

ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY
FACULTY SENATE
Minutes
November 5, 2014

In attendance: Sens. Bosco, Campbell, Carrington-Farmer, Celik, Coon, Dermody, Espinosa, Gentles-Peart, Ghanem, Graham, Hollingsworth, Johnson, Langdon, Leguizamo, Menton, Micken, Noussi Kamdem, O'Connell, Platania, Reynolds, Rhyne, Roberts, Rossi, Sawoski, Schroth, Speakman, Topf, Tsankova, Turner, Warnapala, Wu.

Absent: Sens. Micken, Noussi Kamdem, Spritz

Guests: Pres. Farish, Provost Workman, VP Jerry Williams, Assoc. Provost Robert Cole

(1) Motion to accept October 1 minutes with the following corrections (O'Connell, Roberts):

Adria Updike and Jennifer Pearson attended as guests; delete extra "a" in item 1; clarify that General Education Curriculum and Planning Committee will have 5 representatives from the professional schools, 5 from FCAS and 3 from other units (item 4). It was noted that the minutes lack some information (makers and seconders). **Passed without objection.**

(2) Acknowledgment of receipt of minutes from FSCC (10/15 and 10/29), Deans' Council (10/8), Faculty Development (10/22), Admissions and Enrollment (10/29), Board liaison to Academic Affairs (10/17) and Academic Standards and Policies (10/29)

(3) Executive Committee report

Pres Topf announced that the Senate will meet in the Upper Commons from now on, starting at 2:30.

A list of committee vacancies will be circulated with suggestions for how to fill them.

VP Speakman summarized the Executive Committees 10/15 meeting with the president and the provost:

- An adjunct list will be sent to the Senate upon request to Lori Barry.
- The academic calendar will be adjusted to move warning grade deadline later in the semester, to a few days before the deadline to withdraw from a course.
- The provost will be gathering a committee to review the catalog, student handbook and other documents for inconsistencies
- HR is reviewing the job description for the Assoc Dean for Gen Ed
- Curricunet will be up and running by 10/20, with multiple training sessions
- Student Senate has raised concerns about lack of diversity in the curriculum

(4) Reports from President Farish and Provost Workman.

a) Pres. Farish:

- Search for Chief Diversity Officer is underway—50 applicants
- Academic Affairs Committee of the Board is reviewing Vision papers, and will develop a preamble that integrates what we stand for
- Pres. Farish and Pres. Topf had a conversation about whether or not the university should divest itself of stocks in fossil fuel corporations; as a result of that conversation, the Pres. invited CFO Jerry Williams to address the Senate on the matter.

b) Jerry Williams:

- RWU has a small endowment that needs full diversification to avoid major impact from market swings
- 89% of the endowment is managed by a fund manager who commingles RWU funds with many other sources; they cannot be separated
- Investments are overseen by a committee of the board
- The endowment had an 18.5% rate of return in the last fiscal year
- Pres. Farish suggested that the best way to reduce RWU's carbon footprint was not to change investments, but to strive to be a carbon-neutral campus.

c) Provost Workman:

- warning grades: 1477 were issued by 147 faculty, most is CAS, next SECCM, then GSB. The date for submission will be March 17th in the spring.
- Curricunet is up and running; 28 faculty have been trained so far
- Call for 4 faculty members to serve on Gen Ed Assoc Dean Search Comm
- Academic integrity: we need a larger conversation to get beyond where we are
- Technology Council: need to elect one faculty representative
- Question: why only one? Answer: this is a university wide committee that oversees the AITC, which has several faculty on it. Perhaps the Senate could establish a technology committee that feeds into the Tech Council via the rep.
- Diversity Core Course: the Core Committee will draft a response to the students' concerns

(5) Report from the Advisory Committee on Faculty Led Programs, Sen. Bosco reporting

The committee is developing clear standards for these programs; also working on a Global Scholars program. Meets once a month.

Motion (O'Connell, Roberts) One of the elected members of the Advisory Committee will forward the Committee's minutes to the Senate. Passed without objection.

(6) Report from the Provost on preparing limited English proficiency students for college-level work. Assoc. Provost Cole reporting.

A handout was distributed providing data on international students

Main challenges are: language, class participation, academic integrity, advising and mentoring, campus life, and legal requirements.

Cole has assembled a committee which has done a SWOT analysis and has come up with a number of ideas:

Higher TOEFL scores, enhanced Bridge program, intensive reading and writing before start of first year, learning modules designed to enhance language skills, recasting the mission of ELI, faculty development, tutoring, enhancing the role of the Spiegel Center as provider of academic support, creation of an international residence hall.

Assoc. Provost Cole will canvass the faculty to solicit their ideas.

Questions were raised about the ELS program, about why there is no requirement to live on campus, and about advising for exchange students.

