WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC SENATE

PROCEEDINGS OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE

February 17, 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: Timothy Michael, Associate Vice President for Student Auxiliary Services, and Richard Pineau, Senior Lecturer, Department of Mathematics

The item marked with an asterisk constitutes the Action of February 17, 2020.

1. Report from the Chair: The university has not had a good system to handle phone calls for registration and financial aid. The system could only handle 26 callers. The 27th person would be dropped from the system. Provost Whitfield said that a pilot program is in place that would change the system. The new system will wait list students in the order they called to register for a class. They will have priority to join a class if a spot opens after registration is closed. Policy Committee members had several questions. The Provost will check if the system can be used for both graduate and undergraduate courses and if it tells the students what number they are on the list. The Provost will invite Darin Ellis, Associate Provost for Academic Programs and Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness, and Kurt Kruschinska, Registrar, to a meeting with Policy. [That meeting will be the March 3rd Policy meeting.]
2. Report from the Senate President:
3. Construction of the basketball arena adjacent to parking lot 50 near the Matthaei facilities began February 15. The construction will again likely reduce parking on campus.
4. One Law School student and one Law alumni died of suicide in the last five days. Counseling is available for the students who have been affected by the deaths. This is a growing concern on campuses nationwide.
5. Senior Associate Provost for Student Success Monica Brockmeyer announced a faculty discussion session on March 5 regarding perspectives on undergraduate research. She is seeking more faculty engagement and leadership in providing more opportunities in research for undergraduate students.
6. The University Foundation met last week. It is preparing for the next capital campaign which will include some key “pillars” to be generated through an initiative called Bold Moves. The investment group also made a report. They have been the investment manager now for three years, and as a “values investor” they have tended to be below the benchmark. They believe they will now begin outperforming benchmarks because they predict a decline in the ‘growth’ investment spurt.
7. Ms. Beale met with Board of Governors Chair Marilyn Kelly. Policy Committee had invited Barbara Gellman-Danley, the President of the Higher Learning Commission, to meet with them when Ms. Gellman-Danley visits the university in March. Ms. Gellman-Danley had contacted the Board office about the invitation. Governor Kelly responded to Ms. Gellman-Danley that she would inform Ms. Beale that it would be inappropriate for the HLC President to meet with Policy. Governor Kelly suggested that Ms. Beale should have asked her before inviting Gellman-Danley. Ms. Beale responded that the Senate has historically reached out to parties both internally and externally. If the Senate were required to defer to

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administrators or the Board regarding its discussions, the faculty voice in shared governance would be effectively squelched. Ms. Beale will draft a response to Governor Kelly and ask the Policy Committee members for their comments/edits prior to sending it.

1. Ms. Beale noted that the firing of the three staff members of the University Press had not been discussed with the Press’s faculty editorial board or, apparently, its external advisory board beforehand nor were they notified about the decision before it was implemented. Seventy-one authors who have published with the Press have signed a letter expressing their outrage. The firing has not only been reported in the national press, but in Australia, the United Kingdom, and France. One of the changes that Dean of the Library System Jon Cawthorne had championed was digitizing the material. Although it is appropriate that journals be digitized, some materials should not be digitized and decisions require broad consultation. Ms. Beale urged that the university “hit the reset button” and rehire the fired staffers as a first step in undoing the consequential harm to the university’s reputation caused by this incident.
2. Ms. Beale asked the Provost if he could provide the Policy Committee with data regarding the amount of money the university has spent on contracts for consultants and on software for the past five years, by division or S/C and purpose. The Provost indicated that he would see if that information could be gathered in a meaningful way.

\*3. Approval of the Proceedings: The committee approved the Proceedings of its meeting of February 27, 2020, as submitted.

1. Non-renewal Notices to Lecturers: The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is sending non-renewal notices to all the lecturers whose contracts expire this year. The Dean’s office indicated an expectation that the CLAS budget for fiscal year 2021 could be cut $1.8 million, which is the same as the cut for fiscal year 2020. Lecturers are angry, as are faculty. Reinstating the old policy of annually firing everybody rather than making a real determination of what sections the College knows it must offer and only paring sections around the edges is demoralizing.

[Mr. Michael and Mr. Pineau joined the meeting.]

1. Bartleby Learn: In November, Mr. Michael and Jodi Young, the Bookstore Manager, met with Policy Committee to talk about Bartleby Learn (BL), a service the bookstore promoted to students. At that meeting, Policy expressed concern and skepticism about its use and noted the failure to consult with any of the concerned Senate committees beforehand. As requested, Ms. Young sent the Policy Committee and the Curriculum and Instruction Committee a link to BL’s website so they could access it as students access it. After Policy Committee and the CIC members reviewed the website, they had even more concerns about it and invited Mr. Michael to meet again. Mr. Pineau, a member of CIC, had reviewed the service’s response to math questions, so Policy invited him to the meeting to explain what he learned.

Mr. Michael said in response to the Policy Committee’s concerns and recommendation, as of February 3, the bookstore removed BL from all active and passive marketing information in the store, on the website, and in their email campaign. There is a program prompt at the checkout register that they are trying to remove. Mr. Michael talked with Ms. Young and her supervisors at Barnes & Noble, and they agreed to cease promoting BL at Wayne State.

