WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC SENATE

PROCEEDINGS OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE

October 21, 2019

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 and Co-chair, 2N SET Committee; Laura Woodward, Director, Testing, Evaluation and Research Services; and Rita Casey, Associate Professor, Psychology, and Co-chair, 2N SET Committee

The item marked with an asterisk constitutes the Action of October 21, 2019.

1. Discussion of Student Evaluation of Teaching: Mr. Baltes, Ms. Woodward, and Ms. Casey updated Policy Committee on the work of the 2N SET Committee. The committee began meeting in fall 2018. They put together a best practices page that is posted on the website. Medians were added to the report because sometimes in smaller classes they are skewed. The medians are in addition to the means. The committee is trying to find new items for the SET that are more robust to potential biases. Seven associations wrote a white paper that identified universities at the forefront in the use of SETs. The white paper includes policies around SETs as well as items. Many universities do not use SETs in their merit decisions.

Ms. Beale noted that the announcement that went out appeared to invite the faculty to “pilot” a new online SET policy. From discussions with Ms. Woodward, she understands that was not intended, but she did learn that the administration has been allowing any faculty to execute the SET online so long as their dean approves use of online for SET. Ms. Beale noted that discussions in the past had pointed out many problems with online SETs compared to in-person SETs, especially regarding participation rates, reflection of negative views (students who are angry are more likely to respond to surveys and to respond negatively), and potential biases. Mr. Baltes and Ms. Woodward noted that the 2N SET committee has not supported having all SET evaluations be completed online in the past, but students who take online courses ordinarily complete the SET online. If the new software works as well as expected, it may be worth considering whether allowing online as an option would be advisable. The online SET form is the same as the pencil and paper version. Mr. Baltes suggested some advantages, including flexibility of timing; ease of adding questions; speed of turnaround, amount of individualized feedback students can provide, and cost savings (machine rather than personnel handling paper files). Ms. Casey noted that the Medical School has courses that are taught by several faculty and the current SET does not capture that very well, though Ms. Woodward added that the Medical School has a special form on which students can evaluate all the instructors in one course. The new software should permit the university to evaluate special courses and ask questions that relate to only one group of students. Ms. Casey commented that this would address the fact that there is a vast difference between taking a lab course and a large lecture class. Ms. Beale noted that the paper form and the online form could be changed rather easily to include questions for specific types of courses.

Various commenters noted that the SET questionnaire is used to make important decisions for promotion and merit increases but it does not help instructors identify what is needed to

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improve their teaching. Ms. hoogland suggested that the SET instrument suffers some of the problems of grade inflation, because nothing in the survey suggests that students should

consider themselves responsible for their own learning and that they should be held accountable. Faculty are also concerned about the use of SETs to make statistically inappropriate comparisons across disciplines and across class types and sizes. The SET evaluation does not encourage the kind of reflection that forms an important part of learning.

Provost Whitfield interjected saying that people put their own bias into whatever assessment instrument is used. The bigger issue is how the information is thought about. Either you won’t get any feedback from students or the feedback will be biased. What is more important is how the information is used. How do you weigh it? Is there training for the people reading the information and providing an assessment? Do we have standards and basic practices for how to think about those things, such as the basic statistical pieces of using median versus using means. You start to get a slightly different picture. For the ones that are bad are there ways that give you indicators for the next level? Based on the answers to the three questions are there programs to assist the faculty? Is it voluntary or is it mandatory?

Ms. Casey said that the global ratings do not tell how to help someone teach well, but there are examples of items that are specific or behavioral that might be useful to add.

Ms. Woodward confirmed that a factor analysis had been done over the summer. Among items that students are competent to comment on are the instructor’s clarity, communication, organization, and respect for students. Mr. Baltes and Ms. Woodward adjusted the analysis for the student’s interest in the course, and found that insightful.

Mr. Roth cautioned against thinking that changing wording would have a big impact on the student’s approach to the SET. He noted that making changes is problematic in that it makes year-to-year comparisons difficult. There should be some real expectation that changing some of the questions will improve the instrument before such changes are made. Mr. Volz suggested a downside to having too many questions on the SET. Mr. Volz also noted that a student’s response is not necessarily tied to the teaching or learning but may be affected by the condition of the classroom: they are more apt to come to class and feel better about the class if the classroom is attractive.

The committee representatives noted that they did not intend to add more questions. Mr. Baltes said the idea is to ensure that there is flexibility to colleges and department to include items that are important to them.

