

Spring In-Service
May 25th and 26th, 2010
Tues. 9am – 4pm

Faculty Assembly Meeting

Minutes of previous meeting (posted on FA website)

Voice vote, unanimous approval.

President's Report

Eddie Saiff

FA President Eddie Saiff gave thanks to the following for their assistance and support during his term as president: Faculty Assembly Executive Counsel (Bob Becklen, Ira Spar, Anita Stellenwerf, Iraida Lopez, Marta Bautis, Elaine Risch, Rob Mentore, Jim Morley), FA Secretary (Kristin Kenneavy), ARC Chair (Larry D'Antonio), GECCo chair and representative (Rob Mentore and Jim Woodley), Governance Review Committee Chair (Stephen Klein), Parliamentarian (Kay Fowler), President Peter Mercer, Provost Beth Barnett, all the deans (for making time in unit councils), Board of Trustees Committee representatives (Mary Ellen Allison, Eric Weiner, Alex Olbrecht, Murray Sabrin, Rickki Abzug, Mary Ellen Harvey), and the In-Service Committee (Lysandra Stromolo-Perez et al.).

AFT Report

Irene Kuchta

A petition was circulated to those who live in NJ to sign on behalf of colleagues living in NY. A bill has passed the state senate (and may pass the assembly) establishing residency requirements for state workers. Those with jobs are grandfathered in, but if you get a promotion, you would have to move to New Jersey.

Spirituality Center Committee

Jim Morley

- Faculty assistance was solicited in helping to define the center's focus on secular spirituality as opposed to organized religion. The original mission of the center was to be an inclusive space where all spiritual views (religious or otherwise) would feel welcome. (The groundbreaking ceremony was described as being oriented toward traditional religions).
- Other members of this committee include Shalom Gorewitz and Yvette Keiser. Please speak to these faculty representatives if interested in helping in this task.
- There are no strings attached to donor money, but faculty would need to consult with Anthony Padovano about that issue. Possible legal repercussions were also raised as an issue.
- The interior is reported to be more appealing than the exterior.

Academic Review Committee (ARC) Report

Larry D'Antonio

Larry D'Antonio's term as chair is over, and he thanked the current and past members of ARC. Mary Ellen Allison will be the next chair.

ARC Reports are posted to the website (annual report, results of survey of faculty opinions on online courses, reports on minors).

Approval of minors:

International Studies (see materials at ARC website)

- 5 courses, no resource issues, attached to an existing major
- Voice vote, unanimous approval

Human Rights & Genocide Studies (see materials at ARC website)

- 5 courses, no resource issues, not attached to an existing major
- Overseen by Michel Riff and Rebecca Root, housed in International Studies
- Voice vote, unanimous approval

Report from General Education Curriculum Committee (GECCo)

Robert Mentore

- GECCo is a Faculty Assembly committee which is responsible for holistic oversight of general education and a sustainable plan for gen. ed. assessment (a list of members was displayed). This group will meet every two weeks starting in Fall 2010.
- The goal is to make communication very transparent. A website will be created, including minutes, agendas, tools, etc...
- A general rubric for written assignments is almost finished; it is synthesized from other instruments. GECCo will contact those faculty teaching writing courses about its use, but professors will select the writing assignments that they choose to evaluate. Written communication is the learning goal. GECCo hopes to hire readers to assess the writing samples (the rubric was displayed).
- There is communication with the Writing Convening Group through Monika Giacoppe, who is in both groups.

FRC Faculty Recognition

Lysandra Perez-Strumolo

The Yearly Report from the Faculty Resource Center was outlined. Many faculty members had participated this year in writing circles, teaching circles, organizing the in-service, and orientation. Participation was recognized. Chocolate and tea were distributed to participants.

Instructional Design Center

Valerie Scott

June 1st, three week Moodle Training. You can pick and choose the topics of interest.

Thank you gifts were given to Eddie Saiff for his service to the faculty.

Structural Barriers Open Forum 10-11am

Peter Heinze and Domonique Johnson

The topic of this open forum was Teaching Excellence and Academic Community (related to rigor). The moderators also commented on the forum's process, specifically inviting those who don't usually speak to speak.

The comments below have been summarized into themes, and therefore may not be in the order in which they were spoken.

