

Faculty Assembly Executive Council (FAEC) Meeting Minutes

October 26, 2011, 9:15 to 11:15am

Present: Jim Morley, Max Goldberg, Elaine Risch, Peggy Greene, Sam Mustafa, Jillian Weiss, Donna Crawley

Absent: Ruma Sen, Alex Olbrecht

Secretary: Rebecca Root

1. Minutes for FAEC meeting of October 19 approved.

2. Discussion of last week's FA meeting

a. Sedona

Though faculty raised a few concerns, Judith Jeney's responses were reassuring. Overall the faculty seemed positive.

Action: We will move forward with implementation of Sedona, ensuring faculty concerns about technological support are addressed.

b. Online course standards

A number of faculty at FA responded negatively to the idea of having guidelines for online teaching developed. There seemed to be greater consensus in favor of Faculty Resource Center events on online teaching and technological assistance available to faculty who wish to teach online. Resistance seems to center on the idea that guidelines for online teaching would be attached to greater scrutiny of online courses than exists for face-to-face courses.

Discussion of whether online courses currently receive the same level of scrutiny as face-to-face courses via peer review and dean review. This seems to be the case in some programs (like nursing) but not all. As online teaching becomes more common at Ramapo, it seems important to uphold academic standards by identifying minimal guidelines and best practices in online teaching. Even if these guidelines/best practices are not enforceable, they should be helpful to deans and peers uncertain of how to evaluate online courses, and to faculty developing and improving upon their own online courses.

Action: FAEC charges Rep. Weiss with developing a list of best practices and minimal guidelines for online courses. She will seek feedback and input on these from faculty who do research on pedagogy of online teaching and other relevant parties before bringing them before the FA.

c. Online student evaluations

Two concerns were raised by faculty at FA: return rates and simultaneity.

Action: Rep. Crawley will consult Chief Information Officer George Tabback about the feasibility of utilizing technology to conduct online student evaluations in the classroom.

d. Procedure for selecting faculty reps for the Strategic Planning committee

At FA, some faculty voiced reluctance over two ideas: first, that the FAEC would organize a nominating committee to identify candidates for this, and second, that some schools might not have a representative (if the FA chose representatives on a basis other than unit membership).

Discussion of whether there should be one faculty representative from each unit, plus some additional at-large faculty representatives elected by the FA.

Note that the current bylaws state that the FA president is entitled to a seat at both the provost's council and the president's cabinet. Pres. Mercer does attend the provost's council meetings, but has been informed by Pres. Mercer that the FA president is not entitled to a seat on the President's Cabinet (hence rejecting this part of the FA Bylaws).

The FAEC still does not know who else will be represented on this Strategic Planning committee, who is choosing the membership, or how many members will sit on it.

Action: Pres. Morley will attempt to obtain this information.

3. Agenda items for next FA meeting (Nov. 2)

a. Elections

There are a number of contradictions in the current bylaws (posted on the FA website), particularly in regards to when and how elections are to be held.

Action: At FA, Pres. Morley will go over the following schedule for elections:

- i. The first election will be for the office of **FA President**. For that election, candidates should notify Secretary Root of their intention to run by emailing her (rroot@ramapo.edu) by November 23. Candidates must have tenure.* Candidates will have an opportunity to address the FA on November 30, after which election will occur by mail-in ballot. The winner of the election will be announced in December.
- ii. Units and the Library should each elect one **FAEC Councilor** at the first Unit Council of the Spring 2012 semester. The Councilor must hold tenure.* The Units and Library should then report this information to the Secretary (rroot@ramapo.edu) and to the FA in February 2012.
- iii. Elections for the two **At-Large Councilors** will take place in February 2012. One Councilor at Large must have been hired at least eleven years prior to the date office will be assumed. The second Councilor at Large must have been hired less than eleven years prior to the date office will be

assumed. No unit can have no more than two Councilors on the Executive Council. Nominations must be sent to the Secretary (rroot@ramapo.edu) no later than the first Wednesday in February. Candidates will make a brief presentation at the next Faculty Assembly meeting and a mail-in ballot will follow.

- iv. The only FAEC position for which there will not be an election between December 2011 and February 2012 is that of Secretary. The Secretary will verify eligibility of all candidates for the above positions.
- v. All newly elected members will take office September 1, 2012.

