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Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

Faculty Senate

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TO: FACULTY SENATE
FROM: STUART S. PETERFREUND, SECRETARY, FACULTY SENATE
RE: MINUTES, 2006-07 FACULTY SENATE MEETING, 28 FEBRUARY

Present: (Professors) Alper, Bruns, Cokely, Fox, Gilbert, Glod, Hall, Hansberry, Herman, Janikian, Kane, Krishnamoorthy, McKnight, Meador, Peterfreund, Reynolds, Robinson-Wood, Sanchez, Sherman, Starr, Touran, Willey, Zaremba
(Administrators) Abdelal, Falcon, Finkelstein, Putnam, Stellar

Absent: (Professors) Bosso, Daynard, Hafner, Hill, Reucroft, Strauss, Wallin, Welch
(Administrators) Hopey, Metghalchi, Moore, Sridhar, Zoloth

Provost Abdelal convened the meeting at 11:57 AM.

I. The minutes of 14 February were approved as posted.

II. SAC report. Professor Glod reported that the SAC met twice: once in regular session and once with President Aoun and Provost Abdelal.

The SAC received notification that last year's resolution regarding the retitling of clinical specialists at Bouvé was approved by the Board of Trustees.

III. Provost's report. Provost Abdelal noted that non tenure-track positions are not being eliminated despite rumors to the contrary. Tenured and tenure-track ranks will be strengthened but the University expects to continue to have non tenure-track positions for various important functions. There is a need to strengthen the evaluation process for non-tenure-track positions for continued effectiveness.

The Provost also reported that, based on discussions between the Provost's office, the College of Arts & Sciences (CAS) and the School for Professional and Continuing Studies (SPCS), a center for languages has been created in SPCS in order to respond with timeliness to the University's language instruction needs and practices and to increase the breadth of coverage and number of sections offered. Literature and culture courses will remain housed in the Department of Modern Languages in CAS. This change represents a new model for delivering languages.

Professor Peterfreund added that this is not a move to replace or displace people in CAS with respect to language instruction. Instructors will teach for SPCS and will receive equal or higher compensation, and SPCS will offer graduate level language instruction for the first time.

Professor Glod noted that the model appears interesting and responsive, but that this reorganization appears to represent a split, with literature and culture courses housed in CAS and language proficiency courses housed in SPCS. She questioned if this arrangement is consistent with national norms and requested the department's vote.

Professor Cokely responded that many institutions have created centers for language instruction, perhaps most notably New York University. He noted that faculty will earn substantially more than in CAS and will teach on contracts, and that SPCS will be in the position to offer more sections in language than ever before, as well as to introduce offerings in languages not previously covered, such as Swahili and Brazilian Portuguese. However, there was no vote on this new arrangement, as the department was informed it was an administrative issue.

Dean Stellar noted that the decision resulted from a transparent consultative process that required some discussion but did not require a vote. He also confirmed that, although this new arrangement is not the national norm, there are a number of schools doing something similar.

In response to questions concerning budget and flexibility at SPCS, Professor Peterfreund explained that SPCS has a certain nimbleness of response due to the ability to self-fund new budget lines which is not found in the academic units where budgets are fully committed. The Provost affirmed this statement.

IV. The following motion was moved at the 14 February Senate meeting:

> **BE IT RESOLVED That the Faculty Senate accept the 2006-2007 Faculty Development Committee (FDC) recommendation to replace the Teacher Course Evaluation Program (TCEP) with the Teacher Rating and Course Evaluation (TRACE), as contained in the FDC report of February 2007, no later than the 2008-09 academic year.**
>
> **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That the teacher/course evaluations be administered online.**
>
> **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That the Senate Agenda Committee appoint an ad hoc committee charged with gathering a compendium of best practices and desirable features of online evaluation programs elsewhere for the implementation of TRACE, based on that compendium.**

Professor Sherman remarked that the FDC is pleased with the outcome of this report and noted that his own interaction with the Committee's student representative, Mr. Paradiso, changed his mind on the efficacy of online evaluations. The floor was yielded to Mr. Paradiso, Student Government Association Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Mr. Paradiso indicated excitement with the new format, which clusters groups of questions around a common theme, and with the proposal for online evaluations. He noted that measures to assure student participation, such as withholding grades for a limited amount of time, are in place. He strongly advocated for a positive vote. Vice Provost and FDC committee member Powers-Lee also advocated for the new questionnaire and online application, noting that Information Services has promised their full support.

The Senate discussed reservations concerning online implementation, possible incentives for online participation, the opportunity for students to think reflectively concerning their own learning, the possibility of faculty responses, when to implement the new evaluation, and whether students take the teacher evaluation seriously.

