

Feb. 23rd, 2011

Faculty Assembly Executive Council (FAEC) Meeting

Present: Jim Morley, Elaine Risch, Max Goldberg, Jeremy Teigen, Sam Mustafa, Alex Olbrecht, Jillian Weiss

Not Present: Eric Haye, Ruma Sen

Secretary: Kristin Kenneavy

1. Approve minutes

The FAEC minutes from the Feb. 16th meeting will reflect that the convener of the Law and Society major (Rep. Jillian Weiss) had raised concerns regarding the Criminology minor in that she had requested, but did not receive prior to the scheduled Faculty Assembly vote, the text of the proposal from the convener of the Sociology program. Law and Society supports the Criminology minor and has now received the documentation.

Minutes approved.

2. Middle States Report Response Update

The administration has asserted that the all-college committees created to address some of the Middle States accreditation concerns need to stay on task. It was intimated by administrators that the work of these committees is not being completed quickly enough. However, as one representative observed, some of the committees in question were actually chartered by the administration. The committees in question include the General Education Curricular Committee (GECCo), the College-Wide Assessment Committee (CWAC), and the Design Team (experiential learning). By all accounts, CWAC appears to be on target with its work.

A concern was voiced that faculty are being asked to participate in assessment-related activities without any written rationale that states that such activities are required by Middle States. It was stated that, although this may not be explicit in the Middle States documentation, that such all-college assessment meetings serve as a key indicator that the assessment process is happening and is faculty-driven.

3. SBR Task Force

Four faculty members have volunteered so far. However, the majority of these individuals are less-seasoned faculty. Volunteers are still needed who can represent AFT and the administrative views of this process. Rep. Risch agreed to speak to AFT president Irene Kuchta about an AFT representative. Rep. Mustafa plans to investigate which faculty members had served as chair of the SBR committee in the past and ask if they would like to serve or could recommend someone.

After discussion, the FAEC representatives arrived at the conclusion that the vote to create the taskforce has included the ability to populate the taskforce as well, without the need for a second vote.

4. Three Hour Courses

The ARC is currently in the process of doing research on the issue of three hour classes. This topic will be discussed with the members of that committee next week at a joint meeting.

There is some evidence that this issue has not been a high priority among the deans (no discussion since the Faculty Assembly meeting on Jan. 19th). The deans have control over scheduling classes.

The Provost stated that she will only entertain a pedagogical approach to this issue. A key issue is determining whether some types of classes are better for intensive learning and some are better for spaced learning; research is needed. A second issue is to investigate what courses are currently being offered in a 3-hour format. The numbers supporting the contention that 50 percent of all courses are in 3-hour blocks was requested at the Jan. 19th meeting but have not been produced or sought.

While pedagogical concerns are paramount, the staffing and scheduling issues are also difficult to negotiate. The aggregate percentage target is blind to these problems. Conveners should be asked to find out how many adjuncts they would lose if there were not 3-hour classes available. It is also critical to determine whether classroom availability is sufficient to accommodate courses that would break into two timeslots. It may be harder to schedule these courses at odd hours (some 3-hour classes are currently at odd times). It is the administration's contention that the 3-hour classes actually contribute to the lack of available classrooms. It was asked whether the point of this was to have more students take courses on Tuesday and Friday afternoon.

Rep. Weiss agreed to meet with Eric Daffron about the points of information outlined above.

An administrative memo on this topic specified that first-year and lower level courses should be offered twice a week if possible. It was suggested that the ARC could mandate that all first year seminar classes meet twice per week and that Rob Mentore, who is currently in charge of this program, be asked about this possibility.

5. Meeting with ARC 3/2

a. Online Course Manual

According to the Chair of the ARC, the FAEC does not have the authority to specify what goes into and ARC proposal, only whether the item is put before the Faculty Assembly. Some discussion ensued regarding the relationship of the FAEC to ARC. Historically, the ARC has not been treated as a sub-committee. The by-laws indicate that the ARC is actually a committee of the Faculty Assembly, not a sub-committee of the FAEC.

b. Criminology Minor

There was some discussion of the series of events that led up to the Criminology Minor proposal being withdrawn for a vote at the Feb. 16th Faculty Assembly Meeting. Rep. Weiss clarified that she had

meant to state, when consulted during the FA meeting, that she had a concern regarding the process by which the minor was crafted, not that she opposed the minor itself. She also noted that it was important that a collegial process be observed.

It was suggested that an email vote be held on the Criminology minor so that it could be approved at the next Board of Trustees meeting. A number of questions were raised about whether the by-laws allowed this. Pres. Morley stated that he would speak to the convener of Sociology about this possibility.

6. Class Schedule Task Force Proposal

FAEC had discussed a schedule task force last week. This could be an item put forward at the next Faculty Assembly meeting or perhaps the one after that. Pres. Morley spoke to President Mercer and Provost Barnett, who indicated their support for this task force. Again, the FAEC could solicit non-unit-based representation; constituencies from all over the college would need to be included (not just faculty).

