

Faculty Senate Executive Committee

March 2, 2015

In attendance:

Bryan Bornholdt (BB)

Linda Jones (LJ)

Denise Burton (DB)

Erin O'Brien (EO; President-Elect)

Robert Carlson (RC)

Helen Saar (HS)

Alex Chamberlain (AC)

Nate Staheli (NS; President)

Rebecca DiVerniero (RD)

Samuel Tobler (ST)

Timothy Francis (TF)

Don Warner (DoW)

Jim Haendiges (JH)

Drew Wilcox (DrW)

Jerry Harris (JDH; secretary)

NS: Faculty Evaluations—let's start a dialog. What I'd like to do is let you represent what faculty are asking for in this policy. I'll reiterate that we won't take this policy to Academic Council until we as Faculty Senate are OK with it. It's been through the 30 day process, and comments have been made on it, those comments are that it isn't reflective of what we as faculty want. Can we go through each section and entertain motions to accept in that area? If it's OK, we'll move to the next; we'll do it like we did with the Constitution and Bylaws. By the way, some time today Russ Ross will send out an e-mail asking for a vote on the Constitution and Bylaws, and we'll have 2 days to get a two-thirds majority vote from faculty. If we don't get it, we'll try again. I don't know whether these recent Faculty Evaluation & Academic Freedom policies will cause any people concern; I think our new Constitution and Bylaws strengthen what we do on campus, so it will be good publicity for that policy. Watch for that and encourage your folks to participate. Are we OK with that process-taking sections one at a time?

RC: There are some overarching issues about the process as a whole. For those that haven't seen Joe Green's letter that went around, one thing in it was that the process was becoming so burdensome regarding assessment and the evaluation process that it's a drain on academic freedom overall. Another viewpoint expressed to me in my department was how can we make the process more efficient, where each step adds something that isn't available in other steps? Right now, there's so much redundancy across all the evaluative steps that it becomes excessive, and some of that excess could be alleviated by focusing on what's new—something that branches across sections.

NS: I think that's a great comment, and it's a central thread in a lot of the discussions I've been hearing.

RD: I'd agree about the burden, but if it's my tenure, I'll take that on. But part of the problem with the new requirements for peer evaluations is that I'm putting a lot of burden on someone that has nothing to do with my tenure. So while them signing a form saying "here's what I thought was good about your class" is probably not enough, having them write a letter and send it to three people—I don't think they're going to do it, and then that *will* affect the people looking for tenure, and it's not their fault.

DB: We have to decide what the purpose is, especially with the peer evaluations. Our department thinks peer evaluation is the biggest problem—are we trying to evaluate each other, or trying to learn how to be better instructors? If we're trying to learn, there are a variety of ways we could use policy to support programs that are already on campus. You could sign up to do three brown bag lunches with CTLE instead of a peer evaluation; you could go to a pedagogy conference—there are many other ways that we can ensure in our e-portfolios that we're learning about pedagogy and teaching *aside* from peer evaluations.

NS: I've talked with many faculty and that's what comes through. Any other general comments before we start going through the policy? I'll ask specific questions about parts of the policy that we want to address. It seems like we're going to come to one or two areas and make some overhauls, and stand on what we think our constituencies want.

BB: What *was* the original intent of the peer reviews—was it to foster collaboration between faculty?

NS: Historically, there are some points we need to be aware of. We passed a policy on Faculty Reviews April 2014; inside that it addressed Rank, Tenure, and Promotion and that process. In there, among other things, it addressed peer reviews and the number of them. Whether intentionally or not, we have accepted that there's a schedule with peer reviews, and I think we can get that back out and work on that. But on peer reviews and to your question, it's been

modified slightly and discussed in comments. The fact that the review requirement is not for the person for their portfolio, but for the reviewer's portfolio—it's for me, and it says "this is what I learned by going to this class."

BB: So it's serving two purposes.

NS: That's the general feeling. The major modifications we can make are on the direction of review, as well as the timing and amount.

BB: At other institutions I've been at, this idea of peer evaluations: there became a touchy issue as far as not being a checkmark formality; we wanted substance. If there is something of a criticism or a negative critique, it'd be a plus if in our evaluation process, a person like me is able to say "Someone pointed stuff out to me that I'm not addressing in my classroom, and there's things I can work on"—I can mention that to my next peer reviewer—could s/he look for these things. We don't want to raise flags, necessarily, that will somehow be a ding against the faculty member, but we do want to improve as faculty.

NS: In a meeting I had in our department, there were two poles—one was "why are they strong-arming us" and the other was "I would love to have reviews all the time—I want to be better!" I think there's an element of distrust of administration. Our policy needs to say that we do this because we want to improve our abilities to be professionals in the area of academics. I talked to the President a little bit about evaluation, and his attitude was that there are things that will be mandated anyway later, so we might as well get ahead of the game. This is what we do to improve ourselves. Some of this is onerous, though—I think that's the primary discussion for today.

