM engagement. Mr. Gardner is doing an in-depth needs assessment to find where the problems are and where the gaps are. After preliminary discussion, it looks like funding also may be available from the Office of the Vice President for Research.

Policy Committee asked why underrepresented students have not been involved in research and how we are reaching out to them. Ms. Brockmeyer said her staff is getting information about the problem. She wants to understand the needs of our students and the opportunities on campus before making major changes.

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Ms. Beale sees a need to provide research opportunities for undergraduate non-STEM majors. Ms. Brockmeyer’s staff have written a small proposal with the aim of securing additional funds from the OVPR around interdisciplinary research to broaden participation. Mr. Parrish was concerned that students might not have mentors available to help them develop an intellectually sound proposal. He was critical of the fact that Ms. Brockmeyer’s office had not identified mentors. Faculty, he said, help students write the proposal. Ms. Brockmeyer said that Mr. Gardner is doing a needs analysis of the barriers students experience that make it more difficult for first generation, women, and students of color to access and be more successful in undergraduate research programs. We need to identify all the places where undergraduate research is offered. Mentorship is available through learning communities, the schools and colleges, in courses, through the VIP learning community, The Network (a learning community for African American males), and RISE (a learning community for self-identified women of color). Ms. Brockmeyer’s office has had the recommendations for three weeks; they will return at a later date with more details. Ms. Beale indicated it would be helpful to learn whether Ms. Brockmeyer or her staff saw any negatives about the recommendations and to get a sense of how they envision moving forward.

Ms. hoogland asked how they would address the adverse impact of UROP funding on students’ financial aid packages. Mr. Orr works closely with the Financial Aid office. The Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management has agreed to have a check box on the UROP application where students could indicate that they would like Financial Aid to review the impact of the UROP award on their financial aid package. In the past the office gave the list of students who received the award to the Financial Aid office. Mr. Orr will work with the Financial Aid Office to resolve concerns about students’ financial aid. About 30% of the recipients of the award have financial aid questions. For most of the students there is no problem, but every year Mr. Orr works closely with Financial Aid to make sure that students who receive the award do not exceed the cost of attendance. Information about the possible effect of the award on financial aid is included with the application. Ms. Brockmeyer said the information is communicated to the faculty member in the announcement but they could send a separate reminder to the faculty member and add information on the website that the UROP award could exceed the cost of attendance and reduce the financial aid students receive. Ms. Beale noted that cost of attendance can be customized for particular student needs, so it would seem that in most cases the increased costs of doing research could be taken into account. This would be particularly true when the student is traveling or using special instruments or has significant other costs because of doing the research. Ms. Brockmeyer said that students have to ask Financial Aid to look into their situation and Mr. Orr is not supposed to intervene with the student to ask financial aid to review their aid. The check-the-box solution will help them advocate for the student. Provost Whitfield suggested that faculty who have mentored students in research programs could also meet with new mentors to make them aware of the issues that have come up in the process and how they resolved them in the past.

Another recommendation from the subcommittee is to establish a standing committee staffed by faculty selected (in whole or in part) by the Academic Senate with duties including assessing the applications, deliberating collectively about award decisions, reviewing student work product and faculty-mentor evaluation reports. Mr. Orr said that over the last five years, about 180 faculty have shown interest in undergraduate research. After faculty have mentored a student they are asked to serve as a reviewer. Mr. Orr tries to have each proposal reviewed by three faculty who work in the same general area of the proposal, but not to the specific department. The reviewer is to answer ten questions. (Mr. Orr will send the questions to the

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Policy Committee.) Each reviewer evaluates ten applications. They complete an online form. The scores are tabulated. Mr. Orr’s office funds the top proposals but sometimes, to broaden the award portfolio, they make small adjustments if an area has not had many awards. At this point in the process, Ms. Brockmeyer does not look at the name of the student or the name of the faculty mentor. She looks at the areas of study and the scores.

Mr. Roth said that the subcommittee found it problematic that the reviewers work in isolation. You don’t know how the scores are being calibrated. Others commented that a committee process might better calibrate the evaluations. Ms. Brockmeyer agreed that it would be good for the reviewers to meet and discuss the outcomes and rubrics.

The UROP office does not connect students directly with faculty mentors. Students can check the UROP website where faculty post openings for undergraduates to work on research projects. Students may contact faculty on their own. Often faculty members identify students in their class to whom they present an opportunity for research. Schools and colleges often have ways of identifying students for mentoring.

It was thought that the review committee should not be a small group because of the number of proposals that have to be reviewed. Ms. Brockmeyer will get a sense of the workload and bring back a more sophisticated proposal. In talking about the formation of a standing committee, Ms. Brockmeyer did not think it wise to signal to the 180 people who have been reviewing the proposals that they are less needed. Mr. Roth suggested that the initial reviewers could be pulled from the group of 180 people, and their scored proposals could be presented to the standing committee. Mr. Gardner will send the names of the faculty who have served as reviewers to the PC.

Another recommendation was the coordination of the undergraduate research programs of the various units to schedule meetings that prepare students to undertake research with the possibility of eventually consolidating the application process. There are conferences on campus showcasing the work of the undergraduates, one is for Liberal Arts and Sciences and one for the UROP and Rushton Conference in Language, Literature, and Culture.

Ms. Beale suggested that Ms. Brockmeyer, Mr. Orr, and/or Mr. Gardner visit the schools and colleges to present full information to faculty about UROP and other research programs for undergraduates. Ms. Dallas suggested that advisors be trained about the programs so they can recruit students to participate.

[The guests left the meeting.]