(7) Motion (Topf, Speakman) that the Senate adopt the Statement on Administration Response to Student Complaints about an Instructor. Passed 30-1-0

Topf presented his statement (attached) and gave examples of instances where faculty prerogatives were interfered with by deans, coaches and others. For example, one faculty member received from a coach a list of "excusable absences;" this is not the coach's call. Other faculty members have been asked to change grades or make courses less difficult. There is a pattern of insufficient recognition of the dignity and role of the teacher.

Extended discussion ensued that focused on the practice that students have developed of going to deans, provost or presidents with complaints about faculty. Both Pres. and Provost agreed that there is a strong presumption in favor of the faculty member, but that parents' concerns must be listened to.

(8) Motion that the Steering Committee be charged with clarifying the role of the Registrar in the curriculum approval process.

The motion was withdrawn by Speakman after FSCC Chair Hollingsworth explained that Registrar Romano's name was appearing early in the process as result of login problems that have since been resolved.

(9) Motion (Topf, Campbell) That the Steering committee be charged with reporting to the Senate on the deadlines for approval of faculty searches. Passed 26-3-1

The provost explained that for budgetary reasons, some searches were approved last spring, some early fall, and some in late fall. A question was asked about whether disciplinary timetables were taken into account. The provost suggested that this information could be included when a department requests a position.

(10) Motion (Topf, Hollingsworth) that the Elections Committee be charged with conducting elections to the General Education Curriculum and Planning Committee. Passed without objection.

(11) Motion (Topf, Hollingsworth) that the elections committee be charged with the election of a faculty member and an alternate to the new Technology Council. Passed without objection.

This motion was put on the agenda at the request of Provost Workman. The language “and an alternate” was added as a result of Senate discussion. The first meeting is November 19th at 2:30.

(12) Motion (Speakman, Rhyne) To charge the Elections Committee with conducting elections for four faculty members to serve on the Associate Dean of General Education search committee. Passed without objection.

(13) Request to Senator Menton for an update on SCS granting of credit for alternative experience, in particular with regard to VISTA.

Sen. Menton read a statement about assessment of prior learning, inviting faculty input in the process, noting that he was having a meeting at his home on 11/11 for those interested in assessing portfolios, suggesting that SCS is seeking to improve on the existing process, and acknowledging a relationship with the VISTA training and support division.

(14) Committee reports

a. Curriculum: from the minutes of October 15 and 29, 2014:

Motion (Hollingsworth, Bosco): to acknowledge Roxanne O’Connell’s work on developing and maintaining the curriculum website. Without objection.

Motion (Hollingsworth, Sawoski): To accept the FSCC’s recommendation regarding Core 102, Physics, IB, CW 340, Jour 430, Jour 320, Dance 430, Comm 200 and PR. Without objection.

Motion (Hollingsworth, Espinosa): To accept the FSCC’s recommendation that a printed university catalog be provided to all members of the various CC’s each year. Without objection.

Motion (Hollingsworth, Espinosa): To accept the FSCC’s recommendation regarding the use of the term “on demand” in the catalog. Passed with one abstention.

Motion (Hollingsworth, Espinosa): To accept the FSCC’s recommendations in item 3 of the October 15 minutes regarding EDU, Music, CIS, HP and others. Without objection.

Other committees: no motions.

Adjournment at 4:30

Attachment #1

STATEMENT ON ADMINISTRATION RESPONSE TO STUDENT

COMPLAINTS ABOUT AN INSTRUCTOR

Passed by the Faculty Senate
November 5, 2014

This statement is on the administration's responses to student complaints about an instructor's policies or decisions.

In the interests of affirming the University's interest in academic excellence and intellectual rigor, the administration should support faculty holding high standards. Hence there must be a strong presumption that when an instructor (1) has a policy or (2) makes a grading or other decision within his or her sound professional discretion, that policy or decision is proper and valid. The administration should avoid overturning a policy or reversing a decision, or unduly pressuring an instructor into doing so, unless there is clear and convincing evidence that the instructor has committed error, misjudgment or misconduct.

When a dean or other member of the administration learns of a student's complaint about an instructor's policy or decision, the administrator should not take any action to challenge or reverse the instructor's policy or decision without first informing the instructor of the complaint and allowing opportunity to respond. The burden of presenting at least some evidence of error, misjudgment or misconduct is always on the person complaining about the instructor's policy or decision.

The instructor has three requirements for a policy or decision to be valid. First, students have been effectively informed of the course policy or standard. Second, the policies and standards are reasonably related to the goals of the course, the program, and University policies, or otherwise fall into the traditional areas of an instructor's authority (such as attendance requirements, civility, deadlines, and assignments). Third, the standards and policies are applied equitably.

However intellectually demanding or educationally rigorous an instructor's policies or decisions may be, they should not be challenged by an administrator except on a showing of the instructor's error, misjudgment or misconduct.