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This is not, he said, a student affordability issue. It is supplemental “instruction” and there are other places where similar services can be found. No one is making much money on this. The subscription is $10.00 per month. Mr. Michael noted that the bookstore wants to work with the Senate on other issues related to student affordability.

Mr. Michael stated that the bookstore considers that they merely have a product in the marketplace that competes with Chegg Homework Solutions and other such products. There are several dozen students at Wayne that have a BL subscription and who have renewed it more than once. The Student Auxiliary Services office will not interfere with their use of it.

Ms. Beale thanked Mr. Michael for listening to Policy’s concerns and working with the bookstore to eliminate their promotion of BL. Nonetheless, she noted a strong concern about students continuing to have a connection to the product and suggested that the university should tell the students that it is withdrawing from BL and why. It may be that there are other very similar commercial services; but it is problematic for the university, through the bookstore, to promote a product like BL that is quite simply pedagogically unsound. A university bookstore should never engage with this type of product that is essentially teaching students to cheat, to plagiarize, to do nothing, and then to pretend that they did the work.

Mr. Pineau checked how the system works for math problems. He said there are two parts to BL. Students can look up their textbook and receive access to answers that are 100% fully worked. Ms. Beale reminded Mr. Michael that when he and Ms. Young met with PC in the fall they said that BL gave steps but not the answer. For all of the problems students were given the answer first and then given the steps. That, Ms. Beale said, is cheating. Mr. Pineau gave examples of what students could access for the elementary statistics, calculus II, and discrete mathematics courses he taught in the fall term. The solutions for all the problems in the textbooks were on the website. In two of Mr. Pineau’s courses students do online homework. Theoretically students could simply copy from BL and score 100% without doing any work.

The other part of the subscription, Mr. Pineau said, is the ability to ask “experts” questions. Students may ask up to 30 questions per month. Mr. Pineau asked a colleague to give him a problem for a 7000-level math course. If a student had given the answer that the “expert” gave, they would have received a failing grade. He also noted that the use of English was not great, the solution was incorrect, and there were typos in some of the solutions. Mr. Pineau also asked BL a question from a statistics course. The solution given made no sense whatsoever.

Another concern was what the promotion of this service by the university bookstore would do to enforcement of the academic misconduct policy. Students could punch holes in the appeal process by saying that the university’s bookstore endorsed the use of BL. They would question how they could be accused of cheating if the university had endorsed the system. The first person a student should contact if they are struggling in any class is the instructor.

Policy Committee also had asked about the essays for the humanities that are available in Bartleby Write. Ms. Young had assured Policy that the examples were written by “experts” in their fields. However, the first essay Ms. hoogland accessed probably was written by a junior, not an expert. The other essays she looked at probably were written by students, also. Students, she said, cannot differentiate a good quality essay from a poorly written essay.

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Ms. Beale said the evidence that Mr. Pineau and Ms. hoogland presented show that BL should not be associated with the university at all. She thinks allowing the students who are currently subscribed to BL to continue without any information about the change is a problem. A notice should be sent to students that the Academic Senate has reviewed BL and found that it is not a credible service. We should encourage students to discontinue using it because it is a form of cheating and they are paying for a service that is inappropriate.

Mr. Michael said that the request sounded reasonable but anyone can go the national Barnes & Noble website and buy the service. He could not guarantee that no students at Wayne State would use it. However, Ms. Beale said, we should not be promoting it. We owe it to our students who purchased the service through Barnes & Noble’s incentive program to tell them that BL is not a good service, that the Academic Senate found it unreliable, inappropriate, and pedagogically problematic. She thinks the information should be shared with Barnes & Noble and other bookstore leaders that what they are selling is problematic. Mr. Michael said that he did not know whether he could do what Policy Committee was asking because he was worried that the university would be exposed to liability from Barnes & Noble. Ms. Beale questioned whether informing students that products that permit them to ‘cheat’ or plagiarize are inappropriate would create liability for the university. Our conclusion is based on evidence. Mr. Michael does not think Barnes & Noble would agree that they are telling students to plagiarize. Mr. Michael noted that Barnes & Noble does have an honor code printed on the bottom of the advertisement that was given to the Policy Committee and that it is on the company’s website. Ms. Beale suggested that the use of an honor code suggests the company realizes that the product assists cheating: the bookstore is essentially claiming to have no liability for themselves by displaying an honor code.

The takeaway from this issue is that the bookstore should consult about products they promote and sell that are so directly related to instructional methods. Policy would appreciate it if the bookstore would bring discussions of these kinds of products to Policy before they implement promotions.

Mr. Michael said that he would try to draft a statement, but he would need approval from the General Counsel’s office to release it. Barnes & Noble is publicly held and the university has to make sure that it is not crossing any line. He can’t prohibit students from purchasing the service if they find it on their own. Mr. Michael said any student could buy it and make the claim that he bought it from the university bookstore since it’s on the national website. There are, he continued, a lot of other products on the market.

