Faculty Senate Meeting with Liaisons
Summary of Notes
October 21, 2020

Topic 1: External Observer (EO) on Personnel Committee During T&P
Discussions/Decisions

- No T&P problems reported in Comp Science or Math
- One liaison says they have no problem with an observer, two are unconvinced
  and would like more information
- How would external observer solve a problem if it arises? To whom do they
  report?
  - If problem, you defend person who isn’t there. You won’t necessarily know
    all that happens outside the meeting, but ensure the meeting itself occurs
    appropriately (and step in if it doesn’t)
- How would observer be chosen?
  - Could be senator, could be someone nominated/appointed from another
    college, could be extension of ombudsman
- How would they be trained and selected to ensure they are successful? How
  would we assure the EO has not relationship with the applicant or any bias
  towards or against the applicant?
- Concerns about time commitment for EO (training + one T&P meeting per year)
- What does the EO have access to in regards to department policies? To the
  individual going up for tenure?
- What are the guidelines of the EO within the process? It should be clear in a
  policy what the role of the EO will be.
- How much weight or influence does the EO have on the process?
- With inconsistencies of how PC’s operate, how can the EO make sure the
  process is ethical?
- How will the scheduling of EO and the T&P process work so that EO’s are not
  taken out of their own programs and departments?
- In order for there not be bullying involved in the EO process, EO’s should come
  from a different college.
- Are EO’s required or requested? Should it be mandatory for all PC T&P
  processes?
- Is there a screening process to choose EO’s?
- Those that have larger PC’s, how could having an observer or any other
  members that aren’t tenure track allow for proper input from everyone? (equity
  issues for certain faculty getting longer conversations than others. Example could
  be who is first discussed versus who is discussed last)
- What would the new non-tenure track rank (Assistant Professor of Instruction)
  mean for people who want to switch from lecturer to clinical?
- What about the service demands that it would create for the observer?
- Would the criteria be decided by the departments or university?
Salary is never discussed in these meetings, so should it be? (equity issues: equity adjustments for salaries)

Can we ask the PC how they feel?

Language: “observer” vs “witness”

Recommendation to make the EO optional as per the person who is applying for T&P’s discretion. It could be made less adversarial by providing a check off on a routing form where the faculty member can indicate their desire to have an EO.

Is there another solution for the problem we are trying to solve?

We do not need or want an outside observer, it’s too confusing. As an alternative, all PCs across the university elect a Full Professor who would be charged to keep abreast of all PC T&P procedures and charged to stay alert in PC T&P meetings for breaches of policy and be given the ability to stop any conversations or breaches that violate policies.

I don’t like the idea of an observer at PC meetings. Maybe it would be better to have an impartial party in case someone wants to report a failure to follow the process. Logistically it would be a mess for every department to have an observer.

We were informed about this idea during the Joint Meeting of CAD, Council of Chairs and Faculty Senate this fall and we were all stunned and provided a lot of feedback on it. We were not asked to inform anyone and understood Senate had already talked to faculty, since in their presentation the Senate reps indicated the Senate had full backing of all Senators and their college.

At other institutions it is common to have external members for PhD and PC committees. It provides a level of transparency for problems.

Many faculty are opposed due to new service burden and additional bureaucratic layer this solution creates.

General negative feelings of being watched/overseen and could have a chilling effect on normal conversations.

Procedures already in place and faculty should be responsible for making sure guidelines are followed.

How often are there reports of impropriety — are there that many wildfires that need to be put out?

Does inappropriate behavior occur in PC meetings?

Outside observer role may be a valuable tool for faculty of color or other underrepresented faculty who may not have had an opportunity to be as involved in department activities or decision making.

Seems like a responsive policy – create the PC policy first

Concerns about logistics and bureaucratic nature of adding an external observer.

It is the Department Chair’s job to ensure current guidelines/policies are followed and there is due process for anyone who feels like they’ve been treated unfairly or inappropriately.

Although I assume the impulse to have an external person present at PC meetings is to ward off unfairness, I do not support this proposal. Faculty autonomy has been eroded incrementally over the years I have been teaching.
and this move would introduce another bureaucratic layer to faculty decision making and subsequent loss of autonomy. If the goal of 'standardizing' decision making processes and outcomes is realized through this bureaucratic maneuver then expect faculty to feel even more alienated from the governance of their departments and their workplace than they do at present. In human relationships instances of unfairness are inherent, and the university has in place processes of review and remedy for faculty who believe themselves to be affected by unfair decisions. If these processes are not adequate, then fix them.

