

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Bradford, Fech, Franti, Hachtmann, Konecky, LaCost, Ledder, Lindquist, McCollough, Prochaska-Cue, Rapkin, Zimmers

Absent: Schubert

Date: Wednesday, January 14, 2009

Location: Faculty Senate Office, 420 University Terrace

Note: These are not verbatim minutes. They are a summary of the discussions at the Executive Committee meeting as corrected by those participating.

1.0 Call to Order

Prochaska-Cue called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

2.0 Announcements

No announcements were made.

3.0 Approval of 1/7/09 Minutes

Zimmers moved and Rapkin seconded approval of the minutes as amended. Motion approved.

4.0 Unfinished Business

4.1 Draft Proposal for Best Practices to Recruit and Retain a Diverse Faculty

Fech stated that one of his concerns with the proposal is that there is no clear definition of what constitutes a minority person. He stated that the document does not state that each diversity group, whether it is racial or cultural, has value. He believes that the university will be losing out if we just focus on specific groups because of their race or gender. Bradford pointed out that there is no real definition of what diversity means at the university in the proposal.

Franti stated that he does not think there should be a faculty advisory committee.

Bradford noted that if there is a faculty advisory committee the Senate should have a role in selecting the faculty who serve on it. Rapkin asked if the faculty advisory committee oversees and intervenes in searches. Bradford stated that he believes it is just an advisory committee.

McCollough stated that it appears that no funding will be provided to assist in recruiting minority faculty members. She noted that it sounds like it is the department's responsibility to scout for potential minority faculty members. She wondered whether there will be funds for faculty members to go to conferences to scout out potential employees.

Lindquist stated that we need to send SVCCA Couture a summary of our comments but one main recommendation is to clearly define diversity. He stated that he thinks overall it is a good document and a good start but there are things that need to be clarified. One thing is who is responsible for seeing that these practices are done. Franti stated that from the proposal he gathers it would be the faculty advisory committee.

Franti stated that he believes the proposal has been created for the university to accomplish the need to hire minority faculty members but the proposal does not talk about diversity the way the Committee thinks it should be. He noted that as written in the proposal the faculty members of the advisory committee would have to do a lot of work.

Fech asked the Committee what kinds of diversity should be defined in the proposal. He asked if the Committee is looking at diversity being defined as every ethnic group and world thinking group. McCollough asked if it would be defined as academically diverse.

Konecky pointed out that diversity needs to be tied back at the department level. She noted that diversity for departments can differ. Bradford asked how central administration would be able to evaluate diversity needs then. Konecky wondered whether each department would need to have a diversity committee. Griffin noted that departments were required to include diversity plans in their strategic plans. Bradford noted that most of the document focuses on where it has to be now in terms of recruiting people.

Franti pointed out that the previous attempts to create a diversity plan were shot down. He wondered whether this proposal is being put into place instead of a diversity plan. He stated that we need to build a foundation first by creating a diversity plan. He stated that the faculty needs to approve a diversity plan first before the administration tries to accomplish the goals of the proposal.

Franti stated that the proposal is woefully short on the sustaining section. McCollough questioned where the funding is for doing all of the outreach stated in the proposal. Bradford stated that the section with the bullet points is incredibly general and if approval is being sought this section needs to be a bit more specific.

Prochaska-Cue stated that she will write a summary of the concerns and send it to the Committee for review. Franti suggested that the summary include that actions plans should be made with the faculty and chairs. Rapkin suggested that someone comb through the departments' diversity plans that were created to identify constructive practices.

4.2 Faculty Salary Survey

The Committee reviewed and revised the faculty salary survey.

5.0 Chief Owen Yardley

Prochaska-Cue thanked Chief Yardley for meeting with the Committee. Franti stated that the Committee would like information on the Threat Assessment Team and the threats that were made to the university because of the invitation to Dr. Ayers.

Chief Yardley reported that most of the information he can provide has already been printed in the newspapers. He stated that approximately 1,000 pieces of information came to the Police when the visit of Dr. Ayers was announced. He stated that most of the messages received were from people venting their frustration and that very few of the messages would have been actionable. He noted that there was also a lot of blog activity. He reported that there are other places where the Police look for information and some of the communication showed some veiled threats. He stated that he had safety concerns particularly with how the event was set up in relation to mass communications and the changes that would be required.

