

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY  
ACADEMIC SENATE

PROCEEDINGS OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE

December 11, 2023

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

Absent with Notice: N. Rossi

I. APPROVAL OF POLICY PROCEEDINGS

Policy will defer approval of the proceedings for the Policy Committee meeting of November 27, 2023, handling by email or at a later meeting.

II. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

National walkout: There was a national call for a walkout today supported by Students for Justice in Palestine. Today is the last day of classes, and acting Provost Clabo received a number of texts asking for direction from the Office of the Provost for what faculty should do in the event that a student misses a quiz, exam and/or a required class today. Clabo confirmed that the handling of student absences is a faculty decision. When in doubt, faculty should follow their attendance policy published in their syllabus. The walkout may have been an under-attended event because there is not a lot happening on campus today.

Update on the VP searches: There will be a search for a Senior VP for Finance and Business Operations replacing Dave Massaron. President Espy announced the appointment of Bethany Gielczyk as interim Senior VP for Finance and Business Operations and promoted her to CFO, a promotion that was planned before Massaron's resignation. SP&A, a premier search firm that does president/provost appointments, has been hired to do this search. With Gielczyk moving into a permanent CFO position, this position is intended to focus more on the non-finance side (i.e., real estate, facilities, monetizing our assets, community connections). The CFO will report to the next Senior VP for Finance and Business Operations. We would hope to have someone in place by summer, but that is an aggressive timeline: a good search is more important than a fast search. Clabo will chair the search committee, which should have a Senate representative. Linda Beale explained Policy would normally appoint the current chair of the Budget Committee, but Andrea Sankar (CLAS) is retiring in April, so Beale will serve instead.

On the VPR search, Clabo noted that the president received feedback from the Policy Committee in the form of the Policy memo. She sought feedback from various other constituent groups through in-person meetings. That is a different approach than we have traditionally followed, but it provided a unique perspective. There was also feedback through the Anthem survey. She plans to move to references and off-list references with negotiations with her chosen finalist quickly.

III. REPORT FROM THE SENATE PRESIDENT

Protest at Board of Governors (BOG) meeting: Last week's meeting was held at TechTown because of the expectation of a protest action from Palestinian students who had requested time to comment to the BOG. Several Palestinian students spoke animatedly urging the BOG to undertake a boycott, divestment and sanction (BDS) approach to the weapons industry that supports Israel's actions in Gaza. After speaking, the group was initially quiet but then disrupted the meeting during Mark Gaffney's chair report

with five minutes or so of loud pro-Palestinian chants before marching out of the meeting. Beale had been seated next to a campus police officer who was ready to cast the protesters out if necessary, but they were allowed to disrupt without consequence. Once they left, the meeting resumed. Pramod Khosla commented that we have been hearing arguments in other forums that students' speech has been suppressed, yet this was a good example of a university allowing the protest without suppressing the speech. He suggested the protests were likely intended as a response to Espy's statement last week regarding the Student Senate's BDS resolution.

Resolution honoring Charlie Parrish: Beale noted that the Board passed a resolution at its meeting honoring Charles Parrish (CLAS), who was not able to attend. Mark Dilly (Executive Director, WAU) did a video of the resolution to share with him.

Foundation Board meeting: The recent Foundation Board meeting shared a draft of a new guidebook for Foundation members. Beale pointed out some concerns with wording, but she considered it good that we are finally acknowledging the need to raise at least \$100 million a year. The school-by-school goals are interesting as well. The Budget Committee had a meeting with VP David Ripple and other personnel in October at which much of the same material was discussed, but this was the presentation to the WSU Foundation Board about its role. Foundation Board members are now expected to donate at least \$10,000 a year, a very recent expectation of members. The WSU Foundation Board is recruiting five members to fill open slots, so it will be important to find people who are interested in promoting the university and serving as fiduciaries of the university's endowment. The mission statement in the document is somewhat off kilter, because those board members do not advise the university on curriculum and other academic issues: they are informed about the academic enterprise so that they can be good advocates for the university. Beale was left unsure that they all understand that distinction.