Ms. Beale stressed that the problem here is not that there are products like this on the market and the bookstore’s national website (much as we may not like that): the problem is that the very visible promotion of it on campus suggested that the university is in favor of the product and that it works. Ms. hoogland believes that students should be warned about using the website. Mr. Beavers stressed that Policy’s concern is that the advertisements were sent with the university’s logo on them. We should have a general statement about using these types of services. The Policy Committee is trying to avoid a situation where students are punished for using one of these products and that is how they find out that a product that had been out briefly with our logo on it will get them into trouble. We would like to have a way for students to have information so that they can disengage.

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Members suggested that the university should have a general statement about not using these types of products. Perhaps it should be sent out once a year. It also was suggested that information about not using such services should be made at orientation and included in the class syllabus. The university has evidence that the service was misrepresented to us, that the people answering questions and writing essays are not experts. We were told that students were not given answers to problems when they clearly do. If students use the service and are cheating or plagiarizing they could be called up for academic misconduct. They could defend their actions by saying that the university encouraged the use of the service. It is a liability for the university if we don’t notify the students who bought it because the service was promoted by the bookstore. Ms. Dallas suggested that if the statement came from the Academic Senate it should not create as much of a problem for the university because it is a recommendation coming from the faculty.

Mr. Michael will consult with the Provost and Counsel and send Senate an update on what he thinks the university can do in terms of notifying students. His goal in coming today was to say that they heard the Policy Committee. Ms. Beale said the committee appreciates that. Mr. Michael said that they don’t care much about this and he wants to work with the Senate on finding ways to make textbooks more affordable for students.

[Mr. Michael and Mr. Pineau left the meeting.]

Mr. Roth mentioned that sometimes people rely on the manager of the bookstore for information when they should not. She is not part of the university and will say whatever Barnes & Noble wants her to say as an employee of the company.

Provost Whitfield agreed that the university has to address the cost of books. The cost may be a reason that students do not continue. He suggested that addressing the issue might be part of the next capital campaign. Ms. hoogland said that the question of affordability comes back to providing information online that is produced by content providers and not by faculty. The Provost believes that can be managed and can be part of the discussion about the price of books. We need creative ways to address the problem for our students. Mr. Roth mentioned that often textbooks are updated with few changes and an earlier version could just as well be used for a course. Students may not easily be able to acquire such earlier versions through the bookstore. Ms. hoogland tried to order the fifth edition of a book through the bookstore (rather than the new sixth edition) but was told that it was not available. She found the fifth edition available online for $2.00. Ms. Simon said that if financial aid pays for the books from Barnes & Noble and students do not buy them from the bookstore and buy them cheaper from another source, they do receive a refund on their financial aid but it comes later in the term. If the student has to have the cash to buy the used book, the student will not have the book at the beginning of the course and that is not pedagogically sound. The Provost said that it might be possible to issue a voucher to students. What can be done for students who receive financial aid depends on federal regulations. Another suggestion was that at one time short-term loans were given to students to enable them to buy textbooks before receiving their financial aid.

Mr. Beavers said that a lot of textbooks come bundled with other online resources. Some students who bought used books online did not realize that the one-time-use card to access the resources had already been used. If faculty use textbooks they have to make a deliberate choice knowing that some of the resources won’t be available. In any case, instructors should

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check the cost of a book before adopting it. The instructors can put a book on reserve, but the number of students who can use them is limited. Provost Whitfield asked the faculty to consider creative solutions to the problem of expensive textbooks.

1. Agenda for March 4 Academic Senate Meeting: Policy reviewed the draft agenda for the meeting. They’ll finalize it next week.
2. Report from the Research Committee: Mr. Kessel chairs the Research Committee. Last week the committee discussed impediments to research. Travel Wayne continues to be a problem. It was never intended to be used by the casual traveler. The general fund covers $5 million worth of travel and the people who process the forms know how to use the system. Another $5 million of travel is from grant support. Travel Wayne was not designed and is not intuitive for the casual user. To make using it simpler would cost too much money, and offices do not have the staff to complete and file the expense reports. The committee noted that the paper version was easier for the traveler to complete.

For the past several years, the Medical School faculty had to use a program called Faculty 180 to report their activities associated with their merit review, but the program is difficult to use. Prior to this software, faculty could submit a one-page summary of their activities. Faculty 180 is being replaced by Mountain Pass: Faculty Position Management Software.

The collective bargaining agreement specifies an across-the-board salary increase but unless the faculty in Medicine get a score of 1, which means “exceeds expectations”, they don’t get any merit increase. As a result, “meets expectations” is lumped with doing nothing. The Research Committee thinks people who “meet expectations” should get an increase, even a small increase to show that they are appreciated.

Three quarters of the university’s research is done in the School of Medicine. Because the elevators in Scott Hall have not been maintained, we have to spend $2.5 million to repair them. The cafeteria is closed because they can’t afford to maintain the ventilating system.

James Rowley, the President of the Executive Committee of the Medical School’s Faculty Senate, will talk with Mark Schweitzer, the new Vice President for Health Affairs and Dean of the School of Medicine, about the list.

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