Chief Yardley stated that most of the communications received, not only the ones regarding Dr. Ayers but others as well, are difficult to pursue criminal charges against because they do not cross the limit of making it a criminal offense. He noted that no arrests or requests have been forwarded for criminal charges with anyone involved with the Ayers' situation.

Rapkin asked how many of the messages crossed the threshold. Chief Yardley stated that he did not think any of the messages crossed the threshold that would be considered a criminal offense. He noted that if someone is telling you that they want to shoot you it might be someone just venting but if they start communicating to others and they are specific about what they want to do and have a course of action then it is a threatening situation. He pointed out that each situation has to be looked at individually and in totality. He noted that in some cases there is evidence that it is an escalating situation. He stated that threat assessment is a balancing act and consideration is needed not only to assess what is a troublesome situation but what actions can be taken to intervene.

McCullough asked if there has been any precedent to the Dr. Ayers situation. Chief Yardley stated that it is unprecedented and he compared it to the perfect storm. He pointed out that many external things were happening at the time that exacerbated the situation. McCullough asked if Chief Yardley knew if this is the first time a guest speaker has been disinvited. Chief Yardley stated that he did not have this information.

Fech asked if the sheer volume of the negative messages was a part of the equation for rescinding the invitation to Dr. Ayers. Chief Yardley reported that the volume was a factor. He noted that everything is proportional and while only 1% of the messages might have been serious threats 1% of 1,000 is a significant number to cause concern.

Lindquist noted that Chief Yardley outlined a couple of ways to assess a threatening situation. He asked at what point a decision is made to step in to prevent any further action. Chief Yardley stated that each situation is different and has to be considered separately. He reported that in the case of Dr. Ayers many people from very different

perspectives were sending messages and it was a very unique situation in the way it was played out.

Prochaska-Cue asked if there was any way to prosecute those who made threats. Chief Yardley pointed out that he would not talk about specific aspects of any investigation in a public setting.

Bradford asked what led to the conclusion that we could not secure the safety of the campus because of Dr. Ayers' visit. Chief Yardley noted that the Police do not make the decision about whether an event should be cancelled. He reported that the Police will express their concerns and will do whatever they can to make the campus as safe as possible.

Chief Yardley stated that there were several indications that there were to be protests on campus by people on both sides of the issue which could lead to a volatile situation. He noted that the entire dynamics and setting of the event would have had to be changed and not everyone, including the protestors could be accommodated. He pointed out that it is not just a matter of keeping the speaker safe but keeping the entire campus safe as well.

Bradford noted that Dr. Ayers just recently spoke at George Washington University in DC. He asked if it was harder for us here to ensure safety. Chief Yardley pointed out that Dr. Ayers' speech at George Washington University was post election.

Ledder stated that the message that was sent with the cancellation of Dr. Ayers' visit is that people can cancel events at the university by making threats. Chief Yardley noted that the university has handled a lot of events in the past that were controversial without incident, but none were similar to this situation. He stated that what is critical is when an event is planned the setting has to be kept into context with the event which would allow the police to address some of the issues up front.

Ledder wondered whether the event was cancelled due to other threats, such as financial threats. He asked if the decision could have been made due to some other concerns. Chief Yardley stated that he does not know this information.

Franti asked how many people are on the Threat Assessment Team. Chief Yardley stated that there are several levels of the team. There is the Threat Assessment Group which is housed in the Police Department. He noted that there are also investigators on campus whose job is to look at any potential problems on campus. He reported that Professor Scalora, Psychology, is on the Threat Assessment Team and anyone who has any information on a potentially dangerous situation is consulted. Griffin asked if this includes faculty members who might be aware of a troubled student. Chief Yardley stated that it would include a faculty member or staff member who has reported such an issue.

Chief Yardley reported that the Threat Assessment Review Team is presented cases which involves threat assessments. He noted that there are people from the academic,

student, business and finance, and legal area that are involved in these reviews. He pointed out that situations need to be dealt with in real time and must be acted on quickly by the Threat Assessment Group, but the Review Team meets every month to see if the responses to situations were appropriate and what the results of the actions were.

Chief Yardley stated that there is a third group which is considered the net. This includes supervisors, managers, and others who are most likely to receive information on situations. He stated in addition to a session last fall there will be a training session in the spring for anyone interested in learning how to identify possible situations and troubling behavior. He stated that the fourth component of the Assessment team is the university in general.

