

Minutes

Faculty Senate Meeting

***** The complete recording for this meeting can be found at <http://www.american.edu/facultysenate/agendas-minutes.cfm> Sep 9, 2015**

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Present: Professors: Larry Engel, Todd Eisentadt, Lacey Wootton, David Banks, Kyle Brannon, Rachel Borchardt, Chris Edelson Maria Gomez, Olivia Ivey, Kelly Joyner, Billie Jo Kaufman, Despina Kakoudaki, Iris Krasnow, Joshua Lansky, Gwanhoo Lee, Jun Lu, Mary Mintz, John Nolan, Andrea Pearson, Steve Silvia, Chris Simpson, Kate Wilson, Brian Yates, Provost Scott Bass and DAA Mary L. Clark.

Professor Engel called the meeting to order at 2:40 PM.

Professor Engel welcomed all new and returning members to the Senate and expressed his honor to serve as chair. Professor Engel reminded all senators of some small meeting operation details, and each member introduced themselves for the record.

Minutes Approval – Larry Engel

Professor Engel introduced the minutes from the May 13, 2015, meeting and opened the floor for discussion. No discussion was needed and the Senate **VOTED** and approved the minutes 23-0-0 in favor.

Chair's Report – Larry Engel

Nominations for At-Large and Additional Senator for the Executive Committee

Professor Engel stated that the Executive Committee selected John Nolan and Andrea Pearson to be the at-large and additional senator representatives for the Executive Committee for AY 2015-2016. He asked if there were any other nominations or self-nominations for these seats.

Professor Chris Simpson said that he was concerned about the transparency of the operations of the Executive Committee and would like the senators to be more informed about such decisions like selection of Executive Committee representatives prior to arriving at the Senate floor for a vote.

Professor Engel stated that he takes Professor Simpson's comment "to heart" and feels that the current procedure could be changed to be a more transparent process.

Professor Wootton stated this would involve a change to the by-laws since the change is part of the role of the Executive Committee's responsibility. She stated she is open to this suggestion, but the membership of the Senate in May is not the same as it is when the Senate returns in the fall. Should the selections be made from the old Senate membership or the new membership? Professor Wootton stated that she would be happy to address the issue and asked for suggestions to be emailed to her as well as for Professor Simpson to send some possible suggestions he might have to assist in making this change.

Professor Engel asked the Senate to vote on the current nominees, John Nolan and Andrea Pearson, and the Senate **VOTED** in favor 21-0-2.

Grade Inflation

Professor Engel stated that a Grade Inflation Committee is being formulated and that he is looking for volunteers from the Senate. Currently we have representation from three units, ex-officio members from CTRL and the Vice Provost's Office, specifically Lyn Stallings. Professor Engel requested the senators to email him if they would like to serve.

Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies Search – Lacey Wootton

Professor Wootton informed the Senate of Vice Provost of Undergraduate Studies Lyn Stallings return to the classroom at the end of the academic year. She stated that she will be chairing the search committee and that she hopes to have the search completed in early spring.

Provost's Report – Scott Bass

Provost Bass stated that the enrollment for the first-year class is slightly over the record number from last year. The yield is way up, and the campus is flooded with triples. Additionally, he stated:

- More money was moved from merit scholarships to need-based scholarships. This year 80% want to need.
- Other campus demographics remain largely stable.
- Graduate numbers were not met overall, but the budget will balance; some schools did meet or exceed goals.
- Current dean searches include WCL, KSB and School of Education.
- General Education program changes are underway and will be brought to the Senate soon.
- Leads with graduate students are good but finalizing them has been difficult.

Dean of Academic Affairs Term Faculty Salaries Report – Mary L. Clark

Dean Clark stated that she has had discussions with the Senate and the ad hoc Term Faculty Committee about how the university might improve compensation to be more competitive for term faculty. She stated that led by the Provost, during the most recent budget cycle, a commitment to increase the lowest salaries had been approved, and allocations began during the September 2015 merit increase period. The majority of the allocations this year have been dispersed to the most underpaid. This process will take a total of \$1.6 million to reduce the gap involving the lowest salaries, and she stated the administration is optimistic that additional funds will be provided in the next budget cycle to complete the task of raising the lowest salaries.

