

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY  
ACADEMIC SENATE  
PROCEEDINGS OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE

November 9, 2020

Present: L. Beale; P. Beavers; L. Lauzon Clabo; J. Fitzgibbon; r. hoogland; D. Kessel; C. Parrish; B. Roth; N. Simon; R. Villarosa; A. Wisniewski, Rohan E.V. Kumar

Guest: Ewa Golebiowska, Professor of Political Science and Chair of the Curriculum and Instruction Committee

1. Respondus Exam Software: Professor Golebiowska chairs the Academic Senate Committee on Curriculum and Instruction (CIC). She reported that the committee held a joint meeting on October 28 with the Student Affairs Committee (SAC) to discuss the Respondus Exam Software and is in the process of finalizing the draft report to the Policy Committee.

In brief, the Respondus software proctors exams by locking down students' computers, recording both video and audio during a student exam session, and photographing the student's face at various times during the session to check for consistency using facial recognition software.

The committees have three major concerns about the software as a proctoring method for exams. First, the software proctors but yet is unable to detect dishonesty independently: faculty have to review the data to determine if there has been dishonesty, which will be particularly difficult for faculty teaching large classes with hundreds of students. A related concern is that the software flags students based on its facial recognition system, and there are at least worries that the software poses problems for students of color since facial recognition has been found to be less accurate with people of color than with white people. Second, the software may not appropriately take into account actual normal student activities during use and thus "flag" students causing interrupts that reduce time the student can devote to the exam. These activities include using scratch paper to jot notes, talking to oneself while parsing questions, showing anxiety about the test, and movement away from the desk for bathroom breaks or other needs. Third, the exam software appears intrusive as an invasion of student privacy because of the web-cam monitoring function, and it assumes that students will have a private, quiet site for taking the exam that may not apply for a student who shares living space with others, whether family or other students who may need internet access at the same time. Ms. Golebiowska noted that the recordings are retained for four years, which represents another significant concern for many on the two committees.

Ms. Golebiowska then noted some counterpoints to those concerns. The primary principle that a proctored exam upholds is academic integrity and the prevention of cheating, so there needs to be some arrangement that supports academic integrity. Further, while the second and third issues are clearly worthy of consideration, it is worth noting that students are monitored during in-person exams by proctors and similarly prohibited from engaging in various activities (eating, pacing, use of cellphones, etc.) that can support cheating or disrupt others in that setting. Moreover, the faculty can simply use the software as a deterrent, without actually reviewing the recordings, on the assumption that students who are aware of the monitoring will be less likely to cheat. Finally, one of the most difficult issues is the lack of clear data. The software is not

new and has been used by a number of faculty for some time, but it is not clear how often these concerns about inappropriate flagging interruptions arise for students or what number of students find the software invasive of their privacy. Ms. Golebiowska suggested that the university should not “throw out the baby with the bathwater”, in that there may not be a one-size-fits-all solution but Respondus may work well for some faculty. Sara Kacin at OTL has suggested that faculty in some fields may be able to change the method of assessment from exams to other means, though there are practical implications for those teaching large classes with fewer TAs than in former years.

There was substantial discussion among Policy members about these issues and other issues. Ms. Beale asked what student complaints have been recorded and whether faculty can essentially waive the web-cam requirement for selected students. The student representative noted that students who need accommodations are the most concerned about Respondus use. Ms. Golebiowska noted that her remedy for students who need accommodation or express privacy concerns is to offer a copy of the exam for those students with the web-cam requirement disengaged. Ms. Simon noted that students complain about unreliable internet connections that can cause them to lose time on the exam, sometimes taking multiple tries before they can log back into the exam. Another problem is that the exam apparently cannot actually discern clear cheating: Ms. Simon took the exam twice and actively cheated (visibly handling her phone in front of the web-cam to call an expert and read off exam questions to get the correct answers) but the software did not flag the visible cheating!

Ms. Beale noted that there is a difficult weighing necessary here to determine whether positives outweigh the negatives—the main benefit is the potential to deter cheating, but the main disadvantage is the potential disruption for students for a variety of reasons (internet access; student activity; flagged actions; privacy concerns). Mr. Parrish, seconded by Mr. Villarosa, noted that once students discover how easy cheating is, the software becomes an invitation to cheat, that leaves non-cheating students feeling unfairly disadvantaged. Mr. Roth suggested that the unfairness issues, from being kicked off, having internet failure or the other difficulties noted, seem to predominate. Ms. Golebiowska suggested it would be helpful if there were data about how often these unfairness difficulties arise, but it is not clear who would have such data. Faculty may or may not learn about issues students face. Ms. Simon noted that one remedy for internet problems and time getting back on after a flagged activity would be to provide more time, but that wouldn't solve the problems for students needing accommodations or for those who share an apartment with multiple other students, resulting in privacy and internet demand issues. The group suggested that the committees should consider what options were available and include that in the final report.