Interdisciplinarity

1. Many faculty members commented on a variety of structural impediments to interdisciplinarity and a loss of institutional flexibility.
 - a. The structure of schools and convening groups are artificial and focus majors within artificial boundaries.
 - b. Few opportunities to teach across disciplinary boundaries.
 - c. Faculty may have political problems crossing boundaries.
2. Some suggestions for solutions were also made.
 - a. Resurrect the senior seminars, which allowed for different perspectives to interact.
 - b. Create learning communities – small groups that focus on interdisciplinary themes. The schools are too large to function as learning communities.
 - c. Flex could be repurposed to focus faculty attention across convening groups
 - d. Ongoing forums, seminars, workshops; exposure to faculty from across the campus. Each school has one, but it would be nice to hear about them across schools through one central forum.
 - e. Teaching circles talk about general pedagogical issues, but from faculty across perspectives.

Lack of Resources

1. Faculty members identified a number of areas in which a lack of resources may make excellence in teaching difficult.
 - a. Convening groups are not getting administrative support that they need. It was suggested that these groups take on more responsibility, but also receive more reward. Some convening groups are not empowered to actually fulfill their mission (e.g. the Writing Convening Group may change its name to the College English Convening Group because they have no power over writing in the curriculum).
 - b. Resources are needed to mount adequate programs (e.g. lack of science labs).
 - c. Number of faculty – faculty members only have time to teach required courses, no room for electives. Could use more full-time faculty, but funding is an impediment.
 - d. Adjuncts – about half of the core courses are taught by them. Advisement doesn't get done when the first years only experience adjuncts in their courses. Also need to train some of the adjuncts to see the red flags and send the students for remediation.
 - e. Political boundary of state funding.

Establishing Criteria

1. A number of comments spoke to the need for a more general discussion of what excellence entails.
 - a. It was pointed out that we may not all agree on what excellence is, but that it might include engagement of students and meaningful learning. What else?
 - b. Ramapo is a U.S. News and World Report rated school, but should we have to fulfill certain criteria used by one magazine to sell copies?
 - c. Need to know if income and funds are driving excellence, as opposed to teaching.
 - d. Online learning – based on the need to make money rather than pedagogical concerns?
 - e. Student evaluations of courses influence the work of faculty.

Pillars

1. Faculty identified areas in which resources did not appear to be matched to the college's stated mission.
 - a. Cahill Center – no replacements have been hired for many of the staff positions, which threatens programs for students. Some of it is funding, but we need to decide how we are going to spend money. The Cahill Center speaks to the mission.
 - b. Could organize a discussion around pillars. There is a gap between the mission and the learning communities that we *haven't* created.
 - c. Need structurally supported positions that speak to the pillars.

Diversity

1. Several faculty members mentioned how diversity contributed to excellence in a variety of ways (within syllabi, as well as recruiting faculty and students).
 - a. Presence of students from different backgrounds. Used to have more international students.
 - b. We no longer have an ESL program, nor do we have American Language and Culture. Some students cannot come here if there aren't resources to help them learn language proficiency. Internationalism is supposed to be one of the pillars.
 - c. One barrier to student diversity is partially economic - public transportation. Some students can't physically get to campus and this prevents them from taking a full load.
 - d. One faculty member commented that people at Ramapo are not supportive of people of color.

Student Preparedness

1. Faculty spoke to both the need to support both students who need extra help, as well as those who may want to pursue more advanced learning. Many comments spoke to a lack of resources on either end of the preparedness spectrum.
 - a. Underprepared students – makes it hard to teach the prepared students.
 - b. Our Accuplacer scores are lower than those at community colleges.

- c. Elimination of College English 2 – such decisions are sometimes made without regard to the effects.
- d. Transfer students - often have a hard time in courses. Have their prior courses really given them the requisite knowledge? It was suggested that a study be designed to track the courses students have taken across institutions.
- e. Ramapo does not have a reading coordinator; we have some developmental reading courses, but some have been lost.
- f. It was suggested that support for students who need more help has been waning; undermined by administrative decisions.
 1. Provost Barnett responded to the above point by stating that remedial resources for students have remained steady. She also stated that there are certain state requirements for transfer students, such as accepting their community college courses. She suggested that more pre-requisite courses may prevent unprepared students from entering courses they may not be ready for.
 2. In response, a faculty member pointed out that some courses with pre-requisites attached don't fill up. Could use a study of this as well.
- g. Could train and hire more advanced students to act as tutors; this way they wouldn't need to find work off-campus as often.

It was also noted that complaint can be a barrier, that we need to better use the meeting times, and that we need to use imagination to overcome barriers.

After the above discussion, faculty broke out into small, cross-disciplinary groups to discuss classroom-based approaches to teaching excellence. Note-takers will forward their group discussions noted to the in-service committee for compiling and content analysis.

