

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY  
ACADEMIC SENATE

PROCEEDINGS OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE

November 27, 2023

Present: D. Aubert; L. Beale; S. Chrisomalis; L. Clabo; r. hoogland; P. Khosla; J. Lewis; N. Rossi; B. Roth; S. Schrag; N. Simon

Guests: Kelly Dormer (Assoc. Dir., Strategic Academic Initiatives); Darin Ellis (Assoc. Provost for Academic Programs); Kimberly Espy (President); Ahmad Ezzeddine (VP, Academic Student Affairs and Global Engagement); Kurt Kruschinska (Sr. Dir., Registrar)

I. SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH DISCUSSION

President Espy discussed the potential school of public health with the Policy Committee. She appreciated the exploratory committee's work and its recommendations relative to assessing the opportunity, being clear that in order to do something like this, you have to have a planning process that includes resources. There is no interest in standing up a school on the backs of our existing available resources. Acting Provost Clabo has an upcoming meeting to talk through how that would impact folks. Espy noted that both Mark Schweitzer (VP for Health Affairs), as well as Clabo have worked together on forming the next steering committee, thinking about how to go from exploratory ideas to all the decisions that would need to be made in terms of program and individual people in a broad, deliberative process.

On the resource front, Schweitzer has been working with the county, the city and with some partners from whom we have a preliminary sense that we may be able to procure some resources. Part of Espy's role is working directly with Henry Ford, for example, since the earlier work shows that we might either be able to utilize funds or personnel and include some of their epi/biostatistics expertise. The county also has interest in providing some cash funds, primarily through ARPA dollars that have been assigned to the county, but more importantly, thinking about the public health enterprise of some of their staff and how we would leverage that, whether it be through internship sites for students or directly using some of their personnel. The city is another possibility, although a bit more of a stretch. Those conversations are not so far along, but again, there is interest. Espy has had conversations with Elizabeth Hertel, director of the Department of Health and Human Services, and they also have ARPA money that had been unallocated that we have requested: they have asked for additional information. That would be \$20 million. Beale reminded PC members that is the state money that has been thought to be the most likely resource since the beginning. Espy confirmed it is not on the appropriations side but on the agency side, so it is a different process. When you add all those things together, you begin to have a portfolio.

She emphasized that no money has been committed yet. The trick is to move in parallel. You do not want to wait until all the money is secured and then start the planning because then you have not fully capitalized on the opportunity. At the same time, you would not want to start a big planning process without a reasonable degree of surety that some of those dollars will come into play because you do not want to waste people's time. Her conversations with Hertel were promising, and they are very excited about that concept, especially the community orientation—very different than U-M. That is predicated on the strong record of success in our MPH and other public health-related programs.

Espy recognizes the varying degrees of interest in being a part of a public health school. She noted (as Provost Kornbluh had emphasized) that new hires and treatment of internal folks who have been on our faculty or staff can be two different processes. Espy signaled her confidence that the academic affairs team will work deliberately with deans to think about that equation. The only thing that is an absolute must—a requirement of CEPH accreditation—is that the MPH degree program has to be administered in the school of public health if created. That degree is the defining feature of a school of public health.

Development will obviously be a part of this equation, too, although that course is longer than state funds. At this point we do not have an individual donor in mind, but this is a wonderful opportunity to work towards that. A naming opportunity like this is something we typically do not have for other colleges and schools. Linda Beale agreed it is usually important to get a big donor to start with.

Clabo explained that new hires in a contemporary school of public health will be expected to bring in a significant portion of their salary whereas existing faculty who were hired under other conditions but move to the public health school will not. Beale noted this is something that Policy has talked about for some time. Not only is it that the grant requirement would be for new faculty hired into the school, but also that no faculty would be forced to move. The Master of Public Health degree program has to move, and we have to create two new doctoral programs and a doctor of public health. The main question from Policy's perspective is what we do with the bachelor's—i.e., whether it moves to the new school or stays in CLAS. Either way, it is Policy's understanding that faculty who are already in a school will not be forced to move.

Steve Chrisomalis noted this has a long-standing discussion amongst faculty—in particular, whether the Department of Public Health in CLAS would move to the new school and how that would impact CLAS budgets. We know that there is not a responsibility-centered management budget model, but at the same time, students in seats is a metric that is used in every single college. He noted a lack of trust among faculty as a whole: it will be important to be clear about moving the Department of Public Health from CLAS and what the impact is going to be. If it is not going to move, then what does that mean for the integration of these sorts of things? Right now, the MPH is small and standalone so that issue has not reached crisis proportion, but where you are adding three new doctoral programs, which is going to be required for accreditation, what that looks like gives people justifiable reason for concern. Beale noted the school must have a minimum of 21 actual faculty for accreditation purposes, so that also puts pressure on faculty currently in Medicine to participate.

Clabo agreed. That is why the work of these newly formed committees is going to be helpful. She sees this public engagement session as more of a listening session rather than providing answers. We are all forced to think about degrees and students and enrollment by college in different ways than we have in the past. Everyone is considering how many students they may lose to a school of public health instead of thinking about how many interdisciplinary collaborative efforts we may be able to build that will accelerate research, enhance our scholarship and increase enrollment across the university, which benefits all of us. It is important to discuss that we do not have strict RCM budgeting that tie school/college budgets tightly to enrollments: that kind of deep discussion involving as much of campus as possible will be important as we move forward.

