

Faculty Senate Minutes
Thursday, December 6, 2001, 3:30 P.M.
Hunter Conference Center, Yankee Meadows Room

I. Call to order by President Steve Evans at 3:31 p.m. Those attending: Steve Evans (Pres.), Brian Heuett (Pres. Elect), Joe Baker (Treasurer), Virginia Stitt (Parliamentarian), Art Porter, Rick Lambson, Ben Davidson, Curt Bostick, Darin Wadley, Steve Heath, Rea Gubler, Deborah Hill, Ron Granger as proxy for Greg Colf, Tom Cunningham, Ron Martin, Steve Barney, Idir Azouz, Jim Mills, James Aton, and Kay Anderson; Visitors: Rhiannon Bent (journal), Provost Carl Templin, and Diana Graff. Absent: David Lund (Secretary), Robert Eves, Greg Colf, Boyd Fife, and Eric Brown

II. Review and approval of minutes from previous meeting: Motion by Tom Cunningham to approve previous minutes as written; motion seconded by Idir Azouz; motion carried in the affirmative by unanimous vote.

III. Priority Items for Discussion

- A. Faculty Portfolio for Evaluation – Steve Evans reiterated the importance of the Portfolio Evaluation and then gave time to Tom Cunningham for discussion. He reminded us that the goal was to create a fair system of faculty evaluation and to let faculty know in advance what they need to gather into their portfolio for evaluation purposes. The process is to get information from departments and colleges regarding the kinds of things to be evaluated. With two members from each college, it is hoped that a somewhat uniform system can be created for the entire faculty. He then discussed the actual document and how it is put together. The entire document is on the web, and therefore the document itself is not recorded in the minutes.

Tom mentioned that the peer evaluation portion of the teaching evaluation has not yet been fully created, but care will be used to make sure it is done as fairly as possible. He mentioned that the percentages set aside for various parts of the document are not set in stone, and that comment from the faculty would be appreciated to establish appropriate numbers.

Someone commented that there needed to be some evaluation by the department chair included in the process. Another senator then expressed concern that students were not well instructed in how to do their portion of the evaluations. And although training is probably not appropriate, questions need to be worded carefully so the most

accurate picture of the faculty member can be created. It was also suggested that evaluations from students be done in the last two weeks of the course, but others felt mid-course evaluations would be effective in helping to deal with concerns of students on an ongoing basis. The suggestion to give the students the evaluation forms early in the semester was made so they would be aware of what they would evaluate, then evaluations would be more frequent to help faculty address concerns throughout the semester.

The concern was also raised that it only takes one student giving a very bad rating to drop the whole scale down considerably. The amount of evaluation that is done may be too much. Someone will have to deal with all of them and the documents will have to be stored somewhere. It may be necessary to make evaluating faculty part of load.

Then the discussion turned to the frequency of the evaluation—should it be yearly, or should it be periodic? New faculty should be more often? What about faculty nearing tenure? How will this be combined or integrated into what we already have to turn in terms of yearly productivity reports? This is just more paperwork and cumbersome according to some on the senate. Tom indicated that all of these things are indicated into the proposed evaluation document.

Discussion then turned to scholarly activity and the differences among departments and how this can be defined so it works for everyone. Then the discussion turned to the purpose of all of this evaluation—to let each faculty member show how they are improving; that is, to determine where they have weaknesses, as described by peers, students, etc. and what they are doing to resolve them. Most agreed that the instrument could be useful. Tom reiterated that the committee would like to have suggestions as to how to improve the instrument. It was then suggested that the departments should decide how they might best use the instrument.

Steve Barney brought up the fact that as we apply for various accreditations, we need to have a university-wide tool to evaluate faculty, that we have an opportunity to do so as we see fit, and that if we don't create such an instrument, it is possible that one of the accrediting bodies might impose some form of faculty evaluation tool on the university. Steve Evans then recommended that we each talk to our respective departments and colleges and ask that the instrument be reviewed and suggestions for changes be made to Tom Cunningham and the committee.

B. A handout regarding a two-tiered Academic Approach for Incoming Students was discussed. Steve discussed the handout. Weber State has a system where incoming freshman must meet certain requirements before they are admitted to the higher tier of the university. According to one survey, over 80% of entering freshman are not prepared for Math 1050. The discussion then centered on comparison of college and university levels and the reasons for and against the idea. Reasons supporting the idea include more money, because the legislature would likely fund the remedial classes as official curriculum courses of the university, there is also and a greater likelihood that students will stay at the university after they meet the remedial requirements. The biggest reason against the two-tier approach is that it may not portray the university image we are trying to establish. We are not in competition with Dixie State or any other institution.

