

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Fech, Flowers, Franti, Konecky, LaCost, Lindquist, McCollough, Prochaska-Cue, Rapkin, Schubert, Shea, Stock

Absent: Bolin

Date: Wednesday, January 13, 2010

Location: Faculty Senate Office

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

Fech called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

2.0 Dean Rita Kean and Professor Nancy Mitchell

2.1 ACE Update

Mitchell reported that 443 courses and 486 course outcomes have now been certified for the ACE program. She stated that work continues with faculty members and advisors to develop more courses and outcomes. She reported that emphasis is being placed on transferring the work of certifying ACE courses from the interim ACE committee to the permanent committees. She noted that half of the work will be done by the University Curriculum Committee and, to date, the transition has been encouraging.

Mitchell reported that to continue the development of the ACE program discussions have been held with departments. In particular she has worked with the History department to discuss how the department's curriculum can be reconfigured to make sure that it is in line with ACE. She stated that over a period of time ACE courses will be monitored to see which students are taking them and to ensure that students are receiving a broad education. She pointed out that initial information shows that this is occurring.

Mitchell stated that one of the issues that have arisen deals with assessment and privacy issues. She reported that she has checked with Associate General Counsel Mauer about the privacy issues and was told that as long as assessment is one of the key components of the program, faculty can collect assessment samples without first seeking their permission. She pointed out that instructors are encouraged to take the names off of a student's work if there is anything personal in the writings before the work is used for assessment purposes. She stated that another idea is to ask a student to sign a consent form or to get another student's work. She stated that there is a statement on the ACE website regarding the privacy issue.

Mitchell stated that in terms of the IRB there has been discussion with Professor Hoyt about whether collecting work for assessment can be turned into evidence of teaching. She stated that an official statement is forthcoming.

Mitchell noted that the campus received a grant from the Spencer and Teagle Foundations. Faculty members from various disciplines discussed assessment for Outcome 1 (the writing outcome). They discussed a particular outcome such as writing from their disciplinary perspective. Out of these discussions a rubric was developed. She stated that this is occurring with other outcomes at this time. She reported that guides to conduct assessments along with other information can be found on the website, <http://ace.unl.edu/>.

Mitchell stated that a Blackboard course has also been developed for instructors teaching ACE courses and information on how to use technology to manage ACE assessment is available online.

Mitchell stated that there is real interest in involving students in the process as well, and members of ASUN have been actively involved in discussions about the online bulletin. She reported that a focus group was conducted with students in the fall to see what they know about the ACE program. She stated that students are very interested in seeing links between the ACE courses and other courses and excited about the online piece of the program.

Mitchell reported that a mid-semester check of W. H. Thompson Scholars was done to see what they know about the ACE program. She stated that the students were aware of the program but need to know more about it. Kean stated that there are 178 students involved in the W. H. Thompson learning community. Mitchell stated that she is aware that more work needs to be done to get all students involved with the program but students are coming in to discuss outcomes and what they can do to achieve them.

Mitchell stated that the university would like to encourage students to come here to take all of their courses, rather than transferring in after a few years. The problem is how to promote this without detracting from the community colleges. She asked that any faculty member with a good idea of how to do this should please contact her (nmitchell1@unl.edu). She pointed out that there are many good reasons to come here for your entire undergraduate education.

Fech stated that this was discussed in the Senate meeting yesterday. He noted that a senator brought up the fact that a student can transfer in three courses but only two of them will count towards a major. Mitchell stated that this has been discussed. She pointed out that transfer students are important and we need to monitor enrollment patterns for these students. She stated that it is too early to get any data yet on enrollment patterns. She reported that she, Dean Kean and JoAnn Mosemann, transfer coordinator for UNL, have been visiting all of the community colleges in the state to discuss transfer students and the courses they should have. Moseman and Cindy Cammack, Associate Director, Admissions, continue to revisit community colleges

Mitchell stated that the campus has been getting some national recognition for the ACE program and the work that has been done here on it. Included in this recognition are some publications pertaining to the program.

Mitchell stated that she and Jessica Jonson, Director of Institutional Assessment, have worked at a national level to create rubrics for the outcomes of critical thinking and ethics.

Mitchell stated that there has been success in terms of advising as well. She noted that some colleges and programs are reducing some of their requirements for majors because the ACE courses are meeting a significant number of the requirements. She pointed out that the College of Arts and Sciences has reduced its requirements substantially and has simplified things for the students. McCollough asked if this information is online. Mitchell stated that it is currently online.

McCollough asked if it is strategic for a department to have a lot of ACE courses. Mitchell stated that it depends on what a department's goals are. She stated that if a department is trying to increase enrollment it might be a good strategy.