Espy explained she did some of this work at UT San Antonio. One of the things that they found is that a lot of the conversations were iterative. They started by talking to individual faculty and understanding what kind of research they did, and whether they aligned with hard core public

health or were more community health. What courses did they teach? How did that connect? It is a continuous process of listening and learning and including people and thinking about that. That is why it is particularly hard to say, “here is the answer”, rather than back and forth is the way you get to the bottom line. She understands the anxiety: any time there is change, there is anxiety.

Noreen Rossi has received feedback from faculty who do public health work in family medicine. Many feel reluctant to leave their comfort zone. The need to have a school of public health in order to have a degree in public health is key. Reassurances of what can and cannot be done must be explicit so that they know what their choices are. It would be helpful to have clarity. Obviously, that might come from some of these working groups.

Espy confirmed that is the intention. There will be multiple conversations, allowing understanding to develop. Rossi suggested there will ultimately need to be a period of time when people here would need to decide whether to transfer to the new school or remain in their current school. Beale agreed that the sooner the specifics about that process are put in place, and the sooner information about existing faculty not being required to move or change their contract can be provided, the better.

Naida Simon noted some of the procedures that took place when computer science moved from CLAS to the College of Engineering. She surveyed students and faculty and found considerable misinformation. It will be important to let undergraduate students who are currently in CLAS know whether there will be changes, because if they have a set plan of work and then need to take additional classes, it will be problematic.

Clabo believes the balance will be interesting, allowing these committees the time to develop initial responses, get feedback, revise those, and at the same time provide the level of surety that people are asking for. What she is hearing from Policy is the importance of making sure we do a better job than we have done in the past in terms of feedback from those committees to the broader campus, back to the committees and then up to the decision-making bodies, remembering that all will be somewhat restricted by accreditation criteria. Simon recommended asking the committee working on faculty issues to provide initial thoughts and questions as an early priority because it is a high anxiety point across campus.

Espy noted that there can also be joint appointments, which might be a good transition. Many universities are using that because oftentimes people's interests either change over time or, particularly for faculty who are trained in this area, tend to be more fluid. She encouraged thinking about new ways of doing this for different individuals who will probably have different interests. She is grateful for Clabo and the folks in academic affairs who will collectively work on this. If Policy hears that the group is falling short, they should not hesitate to share that feedback to course correct.

Beale noted the Senate had representation on the exploratory committee, but this new committee was set up with no discussion and no longer includes Senate representation. What happened in the exploratory committee was that Schweitzer was rather authoritarian about what would go into that report, and it took people pushing against that to have different things included in the report. Espy was unaware of that history and agreed to get back to Beale on that issue.

The VPR finalists are on campus all this week. Espy encouraged Policy members to attend the forums that will take place each day at 3 p.m. in Partrich Auditorium. The more feedback from the community, the better. The best way to influence this process is to attend and give input.

Finally, Espy wanted to open up a dialogue with Policy about issues of disagreement and conversation around difficult topics. She thanked Brad Roth for his work relative to some of the learning sessions held around our global conflicts. Many universities are starting to consider the need for mechanisms of more formal modeling, training and promoting of teaching our students to engage in respectful dialogue about challenging issues. Some universities have engaged their Academic Senate to think about trainings as a part of orientation—a more broad-based approach than just the episodic things that those who are interested already attend. She cannot think of a better body to do that than the Academic Senate since it includes both faculty and advisers. Beale confirmed this has been on Policy’s agenda for discussion at least the last two years, and planned for a plenary session discussion as well regarding free speech in the university context. Espy said it would be a missed opportunity not to train our students to functionally engage in the democratic process, especially given the national and international discourse. She welcomes the Senate to either think about this or create a task force, so that the university does more than we are currently doing.

Beale explained the main way we have been talking about it in the past is to what extent we as scholars should express opinions through the Senate about what should be done and how the Academic Senate should respond when the Student Senate passes resolutions on such issues. For instance, the Policy Committee decided it would not respond to the Student Senate’s divestment resolution since it seemed to mix issues related to the Foundation’s investment decisions with questions of student free speech. As for mechanisms for teaching about free speech concerns, the primary means to do that is through the orientation sessions arranged by the Office of the Provost and the first-year experience course. The Wayne Experience, which is a gen ed requirement, was suspended for a year, which means that we need to think about that requirement, either by eliminating it entirely or by remaking it to be a better course that can be offered to all or by making it an optional course for those who need a better introduction to college work. A first-year seminar proposal that originated in the Faculty Affairs Committee (FAC) is one of the possibilities that the university should consider (of course, that could not be immediately done for fall 2022 because it takes time to implement changes and get them through all the processes). It might be a way to address several important topics.

As chair of the FAC, renèe hoogland noted she had hoped to run a pilot this winter, but she was not able to move it forward fast enough. It would be a first-year seminar reading, writing, critical thinking course. She has looked at other institutions and many offer numerous sections of such a course. It is one thing that every student on campus needs. FAC has discussed a range of disciplinary perspectives, and that is one thing that students do not do well enough when they come in. We have been talking about this primarily in terms of not waiting until the second year when they start falling by the wayside, but rather address this when they come in during the first or the second semester. Beale noted that we need to do a pilot program as part of the rethinking of the Wayne Experience.