New Presidential Operations Officer and Head of Strategic Initiatives: Espy is reshaping the university's senior administrative structure, bringing in Angie Griffith as her new President's Office operations officer and head of strategic initiatives, which will include Espy's "College to Career" initiative. The other big change is a new role over the VPs for governmental affairs (Patrick Lindsay), BOG relations (Julie Miller), and Communications/Marketing (Michael Wright). At their last meeting, the Budget Committee asked the CFO and VP for Budget and Financial Affairs to provide a chart and some understanding of what the financial commitment is for the changes in senior administration: hopefully, that will be forthcoming.

SETs: Beale reported the SETs were administered in ways that made it harder for faculty this year. A law faculty member did not receive the notice that the SETs had been sent, even though there was supposedly a notice to all professors. The timing was unusual, because that faculty member received the notice only right before the last class meeting. The decision to move SETs online was made administratively during the pandemic and then continued. Online administration remains problematic, especially if the SETs are treated as important for tenure, promotion and salary decisions. Research shows that they are biased in multiple ways.

renée hoogland noted the Faculty Affairs Committee (FAC) worked on this ten years ago. All the research indicated that online implementation does not work well. When SETs were administered in person, written comments from students were helpful. The system has become meaningless at this point because of the lack of comments, the fact that few students fill them out, and those are usually the ones who want to express negative views. hoogland noted that only three of her students filled out the SET last semester. Beale noted that students can still provide comments but are unlikely to do so online.

Idea to rename the university: Beale reported that Sankar had shared with her an idea that Sankar expects to put forward in some formal way—that the university should change its name from Wayne State

University to the City University of Detroit. Beale thinks it is a good idea because it helps to claim Detroit as our territory to push back against MSU and U-M encroachment. Furthermore, Anthony Wayne was not a person of good character, and the City University of Detroit was the original name of the university.

#### IV. SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH ADDITIONAL SENATE REPRESENTATION

Policy members discussed the appointments to the working groups for the school of public health proposal. Additional Senate representation is needed on the communications group and executive committee. Steve Chrisomalis agreed to serve on communication and Beale agreed serve on the executive committee.

Clabo noted she asked Mark Schweitzer (VP for Health Affairs) for a web page that is information rich, to include beyond committee membership the original report from the exploratory committee and perhaps minutes of these committees' work. We have said this is an important effort that needs to involve the full community: the more transparency, the better. There are some questions about what we call this because we are in a pre-accreditation phase, so how we mount it is one thing, but the fact that information should be widely available to members of the university community seems clear. Carolyn Berry (Sr. AVP, Marketing) is working with Schweitzer, and Clabo has also asked to see a draft so that we can ensure a robust communication.

#### V. C&IT AND SENATE JOINT STATEMENT ON VENDOR SOLICITATIONS OF BUSINESS

Policy discussed a statement drafted by Beale and CIO Rob Thompson regarding harassing vendor emails. A version of this will go out to faculty—perhaps after the return from the holiday break.

#### VI. FOREIGN INFLUENCE POLICY REVISION

While the current redraft language is an improvement, it still does not provide a clear description of, nor examples of, foreign relationships. Policy members were convinced that the FAQ has to be developed at the same time as the policy itself, or there will be no clear understanding still of what disclosure is required. It will also be important to revise the consultation statement to ensure coordination of the information gathered.

Policy suggested the Foreign Influence Committee develop a draft FAQ that attempts to describe the two types of disclosure-required information and provide a variety of examples of activities that would need to be disclosed and those that would not need to be disclosed, taken from actual types of activities engaged in by faculty in STEM and non-STEM disciplines. The committee will meet and get back to us.

#### VII. FEBRUARY 7, 2024 PLENARY DRAFT

Policy members discussed potential agenda items for the February 7, 2024 plenary. Beale will contact Bryan Barnhill to confirm his availability for February. She will also tentatively schedule a discussion with Q&A of academic freedom and free speech (Brad Roth and fellow panelists).

#### VIII. SCHEDULE OF PC MEETINGS FOR DECEMBER AND JANUARY

Policy members determined the schedule for Policy meetings in December and January. We likely will not meet again until January 22, because of Martin Luther King Day on January 15, unless there is urgent business requiring a meeting on January 8.

## IX. REPORT FROM STANDING COMMITTEE LIAISONS AND NEW BUSINESS

Student Affairs (SAC). Naida Simon reported that SAC is meeting this week for the holiday potluck.

