

College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Faculty Senate
October 26, 2016
Submitted by Bryan McCann

Present: Wilfred Major (president/Interdisciplinary Studies), Bryan McCann (at-large), Dorothy McCaughey (ENGL), Jamie Greer (FLL), Steve Namikas (Geo&Anth), David Chicoine (Geo&Anth), Joe Clare (POLI), Elsie Michie (ENGL; proxy for Michael Bibler (at-large)), Isaiah Lavender III (ENGL), Carolyn Ware (at-large), Andrea Castillo (FLL), Emily Batinski (FLL), William Saas (CMST), Mark Wagner (FLL), Hyunju Chung (COMD), Alan Baumeister (PSYC), Steven Greening (PSYC), Angeletta Gourdine (ENGL)

- I. Introductions
- II. Minutes from 14 September 2016 approved
- III. Old business
 - a. Update on internship policies (C. Ware)
 - i. Internships are now managed through career center, so it's not clear if the senate has a role to play now
 - ii. We have learned that course releases are available for overseeing several internships
 - iii. Relevant documents accompanied agenda
 - iv. W. Major will contact Dean Haynie to see if there remains any role for us to play here
 - b. HSS policies on graduate student funding
 - i. J. Leichman sent report, which is attached to agenda
 - ii. Ultimately, there does not appear to be a "groundswell of support for challenging these policies" at the moment, although the senate may seek further clarification from the Dean's Office regarding the new policy
 - iii. Willie will prepare a list of questions for Dean Haynie, share it with senators, and then send it to the Dean's Office
 - iv. **If your department has not yet responded to J. Leichman's queries, please encourage your DGS to do so.**
 - c. Grade inflation/DFW
 - i. Dean was a guest at April 12 meeting and discussed DFWs; **relevant portions of the minutes from this meeting are pasted below**
 - ii. Is there a way to gauge *why* students are dropping or withdrawing from classes? Students drop for many reasons, many/most of which have little to do with the instructor.
 1. This could be challenging/impossible since grade recordings occur with the Registrar's Office, not at the college level
 - iii. Ex-senator C. Barrett suggested more substantive course evaluation process
 - iv. Lingered questions about university policy
 - v. Pursuing comment/action from the university faculty senate could a) challenge/end this policy or b) provide clarity regarding its consistency with university policies

- vi. Is it appropriate to include DFW language in employment letters?
 - vii. What order should we follow? Initially address our concerns/issue a grievance with the dean? Go to university faculty senate first? Consult university lawyers? Approach dean with alternative measures for recruitment?
 - viii. W. Major and B. McCann will assemble a paper trail regarding this issue and share it with the entire senate.
- IV. New business
- a. HSS bylaws and LSU Faculty Senate elections
 - i. Relevant language included with agenda
 - ii. Goal is to make college process of determining university senators consistent with LSU Senate Constitution; would likely require HSS Senate to change bylaws
 - iii. K. Cope is concerned because senators are often *selected* by departments (in the interest of equitable allocation) rather than *elected* by entire college
 - iv. What are other colleges doing?
 - v. **W. Major will forward original message from K. Cope expressing concerns to senators**
 - b. Fellowships and leave
 - i. College is changing approach to external fellowships
 - ii. Currently no clear college policy/guidelines
 - iii. Questions/concerns relative to covering classes, how leave impacts smaller programs, what minimum amount of fellowship is for college to approve
 - iv. **A. Whitmer will attend next meeting and discuss this with us**
- V. Adjourn – **Next meeting on November 30**

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April 12, 2016
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Tasks

Present: Wilfred Major (president/Interdisciplinary Studies), Bryan McCann (at-large), William Saas (CMST), Dorothy McCaughey (ENGL), Chris Barrett (ENGL), Kodi Roberts (History), Jim Stoner (proxy for Dan Tirone, PoliSci), Carolyn Ware (at-large), Jeffrey Leichman (French Studies), Stacia Haynie (HSS Dean), Michael Barton (SOCL), Belinda Davis (LSU Faculty Senate HSS), Elaina McMurry (COMD), Michael Bibler (at-large)

Discussion with Dean Haynie (questions/comments from senators in **bold**)

- VI. Student success, DFW rates, etc.
- a. How do DFWs figure into assessment?**
 - i. Mechanism for recruitment and retention
 - ii. Less variability in students over the years (current average ACT is 25.7)
 - iii. College asks that faculty tell the college about students who are struggling in class
 - iv. College is investing in resources to help struggling students
 - v. Midterm grades also figure very significantly into tracking students
 - b. How do DFWs figure into evaluation of faculty?**
 - i. Dean receives grade distribution for every section of every class
 - ii. Gets compared to unit, college, and university trends, as well as prior years for the individual instructor
 - iii. Average across the university is about 20% (higher for freshmen and sophomores), consistently higher for a faculty member is potentially problematic
 - iv. Presumption is that the faculty member is grading rigorously. Focus is not on faculty member reducing course difficulty, etc., but trying to draw on other resources to help students.
 - v. How does this figure into annual reviews if it's not addressed at a departmental level? In general, how is this communicated to faculty? Will this be evaluated by P&T?**
 - 1. College doesn't do annual reviews for tenured faculty
 - 2. Non-tenured faculty reviewed by college during third year review. College approaches this as an opportunity to cover concerns not addressed by unit. This includes DFW rates above appropriate average.
 - 3. No present mechanism for college feedback beyond third year review and tenure
 - vi. Isn't there a risk for corruption/inflation?**
 - 1. It's possible, but wouldn't a honest/talented professor want to know if they have a high DFW rate?

- vii. Academic affairs also track these numbers, so it is in the best interest of the faculty member and college to catch any issues early
- viii. Grade distribution is available online
- ix. Above 30% gets flagged for third year review feedback, but trends are what generate the most concern
- x. College attempts to account for class size and other variables
- xi. What about classes that are traditionally “difficult”? Do they need to be more mindful about grading on a bell curve?**
 - 1. That is at the instructor’s discretion
 - 2. From the dean’s perspective, concerns emerge when numbers are high relative to multiple sections of the same class
- xii. 2009 faculty senate resolution explicitly prohibits penalizing faculty for grade distribution. Could this generate faculty senate pushback?**
 - 1. Dean welcomes discussion with FS and other groups
 - 2. Does anyone think we *shouldn’t* be concerned about this?
- xiii. Are there more constructive ways we can approach this since it is a shared concern between faculty and the college? Focus collectively on the basics of student success?**
- xiv. **Why are W’s coupled with D’s and F’s?**
 - 1. They are different, but high trends are still problematic
- xv. **Can we be sensitive to timing of a “W”?**
 - 1. Could be worth discussing with university to implement a more nuanced approach to how W’s are recorded against an instructor
- xvi. **What about other instruments for measuring success?**
 - 1. College would welcome new ones and already uses additional measures (course evaluations, classroom visits, etc.)
- xvii. **Clarity on this issue is especially relevant for NTT faculty**