Jennifer Lewis noted her work with the [Detroit Center for Civic Discourse](#). There are also other people on campus who work in preparing students to listen, exchange ideas, and work through disagreements in a civil way. One place to start might be to investigate what is already happening. Clabo noted OMSE has similar activities that relate to multicultural experiences, cultural humility and respect. Bringing all of those folks together and moving the information out through Academic Senate channels would be important.

## II. STUDENT COHORT BLOCK REGISTRATION

Policy invited Ellis, Dormer and Kruschinska to discuss how creating blocks of courses for majors works and what options and complications exist. Ellis explained this is part of a suite of strategies to improve our first- and second-year retention and ultimately our graduation rates. About half of the students who do not graduate within six years are lost between the first and second year, something that is not in line with peer institutions. Another initiative intended to help retention is the first-year interest groups (FIGs), the significant reform to general education requirements done some time ago and, more recently, the revamping of placement testing practices.

Provost Kornbluh had seen at both MSU and Kentucky a broad use of prearranged schedules for incoming students, at least in the liberal arts and sciences departments. Provost's Office personnel gleaned information from the enrollment management person for liberal arts at Kentucky, the registrar at MSU and what various other schools have done. Kornbluh directed Ellis to figure out how to get students scheduled for courses in a streamlined fashion early on. This started with queries to all undergraduate degree-granting schools/colleges for course selection information provided to their incoming students for the 2023-24 academic year.

Ellis is most concerned about the first-year schedules that are the most difficult puzzles to solve—i.e., highly constrained majors for which 115 credits or more are required, with timing the only variable. This was focused on business, because there is a lot of unmet demand for undergraduate business majors, as well as large majors like public health and psychology. That initial discussion demonstrated that some fields were already creating block schedules, though the methods were generally cumbersome and ASO driven. For example, nursing set up plans individually with templates that the students could adopt, allowing students to register using the templates in Banner for their first-year student cohort (about 45 students). Business has created cohorts like U-M does: students are called before orientation to arrange one-on-one advising so that students are registered for their selected courses before orientation. We will continue to support those who are already doing this, but the goal is to find ways to make it easier. Ideally, business, computer science and other engineering majors for which most courses are mandated could more easily put together a feasible rational schedule. For other schools/colleges or departments, the offer is that if the unit can let us know what and when students should take particular courses, that information will be used to feed a capacity model. Again, the goal is to predict what courses need to be offered when. Ellis added that this week he will send a request out to associate chairs, undergraduate directors, ASOs and advisors for their required and highly recommended classes. That information will be run through some “homegrown spreadsheet technology” to determine how those courses can be packaged. The units would then the option to press just one button to register students for a block of classes.

Beale sees the benefit of this kind of scheduling process, which has likely been lacking here for most of our students. Our advisors may or may not have been provided that full information except in those schools that have already worked out a system of block courses. Many likely do not get that information before orientation since in the past they have not registered until after orientation. Being able to pre-register should be a great benefit. Additionally, there needs to be some possibility of students having an option, for example, to start a foreign language in their first year because they are considering a double major in chemistry and French. They need to know they have that optionality of moving away from parts of the block schedule that they are presented with, in talking with their advisors.

Ellis noted this has come up among many of the advisors who have noted that a more open curriculum allows room for electives so a student can take a double major or a minor certificate. We will try to build blocks for that sort of thing. Typically, those are over multiple semesters, so it is more of a pathway than just the first semester. It is an issue, and they have good ideas on that right now. Outside of the functionality, Banner calls them educational plans, so students and advisors can build those now and see the sequence of classes needed to obtain a certificate or the like. Beale suggested that students coming into a particular major should be made aware of the required courses and ideal cohort block but have options to change.

Ellis noted that this discussion shows there is a need for an additional initiative. What we are doing right now is dealing with the scheduling and capacity constraints related to requirements for the majors. This initiative is aimed at handling the stumbling block of scheduling major requirements more efficiently. Those major requirements—like computer science, business and nursing—do not leave room for a six-semester sequence to master French language and culture. For the majors that do encourage exploration taking advantage of the breadth of intellectual and academic opportunity here, we do not have a mechanism to facilitate that, so that would require a separate initiative.

Chrisomalis suggested a problem with block scheduling. While Ellis explained if English is required and the department prefers that students take it in the first semester, then we need to have that information for a capacity model. Chrisomalis' concern is the chairs' "horse trading" in the search for enrollment: in CLAS, every student must have a minor, which created a hyper-competitive environment. Advising at Kentucky is in departments rather than at the college-level, whereas CLAS has a single advising center. Chrisomalis believes departments have focused on "trading to their perceived advantage" and sometimes that means becoming non-student-centered. He would like each of his anthropology majors to take a first-semester foreign language and a quantitative experience course because if math and language are delayed, students struggle to catch up. Too many chairs are thinking instead about how to game the system to the advantage of their departments. Beale suggested the university will have to work around this problem to benefit the students and, ultimately, the departments will still be okay. It will just require some changes in the way we register students from the past.

Danielle Aubert suggested there is also this kind of competition for enrollments for subjects with many majors and intro classes with many sections. For example, the language department has many separate majors, so those advisors would have to come up with block schedules. Ellis noted that at this point it is merely a request for information: not a mandate. In CFPCA, for example, the advisor for music fully supported setting up pre-blocks with this tool to automatically register his students for the 17 different instrument-based sections of private lessons.

