

Academic Senate Policy Committee
February 28, 2022 Proceedings

- I. Proceedings of the February 7 Policy Committee Meeting. The proceedings were approved as corrected.
- II. Proceedings of the February 21 Policy Committee Meeting. The proceedings were approved as submitted.
- III. Report from Senate President.
 - A. BOG Relations. Beale met with Mark Gaffney, Chair of the Board of Governors. He is interested in improving the relationship between the Board and the Policy Committee. He agreed to speak at the April plenary session (10-minute slot with some Q&A) to share his view of the university and role of the Board of Governors.
 - B. Chegg, Course Hero and other Online Subscription Platforms for Students. Beale discussed with Provost Mark Kornbluh sending a joint letter to faculty about corporations asking faculty to upload their teaching material. Faculty lose control of their own material if they upload them, and the services charge students a monthly fee. These services tend to facilitate cheating, as exams and other kinds of assessment tools inevitably are uploaded. Paul Beavers commented that faculty may not realize that these commercial corporations are using their materials very differently from the Open Education Resources.
 - C. Apportionment of Senate Seats for 2022-23. Naida Simon, the Chair of the Senate's Elections Committee, determined the apportionment, i.e., the number of members the schools, colleges, and units will have for the 2022-2023 academic year. The Mike Ilitch School of Business, the Division of Academic Affairs, the colleges of Engineering and Liberal Arts and Sciences all lose one seat. The Law School and the School of Medicine each gain one seat. Next year the Senate will have only 76 members.
 - D. Wilson's Statement on Anti-Hindu Discrimination in Today at Wayne. Beale noted that the statement suggested that Hindus are being discriminated against at Wayne. In fact, the situation is the reverse: a law faculty member has received threats from Hindu nationalists. This is not dissimilar from other situations where one group claims discussion of relevant issues is off-limits. President Wilson's refusal to allow the Student Senate to disseminate its statement on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an example—a university community should be able to discuss colonialism and the negative repercussions of treating a group as second-class citizens without treating the subject as taboo or inflammatory. Brad Roth noted that this is a continuing problem here, in that activist groups demand university statements, or the retraction of statements, to support their perspectives. Provost Kornbluh said that the Dean of Law Richard Bierschbach and he will consider a thoughtful response to the issue.
- IV. Report from the Chair.

Provost Kornbluh noted that the Board of Governors is an important body at the University, and there is a tendency at Wayne for various groups to go directly to the Board to ask them to intervene in the administration of the university. That can be problematic. For example, a month ago a researcher in the medical school re-texted a strong anti-Muslim speech. Thankfully, the

faculty member recognized that it was offensive and deleted it. It did not arise to a level that drew external attention. However, at a recent Board of Governors meeting, a student asked the Board to adopt a particular definition of anti-Semitism that was developed by Hillel several years ago. The statement is worrisome, since it says that any criticism of Israel is an anti-Semitic statement. The Board is currently divided on the issue. Beale noted that this is a national movement not limited to Wayne State.

Kornbluh suggested that these incidents indicate a need for guidelines on the kinds of situations that merit university statements. The issues are complicated and touch on freedom of speech and, for the university, the academic freedom of academics to explore ideas. No one should be exposed to statements that are really offensive or forced to participate in a class that is offensive, but discussion of controversial issues is at the core of a university's quest for knowledge and understanding. Beale thinks the Board members need to understand that delicate balance: she suggested that most faculty do understand how to tread these difficult paths. Jennifer Lewis added that while these issues are uncomfortable to talk about, we have to create a space where people can have such exchanges. We need to think about what it means to create an educational space in the classroom and on campus broadly.

V. Proposed Snow Day Policy.

Following the closure of the university on February 2 because of snow, Policy Committee charged the Student and Faculty Affairs Committees with considering what the university policy should be around cancellation of classes due to inclement weather. Several specific situations were discussed.

- 1) If classes are cancelled due to weather conditions, should online classes be held anyway, since they are already scheduled online so the weather doesn't really affect them?
- 2) If the university closes because of inclement weather, should all in-person classes be automatically cancelled, or could instructors have discretion to move them online?
- 3) If there is inclement weather but the university remains open (as happened on the Thursday after the Wednesday closure), should instructors have discretion to move an in-person class online?

As to the first item, members of Policy tended to think that online classes and other events should be able to take place and that closure should only apply to on-campus events.

The second and third situations are more difficult. Faculty and students might have difficulty making arrangements for childcare and/or technology if they had not anticipated being online for classes. Yet these situations already occur. While there is no stated policy, faculty do cancel classes because of inclement weather, either with a plan to make up with extra classes or time added to classes or to shorten the syllabus if necessary. It probably would make sense to allow in-person events and classes to move online, if those involved have reason to expect participants to be able to participate.

Kornbluh said that the Student Center Building and the libraries would be open even when the university closes because we have thousands of students living on campus. Villarosa noted that if classes were scheduled online, students would have made the needed arrangements for childcare and technology. Rossi added that for classes that pivot from in-person to online the classes should probably be recorded or streamed so students can access them later. Brad Roth pointed out that all classrooms do not have the technology to go online. He thought there were serious downsides with posting links, since the instructor cannot prevent a student from sharing it with people who are not in the course. Some colleges have accreditation issues related to online courses, though in the cases of university closure those limitations may not apply. Another question is how the academic staff should deal with closures. They worked at home during the pandemic and continue to do flexible work schedules now so they likely could work from home when the university closes due to weather conditions.

VI. Student Code of Conduct.

Senate members have a revision to the Student Code of Conduct, which is a Board Statute, that Policy hopes to put before the full plenary session and then send to the President and Board for adoption. The Office of General Counsel has argued against the oversight provisions that call for deans to provide an annual report on how such misconduct issues have been handled. Policy Committee discussed how to move the proposal forward. Kornbluh agreed to talk with concerned parties, with the goal of getting a resolution to support the revisions before the Senate for action before the end of the year.

VII. State Hall Planning.

Jennifer Lewis complained about the remodeling of classrooms without consulting the faculty who use the rooms. The types of furniture purchased do not work well for group work. Policy Committee will invite Robert Davenport, Associate Vice President for Facilities Planning and Management, and Ashley Flintoff, Director of Planning and Space Management, to a future Policy meeting to discuss this and other issues that faculty have complained about, including the role that faculty have had to take in cleaning rooms and removing trash and other concerns.

VIII. Scheduling of Classes.

First time in any college students will be placed in cohorts that will take 9 to 11 credits together. They will take 1 or 2 other courses in their fields of interest. This change should help with first-year retention. Asked if the Wayne Experience course is helping to retain students, the Provost said that the material covered makes a lot of sense. He agrees with Policy that information about plagiarism and ethics should be added.

IX. Liaison Report from the Research Committee.

Rossi reported on a recent meeting of the Research Committee. The committee has discussed the research misconduct policy, as requested by the Policy Committee. An issue raised has been the potential problem of having the investigative phase and the hearing phase handled by the same persons. The Research Committee considered it likely necessary, because of the specialized expertise required. But they suggest that there should be a step at the end of the process to evaluate it for potential bias.

Kornbluh noted that there are best practice procedures that most university researchers utilize—for example, having research and lab notes time stamped, dated and kept locked to ensure data analysis is protected. Wayne State does not have a uniform requirement of that practice, though the VA researchers do. That kind of practice protects bench research, in that it prevents falsification of data.

Approved as revised at the Policy Committee meeting of March 21, 2022