Professor Peterfreund reminded the Senate that the third resolution calls for an ad hoc committee to look at best practices. He agreed that summer implementation eases into the process and opined that it is difficult for anyone concerned to take evaluations seriously by the end of a long semester. He suggested that faulty take helpful commentary more seriously than numbers, but that there are other means to insure that tenured faculty members take teaching more or less seriously.

Professor Herman weighed in in favor of online evaluations, noting that current students are more computer literate and that evaluation information can be returned in a more timely manner than is currently the case with the TCEP system. Professor Alper suggested that Section Two of the

questionnaire provide an option for students to select 'not applicable'. He also expressed his own and his colleagues concerns about going online and suggested running experimental online evaluations for the first year of implementation in order to produce solid data to allay those concerns.

Provost Abdelal noted that the committee for implementation could be charged with exploring various ways of dealing with these issues.

Professor Bruns noted that faculty in the College of Business Administration (CBA) take student evaluations very seriously as they are a tool used to determine tenure and merit increases. While she agreed that evaluations belong online, response rates are a very important issue for CBA faculty.

Professor Bruns offered a motion to separate the questions and that was seconded. There being no objection, the resolutions were divided and debate resumed on the first.

Dean Stellar reiterated the seriousness of teacher course evaluations as the strongest representation of the students' voices when reviewing tenure cases. Having that voice drop to a 50% response rate would be unacceptable. However, with proper campaigning and culture change, online evaluations should proceed.

Professor Sanchez noted that the Department of Counseling and Applied Psychology performs mid-term evaluations to which students respond very positively and faculty receives critical feedback on the course in progress. The feedback is discussed in class and assists in instructional development.

Mr. Paradiso suggested that poor student penmanship may be good reason to pursue online evaluations and assured the Senate that students desire a 70-80% response rate. He clarified, too, that non-participation delays the student's ability to view their grades for two weeks. And finally, Mr. Paradiso assured the Senate that the new evaluation tool is perceived as valuable by the students.

Professor McKnight called the question and, there being no objection, the Senate moved to a vote.

<u>Vote to replace the current TCEP with TRACE by academic year 2008-09: PASSED unanimously, 26-0-0.</u>

Professor McKnight expressed satisfaction that the students were committed to online evaluations but asked Director of Information Services Hitch to comment on how she envisioned working with the Center for Educational Technology in terms of faculty who persist in receiving unsatisfactory responses. Director Hitch responded that both delivery of the evaluation and how it will be read back will need to be addressed with the implementation committee. Director of Educational Technology Russell added that the Center encourages faculty to work with them to address best practices based on evaluation responses.

Professor Glod reminded the Senate that the entire teacher course evaluation issue has been in review by the FDC for two years. She noted that the Senate Agenda Committee (SAC) had reviewed the recommendations at three separate meetings and all the questions being posed by the Senate were discussed at those meetings. The implementation issue cannot be decided by the Senate at this time but must be reviewed in a meaningful and pragmatic manner by the implementation committee.

Professor Kirshnamoorthy asked FDC members if they had garnered participation rates from schools that presently administer online evaluations and whether they experienced implementation issues. Professor Sherman responded that Professor Qualters, who was unable to be present, surveyed a number of institutions and their experiences varied. They all agreed that some type of incentive is essential or there is dramatic drop in participation rates, and that marketing is critical. He suggested, therefore, strong participation by students on the implementation committee.

Following further discussion regarding incentives and implementation, the Senate voted.

Vote to administer teacher course evaluations online: PASSED, 19-4-2.

Professor Herman proposed a friendly amendment by addition to the third resolution to add a sentence indicating that the committee could "recommend improvements as may be necessary." Professor Peterfreund suggested that, as this implied improvements will be needed, it be further amended to read "monitor and make such recommendations as may be necessary. Professor Sherman accepted the amendments.

Finally, Professor McKnight suggested, for the record, that the multiple choice response should be changed from 'undecided' to 'agree' or 'disagree'.

The amended resolution is as follows:

> **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That the Senate Agenda Committee appoint an ad hoc committee charged with gathering a compendium of best practices and desirable features of online evaluation programs elsewhere for the implementation of TRACE, based on that compendium, and with monitoring and making such recommendations as may be necessary.**

Vote to appoint an ad hoc on-line implementation committee: Passed 24-0-0.

The Provost noted for the Senate and for the record that item F. on the Senate agenda is informational only and will not be on a future agenda.

Adjourn: 1:26 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Stuart S. Peterfreund, Secretary
Faculty Senate