Progress Discussion

Lysandra Perez-Stromolo and Jim Woodley

Topics originate from April 21st 2010 Faculty Assembly Meeting and the summary report from last spring's in-service meeting. Each number represents one of the concerns stated in the summary report. The bullets represent faculty comments unless otherwise noted.

1. Erosion of shared governance and collaborative decision-making.
2. Mission and vision of the college is not understood or valued by administrators. Concern about drift away from the liberal arts and interdisciplinarity.
 - Team and co-teaching: needs to be encouraged, need to have learning mechanisms for intellectual growth and the creation of interdisciplinary spaces. This has generally been organized as two separate courses (administratively), but students meet in the same room. The cost can be prohibitive. Enrollment would need to increase by 50% if a course is to be team taught.
 - Prof Swap was very productive – this was a student initiative to encourage interdisciplinary teaching.
 - Faculty can do seminars with a theme and break-out sessions within disciplines.

- Could work on unit-level readers as texts for some of the general courses.
 - Need to remember the informal ways of doing interdisciplinary work. Encouraging daring scholarship. Need to reach out to other faculty members to bring in their expertise. Should we be changing our reward systems to value this?
 - Liberal arts. In what way do we show this? Is literature and history being included across courses?
3. Administrative style is too top down. Insufficient transparency. Reports by faculty groups go unheeded.
 - Provost Barnett commented that mentoring programs will be retained within schools; recommendations based on the report from the writing program still need implementation (this is largely due to staff changes).
 - Provost Barnett also noted that requests for Cahill Center position funding are being reviewed and that the SSHS resolution had been given to the Provost's cabinet.
 - Provost Barnett pointed out that task force reports on the pillars are posted to the Provost's website (including the ARC report, and a list of goals and learning outcomes).
 - Academic dishonesty cases. Vice-Provost Emma Rainforth deals with these – takes up about half of her job. There are quite a few cases (20 to 40 per?). Is that number ever reported? Should this information be in the annual report on academic affairs?
 - Top down style – there are a lot of administrators, so to whom does this refer? One faculty member commented, based on experience with the Provost through the FAEC, that this accusation may not be a reality.
 - Role of the deans has changed a lot. Deans used to be more aligned with the faculty. But now they are more aligned with the administration. Some are even “professional deans”. Less space to send ideas up the chain as opposed to them being sent down. Provost Barnett commented that she is proud of deans, but sometimes there is conflict when deans fight for what faculty members want.
 - There is a need for administrative leadership for some types of work, but faculty need to be included in planning and funding and budget decisions.
 - Would like to hear how administrators feel about how they are doing in terms of working with faculty.
 - Is there a need for more reporting and more structured reporting (Middle States mentions the need for greater communication)?
 - Provost Barnett: administrators create written responses to most issues and regularly meet with faculty. Action items from the Deans' and Provost's councils are posted to the Provost's website. Administrators want the faculty voice to be heard, but the faculty doesn't always speak with one voice. The faculty voice comes forth as constituencies with different views. This is a concern, especially in the face of scarce resources. We need to keep the institution centered on academic issues.
 - Communication issues – redundancy. Administrators can't assume that all issues get disseminated to the whole faculty. Perhaps faculty members need to be consulted in more than one venue. Redundancy is actually good in some instances.
 4. Curricular decisions are the purview and responsibility of the faculty.
 5. Inadequate time and opportunities, and structures for real communication.
 6. Specific concerns
 - A. Personnel Decisions
 - B. Policy Changes

- Website – this is a very real concern. Faculty Assembly website has been changed to be more user-friendly. A new Luminis website is also being launched. Need to have the website be functional! Hard to find the needed information.
- Three issues – plagiarism, in-service agendas, and online student evaluations. More progress on the first two than the latter.

