

Faculty Assembly

Wednesday April 18, 2012

1:00-2:30pm, SC137/138

Minutes prepared by FA Secretary Rebecca Root

1. FA Pres. Jim Morley moved to approve the minutes of the previous meeting of the Faculty Assembly. Seconded, approved.

2. FA President's Report (Prof. Jim Morley)

Pres. Morley reviewed today's agenda, noting one change: Prof. Vasishth's proposal regarding the creation of a Center for Sustainability requires further review by the ARC and FAEC before it can come to FA for discussion and decision this Fall.

Pres. Morley reminded us of the May 22 Faculty Conference, which will include a time dedicated to the Strategic Planning Task Force, threats to academic programs due to financial concerns and programmatic need, the Faculty Budget Committee, and perhaps national and state changes to higher ed and how they will impact Ramapo.

He also reminded the faculty to complete their online harassment training.

This is his final FA as President, and next week the outgoing FAEC officers will meet with their replacements. The FAEC will also meet with the President's Cabinet on May 14, so feel free to contact the FAEC to raise issues you would like addressed there. He reviewed the accomplishments of FAEC over the last two years, such as implementing clear rules of procedure for FA, managing several crises, building a tradition of shared collegial governance, passing resolutions, and fulfilling or making progress on nearly all the 2011-12 Annual Priority Goals (such as meeting with the President's Cabinet, developing recommendations on online student evaluations and the deans' evaluation survey, obtaining funding for the Academic Commons, etc.). He noted that in the case of guidelines for online teaching, we received feedback from FA that persuaded the FAEC to back off on the issue.

He thanked all those who served on the FAEC over the last two years.

3. Provost's Report (Provost Beth Barnett)

A new set of policies/procedures regarding the White House have been approved. The Provost's Council is reviewing several proposals, such as minimum/maximum class enrollments and a policy on the establishment of centers and institutes. Provost Barnett reminded us of the upcoming Student Engagement Retreat on April 27, which will focus on sophomores. She also reminded us that final exams should not be canceled; it is Ramapo policy that faculty must meet during the scheduled exam time.

Next month, Ramapo will graduate over 1,500 students. A record number of students will attend graduation; the fact they can bring more guests due to the change of location

seems to encourage more students to participate. Honors Convocation will take place next week.

Prof. Michael Fluhr asked about the policy on minimum/maximum course enrollments. Provost Barnett promised to send the proposed policy to him.

4. Report from the Strategic Planning Task Force (Faculty Rep. Prof. Lysandra Perez-Strumolo)

The Task Force is currently reviewing Middle States recommendations so as to integrate them into the Strategic Plan. After that, they will begin drafting the goals to include in the Strategic Plan.

5. Union Report, (AFT Local Pres. Irene Kuchta)

She reminded us that there is a rally at the Arch next Wed at noon, immediately preceded at 11:30am by a meeting of the Union membership. This is a critical time not only for our contract but for higher ed in NJ. Last week there was some small progress on contract negotiations, but there is still a long way to go.

6. ARC DECISION ITEM: Name change of Information Systems to Information Technology Management (ARC Rep for ASB, Prof. Tim Burns)

Rationale: The name change clarifies what the major consists of and brings the program more into line with what other colleges call their programs.

Resolution: The FA approves the ARC proposal to change the program name of Information Systems to Information Technology Management.

Result: Of 62 votes cast, 95% voted yes; 5% voted no. Approved.

7. DECISION ITEM: Endorse the recommendations to the Provost found in the report titled “FAEC Recommendations Regarding Online Student Evaluations.” (FAEC Rep. Prof. Donna Crawley)

Rationale:

For several years we faculty have struggled to find an effective, fair, and sustainable way to conduct on-line course evaluations. After reviewing the research literature, Professor Crawley offers some concrete suggestions for how we may phase-in online course evaluations over the course of 4 semesters in a way that would minimize risk to validity and reliability of results.

