

# FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

**DATE:** Wednesday, October 2, 2013

**PRESENT:** Anaya, Bender, Guevara, Joeckel, Nickerson, Reisbig, Rinkevich, Ruchala, Schubert, Sollars, Woodman

**ABSENT:** Wysocki, Zoubek

**LOCATION:** Faculty Senate Office

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## **1.0 Call**

Guevara called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.

## **2.0 Announcements**

### **2.1 Honorary Degree Nominations Deadline Date**

Guevara noted that Associate to the Chancellor Nunez requested that a notification be sent out to the faculty reminding them that the deadline date for submitting nominations for an honorary degree is October 15. Woodman suggested that the message also include the criteria needed for nominees.

## **3.0 Approval of September 13, 2013 Minutes**

Joeckel moved for approval of the minutes as revised. Sollars seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

## **4.0 Unfinished Business**

### **4.1 Update on ACE Ad Hoc Committee**

Guevara reported that Nickerson will assume the role of chair of the ACE ad hoc committee which is to review and make recommendations for streamlining the ACE procedures. Nickerson stated that he will be happy to hear people's concerns about the recertification process. Guevara noted that one of the goals is to try and preserve faculty time by streamlining some of the processes while still maintaining the integrity of the ACE program.

Woodman asked if the ad hoc committee will look at making changes to the University Curriculum Committee. Guevara pointed out that this is not in the charge of the ad hoc committee, but the Executive Committee will look making changes.

## **5.0 New Business**

### **5.1 Review of Senate Meeting**

Guevara stated that although the Senate meeting was fairly quiet the Senate approved two motions. He stated that he would like to see more Senators attend the meetings and be engaged. He noted that the Senate meetings need to be more interesting and faculty members should ask questions of the Chancellor. Reisbig suggested that Senators come prepared to ask questions. Guevara stated that this would be a good idea.

Joeckel asked if anyone was surprised with the grade distribution report given by the Grading & Examinations Committee. He wondered whether grading trends along with less required credit hours needed for graduation is creating a softening of the curriculum. Guevara noted that this issue has been raised before and each time there seems to be a response from the administration about making sure students succeed and get good grades. Joeckel noted that it is an unspoken common knowledge that an A today is not the same as it was years ago.

Nickerson wondered if the 3.11 average GPA included graduate courses. Joeckel stated that it did not. Woodman asked if it would be of interest to get the grade distribution from various departments. He noted that some colleges have a large number of students on honor roll. He pointed out that the grade information should be easy to get from the Office of the University Registrar. Ruchala stated that in her college the grade distribution varies from department to department.

Joeckel asked if this is an issue that the Executive Committee feels is worth pursuing. He noted that grade inflation is a huge issue that extends beyond academia across the country. Schubert pointed out that it might be an issue, but not necessarily in the way one perceives it. He stated that more and more students are getting excellent grades, but the question is whether this is because of grade inflation or it is because we are getting students who are better prepared. Joeckel stated that he thinks it is due to grade inflation, but he would like to see the data to see if it supports his belief. Guevara stated that he believes we can get this information and it would allow us to see where the trends are. He pointed out that if students are actually doing better the university should be advertising it. Nickerson stated that it would be interesting to see how we relate to other Big Ten schools and he thinks the Executive Committee should discuss the issue.

Woodman stated that some pre-tenured faculty members may believe that in order to get good teaching evaluations they need to give good grades. Schubert noted that student input is very important during the tenure process. He noted that all faculty members in his department are encouraged to be rigorous and he thinks there are mechanisms in place that do not allow faculty to just give out nice grades. He pointed out that if someone is giving the same exam over the years, but the number of A+s are increasing, this would indicate that the students are better. Guevara noted that this is a hot issue to discuss in departments but it is very relevant and something the faculty needs to be aware of.

Schubert stated that it is an interesting conversation. The question from the other side is whether the teaching at UNL has improved over the years and how can this be measured. He stated that he believes the teaching in Engineering has improved since the early 90's. Reisbig wondered if the introduction of rubrics for qualitatively-graded assignments contributed to grade inflation in that this often replaced more subjective methods which relied on comparison and ranking within the pool of assignments. Ruchala noted that having a rubric helps her to be more rigorous in her grading.