IJ: The librarians, as a small department, were having 6-12 different faculty trying to come in to observe us. We only have so much instructional time because all our classes are online, and it's hard to evaluate the online classes. So we pull in from our face-to-face classroom meetings from our areas. But for two of our librarians, their departments never call them over for student instruction.

NS: That's a big concern—the number of reviews, and who can do those, and so on. We will take as much time as we need to get through this.

JH: I'll echo from English what others have been saying—the peer evaluation was the biggest concern. One of the biggest concerns was giving negative feedback. We all have a general idea that student evaluations will contain some negative feedback, and that can be good—we know that we're not always making all the students happy. But negative feedback from a supervisor is generally pretty bad and a cause for concern—they didn't know how to center that. The way the policy was worded, they felt that they were *compelled* to give negative feedback—if they'd have to say something like "The instructor was a little late to class," and then punctuality becomes a big issue in their tenure decision. My faculty were paranoid about that—it's one of the roots of their fears.

RD: Just the weight of how much these are going to count...?

HS: I've done four peer reviews this semester on top of everything else. Without this policy, in the Business department, we write a small summary for each other, but we don't have to post it. My dilemma was that I just go to one class—it might be a bad day, an off topic, it's not reflective of the whole semester. Same with punctuality—they may be late 2 minutes because they were talking to a student, or something else relevant. Then transferring that to the tenure process because they were not punctual—that's not fair.

AC: I'm not sure if this would come up line by line, but I keep looking at annual performance review, and classroom observation, and thinking they sound like the same thing...?

RC: They're not supposed to.

NS: They're actually different. Everyone is supposed to have annual performance review, by Board of Regents policy. The classroom observation is part of the review process, and can be a component of the annual review and the dialog between the supervisor and the faculty.

AC: But it doesn't have to be two separate visits to class. That was my concern.

NS: No. Let's move through the policy bit by bit. We want to stay on track but also make sure everyone is heard. The first part, Section I, is faculty evaluations and definitional type stuff. Any comments on that? I don't imagine we'll have a lot.

DB: I think this is where we philosophically have to decide what we want the peer evaluations to be. I don't think they should be called peer evaluations. It may change everyone's view if we call them peer exchange or something. I would like to think of them as continuing education requirements.

BB: We could build these as candid, no-consequence exchanges.

NS: Let's draft that in that section.

DB: I think we put other options in there—if you're already signed up for a team-teaching course, then you're already doing it every day, all semester, so reflection on the whole semester's work should be adequate in that case.

NS: (reads) Four mandatory types of evaluations. Do we want to reword that in subsection b, "Peer Exchanges"? Does someone want to make a motion to that end, and then we'll discuss it? Let's follow that pattern. If you have a suggestion that will materially modify a section, make a motion and someone can second it, then we'll discuss it and vote on it.

BB: I'd move we rename the faculty peer evaluations to faculty peer exchanges.

JH: I second.

NS: Discussion?

RC: Does that change the substance of the definition?

RD: Can we add other kinds of education? Pedagogical training?

RC: What does the renaming actually accomplish? Because the lead-in to “exchanges” said these are evaluations.

DB: You’re right.

RC: Changing the name may not change the underlying issue.

DB: We could change the b line to three mandatory types of evaluation and a category of...

BB: What about “assessments”? Maybe that’s just semantics.

DrW: But that’s all we’re dealing with.

RC: Assessment requires documentation. We’re leaning toward something informal without the chain of documentation. We may be able to call that an undocumented evaluation. That might be enough to satisfy what most of the concerns are.

DB: Maybe take out “mandatory” in line b? It shows up again when we talk later about each type of evaluation. We can indicate later which ones are mandatory.

NS: Do we still call it faculty review? Or faculty peer exchange? Four types of evaluation—is an exchange a type of evaluation? Any further discussion on that? We’ll have to emend the motion to strike “mandatory”...?

BB: That’s separate...I was just addressing the third bullet, not statement b. But I’ll amend the motion to include the change in wording on Section b (recites emended version).

JH: I still second.

NS: All in favor of that emended motion? (All ayes.) Everything else is straightforward in Section I...? Section II: role statements. We beat them near to death. The only thing different here is a comment made by someone on part e (reads). Basically, once you sign your role statement without both parties agreeing to a role change, there can’t be any changes. If you can’t come to an agreement of what the role statement is, then the process of fixing it is going to the Academic Vice-President, and if you don’t like that, it goes through the formal grievance process.

RC: I’d propose changing “the other” to “all”—there are three parties involved. Make sure that the department chair is on board, so it’s not just between the faculty member and the dean.

NS: Any other discussion?