Returning to the issue of online versus paper assessment, Ms. hoogland and Mr. Beavers found that the number of students who complete the instrument online is marginal. Mr. Baltes stated that in the last few years the response rate online had increased, though still less than the paper version. He said that even if an online version were available to all faculty, professors with an in-person class could choose to use the paper version. Ms. hoogland objects to the time when students must complete the evaluation. It is too early for them to understand the arc of the class. The testing office had moved the time up because handling the paper takes a long time and they wanted to get the results to the faculty sooner. If the system were entirely online, the due date could be extended to the last day of classes. As soon as grades are posted, they would have access to the reports.

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Ms. Beale suggested that any decision about use of online should be a considered decision that takes all the concerns into account. The email that went out invited all faculty to use the

online SET, and Ms. Woodward has informed Ms. Beale that faculty who want to have their students complete the evaluation online are being allowed to do so if their dean agrees. The SET scoring, however, does not provide any notation to indicate that the SET was done online rather than in person. Given the differences in responses and likelihood of more negative responses, it would be helpful to add a notation showing that information.

Mr. Baltes suggested that one way to respond to the lower participation rates for online SETs would be to have students complete them on their phones or computers in class. Members objected, however, that some students would not have devices for the online evaluation.

Mr. Parrish suggested problems if departments add questions to the survey. Many depart-ments have no one who is familiar with surveys. There may be many questions that are not appropriate or useful. Would the questions be submitted for approval? Mr. Baltes said that such items would not be used, the same way that only a few questions now are used for promotion and tenure and selective salary decisions. Ms. Woodward said that now there are ten optional items that are given on paper to students. The testing office is setting up the new system the same way. Only the instructors would know how to interpret their scores. They could talk to the SET Committee about these issues. For now, the current instrument remains the same and they do not intend to get more people online. For now, they are trying to keep things small while they test the new system. It opens choices they did not have before. Ms. Woodward agreed that there are many issues that need to be considered. There was a general acknowledgement, however, that it would be appropriate to add a notation to the online evaluations so that faculty who review the SET scores would know which ones were conducted online and understand the probably lower participation rates and potentially lower scores that result.

[Ms. Casey, Ms. Woodward, and Mr. Baltes left the meeting.]

1. Report from the Chair:
2. The search for the Vice President for Health Affairs (VPHA) and Dean of the School of Medicine continues. There will be two levels of interviews.
3. This year’s ad for the hiring of interdisciplinary faculty is out.
4. On Thursday and Friday there is a conference “Net Impact” at the TCF Center downtown. It is an international group. We have a very active student chapter. The chapters choose the activities they want to do in the areas of social entrepreneurship, social equity, and social inequality. The group’s purpose is to empower people so they can have an impact. While some colleges send people overseas, Wayne’s students are interested in working on local issues in Detroit.
5. Report from the Senate President
6. The Budget Committee is holding a special meeting on October 28. Vice President for Finance and Business Operations and Chief Financial Officer William Decatur, Senior Associate Vice President for Finance and Deputy CFO Bryan Dadey, and Assistant Vice President, Budgets Jeff Bolton will update the committee on RCM. Ms. Beale urged Policy Committee members to attend the meeting. We are in the final stage of the adoption of the RCM model.

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1. At the Graduate Council meeting of October 16, it was announced that Slate would replace Alert as the software for the recruitment, application, and admission of graduate students. Dean of the Graduate School Ingrid Guerra-Lopez announced that under RCM the funding of graduate teaching assistants and graduate research assistants would be moved to the budgets of the schools and colleges. Graduate directors are concerned the deans will use the money to fund other needs. In November, the Graduate Council will hold a special meeting with Provost Whitfield.
2. The candidates for the position of VPHA will visit campus twice. Most of the interviews in the first visit are with administrators. Ms. Beale urged President Wilson to include the executive committee of the School of Medicine and the Policy Committee. The President added the executive committee, but not the Policy Committee. The members of the search committee are not to ask anyone about the candidates other than the people they identified. Mr. Parrish noted that once the candidates visit campus and their names are known, anyone should be able to seek information about them.

 \*4. Proceedings of the Policy Committee: The Proceedings of the Policy Committee meeting of October 14 were approved as submitted.