Chief Yardley reported that communications began in late fall to educate people on what behaviors to look for and contact numbers were made available to notify the Police for potential problems. He pointed out that information on a person could come from different sources. Individually the separate pieces of information might not indicate there is a problem but collectively it could identify a potential problem. He noted that troubling behavior may not just occur on campus but off campus as well. He pointed out that the Threat Assessment Team and the Police try to treat everyone with respect and dignity. He noted that solutions work much better if the person feels good about what is happening. He stated that sometimes a person might just need some counseling because they are going through a difficult time. He noted that many times when a situation is identified and positive actions or interventions are taken the situation gets resolved on its own. He pointed out that the last thing desired is to have a heavy handed Police approach.

McCollough asked if the Police are very independent within the university. She asked if people can call the Police with their interpretation of what is going on. Chief Yardley stated that they can call. He noted that the Police do a lot of consulting. He noted that when Police are involved in an investigation they do not have any constraints put on them by the university.

Griffin asked if an employee or student could ask for help with threatening situations outside of the university. Chief Yardley stated that any troubling behavior, threats, disruption, harm, life safety issues, or significant disruption to the university can be dealt with by the University Police. He reported that if an employee or student encounters threatening behavior the Police will conduct an assessment both on and off campus. As an example he pointed out that if an employee or student is being stalked off campus it is very likely that the situation will come on to campus. He noted that when working University cases, the Police have jurisdiction around the state and has worked with people from around the country as well. He reported that from May of 2007 to April 2008 nearly half of the subjects under investigation were from off campus and were not university students or employees. He noted that the more you educate people about what behaviors to look for the more information is received.

Rapkin stated that the Executive Committee represents the Faculty Senate. He noted that among the faculty there is a general sense that the campus was coerced to change our course by rescinding the invitation to Dr. Ayers. He stated that it is very frustrating that there is nothing being done to pursue the perpetrators because the crime is not prosecutable. He asked what the Senate can do to ensure that this does not happen again. He asked, with the three levels of hierarchy of the Threat Assessment Team, what the highest point is that a faculty representative can play. Chief Yardley stated probably at the third level, as a part of the Net. He noted that the Police looked at the Ayers' incident strictly and solely from a campus safety perspective.

Ledder stated that from a faculty point of view there may be times when academic freedom is considered a higher priority than security. Chief Yardley stated that Police are advocates for safety, and in this case faculty would be advocates for academic freedom, and agendas other than campus safety should not be involved in threat assessment decisions. He did not think the Police and the faculty should compete with making such a decision as with the Ayers case. He pointed out that the faculty might be willing to accept academic freedom in place of safety but the responsibility of the safety of the campus rests with him and he is not willing to delegate that safety to others.

Franti asks who makes the decision to pursue an individual or to do an intervention. Chief Yardley stated that the Police will not make the decision to cancel an event. This is not their job but they do tell the people who make decisions what the risks are. He stated that people critical to a case are brought in to provide information and provide interventions, the Police will do advising and consulting but they do not direct what actions are to be taken such as making decisions to terminate, expel or mandate counseling.

Franti asked how the Police communicate a threat level. Chief Yardley stated that communications are made through open discussions with the people who are involved with a situation. Ledder stated that he thinks the approach of the Police collecting information on the threat and advising on it is the right thing to do. He suggested that faculty representation might be needed at the level where the decision is made.

Prochaska-Cue stated that one of the troubling things in the Ayers' case is that it is not clear that those individuals who initiated the invitation to Dr. Ayers were involved in the decision to rescind the invitation. She stated that the Senate wants to make sure that the inviting faculty members are involved in such decisions. Chief Yardley pointed out that pre planning for an event can take care of avoiding a whole lot of problems which includes involving Police early in the planning, using a facility appropriate to the function and identifying funding for logistics including security.

Bradford stated that he assumes that Chief Yardley is involved with the campus security warning system. He stated that the Police need to be careful with how much information is provided with the warning system. He noted that everyone on the warning system was recently notified of the power outage on campus. He pointed out that too much information might cause people to not want to participate in the early warning system.

Chief Yardley stated that they try to limit the notices to just safety issues, and there will be at least two messages in most cases, the initial notification message and a message to say when the event is over. The power outage caused some areas in buildings to be dark which could create a safety issue. He noted that the Police wait to get confirmation on a situation before the campus warning system is activated.

6.0 New Business

6.1 Policy on Writing Health Absences for Classes

Item postponed until next week.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Wednesday, January 21st at 3:00 pm. The meeting will be held in 201 Canfield Administration. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and David Rapkin, Secretary.