McCollough asked if students transferring into an ACE course can get credit for courses they previously took. Mitchell stated that if the community college course was a direct equivalent with one of our courses which were certified for an ACE outcome, they would get credit for that outcome. She noted that she has worked with advisors on this. She stated that if a course is transferred in and it counts toward a department's course here, but our department does not have the course listed as an ACE course, then the student cannot count the transfer as an ACE course.

2.2 Academic Standards Committee

Kean noted that originally this Committee was chaired for over 20 years by Don Gregory, former Director of General Studies. She stated that the Committee's primary responsibility is to review and make decisions on academic dismissal appeals. She noted that students can appeal to her if they are unhappy with the Committee's decision but she rarely reverses the Committee's decision. She stated that Jennifer Nelson, Interim Director of the Division of General Studies, stepped into coordinate the Committee after Dr. Gregory became ill.

Kean pointed out that coordinating this Committee takes a lot of time because a number of review sessions must be organized. Typically only three members of the Committee meet at a time to review appeals. She noted that beginning in 2010-2011 student materials will all be online for the Committee members to review.

Kean stated that the work of this Committee and its coordination of it is a laborious process. She asked the Senate Executive Committee if it is time to re-evaluate the Academic Standards Committee and its needs. She stated that she wants to meet with the Committee members to discuss the Committee and the current process.

Kean stated that the Committee reviews appeals after each academic session, including summer sessions, although the heavy time is in the fall and spring. She stated that one question that might need to be considered is whether a student can take summer classes if they have been put on academic probation.

Kean stated that generally advisors assist students in the appeals process. She stated that a student must write why they should be let back into the university. If they do not appeal the dismissal, students will need to sit out for two semesters and then they have to reapply to the university. She noted that students are often dismissed because of a low grade point average.

Kean stated that things may need to be prepared differently for international students. Students do not always accept that denial of their petition means they need to return to their home country. Prochaska-Cue suggested including information in the orientation of international students about the standards the student is expected to meet in order to remain a student at the university. Kean stated that she has heard that something is done but is not sure exactly what. She stated that there is resistance on the part of some international students to participate in mid semester checks. She pointed out that we need to be doing something for international students to help them understand our expectations with academic aspects of their education and consequences of not performing as expected. Flowers suggested that cultural differences should be explained to help these students understand the expectations of the university better.

Kean stated that the Committee has heard about 59 appeals at the beginning of this semester, 17 of which have been turned down, and one that she overturned. She reported that in January 2009 there were 84 appeals and in August there were 107 appeals. Konecky asked what the total number of dismissals for the year. Kean stated that there were 230 dismissals after the fall semester. She pointed out that once students are put on probation, they have two semesters to improve their academic standing. McCollough noted that there is an advantage to students appealing dismissal because most of the appeals are approved.

Flowers asked if students are automatically put on probation if their gpa falls below 2.0. He noted that there seems to be a need to build into the system a better means of dealing with students who are put on probation. LaCost pointed out that there needs to be an intervention step before the situation gets to the appeals process.

Kean stated that some departments and colleges work closely with CAPS and recommends a student start seeing someone if they are having difficulty, but this is hit and miss.

Kean noted that students today face many issues. She stated that she hopes that we could be more proactive with the students. She noted that there really is no training to help deal with students who are becoming academically stressed.

Rapkin pointed out that for some international students failing is difficult because of the shame and disgrace it could bring for them and their family. Their actions could lead them to desperation, hence their refusing to accept no for an answer. He also noted that in Japan higher education is not as demanding because the schooling before reaching this level is so difficult so these students might have difficulty understanding the standards here.

Kean stated that only students on scholarships can be forced to see an advisor if they are having academic difficulties because these students have to maintain a certain gpa. Konecky pointed out that this may be the only step that students recognize.

Kean noted that the campus used to have mid-semester grades. She stated that the campus is looking at an instrument called Starfish that would tack on Blackboard grades of students and it could be used as an early warning system. Flowers stated that Blackboard already contains some things to do this but he and other faculty members don't trust it to work well enough.

Lindquist asked for clarification on how the student receives notification of being put on academic probation. Kean stated that the student receives a letter notifying him/her that they are on academic probation and must bring their semester and cumulative gpa up to a 2.0 by the end of the second semester they are on probation.

Konecky stated that the real issue is that there is an inadequate intervention system. She stated that if there was better intervention the Committee wouldn't be needed as much. Kean stated that efforts have been done in the past but nothing has been very effective. She stated that a grass root effort is needed in the colleges. She pointed out that when a student leaves the university it affects both the department and the university. She noted that faculty members want students to succeed. She reported that most students who leave the university on their own indicate that it is usually for financial reasons, not academic reasons.

