FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Sept. 15, 2011

In attendance:

Paul Abegg (PA)   Jerry Harris (sec.) (JH)

Brad Barry (BB)   Dianne Hirning (DH)

Jen Ciaccio (JC)   Jie Liu (JL)

Ami Comeford (AC)   Russ Ross (RR)

Rob Cowan (RC)   Matt Smith-Lahrman (MS)

Varlo Davenport (VD)   Kyle Wells (KW)

John Goldhardt (JG)   Dennis Wignall (DW)

PA: Let's talk about reading days: what kind of feedback did we get when you asked about this in your departments?

MS: Our department had mixed feelings—lots of people felt that students would just treat them as party days, others want one day, others want a week, other want weekend days to be included.

PA: I wonder if it's just a matter of tweaking the finals schedule…?

MS: Well, something needs to be done—if nothing else, have the last day of classes be a Thursday and have Friday off.

DW: Does it have to do with block classes?

PA: My sense is that it's just a function of how things line up.

DH: When I talked about it with other librarians, they recalled that, way back when, students requested graduation be on Friday so they could leave sooner to go home. That was a long time ago, and it never got changed back to Saturday, and that's the source of the issue.

MS: It does seems like having graduation on Friday is the issue!

DH: We felt that we should move grad back to Saturday.

PA: Is that everyone's sense of how it is elsewhere? (Few remember.)

VD: If we needed to compress finals, could they go longer into the day?

PA: How late are they now?

AC: Only 5-7.

MS: I've always heard that we didn't want our graduation to compete with SUU's…?

DW: It seems like they're trying to coordinate our graduation with those of other area institutions.

JG: It's not even close—high schools have theirs weeks later. Our department said they don't want reading days if they shortens instruction time, but otherwise they're fine with the idea.

BB: Our department was the opposite—they don't want a longer semester.

KW: It's pretty standard—all other institutions I've been at have had reading days.

PA: I wonder if, as MS said, if we just tweak the schedule so the weekend would serve as reading days…

DW: For Fall, right now, that's how it already is; it's the Spring semester that is the problem because there classes end on Thursday and finals begin the next day (Friday).

JG: A Saturday graduation might be easier for people to attend.

PA: That would create its own set of problems…!

JC: From what I've heard, Biology likes having reading days because our students need them.

PA: Would they be in favor if it added a day to the semester?

JC: Probably.

PA: What about if it took a day away from the semester?

JC: Probably not—we need all the teaching time we can get.

PA: So if we move commencement to Saturday, it would alleviate the problem.

MS: It would be really nice if we could keep the Friday open and have Friday-Sunday as reading days, and push commencement to Saturday.

PA: Finals would be Monday-Thursday or -Friday?

DW: Right now, for the Spring semester, the 26th is the end of the semester, and the 27th is the first day of finals…

DH: Which is Friday.

DW: …and last day of finals is Thursday the 4th.

RR: A few years ago, we had graduation on a Saturday because the speaker couldn't make it on Friday—did that present problems?

JG: Our dept. has always wanted it earlier in the day to avoid standing in the hot sun!

DH: I've heard that too—where's the wisdom having it in the afternoon, which is when the hot winds kick up in St. George?

PA: So is it our consensus to suggest moving graduation to Saturday and earlier in the day? (General agreement.)

MS: And have Friday as a reading day. (General agreement.)

PA: So what is the solution for the Fall to add a reading day? Would it suffice to say we don't need a reading day in Fall?

MS: Finals start on Monday in Fall, so the weekend constitutes the reading days in Fall.

JG: In Fall, the semester would have to end on Thursday to match the Spring semester.

AC: We have some Saturday classes that have their finals on Saturday.

JG: I say we just take a day off of the Fall semester and make it a reading day.

RR: It may not be changeable under Board of Regents contact hours rules.

PA: That came up for us, too—UVU has a week less than us in their semester but the same number of contact hours. OK, I think we've covered this sufficiently. Let's talk about dual representation on this committee.

BB: PA, are you a voting member?

PA: Yes.

BB: AC and I are happy to both be here if for no other reason than to have the year be a "learning year" for AC as President-Elect.

MS: But what about when she's President? Does another English representative come in?

BB: That's why I asked Paul if he votes.

PA: It might be useful for *none* of the FSEC leaders to be voting members—in these cases, after elections take place, to adjust the membership so that there's a separate representative that can vote rather than be administration. So if I'm President, we'd need another Music representative.

MS: So the President and President-Elect wouldn't vote?

PA: Right.

MS: That's a good solution.

RR: It risks becomes committee inflation in the end, though—it seems like it creates more assignments, and doesn't decrease workload. Being a voting member doesn't increase workload of a position or time commitment and takes away from a department's resources.

