President’s Advisory Council
December 9, 2020
10AM via WebEx
MINUTES

I. Approval of November 2019 Minutes

President Mercer introduced the minutes. He asked if there were any revisions. There were none. Professor R. Abzug moved and Professor K. Ray seconded. The minutes were approved.

II. President’s Report

President Mercer spoke regarding the six-year history of PAC, commending the Council for its uniqueness in providing an opportunity for all groups on campus to be represented. He provided a brief update on the state’s Outcomes Based Funding formula for higher education noting that, at this time, it favors volume over completion. He also noted the recent appointment of Dr. Brian Bridges as NJ’s Secretary of Higher Education. Secretary Bridges previously served as VP of Research and Member of the United Negro College Fund. Prior to joining UNCF, he was Vice Provost for Diversity, Access, and Equity at Ohio University.

III. PAC Membership

a. Motion to Approve an Additional Seat on PAC

Since its founding, the Board of Trustees has been represented on PAC by the student trustee. The student trustee serves a two-year term on the Board. Public members of the Board serve minimum terms of six years on the Board of Trustees. In an effort to advance greater representation and stability on PAC by the Board of Trustees, it is proposed that the PAC membership be expanded to include an additional seat for a public (non-student) member of the Board.

Chief B. Williams-Goldstein introduced the motion. Professor S. Hancock Martin moved, and Student A. Patel seconded. There were no objections. The motion passed.

b. PAC Vacancies: Appointments due by February 8, 2021

- Graduate Student at Large: To be appointed by Graduate Council
- Commuter Student at Large: To be appointed by SGA
- Student at large: To be appointed by SGA
- IFPTE Representative: To be appointed by Local 195 IFPTE
- Humanities and Global Studies Representative: To be appointed by HGS Unit Council

PAC members were reminded of the vacancies and encouraged to confer with their respective constituent groups to identify new representatives. Once new representatives are identified, Williams-Goldstein will provide them with an orientation.

IV. Shared Governance Subcommittee Updates

- Continuous Learning (B. Williams-Goldstein)

Williams-Goldstein directed PAC members to the Subcommittee’s report highlighting that of the subcommittee’s four recommendations, two are in progress, one is under development, and one is complete.

- Communication: (A. Lorenz, A. Flatekval)
Dean A. Lorenz and Professor A. Flatekval directed PAC members to the Subcommittee’s report highlighting significant progress on development of a centralized website aimed at making meetings across the campus more open and transparent.

- Collaboration: (N. Morgan Agard, D. Stark)

Chief N. Morgan Agard and Advisor D. Stark advised that the Subcommittee will be meeting in the coming weeks to revisit its recommendations.

V. Presentation: Decision Making Shaped by the Student Status Check Survey Results (S. Gaulden, C. Romano)

Provost S. Gaulden and Vice President C. Romano led a presentation and discussion on the data from three student surveys students (March, May and October) and highlighted some of the following actions taken by the College after analyzing the data:

- Per data that pointed to challenges with technology, ITS loaned laptops and accessories to professors and students who needed equipment. The College partnered with Laptop Upcycle to provide free laptops.

- Students also reported increased anxiety which helped shape the many workshops and support groups for faculty and students delivered by Counseling and Health Services, Instructional Design Center (IDC) as well as the launch of a temporary Pass/Fail grading policy for spring, and additional counseling services.

- Per data that noted a need for greater clarity in some virtual instruction, Academic Affairs established five new faculty-based roles to support Remote Teaching and Learning.

- 350 student respondents said their home situation was not conducive to learning. Ramapo made available quiet learning spaces on campus to students.

- Financial hardships were reported by 250 students, so fees were reduced and late fees were waived.

- In the October survey students (and families) expressed confusion as to how the Fall 2020 semester would progress, so the College hosted very well-attended open Town Halls and virtual meetings for students and families to mitigate confusion. In addition, registration and housing decision dates were merged and more payment plan options were introduced.

It was also noted that the Archway App was added to help students connect with one another and to campus resources and events. AVP J. Connell provided instructions on how to download the Archway App. RSA President J. Ferraro shared a link to Ramapo’s virtual backgrounds. The RoadRunner Express was re-routed to help nursing students get to Valley Hospital for their clinicals. The Food Pantry remained open and had 312 contacts Funding from the CARES Act grant was distributed to students, per federal guidelines, to assist with health care, child care, and tech related expenses.

VI. Roundtable: What modifications/practices at Ramapo College, that emerged as a result of COVID-19, do you think should remain in place post-COVID?

The roundtable discussion focused on identifying practices that emerged due to COVID-19 that might remain post-COVID. Several PAC members agreed that the College should keep many of the features of on-line teaching and meetings. In addition, providing students with the option of virtual advisement and
virtual office hours was also generally supported as was the conversion of several paper-based forms to digital resources. Members also discussed the tech support provided via the Help Desk and the advantages and disadvantages of students using their video cameras.

VII. Future Topics:
   PAC members were invited to submit future presentation topics.

VIII. New Business
   There was no new business.

IX. PAC Spring 2021 Meeting Calendar: Thursdays at 1PM on February 18 and April 1.