Clabo suggested that what this discussion shows is that it isn't clear how this has been communicated and thus there may be misunderstandings among some faculty. The block schedule is not for every student in every major. It does sound like there is an opportunity to provide better communication and make sure that when we are communicating with chairs, faculty and advisors (through faculty), we are clear about the purpose.

hoogland questioned how many courses are typically in these blocks. In their presentation to undergraduate directors, chairs and advisors, it was made clear that this was an entirely variable number. There is no set number of courses, but if there is something that is commonly taken in the first semester that can wait until the winter, advisors should let the people working on these block schedules know that.

hoogland suggested this tool could also be used for scaffolding classes. She teaches a 3000-level intro to literary studies class that is known as a bottleneck class because it is difficult to teach and difficult to take. The students sometimes wait until they are seniors to take it, and then they regret not taking it earlier.

Beale noted that in some ways this could lead to something paralleling the graduate students' plan of work. If advisors have that critical information about course sequences and timing in mind so that they provide a clear understanding of the foundational courses and sequencing of courses to students, then software that helps them put students into those courses in the proper sequence at pre-orientation would be helpful.

Chrisomalis questioned what to do about working students. Many of his students are scheduled for double shifts and tell him they are not coming to class (or tell him nothing). A substantial number of students are working 30 to 40 hours a week as undergraduates while taking a full course load: he worries that block scheduling will not work well for them because their schedule depends on being offered more sections to choose from that fit with their work schedules. There may not be any perfect solution for those students, but that is a real difference between us and MSU or Kentucky.

hoogland commented that number is decreasing rapidly. Chrisomalis surveys his students every year and recently had a student tell him the reason they are working full time is to pay \$17,000 to live in residence. He is concerned that this plan serves a very traditional student model and does not reflect many of our students. We would like data on how many hours our students are working, and how many of them are working strictly nighttime hours.

With the first-year schedules, Dormer noted the emphasis placed on having in-person classes. Some of the students Chrisomalis is referring to may not be first-year students. She spends a lot of time looking at first-year classes because she builds each of these figures manually. It would be very difficult to have a fully online, very flexible schedule in that way because we offer so little online targeted at first-year at this point, which has been a directive in the past.

Aubert questioned how the block tuition for incoming freshmen helped with retention for first- to second-year. Dormer confirmed 30% of students leave new student orientation registered part-time and 10% leave unregistered. Usually by the first week of June, English 1020 and Composition 1010 are full. The bulk of students come after that, and so advisors have these prepared schedules they are emailing to students full of courses that are already full. The registration portion of orientation is terrible, held in hot rooms with two advisors, 40 students and computers that often do not work, while trying to build these schedules from scratch. Part of the vision of this initiative is course capacity, so that registration can get people into those high-demand courses, spreading the schedule out and having a foundational schedule given to them that allows the time spent at orientation to be used to explore options like a foreign language or other elective.

It was not clear to Aubert how that helps with the retention into year two. Simon explained students do better if they take the traditional skill courses as freshmen. Dormer pointed out a great article about the five-year threshold and how you get one opportunity to welcome people through the threshold. It is also about giving students a cohesive, structured, welcoming experience where they are getting what they need, and they feel supported and taken care of at the beginning. It allows them to build that connection.

Roth questioned what assumptions are being made because it is unclear if we have any data that tells us why it is that students are not continuing after first-year into second-year. He appreciated Chrisomalis' comment about students working massive numbers of hours because that certainly has been his experience with students' flexibility being greatly impaired by the number of hours they are working. Do we have that information or are we merely guessing as to why it is that students are not continuing from first year to second year? Some of the data that Simon has been able to glean is they did not do well enough and lost their scholarships, and they then have a \$10,000 bill for tuition and books. Some go to community college and perhaps transfer back in later. Roth questioned if we know what percentage of students that are not continuing are people who have lost scholarships. Beale believes there is only anecdotal evidence about students who work full time. We know that students do end up with wacky schedules and have problems and do not want to or cannot afford to continue, but we do not know the percentages. She has asked if we are doing exit interviews or contact people who do not continue, and the answer so far appears to say that we simply do not have a full process for exit interviews. Clabo agreed, although there are departments in schools and colleges who do follow up with students who do not continue such as nursing (though a single discipline college makes it easier to do), and they do get some of the actual data. We underestimate what we hear anecdotally in terms of student frustration, and that is "I know I need to take this course. I have tried for three semesters, and I cannot get in, so I am done." She is hopeful this changes first- to second-year retention, but it is only one element.

Chrisomalis suggested Dormer put together models for majors and models that are more exploratory. The example in their presentation was the business school where there are five courses that are set. What we are talking about are gen ed classes, where the major classes are irrelevant. Anthro 1100 is not holding anthropology students back, rather their math class or the like. It would be helpful to present a 9- or 12-credit model that still has an elective because we have many double majors, students who do not know what they want to do, or who want to take classes in a minor. That exploratory model still provides structure: it emphasizes the gen ed side rather than emphasizing the major degree side. It is likely that students saw that they could schedule four classes in anthropology in their first semester, for example, but it is a terrible idea and we should not be doing it. Chrisomalis noted that his reference to horse trading was that departments tend to stack requirements for the degree because they want their students to be locked in and then trade off electives, because of the credit hours economy.