Shea stated that students often leave for legitimate reasons. He stated that the issue needs to be carefully followed. He pointed out that we should not focus on retention at all costs because in the end it is the responsibility of the student to fulfill the requirements needed to graduate.

Kean stated that there needs to be a discussion with the members of the Academic Standards Committee to see what they are thinking about the process. Konecky noted that students who file an appeal are self-selecting themselves because they want to be back in the university. She pointed out that students have to show a plan of how they are going to succeed before an appeal is granted. She stated that the Committee assesses the student to see if they should be allowed to continue. Kean stated that the student needs to have an advisor approve the plan and often the advisor spells out the courses the student will need to take.

Kean stated that she will meet with the members of the Committee and that she and one of the Committee members will report back to the Senate Executive Committee. Karen Griffin, Coordinator of the Faculty Senate, will also attend the Committee meeting.

3.0 Announcements

3.1 General Budget Framework

Fech reported that he has been invited as part of the Chancellor's cabinet to hear the presentation on the general budget framework. He stated that this will take place on January 21st.

4.0 Minutes of 1/6/10

There was no discussion regarding the minutes of 1/6/10.

5.0 Unfinished Business

5.1 BRRRC Documents

Prochaska-Cue noted that the original changes that were requested to the document were made by some members of the APC. She stated that she had hoped the BRRRC would have created more discussions about the changes but it didn't.

Shea stated that he was surprised at how small the changes were. He noted that we need to make sure that we are comfortable with the changes because we will be held responsible for future outcomes with the way the procedures are written. He pointed out that if the Executive Committee is not comfortable with the changes then we shouldn't accept the report and we should make the changes we feel are necessary.

Fech asked if the Executive Committee can add changes to the document to make it more substantive. Shea stated that we could and one of the committee members of the BRRRC that he spoke with stated that the Executive Committee could do whatever it wants with the report.

Fech stated that he wants to validate the work that the BRRRC has done and noted that there are some good changes made to the procedures and the process of making the changes was helpful to overall shared governance. Prochaska-Cue stated that one of the values of the BRRRC meeting was that it was a collaborative group that met to work on an important document. She noted that the BRRRC consisted of representatives from the Faculty Senate, Chancellor's Office, ASUN, UNOPA, and UAAD.

Prochaska-Cue pointed out that the Chancellor has already agreed to incorporate some of the procedures into the current budget cutting process. She stated that the Chancellor has agreed on the clarification of the word consultation and is putting representatives from UNOPA and UAAD onto the APC for the budget cutting process. She stated that the Chancellor has also stated that that he will be getting the word out to the colleges and departments that recommendations on budget cuts are not to be developed solely by the administrators but by all parties.

Lindquist suggested that the Executive Committee accept the BRRRC's recommendations. If the Executive Committee wants to recommend further revisions it can do that.

Rapkin pointed out that the discussion was very abstract and suggested that members of the Executive Committee make a list of concrete recommended changes that they feel need to be in the document. The Committee agreed to review the initial draft with the suggested changes from some of the APC members and then decide whether additional changes should be made to the document proposed by the BRRRC.

6.0 New Business

6.1 Review of Senate Meeting

Fech asked if Dr. Bateman, Director of NU Online Worldwide, should be invited to address questions at an upcoming Senate meeting. Shea stated that the issue warrants discussion with the Senate. Lindquist suggested that Dr. Bateman be invited to speak briefly but primarily to answer questions from the Senate.

LaCost wondered if a message could be sent to the senators asking them if they have seen the large white binder that was distributed earlier this fall on NU Online Worldwide. She suggested letting them know that there is a document that explains the history about the program. She stated that the deans should each have a copy of this binder.

6.2 Follow Up Email Message to President Milliken

Fech reported that he sent President Milliken an email asking him to address questions regarding Innovation Campus and the Health Care Reimbursement Account. He stated that he will report back to the Committee when he receives an answer.

6.3 Senate Secretary

Rapkin stated that he has conflicts with attending the full Senate meetings on Tuesdays due to a class conflict. He noted that he would miss three Senate meetings. The Committee suggested that an Executive Committee member step in to act as secretary during the Senate meeting. Shea volunteered to step in as secretary during these meetings since he has done this in the past.

6.4 Representation on the Threat Assessment Review Committee

Fech noted that concern was expressed at the Senate meeting that there is not an academic dean on the Threat Assessment Review Committee. It was pointed out that this committee is an arena for making policies and it is important that someone from the academic side be represented on it.

The Committee agreed to discuss this with Chancellor Perlman when it meets with him on January 27th.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Wednesday, January 20th at 3:00 pm. The meeting will be held in 201 Canfield

Administration Building. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and David Rapkin, Secretary.