7. Community Building

Faculty Governance Presentations and Discussion¹

Past Faculty Assembly Model

Kay Fowler

1. The Faculty Assembly President was the “voice” of the faculty. Spokesperson for all faculty members to the Provost, Faculty, AFT, etc... It was rather daunting. It is very empowering but also concerning (lots of responsibility for one person). Could be purposefully abused, or the person in the office may just not be informed.
2. There was an advisory council, but there was no specified input from the advisory board (5 at-large representatives, not specifically from units). Regular reports were received from from the Board of Trustees, VPAA, and other committees. As a result, Faculty Assembly meetings went on forever, and time spent on decision-making was limited. What could be done differently?
3. The current by-laws reflect an attempt to fix the above problems. Needed more civility, move reporting to an online format, limit how much each person could speak, regular communication so everyone would know what’s going on, fewer meetings, elimination of picayune discussions to the Executive Council, and for decisions to come to the full assembly with some data and information.
4. Wording of the by-laws might not have been as clear as it could have been. Haven’t been all that good at limiting discussion or keeping track of what’s been passed. Need to put key agenda items first so that faculty members don’t lose steam.
5. Representatives are now from each unit plus two at-large reps. Elections process this past year – people felt dissolution and disengagement, lack of willingness to serve.
6. Faculty Assembly currently doesn’t have the power to start things, only to stop things. Need to be able to initiate ideas. Need to maintain the faculty’s ability to have a hand in decision making.

Current Faculty Assembly Model

Eddie Saiff

1. Presently, unit and at-large representation is in place. Unit reps need to be able to bring back information to the units and bring unit input back to the FAEC.
2. The FAEC then looks at an issue and sends it to ARC, an ad hoc committee, or to the Faculty Assembly as whole.
3. We need to preserve time for the issues on the agenda – much time is given over to faculty announcements currently.

Governance Discussion Open Forum

¹ FA = Faculty Assembly. FAEC = Faculty Assembly Executive Council. ARC = Academic Review Committee.

Lisa Cassidy and Aaron Lorenz (Governance Review Committee)

The moderators asked that faculty please respond to the “actual” governance survey online. “Faux” survey questions were posed to the audience.

Q1: Faculty views on present governance structure. Modal response: Some procedural and structural changes needed (60%). 23% would prefer a whole new model (e.g. senate).

Q2: What is your impression of the FAEC as an institution? 73% said FAEC needs to be more empowered.

Q3: Impression of Faculty Assembly itself. 74% said FA needs to be more empowered for more decision-making power.

Q4: What values? 53% responded “efficacy” vs. 41% chose “likely participation”.

Q5: How long have you been teaching at Ramapo? 42% stated less than 5 years. 24% reported less than 10 years.

Q6: Tenure? Most respondents were tenured or on a tenure track-line.

Governance Committee Charge

- To review the current by-laws and structure and make recommendations to improve and enhance the current structure (not come up with a new structure). Ratification needs to occur by Feb. 2011.
- Examples of holes in the by-laws were distributed (see below).
 1. Article II: Vague language around voting members. Who should actually get to vote?
 - a. By-laws don’t state whether emeriti or adjuncts should be able to vote. Might include full-time temporary faculty. It was suggested that anyone who has to live with the decisions should be able to vote.
 - b. 221 full-time faculty members on the books. Does not include deans or administrators. 10 years ago it was 175, but we have less participation than we had ten years ago. Do we want to take attendance at the meeting? This information could be included in personnel decisions. What does it mean to participate in the meeting?
 2. Article III – Officers. Do you need to have tenure to run? Almost tenured? What is the compensation, summer or otherwise? Need to make sure that we fairly compensate service to the Faculty Assembly.
 3. Article IV – Dates for meetings. Can they be changed after publication?
 4. Article IV – FAEC decision-making. Who votes on the FAEC? How are the votes verified? Is a majority required?

Comments

1. Possible motion – if something is controversial enough, then it must come before the entire faculty assembly. Non-unanimous FAEC votes should come before Faculty Assembly with a brief blurb about the history of the issue, potential effects, constituencies, etc... Need more background on the issues we vote on. FAEC should dispose of issues that are likely to be fairly unanimous, but everything else should come before FA. How would unanimity be decided?
2. The current majority of faculty members think that there needs to be more empowerment of the FAEC. The job of FA president is too overwhelming right now. It's a tremendous responsibility to share the information from all the bodies that the FA President consults with. We need to consider the realities of having more power in the FAEC.
3. Example – faculty members change motions on the floor of the Faculty Assembly. This illustrates a disconnection between what the FAEC plans to propose and what faculty members want and think is important (i.e. faculty may not like a certain proposal and would like to give feedback).
4. The faculty doesn't take charge of their own agenda sometimes. Need an overarching view of what issues will be tackled in a given year.
5. We need to talk as a whole because it helps to hear other perspectives. Initiatives used to come from the floor. The at-large reps could be the point people for faculty-led initiatives. We should meet right away in Sept. and set an agenda for the academic year.
6. Role of councilors (representatives). Each one should have a role to do. This takes some pressure off of the FA president. Could have the representatives sit up front at meetings.
7. Could have representatives who sat in on other unit councils (for cross-unit sharing of information).