1. Report from the Chair: The Provost took questions from members.
2. The Curriculum and Instruction Committee and the Faculty Affairs Committee will hold a joint meeting with Provost Whitfield and Boris Baltes, the Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs and Associate Vice President of Academic Personnel, on February 19 to learn about the process for the interdisciplinary hiring of faculty.
3. Ms. Dallas asked the Provost if the chart of accounts was ready for the launching of RCM. He said that he would get a summary of the status.
4. The announcement of the search for the Dean of the Graduate School has been sent out.

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1. Election day, Tuesday, November 3, will be a university holiday. No classes will be held and the university will be closed. Ms. Beale pointed out that the decision was another academic issue that was not discussed with faculty.

3. University Press: Provost Whitfield was asked to comment on the changes in the staff at the Wayne State University Press. As background information the Provost said that the Press is one of two auxiliaries that have been running a deficit despite receiving support from the university. The other is WDET. This has been of concern to the Board of Governors for years. There have been arguments that the press is a central element of the university, but so are radio and television. A new manager was hired for WDET in part to change some of the culture at the radio station and some of the ways in which they generate revenue. The administration moved the press from the Provost’s Office to the University Library System. Many universities, particularly under RCM, have made the same move.

Last spring an external advisory board visited the press. That group had a number of concerns about the culture in the press and about the press being more innovative. Presses are producing more digital content. The advisors recommended that the press broaden its catchment. Our press is unique in that we are not open to any topic. It focuses on topics related to Detroit. One of the suggestions was for the press to enlarge its catchment so they could produce more books and engage more authors.

The Provost noted that after the retirement of the current director, a search for a replacement failed. The chair of the external advisory board told Provost Whitfield that the failure was due in part because the applicants for the position did not think they could do well with the press. Several PC members said that they had heard that the reasons were different.

Ms. Beale commented that a desire for more innovation (if indeed that was behind the firings) is not sufficient reason to fire multiple staff in the manner done here—without notice and without any academic discussion about the merits or demerits of radical changes in the operations of the Press. It was, to say the least, a PR nightmare for the university. The editorial board, which has faculty from many disciplines, was not consulted. Going digital and broadening the disciplines that the press publishes might be good, and the university might save money while publishing more. But those issues merited a broader discussion. The university should not rely on an external board to make such a decision without any input from the university faculty. There were statements in the national press that the employees were fired because the search committee was not able to hire a new director. However, Ms. Beale noted, there are many places in the university that have had trouble hiring because of the reports in the national press about the dissension between the Board of Governors and President Wilson. Ms. hoogland pointed out that although WDET and the Wayne State University Press are not essential to the university, they complement it and play a much larger role. University presses, Mr. Parrish said, have had problems for years and many are subsidized. Our press’s faculty review board, which does review manuscript proposals, has not been consulted on policy. The external review board is made up of a mixture of community people and they basically do whatever the administration wants. You have to question the decisions that cast a bad light on the institution.

Mr. Beavers mentioned that under RCM the School of Information Sciences is revenue generating. The Libraries are under the Provost and are non-revenue generating. He asked if the press would be treated as a revenue generating or a non-revenue generating unit. The Provost said that there is the treatment and the reality of what the press does. It has a function

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that generates revenue so it is considered an auxiliary. It operates differently than what can easily be categorized as a non-revenue generating or as a revenue-generating unit. It brings in revenue so in theory revenue should go back out.

Ms. Beale said that the press might be considered to be like classical languages. We don’t expect classical languages to be revenue generating and the university subsidizes them. She thinks most people see WDET that way. Over the past few years, the university has cut WDET’s subsidy several times so that the current subsidy is rather small, at $250,000 annually. Presumably the Press’s situation is similar. These decisions tend to cast Wayne State in a bad light and make what we have been doing harder to do, ultimately costing us much more than saved. Most university presses, Mr. Beavers said, support themselves by having a commercial arm and an academic arm. It is important, he said, that academic journals be digital because that is the way they are accessed now. Popular press books should not be digitized. Ms. Beale noted that few would argue against digitalization where appropriate, but for a university press, it should not be the only format. Ms. Hoogland suggested that poetry and art should not be digitized, since the physical nature is part of the art form itself.

1. Report from the Senate President:
2. Policy Committee invited Dr. Barbara Gellman-Danley, President of the Higher Learning Commission, to meet with them during an upcoming expected visit to campus. In her letter of invitation, Ms. Beale wrote about the importance of shared governance and that the committee would welcome the opportunity to speak with her. Dr. Gellman-Danley declined saying that she was meeting only with the Board of Governors and the President. This occurred after Marilyn Kelly, the current Chair of the Board, had contacted Ms. Beale to indicate that it was ‘inappropriate’ for the Senate to have invited the HLC President to meet with Policy. Ms. Beale will meet with Ms. Kelly to discuss this.
3. The Foundation Board is meeting this week.
4. The Budget Planning Council hearings with the deans of the schools and colleges and the vice presidents of the administrative units begin February 11. The units will present their budget needs for the 2020-2021 fiscal year that the central administration will use in developing the university budget for FY 2021.

\*4. Approval of Proceedings: Policy Committee approved the Proceedings of its meeting of January 27, 2019, as modified.

\*5. Replacement for the Academic Staff Tenure and Promotion Committee: The archivist originally selected to serve on this committee is not eligible because he is applying for promotion. Policy Committee and the Provost jointly selected Kristin Chinery, Archivist IV, Reuther Library, to serve as the representative from the Archives.

\*6. Approval of Resolution: The Student Senate submitted a resolution to the Academic Senate. The members of the Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty Affairs, and Student Affairs Committees unanimously supported the resolution. The Policy Committee unanimously supported the resolution that called “upon the University to support LGBTQ+ Student and Academic Life in its mission to promote Diversity and Inclusion” and forwarded it to the full Senate for action at its March 4 meeting.

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Approved as submitted at the Policy Committee of February 24, 2020