While Ms. Golebiowska was present, Ms. Beale also noted that some issues had arisen at the last Academic Restart committee that should be discussed at FAC, SAC, and CIC. The most urgent among them is the question of continuing the ***policy of P/NP grading for undergraduates*** for the Fall 2020 and Winter 2021 terms. Students have asked for a continuation of the policy, and academic administrators believe it may help increase registrations for the winter term. AVP Darin Ellis had planned to start implementation this week but Ms. Beale had pointed out that this is clearly an educational policy issue that is required to come before the Senate for review. (See Beale 11/08 email to Ellis on this issue.) Recognizing the sense of urgency on the issue, the committee agreed that the committee chairs will share the information with their committees and take a poll of their members that will be made available to Policy and the Provost by Wednesday at 2 pm at the latest.

[Ms. Golebiowska left the meeting.]

2. Report from the Chair:

- a. Provost Clabo updated the committee on the increased **COVID-19 positivity rate** on campus and in the community. Michigan had 6275 cases a few days ago—more than three times the 1950 peak in March. We've moved from a seven-day rolling average of 2.5 a day to 5.5 a day. Campus positivity rate is at 2.13%, and Detroit's is at 4.3%. Unless there is a reversal, it is likely that we will reach the trigger for targeted action or even depopulation of the campus within weeks. The spread is primarily being driven by relatively small but indoor gatherings of people who do not live together. This will increase over the Thanksgiving Holiday. The planned loosening of residence halls to allow small gatherings will not take place. The Public Health Restart Subcommittee will now meet twice a week to be able to take steps as needed. The good news today was that it appears the Pfizer vaccine will be effective, but it takes 2 doses and it must be stored at 80 degrees below zero or loses effectiveness, so that will make distribution difficult and it will take time to vaccinate a majority of the population. The university health center is purchasing an 80-below freezer for this purpose.
- b. The **mental health day** was a big success with students. There were 1500 who arrived for the swag bags, and students have emailed to say how important it was to know that people care. Michigan is following our example, with two 'well-being' days planned. There is some administrative support for planning a similar day in the winter term, perhaps in February, since January has Martin Luther King day and March is spring break month. Policy was generally supportive, especially if it was handled like the Election Day break this year with the ability for the calendar to accommodate the classes by having a day added at the end.

3. Report from the Senate President:

- a. After receiving information from several of our Senate members, Ms. Beale sent "get well" wishes from the Senate to Professor Emeritus Alfred Cobb. She shared the warm email received in response upon his return home with Policy and noted that we should ask colleagues to let us know about such illnesses or other problems so that we can regularly reach out to our colleagues, whether retired or still working. She will mention this at the next plenary session as well.
- b. The Provost's Office announced the deadlines for various faculty award nominations. We should encourage Senate members to nominate individuals for these various awards. Some deadlines are in November and early December. Members should review the information on the Provost's website and consider nominations.
- c. Dean Sheryl Kubiak, who is chairing the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Social Justice Action Subcommittee, will visit Policy next week to talk about forming a DEI Council. It is important that such administrative bodies be established so that they are coordinated with and work through the Senate rather than bypassing the Senate's jurisdiction. Please be prepared for a full discussion of the appropriate makeup and procedures for such a group.
- d. Ms. Beale received information from several women faculty in the School of Medicine inquiring about an Ombuds-like role at the university. They noted that they see a need for something different from the Title IX coordinator in the General Counsel's office or the Grievance and Contract Implementation officers with the Union. They want someone independent to whom they can go for advice about dealing with issues that arise, such as when a senior male faculty tends to choose other male faculty as work partners. We currently have someone with the Ombuds title in the Student Center, but that is primarily an information office rather than an advocacy office and only serves students. Ms. Beale suggested that there is likely a need for a genuine university Ombuds office that serves faculty and staff and is independent of the administration so that it can effectively serve as an avenue for raising concerns and getting advice about proper channels to follow or guidance in having concerns heard by the appropriate personnel. She asked for comment

from members. Mr. Parrish noted that there had been such an office in the past, but it was politicized, so it would be important that the person be installed for a specific term of years. The university president should not be able to terminate the person without cause. Provost Clabo noted that the NSF grant with which Boris Baltes is working has as a goal creating some avenue for “outside” mentoring and advocacy—i.e., faculty mentors located outside the junior faculty’s own department. Perhaps this process can satisfy the need or can be coordinated with the effort to create an Ombuds office. Ms. Beale will set up a Zoom conversation with Mr. Baltes to discuss this issue as a first step. Mr. Roth noted that the Anti-Bullying Committee is discussing similar issues as well, since most models for dealing with those types of issues presuppose an Ombuds role at the university. Mr. Villarosa suggested that the union should also be involved.