Rep. Crawley’s report, “FAEC Recommendations Regarding Online Student Evaluations”, is available on the FA website. She reviewed the issue, examined best practices at other colleges, and met with several relevant parties on campus. The report makes specific recommendations about how to deal with logistical issues and raise return

rates. It encourages faculty who no longer need student evaluations for personnel decisions to begin moving them online, with an anticipated roll out of online evaluations for all faculty and courses in four semesters. Students could do them electronically but still in class, either on their own laptops or else on netbooks provided by ITS. The report also recommends various incentives to raise response rate. However, most of the recommendations are changes to be implemented by the Provost to deal with current or potential problems, including dedicating sufficient staff to manage the data and changing elements of the format and printout.

Rep. Crawley responded to several questions from the floor. Among them were questions relevant to whether it is possible to check whether someone has actually completed online evaluations, whether ITS can give the faculty access to the url for student evaluations, and whether it is possible to require students to complete them. In response to a question as to the benefit of moving to online evaluations, Rep. Crawley highlighted the paper and storage that is saved. Some comments noted the poor quality of the current questionnaire used for student evaluations and proposed that a Task Force might be convened to address this. In general, many comments expressed skepticism about the benefits of switching to online evaluations. Rep. Crawley noted that if individuals do not wish to implement the recommendations in the report and move towards full adoption of online student evaluations, they should vote no to the resolution; if they support moving to online evaluations over the next four semesters if the recommendations are implemented, they should vote yes.

Resolution:

The FA endorses the recommendations to the Provost found in the report titled “FAEC Recommendations Regarding Online Student Evaluations.”

Result: Of 76 votes cast, 36% voted yes, 57% voted no, 8% abstained. Not approved.

8. DECISION ITEM: Faculty survey on Deans (FA Pres. Jim Morley)

The questions developed by the FAEC were distributed to all faculty by email a week in advance of this meeting.

Rationale:

The provost’s office periodically distributes a faculty survey on deans. Unfortunately, for personnel reasons, the results of this survey may not be seen by faculty. So, to facilitate transparency and effective communication the FAEC has designed a separate survey to compliment the Provost’s current survey. The quantitative results of these simple 5 questions will be shared within the units, while the content of the 6th qualitative question will be seen by only the FAEC and the respective deans.

Prof. Kristin Kenneavy raised a methodological issue: some questions are double-barreled. She also suggested language that is more specific. At least two other members of the faculty objected to only the FAEC having access to the results of the qualitative questions, arguing that all faculty ought to see those results.

Prof. Mike Fluhr made a motion to table the resolution so as to remit this issue to the FAEC so they can address the concerns raised.

Result: Of 71 votes cast, 75% voted to remit, 24% voted not to do so, and 1% abstained. The issue is remitted to the FAEC.

9. New Business

Prof. Kristin Kenneavy suggested that, in future, FA should be scheduled on days when primary convening groups are meeting so as to increase attendance at FA. Others noted that, given the many back-to-back meetings on Wednesdays, it would be best to either provide lunch or schedule some time between meetings for faculty to eat.

10. Motion to end meeting approved.

11. Brief Announcements

Dean Rosenberg congratulated Profs. Aaron Lorenz and Mike Unger on the Dean's Lecture Series they organized.

The Teaching, Learning, and Technology Roundtable (TLTR) has extended the deadline for grant applications to May 11. Contact Librarian Christina Connor or Prof. Ann LePore.

Friday night, a production of *The Cherry Orchard* opens.

The Diversity Action Committee noted that the results are in from the Campus Climate Survey. Next week, two town hall meetings will be held to discuss the results.

On April 27, the Ramapo River Watershed Conference will take place.

Today there is a poetry reading at 5pm.

On May 23, there will be a retirement party for Prof. Marshall Harth.

Prof. Ashwani Vasishth noted that the MA in Sustainability Studies is graduating its first students next month. On May 3, they will present their Master's projects.