

UHD Faculty Senate Meeting

November 30, 2010

Minutes

Present: P. Lyons (President), A. Allen (President-Elect), J. Schmertz (Secretary)

R. Beebe, C. Bedard, D. de la Pena, A. Eliassen, G. Evans, A. Gomez-Rivas, J. Jackson, K. Jegdic, J. Johnson, P. Kintzele, N. LaRose, M. Moosally, W. Morgan, O. Paskelian, A. Pavelich, R. Pepper, N. Rangel, N. Sullivan, F. Williams, K. Wright, V. Zafiris, Z. Zhou

Absent: R. Chiquillo, L. Spears

Minutes for previous meeting were passed.

Announcements from Senate President Lyons

Lyons said the Grievance Committee members would be announced soon. The Faculty Development Leave Committee met once so far. It meets again on December 7 and will send a call out for applications afterwards.

Lyons reviewed the Academic Planning Process calendar established by Interim Provost Dressman. By Nov 22, deans should have replied to departments with comments on the departments' planning reports. Departmental planning reports are held in the deans' offices and the deans conduct any necessary discussions with the departments. On Dec 3, general reports are sent from the deans to colleges and provost. On Dec 6, Deans will share college plans in Deans' Council. In January begins university-wide planning. After this point we don't really know what shape the planning process takes. We hope to find out more about that very soon.

Friday before last (Nov 19), Interim Provost Dressman called a meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee. Its charge is to move the BHAG forward. We await information about what their full charge will be.

Wintermester registration begins December 1.

Other announcement: Deadline for completion of mandatory training is January 31, but Evans encouraged everyone to get it done now, as the process is much more efficient than last year and your merit pay (if any) depends on it. See Linda Biddle's recent email announcement for a complete explanation. Moosally noted that one significant improvement is you will now get an email certifying that you have completed the training.

Online Education Survey

Moosally introduced the report and how the committee had addressed issues previously raised. She responded to a concern raised by Susan Henney at the last Faculty Senate meeting about the lack of a context for the survey data. The committee writing the survey report subsequently discussed whether some sort of broader lit review should be included. Ultimately, they decided doing so would impede getting the existing data out, and that there had not been enough input from Faculty Senate to warrant situating the report in some larger context. However, the

committee did decide to include language encouraging consulting the literature on best practices in online education. Nothing in the report makes curricular recommendations or precludes further research. The implications of the survey, and the recommendations that emerge from it, are specific to UHD and its infrastructure. To counter the possible perception that the report would be seen and judged as an academic project, which it was not intended to be, the report was reformatted to look like a business report by adding an executive summary and moving the methodology section to the end.

Moosally also noted that Dr. Cindy Stewart had raised a concern about the value or relevance of separating responses according to who had and had not taught online, as her own research has suggested that such a division is not statistically meaningful. Although the Faculty Senate survey did collect and report responses of these two groups separately, the emphasis of the Senate's report is on shared perceptions and the majority position of all faculty respondents.

Moosally read out loud the shared perceptions mentioned in executive survey. It was decided that language suggesting that we think it's okay for students to graduate having taken only one face-to-face class will be amended to reflect the language of the actual survey question. Suggested language on a meta-analysis/lit review by Major was removed, as another meta-analysis conflicted with it and the senate is not in the position to recommend one piece of research above another. Similarly, a request to append a bibliography drawn from Western Cooperative and Sloan-C websites (organizations that address online education) was discarded on the grounds that approving a specific bibliography constitutes approval of its contents. Evans said her approval of the report would be conditional on approval of appending a lit review or, if none were included, elimination of any recommendations not grounded in outside research. Moosally reiterated her point that the recommendations consisted only of procedural guidelines for making decisions on online education at UHD, and the discussion then moved to the recommendations section:

Section 1A: Committee Structure and Selection

The first part of the recommendation section is to establish a planning committee. Senate will establish this committee with nine members: 2 reps from each degree-granting college, one faculty member who has taught online and one who has not, and one rep chosen by provost. There would be an elected chair, two-year terms containing mix of tenured/non-tenured faculty, and nominations to this committee would come from senators, be chosen by FSEC and approved by Faculty Senate. The committee would address charges originating from Faculty Senate but would also be free to develop their own agenda. They are encouraged to consult anyone they need to and encouraged to use the survey. They are also encouraged to examine best practices and seek information from external groups. This planning committee would share its progress with Faculty Senate, and any other entities working on online education should be in communication with the committee. All online procedures should be developed through shared governance procedures involving this group.