Faculty Affairs (FAC). hoogland reported that FAC met last week with Berry for a fact-finding mission on recruitment and retention. More of that effort seems to be devolving to faculty and academic staff, so FAC wants to understand what is happening elsewhere. In November, the committee met with Ashley Flintoff (Dir., Planning and Space Management) to discuss the idea of a faculty club: they will meet again in January to tour four potential buildings. There has been an interesting conversation about what the faculty club should be like and the functions it should fulfill.

Faculty well-being has been a fixture on FAC's agenda for the last year and a half. People are still concerned about pressure on faculty to take on more tasks and do more work, with little attention to the well-being of faculty. Most of the talk—and focus of efforts—is about students and student success. You do not have successful students without successful faculty. There is a considerable faculty stress and burn out. hoogland suggests this is partly due to inattention at the administrative level to these concerns.

Khosla noted the union has been trying to get actual data on faculty well-being. There is information about the stress from students. What is not clear is the protocol to follow when a faculty member thinks that another colleague is not doing well. Like a care report for faculty, should the faculty member go to the chair or somewhere else? How would the colleague respond if the chair approaches them because of that report? Some of the inquiries at the union are members just wanting to talk: the conversation makes clear something is not right, but it is unclear what can be done.

Clabo responded that there are two issues here: one is the burdens placed on faculty to do additional work, and the other is the services provided to support faculty. Looking through her health and wellness lens, she has heard from faculty over the last year. BOG presentations have covered services to promote the health and well-being of students. Can there be an expanded role for the provision of services for faculty and staff, and if so, what might that look like? She has heard about dissatisfaction with EAP, and there may be some alternative models that would help. Are there services that could be provided in the faculty club setting around mindfulness (e.g., a yoga room or meditation room)? There are opportunities for the administration to partner with faculty leadership on those efforts, and Clabo would be very happy in her other role to entertain that discussion.

Beale suggested having a faculty club that can combine dining with relaxation/meditation/exercise areas. Clabo also recommended access to counseling services that are disaggregated from the administrative process. Jennifer Lewis suggested that if a faculty member notices someone with problems, they should just talk with them: "I have noticed this going on with you and I am worried. Can we do something about it together?"

Khosla explained that nobody comes directly to the union with such problems. For example, if someone is drinking on the job, it is likely that no one is working with that person to understand what is going on. Faculty may only see each other at meetings and not know what others do other than teaching their classes. There is discussion among small groups of colleagues. The union tends to hear of it indirectly. Somebody may approach one of the union officers on an informal basis because they know the union's mechanism is through grievances, but they are seeking help because they do not know what to do in this kind of situation. They may only hint at an underlying issue about a colleague that is not functioning well.

Beale noted a former law professor who we later learned had frontal lobe dementia in the months before he died. In his last few classes, he was giving students inaccurate information about his field. The

students approached Beale and other law faculty to ask what to do because something was clearly wrong. Beale mentioned it confidentially to the dean, thinking that some discreet checking was necessary.

Roth explained the flip side of this coin is concerns that have been raised about measures that are taken against faculty members by chairs or others where there is no clear recourse for the faculty member. On one hand, it does not seem to be covered by the grievance procedure; on the other, we do not have a faculty ombudsperson for raising these concerns. Hoogland agreed, noting that FAC has been discussing this issue as well since FAC and Policy raised it several years ago. FAC is drafting a memo urging that an independent ombuds office be reinstated to serve faculty as well as students.

Clabo explained the issue of reporting and discipline is only one arm of this. She noted the mental health triage program, which is a confidential one-stop-shop for students that gets them a standardized assessment and a referral to the most appropriate provider. It would seem appropriate to have that kind of connection for a faculty or staff member who is saying, “I need help,” rather than being disciplined. The service might be somewhat different and would not go through a reporting mechanism. She suggested offering someone a card with the contact information if they are interested in receiving some help, but then that is between them and the provider. When you step behind the provider screen, there is HIPPA protection. Khosla agreed that, whatever the mechanism, we need that discussion because if the faculty member is not in good shape, they cannot help students. Danielle Aubert suggested some would be hesitant about mental health support being provided through the employer: an independent ombuds, though, could be key for many of situations.