* The President and each Councilor must be tenured at the time they are inducted into office. Those whose tenure has been approved by the Office of the President or the Board of Trustees may run for office, even though their tenure is not yet in effect, so long as their tenure will begin prior to induction.

b. Sabbaticals

At the last FA, faculty expressed a desire to have more time to address the suspension of sabbaticals.

Action: This will be placed on the agenda for the next FA. President Mercer will be invited to attend in order to directly address the faculty on this issue.

c. Procedure and criteria for termination of academic programs

Discussion of whether ARC should be tasked with the development of a procedure and criteria for termination of academic programs. (It would then bring those procedures and criteria before FA for a vote.) Though Pres. Morley and ARC Chair Emma Rainforth have discussed this as an appropriate response to the Provost's actions (described below), several FAEC representatives object. Some argue that once a program is approved by ARC, it simply cannot be eliminated. Others suggest that is unfair or unwise to place ARC in the position of closing academic programs. Furthermore, a concern is raised that tasking ARC with this now implies a certain acquiescence to this new initiative to close programs, when that may not be something we wish to agree to at all. Others feel it is legitimate for ARC to develop a policy that would make possible the elimination of programs but only after the programs' contributions to Ramapo's mission is considered and evidence is provided that there are impressive savings to be gained by closing the program.

Action: Pres. Morley will ask ARC not to pursue this matter until FAEC reaches consensus on how to respond. Rep. Mustafa has a meeting today to gain access to the "Delaware Data" on comparative costs of academic programs.

Prof. Steve Rice, convener of American Studies (AIS), joined the meeting from 10:30 to 10:45am. About one month ago, AIS Dean Nejad informed Prof. Rice that the Provost's Office sees American Studies' current level of enrollment (16 majors) as unsustainable,

and that if enrollment is not raised by Fall 2012, it might be removed from the college catalog for 2013. This was the first Prof. Rice heard about a specific concern with enrollments in the major, though AIS faculty as a whole had been informed by Dean Nejad that programs with low or declining enrollment were an issue of concern for the administration. Until recently, American Studies had more than 30 students enrolled in the major, but it has fallen over the last two years. This may partly be due to curricular changes to the AIS core (eliminating the requirement that students take an American Studies course). Prof. Rice notes that American Studies just hired a new faculty member in Fall 2010, a line approved by the Provost and which surely suggested that it was reasonable to expect the American Studies program was not about to be eliminated. That faculty member and Prof. Rice are the only two faculty identified as professors of American Studies.

Prof. Rice and Dean Nejad will be meeting with Provost Barnett next week to discuss this matter. One thing Prof. Rice plans to ask the Provost is how closure of American Studies would save the college money, as she has cited fiscal concerns as motivating her initiative to close programs with low enrollments. It is especially difficult to see how closing American Studies could save the college money because it is an inter-disciplinary program: only one course in the major is a required AMER course and all others are courses offered under other convening groups. Furthermore, the program's relevance to the mission of Ramapo College does not appear to be part of the Provost's criteria for program closure.

Rep. Crawley raised the point that enrollment in the major is not as important as enrollment in courses. The FAEC needs better information about how the Provost is proceeding in these matters. Some people are hearing that the enrollment threshold the Provost has in mind is 30; others hear 40; most are simply unsure. Bio-informatics too has been warned about possible closure based on enrollment.

Discussion of how to proceed. The Provost's handling of this matter directly contradicts the FA-approved motion of November 17, 2010:

“Motion: Affirmation of Procedures for Academic Curricular Changes

After consultation with the Provost, the Faculty Assembly hereby reiterates the principle that proposed actions to be taken by the College on academic and curricular matters are to be reviewed by the Faculty Assembly Academic Review committee ("ARC"), the recommendation of which is required before the actions may be taken. "Academic and curricular matters" refer to issues of academic policy and curriculum, such as proposals for course title changes, and new courses and programs, as noted on the ARC website."

Rationale: To maximize good institutional communication while reaffirming the functional principle of collegial shared governance in academic matters.

Responses: Yes: 76 (97.12%); No: 1 (.96%); Abstain: 2 (1.92%); Total votes: 104;

Motion passes.”

Action: The FAEC approves Rep. Weiss's motion to put a resolution before the next FA responding to the Provost's actions and reaffirming that changes to academic programs

must have the approval of ARC and the FA. Given the limited time left in today's FAEC meeting, the exact language of that resolution will be crafted later today by email exchange.

d. Hence the key FA agenda items for Nov. 2 will be:

Discussion and decision on proposed resolution on program closures

Discussion of the suspension of sabbaticals

Preparation for upcoming elections