PA: Some departments are more able to staff multiple positions than others…

VD: Our faculty liked the proposal written about avoiding double representation.

PA: Either way, we want to do that, but I think BB's solution would get us through this year.

RR: Do most votes in this body tend to be divided or consensus? It seems like the discussion aspect of participation is more valuable.

DW: In reality, divisiveness has not been a problem, but there's a principle involved, and that's what people are responding to.

RR: So it's a difference of double representation in terms of input vs. voting.

PA: For now, should BB be the voting member from English for this year? As I see this, this body's purpose is to have complete representation to express the faculty's desires and provide input to administration; at the same time, it's important to set up a structure that carries weight as we grow toward university status. Can we move forward this year and re-evaluate the Constitution and by-laws?

MS: I second that motion that BB is the voting member for this year.

PA: All in favor? (Unanimous). OK, we'll revisit this issue when it comes to revising the Constitution. So think about the possibility of double representation taking away from a department's resources, and have the possibility of leaders be non-voting vs. having double representation on the FSEC.

DW: The most recent Faculty Senate policy available on-line is from April 2002, and it specifies that representation be from a list of departments that is out-of-date…(reads much of rest of policy). This says that the FSEC leaders come out of FSEC.

PA: Right, so anything that's happened since then, including the change we made last year to have the leaders be voted on by the entire faculty, isn't on there. That's why updating our Constitution and by-laws is on this year's agenda.

DW: But there's nothing in there about double representation.

JC: That's because it's never happened before and is only an issue now because we moved voting to all Faculty rather than just within the executive committee.

PA: OK, let's move on to feedback about e-portfolios and whether or not we would like Peter Seldin to come back with his workshop. I got input from the Health Sciences—they would like him to come back, but would also like to have administration involved in the training. What else did we find out?

DH: While we valued some of the things he brought to the table, we didn't feel like we needed him, specifically, to come back; there are plenty of other people that could come and offer other perspectives and training that would benefit the faculty and that might be, uh, less expensive…

PA: His emphasis was on hard copies of portfolios; I like BB's suggestion that we have people from within DSC that created good portfolios that we could hold as exemplars. Because we're just now moving into the electronic format, we don't know what a good model looks like yet, but down the line we could; this would avoid paying thousands to bring someone in.

VD: We have one person in our department up this semester—I'll go on record as saying that I hate the e-portfolios, their missing links, clumsy format, etc.

MS: But we'll improve it over time!

DW: There are only 3-4 people being reviewed this semester—those people's portfolios will set the benchmark for what an e-portfolio at DSC should look like, but they will also open a gateway to lots of changes, so the next round of RTP considerations will use those benchmarks. The RTP committee will have to deal with all the problems that are discovered this year.

DH: A good example of a problem is where you have a spot to put in presentations you've made—right now, you can only upload a single supporting document, not multiple. DW is right that the look of the portfolio next year will look different than this year.

MS: But do we need Seldin to come in and do this for us? I don' t think there's a going back from electronic to paper portfolios; we're going to have the digital system going forward.

JG: We liked him fine, but we're not fans of the end-of-year self-evaluations; we liked his ideas about a document of "here are things that mattered in my syllabus, scholarship, etc." The real issue is what is the purpose of the e-portfolios, and will they help us to become a better teaching institution?

DW: Well, I'd argue that administration thinks self-evaluations show that faculty can identify and acknowledge their own weaknesses and explain how school has, or can, help them overcome those weaknesses—that's why they have currency.

PA: It goes the other way, too—faculty can express where they see problems that the school could help fix in order to enable that faculty member to improve. I think it can work if we want it too; I don't know if it's happening across the board, though. But that's a valid question—what's the motivation in making the portfolios?

DH: Once all the information has been inputted into the system, it's easy to update—that's the part I've liked. I've had to do that constantly.

RR: In terms of gathering evidence, digital is the way to go; Dr. Seldin talked about an additional, 10-12 page document that can accompany the e-portfolio. But that was a new idea to me—I supplied the "cheat sheet" independently, but the best way to go would be have the written part be the important stuff and the digital part just be supporting documents.

DW: Seldin mentioned that there's a difference between an academic portfolio and a teaching portfolio—the digital format doesn't have room for the subjective.

BB: There are places where it's built in now, and more can be put in.

VD: The digital system stores information well, but the format, in terms of reviewing someone else's portfolio, is difficult, and that will be difficult to fix.