DrW: In Health Sciences, one thing that came up was what if a role statement has to be adjusted mid-year?

EO: Section e has some allowance for that.

RC: It reopens the negotiation.

DrW: If there’s an actual role change mid-year...?

EO: Then everyone agrees to reopen it. If everyone doesn’t, the role can’t change.

NS: That’s in section f.

RC: Can we clarify what “may involve the Academic Vice-President” means?

NS: I think it’s to act as a mediator.

RC: Can we emphasize the mediator role and not having the ability to unilaterally overturn a decision?

NS: That’s great—change that to “as a mediator.”

AC: Last time, I heard discussion about this in the General Faculty meeting, and it sounded like the role statement could be delegated from the dean to the chair—is that the spirit of the intent here? Section a says “in conjunction with his/her department chair *and* dean”—should it be “and/or”?

RC: No, it has to be “and.”

NS: Both of them sign it.

EO: It can be negotiated at the chair level, but it has to be signed off on all levels.

RC: But if the dean were to make changes, and the department chair didn’t want those changes, that would also be bad, just like if the faculty didn’t want those changes.

NS: So the dean could give that responsibility to the chair, to negotiate what that faculty’s role is, but at that point the dean better accept that responsibility.

AC: Do we need to clarify that?

NS: I think it already binds them all into the process. The faculty member could defer to the chair and dean, which I think would be crazy. The dean could confer the responsibility to the chair; the chair could defer to the dean.

RC: Where we refer to all parties, we could put in parentheses “the chair and dean.”

AC: I just wanted to make sure it says exactly what we need it to.

NS: I think it does. Do you want me to put “all parties” in parentheses?

RC: I don’t think we need to.

NS: Any other discussion before we entertain a motion? OK, is there a motion on section II?

RC: I move to accept with the amendments previously discussed.

DB: I second.

NS: Further discussion? All in favor? (All ayes.) Next: student evaluation and instructions. Just a clarification: the back to this is that we've been given authorization by the Academic Vice-President that we (Faculty Senate) can determine the timing of the administration of these student evaluations. The only caveat I see is that Faculty Senate can make the motion to do it the week before finals, then it has to go to Academic Council for a vote. We could be railroaded by the deans—I don't believe that would be the case; I think the faculty have a strong argument and the Faculty Senate says to do it a week before—I think that'd be political suicide on their end, but they have the option that they could *not* allow it, even though we've been given permission. It was advised for us not to craft into the policy a specific time when they're held.

RC: Can we codify that agreement in the policy?

NS: That's great—that's why I bring this to your attention. HS pushed this issue forward before and we discussed it quite a bit; we haven't come to a solution as to what is the *best* time, but we've asked for permission to do that, and we can codify it in there. Other than that, my general feeling is that I don't know that we're going to get away from doing student evaluations ever because it's in the Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook. So I don't know that there's a ton of discussion on this...?

RC: One other comment: can we also include in the policy that Faculty Senate controls the evaluation form itself?

NS: In the addendum, it shows that the student evaluation is general, and there are additional questions that can be put in there for each department.

RC: Well, faculty want to know that they have control over what goes into the document, that it's not dictated by administrators. There's always concerns about student evaluations, but there will always be differences of opinions among faculty. They'd feel more at ease if they knew that the Faculty Senate was the body that was given charge over determining what that form was. There'd have to be an approval process, and maybe these two things are in parallel—there'd have to be approval by, say, Academic Council on the timing and the content, but that Faculty Senate is charged with proposing the timing and the mechanism.

NS: It's in III, subsection ii: Evaluation Instrument. It talks about it (reads).

RC: We can insert that the tool will be created by Faculty Senate or something like that

NS: In vi, it says (reads).

DB: In the same statement, we could put in "built and scheduled by Faculty Senate."

NS: Put that in v.

HS: That was the second part of my problem when I brought it up: kind of the same as peer evaluations, student evaluations—there's a lot of faculty that take it as "this is how students attack me" and give me all the negative feedback possible, but if we change the culture to make it a feedback tool. I brought you the questionnaire that we had at the University of Hawaii. There were four university level questions, but most of the questions were assessment and accreditation questions, and then, as instructor, I had a pool of 100 questions, and I could write my own to get feedback about my course. I wanted to get that feedback to improve my courses.

NS: In the current course evaluation questionnaire, there are three questions, 18-20, that are related to a specific course prefix, so you can gather specific information about your course. The issue coming up, and I don't know the logistics behind this document, is that it's possible to put in specific—

HS: Currently, I use Canvas to ask questions from students anyway because I need that feedback. Maybe just change the culture of student evaluations just like we want to do with peer exchanges—that they're not something bad.

RD: Students have no idea why they do them, so I tell them that they're a lot of weight on your professor's future, so if you're going to say something negative, be fair and be clear. That completely changed the way that they started writing them, at least for me. If professors assume that students have no idea why they're doing these evaluations, it might help create that change that you're talking about.