In the discussion, the Provost was asked about what benefit we would have in going to the two-tier system. At this point, we only receive the additional funding that the remedial courses bring in from the students. Going to the two-tier system would generate additional income based on student credit hours from the state as these students would then be counted in our enrollment. This would show a better growth pattern at the university. One of the problems relates to the preparation of students in the high schools. It is not necessarily an issue of not learning math, but may be an issue of taking only the bare minimum combined with having done so in the 9th grade. One solution to part of this difficulty is to go to the schools and train counselors to inform students that not taking classes of sufficient depth and difficulty will result in them having to take, and pay extra money for low level college courses that they could have taken in high school. We may not want to allow the college idea, since this may lower the quality of the university in the eyes of those who are considering coming here. It was then brought up that if we want to be a university, with the attached image, we need to start advertising our status as a university. A straw poll was taken--3 senators were in favor of a two-tier system, three had no opinion, and 13 were against such a system. The question was asked if we knew about similar numbers at the other colleges and universities in the state. There is not any data in this area, but it appears that most states and universities are in the same predicament.

IV. Officers' Reports

A. President

1. Policy on Travel was approved by the Dean's Council and we just need to be aware of this action.
2. Policy on Conflict of Interest is also given as an item of information only. The original copy we had was missing the back-side. Steve handed out full copies to those who needed them.

V. Committee Reports

A. Policy Review Committee

1. Policy on LRT ("Grandfathering") or "sunset statement," the new handout contains some new wording to allow faculty hired under a previous system to be judged under both the old and the new systems. Motion to adopt the document made by Steve Heath, seconded by Steve Barney, and passed in the affirmative with 3 senators abstaining.
2. Statement on faculty preparations for classes was then discussed—because many faculty had too many preparations per year. The document in question was intended to be a guideline; it stated that the faculty should not have more than 3 to 5 preparations per year. There is a provision in the document that would allow the dean of a college to make exceptions on an as needed basis. Joe Baker moved that discussion on this item be tabled until next meeting, seconded by Jim Mills. This discussion was tabled by unanimous vote of the senate.

VI. Old Business

A. General Education follow-up and proposals discussion was led by Diana Graff. She indicated that most of this was done, but they wanted to be finished by Dec. 10th. They are still working on some courses and course work and would like to finish this up. There are some changes from the last time we saw this information. Some of the changes are in the inclusion of some 3000 level courses, and more interdisciplinary courses among others. There will be revisions in the future. They are looking for other General Education courses, especially in the humanities; some of the faculty expressed the desire to offer more of these classes, but they have been told to cut classes. Carl Templin indicated that as we grow, we will be able to add some of these types of courses, but at the present it is impossible to add some of the desired courses. Diana had indicated that other similar universities had a much richer offering in the humanities and fine arts. It is for this reason that the program will be tweaked in the future. Diana indicated that part of the problem that caused the delay in finishing their job for the coming catalog is that much of the curriculum did not come in by the October 31 deadline.

VII. Return to policy business.

- A. Annual report of academic colleges and schools was then discussed. It has been to the Dean's Council and approved, we are giving feedback. Curt Bostick suggested that another item be added in which outstanding graduates be included in the report. The question was asked if that would be covered in the section on outcome assessments. Brian asked if Curt's statement might be added to number two, Curt agreed. Motion to accept the policy was made by ???(If anyone knows who seconded this motion, please let David Lund know) and seconded by Deb Hill, no further discussion. The motion carried in the affirmative with 18 votes for and one abstention.
- B. Grading policy was the next item for discussion. Art Porter led the discussion. The Dean's Council agreed with all recommendations of the Faculty Senate Committee. There was some discussion regarding grade inflation and the fact that D's and F's are nearly non-existent; this was just a comment. It was pointed out that the document was a procedural document. A motion to accept the policy was made by Tom Cunningham and seconded by Joe Baker. Discussion about the IP grade being put back in, it is missing from this policy document ensued. It was recommended that the Dean's be quizzed about the loss of the IP. The motion carried by a vote of 18 in the affirmative and one opposed.

VII. Motion for Executive Session made by Jim Aton, seconded by Tom Cunningham, and passed in the affirmative by unanimous vote.

VIII. Adjournment at 5:12 p.m.