Kruschinska noted they were clear in the meetings that they did not want them to do that. One of the factors is the overwhelming number of choices that first-year students have. He agreed with the need to do a good job of communicating to students that they still need to talk to their advisor because these class lists are not final; we are just trying to get them off on the best foot forward based on what the advisors have told us about their requirements. Once they receive those class lists, he will talk to the advising center about the exploratory tracks, the things that Policy members are talking about, because they have been thinking about that as well.

We know many students will change majors, and Chrisomalis realizes that a change in major always runs the risk of extending the time to degree, but he would much rather have a student who takes five years to graduate and gets into the right major, graduates with a 3.5 GPA and has a great experience than a student who graduates in four years with the wrong major and feels like it is a sunk cost, or drops out because they struggle with the major they originally decided on. What Kruschinska talked about was choice paralysis at the level of courses when they get in. How did that first major get picked? That is not an eternal permanent choice.

Dormer elaborated on what was meant by a separate initiative. The elective credits are primarily Psych 1010, Soc 1010, Econ 1020, an intro AFS course, nutrition and PS 1010, and there is a



desire from smaller departments to have greater exploration of these other courses. How do we broaden students' awareness of what those options are? When you go back to the current model where students are registering in hot, cramped rooms with broken computers in 45 minutes at orientation, there is no opportunity for an advisor to have a meaningful conversation about those options. There is a need, so how do we broaden exposure to that? From Beale's perspective, if you can create a structure that helps students be better organized before they get here for orientation, and then at orientation you have some flexibility built into that structure so that the advisors already know that the idea is to try to help a student create a plan of work, things they want to experiment with or explore, then you can have something that feels really welcoming and could work.

Dormer noted orientation is excited about the possibility of that. We are one of the few institutions still doing registration at orientation, but most schools have moved to one on one advising prior to orientation—an April, May, June type of model, and then July and August are more like life of a warrior when you come on campus to get acclimated, meet your professors or people in your classes, etcetera. The surveys from orientation every year indicate students very much want more individualized advising prior to or at orientation. Again, if we can remove part of this transactional component of everyone searching for their major requirements, and we can start to do that for them, it allows advisors more time to do the advising. Beale agreed. The next steps are to figure out the details and how to communicate it right to the departments, chairs, advisors and faculty. She requested Dormer share the presentation and anything else she sends out about this so that Policy has some sense of what is going on.

### III. COLLEGE TO CAREER DISCUSSION

Ezzeddine was invited to Policy to discuss President Espy's new College-to-Career initiative. He stated that the core idea is to ensure all students have access to the current opportunities on campus, and to have schools/colleges/departments integrate more experiential and project-based learning into the curricula and to coordinate those with adequate career preparation of students. He often asks students about to graduate what they are going to do. Their response is usually, "I don't know, maybe get a job." They are not well prepared, so this initiative is to make sure the minute they arrive on campus, we start ingraining into their minds thinking about their future beyond graduation. We do have pockets already across campus, so the first task is going to be inventorying what we have here to know what we do, what faculty are doing and what classes have experiential learning. Based on that, we will work collectively as an institution to figure out how to build these things that we are talking about into the curriculum for all Wayne State students. This requires deep faculty engagement across campus. We do some of that work currently, but what about the English and arts students? How about the biology student who is not going into pre-med? How about graduate students? How do we prepare these students? There is going to be a task force created that he hopes will have representation from Policy. He will be talking to the president later this week about the structure, but there may be different groups.

Beale noted that this statement at a meta level missed the core issue that a university-wide task force really is not the right group for making decisions about what different fields should do in terms of experiential or internship or other kinds of education or teaching their students about potential careers. That is a departmental and field-oriented decision, not an administrative task force decision. Further, it is not clear what the task force could do, other than collect information that can be share more broadly for recruitment purposes about the many different kinds of experiential and practical educational programs that exist in different schools and fields.

In law we do externships and practice-oriented simulation courses and clinics. Nursing has clinics and affiliated practices. Pharmacy has different kinds of clinics and practices. Those are all specific for those fields. Moreover, the fixed focus on educating for careers that you suggest is not the way university education works: we do not normally tell students to select courses in order to get a particular job. We want them to explore and develop as critical thinkers and people who know how to learn throughout life. So your statement that “we want to integrate more project-based and experiential in the curriculum, so that the minute students hit the campus we push them to think about their future beyond the university” seems a rather shallow view of the university and, to the extent thinking about specific careers is important, not clearly something that an administrative task force appointed at the president’s level suggesting changes for the whole university across all the fields in schools and colleges should do. The faculty of the schools/colleges and the Academic Senate is where discussions about educational policy belong.

Ezzeddine suggested that the task force will define the items that can be considered and the issues, but it would not set policy because it will be an inclusive process. All the president has asked is that the task force work on building projects around this idea. No decisions have been made yet.

hoogland countered that it is an administratively driven process; so in that sense, the task force itself will be administratively driven. It is not coming up through faculty processes, but rather it is coming from above. Ezzeddine insisted the task force would not replace faculty processes, but members noted their concern that this idea is starting at the top with a conclusion that “we want more college-to-career programming from the time students arrive on campus” and the task force is to figure out how to make curriculum, courses, orientation, processes and services more career oriented. hoogland added that it is important for students to have some awareness of the need to plan for the future, but she finds it highly problematic to suggest this should start even with their first year, because there is so much in terms of a basic liberal arts education to which to orient them—learning to read, write and to think critically when most have very little idea how to engage in such activities. She noted that she has asked students in her gen ed class this semester how many had been taught about poetry. None in the class had ever read any poetry.