The concern was voiced that there is no point in attempting to make changes to the class schedule unless the Provost will fully support the conclusions and recommendations of the committee. The Provost would also need to be involved in consultation at all stages of planning. This could be a very contentious issue and would also intersect with the issue of 3-hour courses. There is some possibility that this could have implications for Student Life, including the issue of drinking on campus.

7. May Faculty Conference Agenda

It was noted that if the FAEC decides to include assessment on the conference agenda, it needs to be clear what is required and what it is that we will do to be productive. The content should be limited in scope and concrete, and should directly relate to exactly what Middle States wants. This view may not be congruent with what CWAC and Eric Daffron have stated they want. Eric Daffron should be invited to come and speak to the FAEC about what is required for assessment; a written proposal sent via email in advance of the meeting should be acquired. Proposals should also be sought from other groups that would like time, such as the Design Team and GECCo.

8. Winter Break/Accelerated Final Grade Submission

Contrary to what was previously assumed, the ASB faculty members were not opposed to having the Spring semester lengthened to create a longer Winter Break, but were also not supportive of having the grading period shortened.

Those with writing intensive courses and those involved with assessing writing across the curriculum were also expected to be less supportive of a shortened grading period (there had been some informal discussion that supports this view). It was suggested that it may be possible in Banner to flag Writing intensive courses such that those courses would be given earlier exam times, allowing the maximum amount of time for faculty to grade written materials. It was unclear whether Banner was able to actually accomplish this however.

It was reiterated that there was no benefit in establishing a system in which giving final exams during the last week of classes was incentivized.

Currently, if grades come in late, a grade change form must be filled out for every student in the course and a memo is sent to the faculty member's dean indicating that grades were not turned in on time.

To move forward, a copy of the report from the last time that the academic calendar was revised will be obtained from Amruth Kumar. This would need to be a ballot item on the Faculty Assembly agenda.

It was also noted that the State of New Jersey does not require weeks, it requires hours of class time. Classes could be made slightly longer.

10. Recording Faculty Assembly Attendance

Pres. Morley noted that the low turnout at FA meetings is shameful and asked why it is that faculty members don't come to meetings. He suggested that it may be advantageous to start recording attendance at meetings again. Attendance used to be recorded, but sign-in sheets were recently done away with since they were never actually used in the promotion and tenure process.

One suggested approach to this problem was to ask the FAEC representatives to talk to those who habitually do not come to meetings and ask them why and what it would take to get them to come again.

It was noted that it may not matter whether everyone comes to an assembly and that full participation may result in mayhem. It was further suggested that faculty may be more willing to come to meetings if the perception was that something meaningful was getting accomplished.

Pres. Morley reported having consulted both the Faculty Handbook and Judith Jeney, both of which stated that the criteria for tenure and promotion state that faculty members are supposed to participate in governance as an aspect of their professional responsibility. Service is supposed to count for 30 percent of the criteria for promotion and tenure. It was disputed whether attendance at an assembly constituted service.

A number of suggestions were put forth; an FA vote on a return to having attendance recorded, FAEC reps could write a letter indicating that a constituent was an active member in governance, and leaving things as they currently are.

Not all representatives were supportive of a return to taking attendance.

11. Future FA Agenda Items

No discussion.

12. Visit to Lehigh University regarding Student Binge Drinking

This trip was made by Rep. Olbrect, Pres. Morley and Pres. Mercer.

Lehigh U. had a very bad problem with binge drinking in the 1980s. According to internal studies, 68% of students binge drank 3 times a week. To change this, Lehigh took a community-based approach that included faculty. The goal was not to decrease drinking so much as the negative corollaries of drinking, such as students going to the hospital, high BAC, assaults, etc... Heavy drinking has an effect on students' academic work. To combat this problem, faculty can take attendance in classes, talk to student who may have a problem, contact the Behavioral Intervention Team, or talk about this as a substantive issue in classes. The approach should be benevolent not punitive. Students do admire faculty and listen to us.

With the introduction of new policies around drinking at Ramapo, drinking has not necessarily decreased. Students have gotten better at hiding drinking and the problem has moved off campus, which is why more students are getting in trouble off campus with local police departments. The goal is not to try and stop underage drinking, just to encourage students to drink smarter.

It was suggested that some time at the May Faculty Conference be devoted to this topic. A representative from Student Affairs could be asked to make a very brief presentation.

13. New Business

Amendments from the governance review committee are still being edited (it has only been one week since the current governance structure was approved). We were supposed to vote on the bylaws first, then vote on the amendments separately. It was asked if all amendments needed to be voted on by mail ballot and whether they would all be voted on at the same time. The new amendments must be approved by two-thirds of all faculty, not just by two-thirds of those voting. It was unclear whether this item would go on the next FA meeting agenda.

Eric Haye has not yet sent his letter of resignation.

Meeting adjourned.