AC: It sounds like there are two separate issues here: (1) Seldin wanted the subjective content to be included but that doesn't go well with the digital portfolio system; and (2) specific issues about the *medium*, which Seldin isn't involved in. If administration is adamant about using the e-portfolios, then maybe someone can come in to address these issues on *how* to then include what Seldin wants. Presumably our administration looked at other institutions that have used this system and saw how it worked before adopting it here…! We need someone brought in to talk about the mechanics, not the content.

PA: Are we unanimous that we should tell administration that we're OK with the subjects of Seldin's talk, but we want to address the means?

AC: The General Education committee is contemplating using digital means to evaluate people, and we have someone we have in mind someone to bring in to address how to do this, someone that's successfully used this to for 23,000 people. There are people out there with experience in digital evaluations.

VD: And that comes back to *what* we're trying to accomplish with the e-portfolios.

JG: Is it improving practice? Accreditation matters, but if it's just a matter of producing something to get us a check-mark that gets us through approval, it's meaningless unless it improves practice. It can do all of these simultaneously, but… Also, are other departments having students do e-portfolios?

DW: Is there a cookie-cutter approach with regard to the e-portfolios that allows administration to provide a uniform look at the faculty body?

VD: Brent Hansen told us that that's why this system was chosen—it can generate those kinds of reports.

DW: That takes away an individual faculty member's ability to stand out, but that ability *could* be successfully done on paper. My faculty is mixed on this issue: most feel that both digital and paper ought to be there.

VD: If it's a matter of storage and paper, a web page that's more navigable than what we currently have is also an easy solution.

DW: The original conception may have been something like that. My feeling is that we have sufficiently skilled people in our areas that we can satisfy the needs of ourselves as a college and we don't need to bring Seldin back.

PA: We're running short on time, so if we can move on: we've got two issues that we've tabled: faculty workload (policy 3.10) and compensation (policy 3.18) policies, and then the Constitution and by-laws revisions. I'd like to have 2-3 people from this committee work on each of these and come back to this body and report on ways to change them. For faculty compensation…? (DW, VD, DH volunteer). How about workload policy? We started on that last year… (JC, KW, JG volunteer). And Const. and by-laws…?

BB: Is that just a matter of access to the Internet? Could Munir do that?

PA: Well, that's just mechanics; we need actual rewording. (BB, MS, RC volunteer). Before we finish: Philip Lee thought it would be apropos for the FSEC to recognize retiring faculty in some way—some of that's been done, but we need consistency.

DW: Departments do this for their own, but is seems to me that Faculty as a whole could combine them into one event—a dinner or toast or something.

PA: Think about that before our October meeting—what are good ways to approach that. One more item: I e-mailed everyone a rank document from USU; please read that and see if it's a good model we could use on our campus.

DW: What I struggled with in reading this is the "professional career and technical education instructor" title—that seems like overkill and really complex!

PA: Well, we'd probably have to go to an acronym.

VD: Culturally, USU is very protective of title "professor."

DW: For those kinds of fields, rather than depend on one institution as a model, we should use multiple institutions—the content of this is very workable, but the titles aren't. Off topic: President Nadauld has frequently mentioned he's going to retire at various times; what we need to do is be sensitive in how to play a role in the new president's selection.

PA: Is that addressed in Board of Regents policy?

DW: We're involved up to a point, and after that we don't have a vote. We need to have more proactive engagement.

PA: I think the Board of Regents has changed since all that happened, but yes we need to remain at the forefront of this.

DH: Another off-topic issue: last year, one of my roles was to send out cards to ill, injured, etc. faculty and keep track of that—it's really hard to do with so many departments and faculty, so if there's an issue in your department, and you want Faculty Senate to send them something, just e-mail me to keep me in the loop. I'd like to do this, but I don't know what's going on in various departments.

PA: OK, so look at this for next time. AC and I also talked to President Nadauld about how it's been four years since we had a cost-of-living increase, and he said that that's on his radar and the subject of a meeting tomorrow, and we'll follow up with that.

VD: What about when we should have student evaluations…?

JG: Three-quarters of the way through the semester, but individual departments can do mid-term ones for themselves.

DW: That way deficiencies that are identified halfway through a semester can be corrected so that the end-of-yr evaluation reflects those changes.

JG: At other institutions, there could be problems if a teacher was angry about a mid-term review and took it out on the students.

VD: Another problem could be that, at mid-term, students don't know what they've learned yet and then can't accurately assess their professors until later.

DW: Then the decision of when to do department-level reviews would be up to the departments.

PA: But we all feel it'd be useful to have evaluations done before end of semester…?

JL: Is it possible to go back to the paper evaluations? Our department thinks they're better.

DW: The school will insist on electronic ones, but departments can use paper if they want for their own evaluations.

PA: We'll continue this next time.