Ezzeddine asked how the university can ensure that those basics are taught throughout the campus to build the skills needed. Beale responded that those general education course requirements are developed with the General Education Oversight Committee (GEOC) and the Academic Senate, not through an administrative task force.

Roth noted that he does not have a sense of what the vision is for the role of this task force. There is some sense that this is playing defense, as though the university is being accused in some sense of not preparing students for careers, like the attacks on public universities around the country arguing that they do not provide value for dollar it is necessary to find some way to demonstrate to the state legislature and everyone else that we are doing what people think we ought to be doing. I am trying to figure out, apart from the PR aspect of it—which an inventory and publicity about what we do can address—what it is that is envisioned in terms of central coordination of the role of the university in preparing people for jobs.

Ezzeddine responded that the intent is not just focus on getting jobs but to provide graduates who are critical thinkers, graduates who are able to work across culture, across languages, in different industries. Beale responded, again, that we already do that—perhaps not perfectly, but that is why we have gen ed requirements. Ezzeddine suggested that the task force can look at that and see how it is being implemented. Beale noted that the GEOC and Senate already does that so it is not clear what the task force would or could add to the process. Ezzeddine responded that the

task force would bring the community (faculty in the different schools, alumni voices, different stakeholders, external voices) together to discuss these issues and figure out a plan and a process.

Beale noted some dissatisfaction with that response. She asked Ezzeddine to consider Roth's question. Was this primarily aimed at showing the legislature, especially those who have been criticizing university education as a waste of money because it is not dedicated to job training, that the university does consider the economic impact of our graduates in the workforce, so that we can put out a report from the task force that sets out the many different programs at this university that allow our graduates to work through internships/externships, fellowships and certificate programs to acquire practical skills related to their field of interest? That PR effort is probably worth doing along those lines, but the task force should not be used to put external corporate or political pressure to intervene in faculty development of curricula.

Chrisomalis reminded the group of “Career Insights”, an example like this that was administratively imposed just a few years ago. The university collected data from the [Burning Glass Institute](#) and displayed a widget—without reviewing information on what jobs people actually get or considering opportunities like public service or law school or grad school or many other opportunities students may have upon graduation but looking only at jobs that included a B.A. in anthropology—that said that the top job for those students is retail. The widget suggested English majors consider cosmetology. The widget was a top-down creation that misled students rather than helping them. It had to be tweaked by individual departments taking into account the actual jobs their students had found in the past.

Chrisomalis continued that another challenge is that our career services department has little information on opportunities for most liberal arts degrees. He follows about 100 of our alumni on LinkedIn and brings them in for talks. One of our Ph.D. students who does semiotics and is a vice president for qualitative research firm is looking for interns. That kind of stuff is exciting. It is not clear how this initiative can relate to those kinds of activities that go on in departments: will it be seen as replacing or, if it is going to be informed bottom up, how is that information going to be collected in a way that will be useful to students. That is a different issue than what is useful for showing Lansing or the president or the development office or other administrative stakeholders. An inventory could be useful for them, but the president has suggested this is intended to be student-centered and it is not clear how that can work.

Ezzeddine responded that his goal for the task force is to find those examples of work that is being done and adapt them as models for departments that are not doing much in the way of college-to-career preparation so that you scale those models to the entire campus. Beale, however, noted that a model in one area is not necessarily repeatable in another field, because they are field specific. We can talk about them, we can make reports about them, we can encourage people to look at them and think of how to adapt them, but a task force cannot adapt them to scale them to the university level the way you suggest. And, for that matter, it is the provost's and dean's job to work with department chairs on what they are not doing well, not an administrative task force's job.

Aubert added that almost all of these extracurricular and faculty-specific efforts are done by individual faculty with zero support. For example, she oversees an internship program to find places where students can go to do work relevant to their graphic design field of study. That oversight does not count as part of her course load, but it is something done on top of everything. The task force does not appear to be intended to provide support and recognition for what faculty do along these lines. Instead, faculty will be asked to provide data and information that is extremely field-specific so it will create more work for faculty who are the ones engaged in these

kinds of programs. It is unclear how there can be a university-wide program for this kind of work that is field specific—it simply is not scalable. So, it is unclear how this can be useful for academic programs. Yes, we all want students to have jobs after graduation, and we tend to work towards that whenever possible. But faculty will not want to address that issue in an intro class, and they do not want to be told to have their classes do work for external clients—something that has happened at other schools. Beale added that there are real dangers of an administrative task force moving towards support of a corporatized model of incorporating “training” for particular careers, which is a very different concept than “education”. It might make sense for engineering students to do some projects that are industry-related; but it is worrisome in law, for example, if students work for particular law firms rather than for public interest, government and other public goods services.

Simon added that another concern is that students focused on career goals may be off target. For example, about half of our entering classes tend to select STEM majors with hopes of going to med school or grad school, but many of those will graduate with a 2.2 GPA and that route will be closed. Chrisomalis added that some of those students who did get into chemistry realized it was not for them, so they changed to something that was a better fit, but that is a different issue than what we are discussing.