High Impact Research Report – Jon Tubman

Vice Provost of Graduate Studies and Research Jon Tubman stated that he would begin by going over the process the committee went through and their goals, followed by answering any questions.

VP Tubman stated the following:

- The overarching question the committee addressed in this report was, “What can the university do to assist AU faculty to communicate and disseminate the results of their research, scholarship, and creative activities?”
- The major themes of the report are translating scholarship to outside audiences, disseminating scholarship, and best practices for fostering high-impact research.
- The overall benefits the committee saw include enhancing the university’s national reputation and faculty career trajectories, and attracting new faculty and well-qualified students.
- The committee also discussed incentives for faculty, existing campus resources, additional resources, and communication and media strategies.

Professor Wootton asked what the committee expected the role of the Senate to be after this presentation.

VP Tubman stated that one important issue that would be a place for the Senate’s input is to look at how a faculty member is rewarded for his or her high-impact research and the role of a public scholar. These are not written into the tenure and promotion guidelines or any metrics for annual raises.

Professor Engel stated that the current document requests input from the Senate on “recognizing the importance of public voice, media, outreach.....in the standards of tenure and promotion” and this could be a starting place for the Senate.

Professor Mintz proposed a motion to refer the report to the CFA and ask them to review the referenced section mentioning promotion and tenure and possibly make a possible recommendation to revise language.

Professor Engel called to question the proposed motion to refer the 2 paragraph on page 4 in the High Impact Report to be sent to the CFA for review and possible recommendation. The Senate **VOTED** and the motion was approved 20-2-1.

Professor Engel stated that the report was presented informationally and is not being presented for an overall vote.

Freedom of Academic Expression Resolution – Larry Engel

Professor Engel stated that the Executive Committee has crafted language that has been brought forward for the Senate's approval. He then asked the Provost to give the senators some background.

Provost Bass stated that historically universities are a pivotal institution for accommodating different voices, but over the last several years there have been incidents that are troubling to the notion of academic freedom. He stated that "AU is still an institution where ideas flourish and even ideas that may be found repugnant can still find ability to be voiced." This has been an issue at many campuses. The primary issue that faculty are seeking is guidance on where the university stands on issues of intellectual freedom in the classroom. AU wants to ensure that faculty at AU have the freedom and the full understanding to express points of view that students may find uncomfortable.

The Senate discussed the document and made several friendly amendments. The Senate **VOTED** and the document was passed unanimously 23-0-0.

Senate Committees' Annual Reports for 2014-2015

Committee on Learning Assessment (COLA) – David Banks

Professor Banks stated that COLA worked with many units on learning assessment. The main initiatives were 1) collection and review of assessment reports, 2) strategies for mapping curriculum and 3) ways to enhance knowledge and assessment of institutional outcomes. He stated that COLA will continue to work on ways to support the faculty community to improve student learning.

Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UCC) – Maria Gomez

Professor Gomez stated that the committee was successful in completing a two-week turn around (or less) for reviewing proposals. From summer 2014 to the present, the UCC reviewed a total of 76 proposals.

Graduate Curriculum Committee – Jun Lu

Professor Lu stated that the GCC reviewed 64 proposals. The committee was able to meet the two-week turn around except for one proposal that needed revisions. The committee worked over the summer to review approximately 10 proposals.

Committee on Information Services (CIS) – Chris Simpson

Professor Simpson stated that CIS worked on submitting budget recommendations concerning communication and information services for faculty. CIS participated in the Social Media Policy recommendation, worked to add photo' to class rosters, advocated for access for people with disabilities to the AU computing and information services, and made recommendations to the AB&B committee to submit for budget consideration.