Pavelich asked if this was a Senate subcommittee or a Senate-assigned committee. Moosally said it would report to Senate but its body would not necessarily be made up of faculty senators. Kintzele asked if the pool of faculty falling into the “have not taught online” would shrink over time and whether “wiggle room” could be built into the requirement that one member of the committee from each college be someone who has not taught online. Schmertz asked if the committee being proposed was a task force or if task forces were understood differently. Moosally said these questions were addressed by the report-writing committee and it was decided the online planning committee should be a standing committee rather than a task force, which ends when the task is completed. However, it occurred to Moosally that the same purpose achieved by a standing committee on online ed could be achieved through a Senate subcommittee on curriculum which would have online ed as one of its initial charges. Such a committee could shift its focus as needed and be more useful in the long run. Evans thought this was a good idea to develop later; a standing FS curriculum committee would provide a clear shared governance link to the university curriculum committee. Lyons suggested a compromise would be to establish a task force and then have a senate discussion about later developing a senate curriculum committee. Moosally suggested that the committee structure proposed in the report could be reconfigured or retasked by later senate action. Sullivan felt that a committee focused strictly on online education reflected the current importance of this issue to UHD. Task forces are by definition short-term or developed to address emergency situations. Schmertz removed the task force question from the table.

De la Pena asked if the requirement that one senator on the committee has taught online be changed so that this person would be familiar with the scholarship on online education; having taught an online course does not guarantee expertise. Evans asked if the report defined online education. Moosally said no, but the committee understood the term to mean fully online courses, not hybrid courses. She would make sure this got clarified in the final document, along with the importance of finding a committee member with knowledge of the scholarship on online pedagogy. Morgan mentioned that there were best practices in the business world and its training practices and wondered whether “pedagogy” might be limiting. Moosally suggested that “pedagogy” could include knowledge of training practices but the committee members’ focus would be on university teaching.

Vote to approve “committee structure and selection” section: 14 in favor, one opposed, six abstentions.

SECTION 2 A: Academic Honesty

Evans said that ensuring academic honesty is a priority for all faculty. She thinks that charging the committee to address academic honesty strictly for online courses is a recommendation that goes beyond the scope of the study. Sullivan said concerns about academic honesty currently impair perceptions of online education; we should not put off confronting the issue directly. Evans said that she teaches face-to-face courses that have an online testing component. LaRose said that Evans had a choice in doing so, but a teacher in a fully online course would have to

deliver tests online; a secure testing center would be important for that as well as for make-up testing situations. Bedard asked if potential policies regarding online testing that might emerge from this committee would override the way we currently handle accommodations for special testing. Moosally said she assumed there were special accommodations procedures in place for online courses, although she was not sure what they were. This might be one of the charges of the committee—to figure out how current special testing accommodations would or could work with online education.

A motion was made and seconded to approve section 2A on academic honesty. The motion passed with 18 in favor and 3 abstentions.

SECTION 1 B: Committee Authority, Support, and Action

Approved along with SECTION 1A and also discussed in reference to section 2B below.

SECTION 2B: Approval to Teach Online

Faculty Senate next discussed a section on the approval process for teaching online. Senate survey had agreed that faculty seeking to teach online should be familiar with best practices prior to doing so. The committee would be charged with ensuring a mechanism for ensuring adequate preparation. A set of questions having to do with mentoring, certification, and oversight of faculty new to online teaching had been brainstormed; the committee would not be bound by these and could develop other agendas.