- Numerous respondents voiced support for the proposal of adding an EO, stating it would create equity and provide an objective opinion, and it would be a good reminder to all to provide constructive feedback.
- Problematic departments will have to move their discriminatory behavior into private spaces, which will have the same outcome but at least be less visibly hurtful.
- This has the potential to reduce bias in the promotion process and ensure that women and faculty of color (two example of groups less-represented at highest ranks) are given equal opportunity to succeed.
- I don’t like the idea of a designated person. It really is too much for one person. Perhaps by college, we move from one tenured track faculty member to the next, if scheduling would not allow that person, the next person in line would attend. This is the way outside reviewers were assigned for dissertation defenses at my prior university worked.
- Could the observer misinterpret personnel committee criticism against a faculty member because they (the observer) don’t understand the nature of what is acceptable (i.e. regarding research) for a specific discipline? Could they cause more harm than good in some way by not being able to see unjust criticism/decision making because they do not understand the field of expertise or what is acceptable work? This concern may only really apply they have access to and view the box submissions of faculty.
- Additional evidence of the slide towards increased administrative burdens in our work.
- As a full professor, I think it is a good idea if the following is clearly identified:
  1. Need clear goals of the observer
  2. Need training for the observer
  3. Need clear guidelines for PC
  4. If instituted, this should be mandatory for all departments/schools across the university.
  5. I do not think it should be optional where a faculty have to ask for it. This might create an atmosphere of distrust and also the faculty who might want this might feel unease to ask (fear that they might offend the PC)

**Topic 2: COVID**

**General comments**

- There is skepticism regarding COVID dashboard – more transparency needed
- I question how well our contact tracing is working.
• It is very stressful with looming budget cuts and no transparency. Are the President and Provost taking a pay cut before they let additional faculty go?
• Faculty workloads are inconsistent and workload expectations are uneven. Most of us are expected to be producing scholarly work. There is no time for research. Worried how this will effect tenure and promotion decisions.
• Can a faculty member ask for travel money while holding workplace modifications? Can this situation be handled on a case-by-case basis?
• Greatly appreciated the Senate survey and us voicing the opinions of those who were hesitant to come back to campus!
• Difficult to teach hybrid and meet students' needs who are in the class and who are online
• Faculty are in class twice as much because labs have been split
• Mandated training and meetings – pushback from faculty on the Cybersecurity training; could the training have been made a little simpler?; the IT department has taken a rigid approach to the interpretation of state law; fear of a security breach has led to halting of progress and innovation
• Concern about budgets: doom and gloom, we can’t cut anymore, no cuts to administration
• Faculty have not been adequately compensated or acknowledged for all of the administrative changes imposed in response to the virus
• Faculty are exhausted. Faculty are being asked to engage, connect, support students, etc. when they, themselves, who are not counselors, and are juggling issues in their personal lives (caregiving, loneliness, home schooling, increased anxiety of loved ones, etc.). The administration needs to explicitly encourage Deans and Chairs to allow flexibility for all faculty who are behind on research, get lower teaching evaluations, etc. It cannot simply be encouraged. Something should be put in writing that essentially gives all faculty support and flexibility in annual reviews and T&P decisions in 2020 and 2021. Faculty are concerned that the administration is not listening to them.
• Overwork, overwhelm, declining mental health - would be really nice to see the faculty senate put out a statement advocating for the recognition of the importance of faculty well-being and the recognition that many faculty are working under new levels of stress and pressure (from home and work) - encouraging faculty to do less in order to care for themselves.
• Readdressing the fee for online classes for students (don't know if this counts as "beyond teaching").
• How are my evaluations going to be done this year? Students are disgruntled and I fear my evals are going to be reflective of that. Additionally as a senior lecturer I'm only evaluated on student evals and service. I haven't been able to do as much service due to Covid obviously and with those two both being affected I'm concerned.
• It is the personal issues of the students - depression, loneliness, concerns over money, losing their jobs or having to move back home and if graduating, trying to find a job. I try to be as accommodating as possible, however there is so much more extra work involved with assignment extensions, test re-takes, etc.
Hybrid classes are too difficult: make classes either online or in person
  - Students in hybrid classes tend to migrate towards online only – is the f2f component helpful?
  - Possible solutions: move largest classes online to make space for f2f, or allow classes to move online more freely
  - Faculty are doing twice as much work because teaching theaters are not equipped to handle hybrid f2f teaching needs

The availability of funds for faculty to purchase technology to enhance the online experience is needed (lights, microphones, etc.)