Nickerson suggested that the Executive Committee would need to formulate questions that are more defined and he is not sure if there is anything that needs to be done about the issue. Schubert stated that getting the data would show whether there is grade inflation or whether students and teaching at UNL have improved. Woodman pointed out that grade inflation has been documented and it is almost universal. He stated that there are probably many faculty members that are not teaching any differently, yet the grades are higher. He suggested that the class average grade could also be reported. He noted that many professional schools do not consider a student's grade as much as they consider the entrance exams. Ruchala pointed out that the entrance exams can be easily manipulated by people taking prep courses for the exams. She noted that those in higher socio-economic standings usually score better on entrance exams because they have taken these prep courses. She stated that she looks at recommendations and grades when considering a doctoral student.

## **5.2 Agenda Items for Chancellor Perlman and SVCAA Weissinger**

The Executive Committee identified the following items for discussion with the administrators:

Update on the Bylaws. Will faculty members have the opportunity to suggest items that they feel should be included in the Bylaws.

Policy for Hiring Faculty Spouses for non-academic positions

Future of the leadership of UNL

Upcoming faculty initiatives through Academic Affairs Office

How will new faculty positions be distributed? What about existing departments? How will the decisions be made on what departments will be allowed to hire new faculty?

Clarification on how the UNL-UNO Engineering program is going to work.

How do faculty members get involved with making strategic decisions for their college?

Clarification on priority programs that the Chancellor feels should be emphasized as raised in his state of the university address.

## **5.3 Actions for Non-Tenure Track Faculty Members**

Woodman noted that in the Executive Committee Goals ideas were raised on how to get non-tenure track faculty members more informed. He stated that one idea is to create a list serve for non-tenure track faculty members and wanted to see that this not be forgotten. He noted that Professor Shea asked about the results of the survey of non-tenure track faculty members and suggested that this needs to

be distributed. Reisbig stated that she will review the IRB documentation to see if the aggregate data can be distributed to the Senate.

Nickerson asked what the Senate could do that might benefit non-tenure track faculty members. Guevara pointed out that two things have just been done: to include a non-tenure track faculty member on the Faculty Compensation Advisory Committee and to designate a seat on the Executive Committee for a non-tenure track faculty member. He stated that how they are treated and paid are matters that reside within the departments.

Woodman suggested that a forum for non-tenure track faculty members be held in the early spring semester to let them know of their rights on campus. Bender stated that representatives from the Academic Rights & Responsibilities Committee, the Academic Rights & Responsibilities Panel, Academic Freedom Coalition of Nebraska, and a representative from AAUP and the ACLU could be invited to speak at the forum.

#### **5.4 Guest Speakers for the Faculty Senate Meetings**

The Executive Committee suggested the following speakers be invited to speak at Senate meetings during the year:

- Dean Busch, University Libraries
- Athletic Director Eichorst
- Director of Benefits, Greg Clayton
- VC Paul
- VC Franco

Anaya reported that there will be faculty forums about what changes are being considered to Love North. She noted that this will be a good way for faculty members to provide input on the proposed changes. Nickerson asked if most of the books currently in Love North will go to storage. Anaya stated that some will go to storage and some may be eliminated.

Joeckel stated that there appears to be more pushback from faculty members on the changes to the Love South and North libraries than there is with the CYT library. Anaya pointed out that the challenge with CYT is that it is very underused. She stated that there is a different culture on East campus and CYT is not used as a central study place like Love library, but there is still concern about having a library on East campus. Joeckel stated that he finds it disconcerting that students do not look at books anymore and it is stressful to hear about the repurposing of the libraries. He stated that he hopes faculty members show some level of concern about what is happening at CYT and Love libraries. Anaya pointed out that not many faculty members are incorporating using CYT in their course assignments which is one of the reasons why CYT is underutilized. She pointed out that the libraries have changed from the way there were ten years ago in terms of what they can offer and how that information is offered.

Joeckel asked how the changing of CYT will affect the employees. Anaya stated that she does not think any of the faculty members will be cut and in fact another libraries faculty member will be hired. She noted that the CYT faculty members have offices in Love library too. She stated that there are not many staff members at CYT.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:36 p.m. The next meeting of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee will be on Wednesday, October 9, 2013 at 3:00 p.m. in 201 Administration Building. The minutes are submitted respectfully by Karen Griffin, Coordinator, and Toni Anaya, Secretary.