Ezzeddine suggested that although all students take gen ed courses, they do not necessarily become critical thinkers. Beale asked what that comment was intended to accomplish; surely no administrative task force can solve that problem. Ezzeddine responded that the task force would bring together a group of people who can work with the campus community to figure out these issues. Policy members remained unconvinced how a task force at the university level could even begin to address such questions. Aubert noted that this discussion seems very vague. It is not clear, for example, what models for emphasizing ‘college-to-career’ at other institutions look like. We did have an incubator center in the library, and other small, fledgling attempts to do something at the university level. Ezzeddine noted that Espy’s former institution UTSA had a small model, and Northeastern and Drexel are other examples with a career-oriented focus that push the incorporation of particular models into the curriculum. Again, members noted that these issues must be faculty driven. Hoogland noted that faculty already teach the best classes that they can to help prepare students for a fulfilling life, so she finds it problematic that this push seems to say that the reason students are at Wayne is to get a job.

Ezzeddine insisted that the university needs to “balance the need to prepare for a career.” Beale suggested perhaps the administration should review what the various career services offices do to help students think about careers, rather than suggesting that the task force would mandate curricular and externship “pathways” to careers, because that part is what faculty do and what our approach to general education courses is supposed to address. Chrisomalis added that the career services office generally has a narrow remit because they cannot provide field specific advice: they likely cannot give good advice to a biology student who is not going to medical school. Instead, what is needed is resources for departments to expand initiatives they already have: maybe that is something the task force could do. Part of this is documenting what is already being done but the other is what resources can be provided to departments to expand their activities. There is a lot of invisible labor being done at the departmental level that needs more funding support. Then those successes could be highlighted. Beale agreed that inventorying what is being done and considering how to provide greater resources to support that work are two positive things the task force could do.

Ezzeddine agreed that part of the effort is to surface all of these things because now they are invisible. Beale agreed: have the task force do an inventory, and then do a report about how this

campus is doing all these great things to help our students prepare for a life that is worthwhile, and then urge the university (and legislature and outside donors) to put more money into what each of the fields are doing. That would be reasonable work for the task force. But anything that attempts to dictate curricular and educational policy and gen ed requirements to scale up something you see in one school to another school or in one department to another department where it does not fit, that is not a province for a presidential task force. The whole external marketing, inventory and maybe understanding that Career Services cannot do what it cannot do, that is okay territory. Using this college-to-career term to suggest broad curricular shifts such as giving credit for jobs that they have already had, as President Espy suggested in her speech, is problematic. Students should not be coming to Wayne State so that the university can give them academic credit for having worked as a computer programmer somewhere for two years. Because of that work, students can, however, be waived out of prerequisites so they take more advanced courses, but they should not get college credit towards the degree for work already done.

Beale asked whether there was a written charge from the president and what specifically had been discussed when Ezzeddine was asked to chair the task force. Ezzeddine said there was no written charge. He and President Espy noted that the university cannot just continue what it is doing now but must change the approach to provide our students with a job-relevant learning experience. They considered it a problem that there is not a consistent focus on that throughout the university. The task force will have discussions and come up with a plan regarding what is missing, what should be happening in the schools/colleges, what resources and infrastructure is needed.

Beale noted that a charge to do an inventory and then figure out ways that faculty and academic staff could apply for additional funds to support field-specific programs would be reasonable. But imposing models for “consistency” across campus is not. Chrisomalis added that some departments are resistant to internship models because there is no perceived benefit for faculty, including no reward or incentive structure except where there is an accreditation requirement. Much of the work is done by individual faculty who appreciate its importance, so the best thing the task force can do is provide a meaningful incentive structure with meaningful resources to support efforts developed by faculty. This would permit subject/field and professionally specific projects to increase.

Beale asked Ezzeddine what the makeup of the task force would be. She noted the strong concern expressed at the meeting that the task force cannot dictate what fields do or particular curricular approaches, so it has to be dominated by faculty representatives of different fields. Beale noted that the Senate generally picks faculty (both Senate and non-Senate representatives) for university-wide committees, as in the Article XXX context, and the administration picks the administrators and deans that serve. Ezzeddine answered that there are no specifics yet, but that the task force would likely have some representation picked by Policy as well as faculty, deans and external employers. He considers it important to have the voice of external employers on this issue. Several members suggested it would be unwise to have external employers on such a task force. They could be guests for discussions, but not involved with reviewing the university or pressuring the university to undertake certain kinds of activities. Aubert suggested that at best any external employers should be part of a separate ‘advisory group’ to the task force. Chrisomalis noted that having such employers on the task force would inevitably be only a small, field-specific selection, such as an engineering firm or a large consumer business. It would not be possible at all to represent the breadth of what is going on at the university, so selecting would likely push the dial in favor of particular disciplines (health or engineering, for example), having an enormous impact on what that committee would decide. There are better ways to get corporate input into the curriculum. That is not the way the administration considers it, but that is

what the task force makeup suggests and is problematic. Beale added that such an approach focuses on the kinds of things a training institute does, not an educational and research university. Ezzeddine stated that was not the intent, but several members suggested the conversation here had nonetheless sounded like that would be a likely result.

Roth summarized the concern being expressed by members, noting that Ezzeddine countered all our concerns by saying those are not things that the task force is planning to do, but it was Ezzeddine who suggested a need for input from employers because he considered that the university is not doing what it needs to be doing as a university. What can you tell us about what those things are and what your vision is for how a task force can move us in the direction you think we need to go?