Student engagement is difficult, training would be useful

No consistency with attendance and assignment submission. How much flexibility are faculty to supposed to give without repercussions?

AB and various modalities for teaching are continuing to be a challenge. I am frustrated about concessions being made for students and about the quality of education we are offering.

Students are experiencing burnout and their mental health is being challenged.

A lot of feedback from students and faculty that this fall has been a challenge. Faculty are offering so many different options and configurations that it is challenging for the students.

If they develop a vaccine, I will come back f2f.

President eluded to the fact students would have a choice about remote or f2f but didn’t consider the fallout of this promise.

It was expressed that some chairs asked for teaching observations for junior faculty during COVID times still and that has been difficult to accomplish meaningfully (what does this mean for faculty teaching asynchronously?).

Some chairs are listed on Canvas as alternate professors giving them access to all course materials. Is this a rule, or something one department is only doing? Worried that access could impinge on the course itself while active, or someone having the capacity to change/alter things. Could this situation be seen as impacting academic freedom? If Chairs need access to a faculty member’s Canvas site to conduct a teaching evaluation, the faculty could give them guest access for a day or limited period of time.

The hardest thing is to determine how to give exams: if virtual, have to have a proctor, which the student pays for, and some take it online and some take it in person, so to avoid cheating, have to give an essay question exam; one department asks students to log on to Canvas and the students are monitored by GAs and faculty; another department lost their GAs in the budget cuts so there is additional burden on faculty; Will the university purchase a proctoring software for us? Can ask Dana Willett in ODS.

Appreciated that faculty got a great deal of say in their class teaching modality.

Faculty who have not made their classes virtual after Thanksgiving are getting pressure to do so.
Planning for Fall 2021

- Should plan for online option; faculty who are at highest risk of serious illness if infected by the vaccine should be given the option to teach fully online, and if the evidence shows that faculty and students are not being well served by the hybrid teaching modality then it should be abandoned.
- Possibly plan for f2f with backup plan for online instruction as needed
- Plan for extra time between classes for setup of hybrid/online instruction
- Can the course fees be reallocated differently?
- Concern about moving fully f2f in the fall; it will be a disservice to be fully f2f; faculty prefer to continuing option for online/hybrid because COVID won't be gone and there is no guarantee that a vaccine will be ready, effective, and available; by the time a sufficient percentage of the population are vaccinated, it will be closer to Spring 2022
- Concerns about vaccines, protective equipment, some faculty think that faculty choice needs to be affirmed
- Not comfortable requiring students or employees to come to campus unless there is significant availability of vaccine.
- The schedule should not be formalized until more information is available.
- Fine holding class f2f.
- I can't even wrap my mind around this question. I don't think it is productive to think about this right now. We won't schedule fall until January, at least, right? We are learning each week, how to do this better, let's give ourselves the benefit of the doubt. Yes, we have been neglectful of certain programs, cramming hundreds of students into classrooms that are not fit for purpose. In some cases, our programs may see a permanent transition to online as a way to handle this shameful neglect of some programs who did not benefit from increased space in the building or who still need modern, spacious, well ventilated classrooms.
  That's how I feel. I also think we might lose a few faculty who cannot adjust to the circumstances to retirement.
- I think we cannot go back to full classrooms. Class options should be the same as they are for Spring 2020.
- I'm coming back to F2F in the spring and I'm fine with coming back fall 2021.
- I currently teach 2 f2f classes. The students have been good in general. Only problem is that I have to constantly meet the different needs of students for assignments, tests, etc. for a variety of COVID related reasons. It is like running 4 classes.
- Not good. I am afraid with face2face we will see a decline in student numbers. Students and faculty will still be looking to protect themselves and those they live around.
- Scheduling f2f in the Fall is not a huge worry to me. While I know there is a risk, I personally prefer f2f because my students seem to learn best in that modality.
- I think scheduling the courses F2F is fine as long as there are clear assurances that courses will be moved online/hybrid if there is not sufficient progress made on eradication of the virus. This would require very clear protocol about what input will be used to make the decision, and by what date the decision will be made.
• It makes me nervous and I'm not sure how students feel either. I think it is good to focus on online teaching and/or hybrid models.
• I prefer to have face to face classes - I need it, students need it - we all thrive in that environment!