1. Distinguished Teaching Faculty Committee: Provost Whitfield is forming a new committee to acknowledge excellent teaching in response to the belief of some faculty that the university does not value teaching. The committee will determine what metrics to use in the evaluation of nominees and participate in the selection of the awardees. It is expected that the monetary award will be added to the faculty’s salary. The Provost and the Policy Committee will each appoint three faculty to the committee. Policy Committee began the process of selecting their appointees.
2. Computer Use Policy Group: This group will work with Daren Hubbard, Chief Information Officer and Associate Vice President for Computing and Information Technology, to rewrite University Policy “Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources.” Policy Committee began the selection process and will finalize the membership at a later meeting.
3. Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program: Earlier this year Associate Provost for Student Success Monica Brockmeyer had met with Policy to discuss the problematic announcement of the end of UROP and movement of the funds to a McNair partnership program for different undergraduates. At that time, Ms. Brockmeyer agreed with Policy that the best way to proceed would be to create a Senate-sponsored committee with significant faculty who have worked with UROP with which key administrators would cooperate to provide information as requested. Policy then formed the University Research Opportunities Funding Subcommittee to formulate “plans for the ongoing operation and expansion of the current Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP), with the aim of generating additional research opportunities for students.” Eight faculty members from across the university agreed to serve on this important group and Brad Roth agreed to chair it. Ms. Brockmeyer met with Mr. Roth earlier this month to discuss ideas to be considered, and did not mention her appointment of a parallel group.

Policy Committee members were therefore quite surprised to learn that Ms. Brockmeyer formed her own group, soliciting her own faculty representatives to serve on a “re-imagining UROP task force” that has apparently been renamed the Re-Design UG Research Action

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Team. The reason for setting up the action team was not clear, and the membership and materials that the ‘co-chair’ of the Brockmeyer group shared with Mr. Roth suggested a parallel function to the Senate group. There seems to be little rationale for two groups, because of duplication of effort. The plan for the report of the subcommittee is the end of this fall term, but the action team is apparently planning to work through the spring/summer term and may continue to function after that time. Mr. Roth also noted that there is some uncertainty regarding whether the university will conduct a UROP competition for the spring/summer term, which needs to be done soon.

Ms. Beale noted that the establishment of the Brockmeyer group—with eight faculty and including the same administrators expected to assist with the Senate group and thus adding only a CLAS assistant dean and a student—appears duplicative and undercutting of the Roth group. It is important for the administrators to be involved, but the understanding was that they would meet with the Roth committee as needed and help gather data about how other institutions handle undergraduate research.

Provost Whitfield did not agree that forming the action team was an effort to undercut the UROP subcommittee. He understood Ms. Brockmeyer’s intent was to have her group provide background information to the Senate committee.

The Policy Committee will write to Ms. Brockmeyer to learn the purpose of the action team and the timeline for its work.

1. Agenda for the Senate Meeting: Policy Committee reviewed and revised the drafted agenda for the November 6 Academic Senate meeting.
2. Bartleby: bartleby learn is a program pushed by the university bookstore that gives students answers to homework questions and writes essays for students. For a fee of $10.00, students can ask up to 30 questions per month. Policy Committee objected to the bookstore selling this service—indeed, using a $5000 promotion to incentivize students to sign up. This is an educational issue. Ms. hoogland noted that the bookstore increases textbook prices by 40%. Policy Committee will ask Timothy Michael, Associate Vice President for Auxiliary Student Services, to attend a meeting to provide background information on the bookstore’s promotion of this service and consider the various pedagogy problems noted by Policy members.
3. Report from the Student Affairs Committee and the Facilities, Support Services and Tech-nology Committee: The committees had a joint meeting. Mr. Roth said that Ms. Brockmeyer talked about STARS 2.0. Its rollout is three years away. She had a conversation with the committees about what the university would look like in 2030. Ms. Dallas added that employees from the Division of Computing and Information Technology are meeting with advisors in the colleges asking how STARS should be structured and what they think would make it a good system. They are making a better version of the software.

The Provost said the timeline would be shorter than three years. It would probably be 18 months. People liked STARS. The goal is to take the best aspects of STARS and what we learned from our engagement with EAB and create STARS 2.0. We learned a lot from EAB. STARS 2.0 will be more powerful. The Provost wants the university to be self-sufficient. We’ll

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be able to control and modify the system. We need a data dictionary to use across systems so they communicate with each other.

Ms. Simon stated that Ms. Brockmeyer told the committees that a STARS 1.5 would be launched in about 18 months. Talking about the importance of C&IT, Provost Whitfield had C&IT develop an app that provides directions for buildings and offices on campus.

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As approved by the Policy Committee on October 31, 2019