Ezzeddine responded that the task force will help us surface those issues. The task force will bring in a group people to discuss what we want and how we can evolve the current learning experience at Wayne State towards preparing people who are career ready, to take on the next step after getting their degree. If the next step is getting a job in political science, enabling our graduates to go into that field. If it is going to grad school, preparing our students to do that. It is ensuring that they have the skills and the competencies. Ezzeddine suggested that we do not do that consistently, as shown by employers that do not hire our students. Some places do, but many of our students are not hired. Employers do not recruit from Wayne State because they think our students are not well prepared.

Beale suggested Ezzeddine's focus was in the wrong place. It is not because our faculty and departments are not establishing appropriate curricula or teaching students but because the university went through a period of almost a decade of admitting students who were not prepared for studying at college, including students with A.C.T. scores in the 8-12 range. That had a bad effect because the students were not well prepared for steps beyond college because of those struggles in college.

Ezzeddine acknowledged that would need to be addressed as well. He suggested the task force will need to identify such problem areas and work together on addressing them, whether it be at the department, college or institutional level.

Roth noted deep concern with Ezzeddine's responses to the queries raised here. It suggests that the task force is identifying, based on what is known from the labor market, what is fundamentally wrong with the way in which faculty make decisions about the structure of the curriculum. So the purpose of the task force is to bring the university kicking and screaming into the 21st century with new structures for the curriculum. That is how those responses come across. Hoogland added that such an approach is problematic. In CLAS, for instance, the different kinds of activities or internships or hands-on experiences that students would likely benefit from are not comparable across departments and fields.

Ezzeddine continued the same line, saying there are some faculty and programs that are doing a great job with their students by building internships and practical experiences into the curriculum but others that are not. Beale noted that if a school or department is not providing an adequate education, that is the deans' and chairs' responsibility. They are the ones to focus on the core academic issues. It is not the role of an administrative task force to review departments and conclude that some are not doing a good job because they are not doing the same thing that another completely different field is doing. It is not an administrative task force job—with a few deans from a few schools who want particular things, a few employers from a few industries who

administrators hope will hire students, and a few faculty who are selected for the task force by administrators because they will go along with the top-down mandate.

Ezzeddine suggested that the task force can start with an inventory to learn what works, find resources and develop university-wide structures. Hoogland agreed that it is useful to take stock of what is working well, whether there are enough resources for what is being done by individual faculty on the side and support those. But she continues to hear what sounds like a task force that dictates what faculty members should do and what kind of credit must be given for those experiences, which she finds problematic. What would be helpful is to provide funding for initiatives that are already there so they can be expanded. Beale again agreed that putting together an inventory is a reasonable thing for the task force and can be very useful for building narratives that can be shared with media and legislature, but not imposing particular approaches university wide. Chrisomalis noted that if there are resources out of this so that departments can expand existing programs, that would be welcomed. But the task force talks about credentialing, like giving students credit for life experience, is problematic. It is being done by other institutions, but it devalues faculty and it devalues education. It basically says that everything the university does can be accomplished by just getting students out into the workforce earlier. Nobody around this table believes that, and we suspect Ezzeddine does not either. The problem is the way that this has been rolled out from the beginning has left a bad taste in faculty members' mouths that this is just another step towards devaluing the breadth of education that the university provides. That is how you end up with something like the useless "Career Insights" program mentioned earlier. So if we seem sharp, it is not because we do not believe in internships or various other modes of clinical education, it is because we do and we know the peril of a cookie cutter model that can be talked about without much detail and garner media attention. That is, for better or for worse, what seems to be out in the public discourse about the College-to-Career initiative.

Beale indicated that Policy may decide to write a memo to put some of the ideas that have been discussed here into writing. It seemed odd that she had not been informed about this educational initiative even though there had been private meetings with Espy when it would have been feasible to discuss: instead, we all learned about it when it was announced at a public show to which the media and others had been invited. There is a real concern about the devaluing of the faculty process for educational decision-making. As a university, that is centrally important to all of us, so it is also important to be careful that this idea of a task force around "college-to-career" does not go astray by adding to that negative view of a university as just training people ready for a job with a particular industry. I think the idea of an inventory of what we do is good, because it is something that can be used as a publicity/marketing/lobbying tool with the legislature and other external audiences that tells a story about the university's strengths. It is something that can be touted by the president and by others, as examples of the wonderful things we do to prepare our students for lifetimes of learning. It can also provide information to faculty across the campus about what other people do that helps ideas spread. That inventory could be coupled with creation of a fund to provide more support to existing and expanding initiatives. Maybe David Ripple (VP, Development) can make that a major drive—creating an incentive fund for faculty for field-specific initiatives. Beyond that, however, the task force should not reach into departmental reviews, pressuring faculty to undertake more, establishing only a few accepted models, etcetera.

#### IV. APPROVAL OF POLICY PROCEEDINGS

The proceedings of the November 13, 2023 Policy Committee meeting were approved as submitted.

V. QUESTIONS FOR VP RESEARCH INTERVIEWS

Policy agreed on questions for its interviews with the VPR candidates starting this week.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

Aubert has talked with staff and faculty in the Biological Sciences building that caught fire over Thanksgiving. One of the labs was completely destroyed. FP&M has been in there, but there was some concern about the air quality from the smoke. Luckily, there was a good inventory of items in the lab, so that firemen were able to enter without concern. Aubert suggested it was a significant burden for faculty to inventory everything in labs.

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*Approved as submitted at the Policy Committee meeting of January 22, 2024.*