HS: Yes, to get valuable feedback.

NS: I think it's helpful. In private practice, my customers' feedback was very helpful to me in making good management decisions. That's the culture where we need to be.

RC: If we make this like customer service, the comments will be to make the course easier.

HS: Mine have been the opposite!

RC: The data are quite clear; the easiest way to get better evaluations is to make the class easier.

NS: I see what you're saying about customer satisfaction. The culture of the institution as it relates to student evaluations should be that they're helpful.

DoW: On the easier evaluation part: I had a faculty member tell me that before getting tenure, he dumbed down his course so he could get better evaluations, and then after, he brought it back up to where it should be. This happens because you have to get tenure.

RC: This is related to the peer evaluation issue—when you know something will be part of your file, you basically "teach to the test," as it were, and if you know you can do some things that will get a better evaluation, then you'll do that. If you really want substantive feedback, and you know it doesn't hinder your progression, that's really valuable. Right now, most faculty are terrified of the fact that these student evaluations can actually affect tenure because many of the issues

students bring up are hard to quantify, and most of the quantified parts don't address the real feedback—the verbal stuff. The verbal stuff is the stuff that can be valuable. But the numbers is what we too often rely on in tenure evaluations, and they're the ones manipulated by irrelevant things.

RD: In my self evaluations, I talk about the negative feedback—for example, I require participation, and I get loads of negative comments about that, so I talk about that in my self evaluations. We can easily say “if you look here, this is why I'm doing it” and I'm going to try to improve explaining why I'm doing it. If it's a major problem, it's probably either a lie from the student or something that really needs to be addressed anyway.

NS: We've talked about a couple of modifications to that section, on the ownership of the document and timing of when it's administered—are there any other issues?

DoW: Another comment: a faculty in my department asked about having to have it every semester...?

NS: It's codified that was in the Student Rights and Responsibilities that they're every semester. President Williams thinks we're ahead of the curve and that this will be legislated.

RD: Is there a reason we don't have them in the summer?

NS: That's a good question, and I don't have an answer. I think it's the administration of them.

DB: I was part of a task stream team that helped pick the software, and one of the reasons we picked it was because it could be expanded to include student evaluations and faculty e-portfolios so that everything would migrate automatically.

That's expensive, so in the future, we can lobby for it and make the system easier.

NS: The big thing with faculty right now is uploading them...!

DB: And with places to type in reflections and responses.

DoW: That'd be very helpful.

NS: :Let's keep rolling. Is there a motion on student evaluations?

RC: Can we make the modification about how they're used in tenure decisions?

NS: That'd be in another document, not this one—into Faculty Review. But it's an issue we can talk about. Anyone like to make a motion? (DB moves to accept new statement, reads what LJ has typed) (DrW seconds). Further discussion? All in favor? (All ayes.) In terms of our schedule, what are we looking at? It's almost 1:00. Do we need to reconvene to get to the rest of this?

RC: We haven't even attempted the most controversial things, and in my experience, I've gotten polar opposite points of view on some of these issues, and expecting us to decide that this is ready to go forward is impractical.

NS: I'm sure the Policy Office and administration will be a little upset when I pull it off of the docket, but I have no problem with that. I'll let the powers that be that this will *not* be voted on by Academic Council. Has this been a good dialog?

RC: We haven't gotten to supervisor evaluations, which are still a major problem.

DB: This is rolling over past the drop-dead date for going into effect next year, right?

NS: It has to be to the Board of Trustees by April 15. I've been involved in Academic Council and University Council long enough to know that we can convene a vote outside of the regularly scheduled meetings, and if they don't want to convene, I'll take the hit. We won't have the new policy in place and will have to go by the old policy. But I wouldn't play that card.

RC: Our goal isn't to stall, but this document has a lot to it.

NS: The criticism back to us is going to be that we've had access to this document for a long time now.

DB: If they'd set up a comment discussion board...!

NS: We're working on that too. We're learning a tremendous amount going through this process. Part of it's intentional but we're learning and growing a lot, and hopefully when I leave things will be a lot better for those that come after. We won't meet Thursday unless the senators wants to meet...? We'll reconvene at the next regular meeting after Spring Break unless there's a timeline that has to be met. Maybe we'll have to have a meeting longer than an hour to finalize this document. In the interim, keep soliciting feedback on the sections we haven't covered yet—moving forward we're looking at peer evaluations, supervisor evaluations, and then the rest of the document.

JH: And the addendum is part of it, too.

NS: I think this is great dialog, and at the end of the day I hope that faculty appreciates that senators are asking questions and getting opinions, and that we're actually making a difference. I feel if we do that, then faculty is engaged and trust the process.

LJ: The next meeting is March 19th.