Evans said this section should begin with a charge that the committee study best practices at other universities. Moosally referred to a previous section of the report that covered this issue (1B, Committee Authority, Support, and Action). Evans said the language in that section should be made stronger and should require the committee to do such research. Lyons pointed out that Evans was making a very directive recommendation; her proposal went against her prior concern that the recommendations section had overstepped the survey's scope. Lyons said the committee will be accountable to the Faculty Senate for their work; we should trust that the process will ensure consideration of best practices. Cindy Stewart had a question about language in Section 1B which suggested that the committee should base its work on the results of the senate survey; other research less idiosyncratically based on UHD would be more helpful. She suggested adding language to that section requiring the committee to base its work on other research besides the senate survey. Others noted that the survey was not expected to be the sole basis of any committee work. A motion to change "expected" to "should" in Section 1B failed, with 7 in favor, 10 opposed, and 2 abstaining.

A motion was then made to approve section 2B on the approval process for teaching online without changes. It passed, with 15 in favor, 3 opposed, and 2 abstentions.

SECTION 2C: Need to Indicate Online Courses to External Groups

Evans said we should study the rules of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board as well as practices of publicly funded state colleges and locally funded community colleges. LaRose said the recommendation “The committee should investigate the acceptance and value of online courses outside of UHD – graduate and medical schools, employer reimbursement programs, professional accreditation, etc” as currently worded made it unclear whether the committee would be focused on curricular and pedagogical matters or extend itself to more legal and administrative concerns like those mentioned by Evans. Lyons said that the issue of how to represent online courses to external bodies needed to be addressed outside the committee because the survey questions did not address it. Evans cited instances where the burden is placed on the student, not the institution, to certify method of delivery. Jackson corrected Lyons: there was a majority opinion in the survey that online courses should be flagged as such. Moosally concurred and proposed that this charge be moved to the end of the report labeled “other areas of concern.” Pavelich disagreed; since the issue was of clear concern according to the survey, the committee should address it in its charges, keeping in mind that Faculty Senate could send back for revision whatever the committee proposed. The consequences might be bold, but they will be mediated by Faculty Senate.

It was moved that section 2C be passed in its current position in the document with a few amendments: retitling the section as “Perceptions of Online Courses by External Groups” and adding a sentence that the committee would investigate rulings of the Coordinating Board and practices at other institutions.

A motion was made to approve this section with the friendly amendments. The motion carried with 18 in favor, 1 opposed, and 2 abstaining.

SECTION 2D: Program and Course Approval Processes

This section pertained to the shared faculty opinion that online programs should require a separate approval process from face to face courses. The word “course” was struck from the header and a sentence speculating about why support for individual course approval was not as strong as that for program approval was struck. 14 voted in favor of these amendments, 2 opposed, and 3 abstained.

The whole section (2D) then passed with 13 in favor, 2 opposed, and 6 abstentions.

SECTION 2E: Workload and Compensation Implications

This section was passed with 20 in favor and one abstention. A section originally headed Section 2F on how online education would fit into the goal of high impact learning was moved to a final section titled “other areas of concern.”

Other Areas of Concern

The final section titled “Other areas of Concern” section was passed (18 in favor, one abstention) with the following additions:

“What is the status of materials that are retained by data back-up processes? We may need a formal records retention policy. What about other portals outside of UHD? Who supports these technologies and protects student/faculty data?”

“While not directly addressed in the survey data, Senate discussion of the data raised a critical question about the relationship between development of online programs and our target of high-impact initiatives for all students. The committee should ensure via their proposals that the high impact focus is adequately addressed in online programs; students in online programs should not be exempt from this key university-wide student success initiative.

The report was approved in its entirety, as revised by the subcommittee and amended by the Senate with minor editorial changes to be added later by Moosally. 15 in favor, 3 opposed, 2 abstentions.

Respectfully submitted,

Johanna Schmertz
Faculty Senate Secretary