*[Not mentioned at the meeting: the Graduate School seeks nominations and self-nominations for membership on a taskforce on graduate faculty membership. Nominations are due to Dean Amanda Bryant-Friedrich by November 10.]*

4. State Hall Renovation Advisory Committee: Policy discussed Ashley Flintoff’s request for Senate representation on a new committee being established to consult on the design and renovation of State Hall. Policy reviewed the members it had appointed to the Classroom Advisory Committee whose charge had included considerations of appropriate design for State Hall and concluded that it would be appropriate to ask the Facilities staff to continue working with those same people in the State Hall design process. Ms. Beale will provide those names to Ms. Flintoff after the meeting.
5. Senate Representation on the Juneteenth Celebration Task Force: Provost Clabo provided the memo distributed to President Wilson and the Board of Governors regarding arrangements for celebrating Juneteenth, an idea initiated by the Student Senate and supported by the Academic Senate. Mr. Roth noted a few concerns regarding specific items mentioned in the memorandum. For example, the suggestion that “Black-owned food trucks” be invited for the event would likely violate the Michigan law prohibiting discrimination in favor of any group by public institutions. Further, the discussion of “safe spaces” in the memorandum raises some concerns where it is discussed in the context of pedagogy, as opposed to student services. We will need to be very careful how we are using the term, so as to avoid problems. Provost Clabo noted that these recommendations came from a subgroup of the Social Justice Action Committee (SJAC): it will be important to honor the resolution by careful planning. The committee will include Student and Academic Senate members, members of the SJAC and members of the community. Several members of Policy suggested that Brad Roth should serve and he agreed to the nomination. Other potential faculty members were suggested for an additional slot or slots, and Ms. Beale will follow up on those.
6. Senate Plenary Session: A draft agenda for the December 2nd Senate meeting was reviewed. Members agreed that the two selected topics would be appropriate if the presenters are willing.
7. Reports from Liaisons:
  - a. Facilities, Support Services and Technology Committee: Ms. Simon is the Policy Committee liaison to the FSST Committee. The committee discussed three important issues. The first was the use of Canvas. It continues to have more than 90% of faculty using it for classes (Blackboard peaked at about 88%). Ms. Hoogland noted a problem using the ‘hide grades’ feature, resulting in loss of the ‘hidden’ grades and the need to redo the complete process. Others noted that they still continue to put their original grades into a spreadsheet for loading into Canvas when complete. Some consider the interface not to be user friendly for selecting

texts. It was suggested that those with problems contact Bob Novak for help. The second was the use of Zoom. It was noted that there are multiple licenses and at least 950 Wayne personnel with more than one Zoom license, so C&IT is working to merge accounts. Zoom bombing is also a problem. C&IT will continue to work on that with DOSO. The third was the First Day Pilot. It was successful, with expectation of expansion for the winter term. The best savings for students is if faculty are using the courseware, but another advantage is having the books for the first day of class. Students can use the books through census day (day 22) and then give them up if they do not want to continue with them. The bookstore receives a reduced markup and the university, a reduced commission: this allows students to get a discount on price. Cengage, however, may provide better deals for some books. A survey will be done of students and faculty who used the pilot, and those results will be shared with Policy. Both Ms. Fitzgibbons and Mr. Beavers noted that the task force worked well together and really enjoyed the process.

- b. Budget Committee: Mr. Beavers, the Chair of the committee, noted that Susan Burns would provide a report on Development in a Budget meeting this month.
8. New Business. Mr. Parrish mentioned that it would be worth reviewing the emeritus title issue. It continues to seem unreasonable to have a process similar to promotion and tenure to entitle someone to the title after they have taught here for a decade or more. It does not carry any expensive percs: library access and email use (available to all retirees) and listing in the Bulletin and in the faculty directory. It is particularly unreasonable to allow the administration to deny the title to anyone when the faculty in the person's unit has supported the title. Ms. Beale agreed that this is an important issue that should not be controversial and said she is strongly in favor of granting the title automatically or at most through a relatively simple unit vote process with no administrative veto. She added that we had an extensive discussion along these lines several years ago in Policy, and suggested it be put on the agenda again in the near future. Provost Clabo asked if the prior discussion could be located and forwarded to her for reference.

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Approved as submitted at the Policy Committee meeting of November 16, 2020