Committee on Academic Budget and Benefits (CABB) – John Douglass

Professor Douglass stated that CABB started the review of reports for the budget cycle, which included review of tuition and room and board expenses and term faculty salaries, and CABB was able to meet with CIS to discuss technology recommendations. The guidelines that CABB submitted were approved by the BOT; however, due to budget constraints the committee presented a list of suggested requests to the President for consideration. CABB, along with the University Benefits Committee, reviewed the dental and health plans, and increases to Carefirst, Kaiser and Delta Dental are anticipated in the next cycle. The committee also participated in the language changes to the *Faculty Manual* Section 25, Pg. 68 Early Retirement Incentive.

Committee on Faculty Actions (CFA) – Steve Silvia

Professor Silvia stated that the CFA reviewed a total of 58 files. The CFA additionally fulfilled the five-year review of the Promotion and Tenure Guidelines for all units except the Washington College of Law.

Committee on Faculty Grievances (CFG) – John Douglass

Professor Engel stated that he needed to inform the Senate that since we audio record Senate meetings, discussion of this report and its recommendations may become part of ongoing litigation; further, if we form a committee as recommended by the CFG, those members who serve on it may also become part of the litigation and could be deposed. Lastly, since the case is currently in litigation, it seems that an investigation is already underway, and the Senate should wait for this outcome before addressing the concerns of the report.

Professor Douglass stated that the committee worked very hard and takes seriously the cases brought before it. While the committee is considering the cases, they meet weekly for one hour. All cases are handled with confidentiality. This year the committee reviewed two cases that both received positive reviews from all previous evaluations and external reviewers but were denied tenure by the Provost. Both reports were sent forward to the President. Professor Douglass stated the committee has asked him to read the following statement: “The pattern of positive evaluation except at the last level raises concerns. If junior faculty are advised by senior faculty and follow guidelines established by their academic units approved by the Provost but are denied tenure on the basis of criteria not known to the parties involved, then the tenure process is not transparent. If the recognized guidelines are not adhered to, then tenure decisions appear to be arbitrary, and can only harm AU’s reputation among prestigious reviewers at other universities and among academics at large.”

Professor Douglass stated that the committee was charged by the President in reference to one case to investigate the discrimination charge, which turned out to be the charge of the committee. The committee asked for additional information, and some was received from the DAA, and the committee found a possible pattern that in some cases women and relatively older scholars are denied tenure at a significantly higher rate than males and younger candidates. The small number of cases that the committee could view were not that conclusive, so the CFG is recommending that the problem is serious enough that the Faculty Senate should consider a full-scale investigation. Dealing with the same grievances, they also looked at the language for the committee in the *Faculty Manual*, but after talking with the DAA Mary Clark, the committee feels that most of the recommended changes would not be approved by the Board of Trustees. The CFG feels they need clearly spelled

out procedures in the *Faculty Manual* on dealing with equity issues involving the Office of the Provost. They do not propose that it be the person oversees such cases but urge that there be some mention in the *Faculty Manual* of what the proper procedures are.

Professor Engel asked if there was any discussion and none was had.

Provost Bass stated that it is important for him to state that as Chief Academic Officer, he reviews each file independently based on the work that is presented and follows the *Manual*, which makes it clear that there is an independent review at each level. It is agonizing to deny anyone tenure who has gone through this process, but he stated he uses the guidelines in the *Manual* to make his judgment. At this time he has reviewed and made decisions on 181 cases, and each was reviewed carefully. Out of 181 cases, there are only a handful that have been denied, and he stated that they have all been reviewed with the same process.

Dean of Academic Affairs Mary Clark stated that more than 90% of the cases the Provost has reviewed have been approved for tenure and the denial rate was 9.63%.

RiSE/ Mellon Grant Update – Peter Starr, Sharon Alston and Fanta Aw

Dean Peter Starr stated that the Mellon Foundation has given AU a \$150,000 grant. Dean Starr stated that he would like to answer one question: “Why RiSE?” (Reinventing the Student Experience). The student body has changed so much over time, and with new demographics and a very diverse student body, they need more effective support systems. The overall hope of RiSE is to not coddle students, but make their four years at AU a more cohesive and supportive experience. Additionally, technology has brought many new issues to the college experience.

Vice Provost Sharon Alston gave an overview of the structure of the committee and sub-committees and each group’s responsibilities.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 PM