Hoogland explained the ombuds person would primarily serve faculty members who are being harassed by their chairs, peers or students. What became clear from the campus climate survey is that faculty have no idea where to go with those kinds of things. It is important the ombuds office be reinstated so that faculty at least have somewhere to go to talk about these kinds of problems—often, about disputes that are not out in the open. FAC is trying to figure out if there is a way to determine what faculty are struggling with now, two years after the pandemic. What she has heard is pressure from being overburdened.

Khosla asked at what point the Office of the Provost considers it necessary to act when it receives information about a faculty or academic staff. Clabo responded there are very few instances where it has risen to that level. From her role as health and wellness officer, it generally comes from two sources: either a peer or the dean. When it rises to the level of potential harm to the individual or others—and the interpretation of what constitutes harm is broad—then the belief is that action is required. It has been supportive action, not punitive action. Do we have a clearly defined process for that? Like many things we do here, our processes are less defined than they need to be. Beale noted these processes seem to be both ad hoc and discretionary; therefore, since no guidance is published, most do not know where to turn if they believe someone needs help.

Curriculum and Instruction (CIC). Now that campus policies will be separated from syllabi, CIC will focus further on necessary syllabus content. At a prior meeting, a student representative heard the discussion of grade change appeals. It gave CIC the idea to invite a small group of faculty, staff, administrators and students to talk about this to develop suggestions for that policy.

Lewis also reported there was discussion about the Wayne Experience (WE) course. Beale reminded Policy members that WE had been suspended for only one year, which is up at the end of this academic year. The suspension should likely be extended officially while something adequate is developed. Lewis wondered what should be included when/if it restarts. Darin Ellis (AVP, Academic Affairs) attended the last CIC meeting and indicated there is no money to run a new WE course: it is an unfunded mandate. Despite those logistics, Lewis noted that it is an important experience for all of our students coming in.

All of gen ed is an unfunded mandate. We at least need to have a sense of what belongs in it, and CIC is hopeful there can be some version of a course that would be valuable for students. One of the CIC ideas is to have fourth-year students and early graduates involved in planning and perhaps co-teaching the course. Beale agreed that the university cannot just leave it hanging because it is a requirement that has been put in our policies. Clabo suggested we first figure out what it should be and what resources are required and then make a decision on investing or disinvesting. If this is important to do, we have to find the money.

Beale recommended it be removed as a mandatory requirement. There are various options. WE could be an enriching first-year course for everybody or it could be an optional course available to introduce those who need it to study techniques and tips for taking advantage of what a college education offers. CIC, FAC, perhaps SAC and Policy should put this on the agenda for the winter term, and also remind the General Education Oversight Committee (GEOC) that the suspension was temporary so a resolution is needed. Simon pointed out it is hard to have a mandatory class for entering freshmen when there are only 1600 seats for 3000 students, and it is problematic if they do not take it when they are supposed to take it. If it is an optional class, there are a few key subjects that could be covered. Lewis reported Fernando Charro (CLAS) has developed a lesson about mindfulness and mental health that would be great to include, as well as topics around study skills and what it means to have college education. Beale suggested including academic integrity.

Beale reiterated that the standing committees and Policy should reach a recommendation about how to handle this. It is appropriate for CIC to continue working on it, and it is appropriate for SAC and FAC to discuss it as well. It needs to come to Policy and to the plenary. This must be in place for fall 24 or the Board should be asked to extend the suspension. Beale recommended it be suspended through the 2024-25 academic year to allow sufficient time to work on an appropriate replacement. Clabo noted taking the official action to suspend it for a finite period of time prevents it from dying on the vine. She believes that should come back restructured and reconfigured. We have been talking about where to introduce students to civil discourse in a university and how to deal with complex, conflicting ideas. The sooner and the more often we do that, there will likely be support and we will be able to find funding.

Beale noted that they had thought all the student code of conduct changes Policy had recommended had been officially adopted at the BOG because they were forwarded to the president and VP & Secretary BOG Julie Miller for the BOG. It turns out none of the changes were put before the BOG. Dean of Students David Strauss even announced at the BOG meeting that no changes have been made to the student code of conduct since 2006, which was a mistaken statement. Two sets have been recommended in the last five years. Roth confirmed the first set of changes were approved. Although he was not there for their approval, he was certain the second set of changes were approved because they were on the website but littered with typographical errors.

Members of the Policy Committee acknowledged this is Simon's last Policy meeting before she retires. They applauded her time at Policy and expressed their appreciation for all of her hard work on the Academic Senate.

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