

Senate Executive Committee (SEC) Meeting: Draft Minutes

December 1, 2014 -- 3:15 p.m.

WAB 227 - Conference Room

- **Call to Order:**

Chair Margaret Crowder called the Executive Committee meeting of the WKU Senate to order on Monday, December 1, 2014 at 3:18 pm in the Wetherby Conference Room. A quorum was present.

- **Members Present:**

Barbara Burch, Margaret Crowder, Laura DeLancey, Molly Dunkum, Lloren Foster, Ashley Chance Fox, John Gottfried, Rick Grieve, Jennifer Hanley, John Khouryieh, Richard Miller (for Gordon Emslie), Patricia Minter, Evie Oregon, Julie Shadoan, Beverly Siegrist, Nicki Seay Taylor, Andrew West

- **Guests Present:**

Karl Laves

- **Absent:**

Heidi Alvarez, Kate Hudepohl

A. Approve November Meeting Minutes

- Motion to approve November Minutes was made by Minter, seconded by Hanley: motion approved

B. Reports

1. Chair

- This month there is a quick turnaround to full Senate meeting
- Any items identified for revision must be done quickly, as the Senate agenda must be posted by Thursday

2. Vice Chair

- No report

3. Secretary

- John Gottfried filling in for Secretary Heidi Alvarez

4. Committee Chairs

a. Academic Quality Committee: (Report posted)

- Report from Laura DeLancey, Chair
- AQ approved CAD recommendations for revisions to SITEs items

- Faculty member brought up the issue of student readiness (computer literacy, writing ability, etc.) Committee proposes passing this issue to the Retention Task Force.
- Late enrollment—committee looked at the issue and found that it affects less than 1% of enrollment. Committee decided not to pursue the issue.
- Motion to approve by DeLancey, seconded by Chance Fox: motion approved

b. Faculty Welfare and Professional Responsibility Committee: (Report posted)

- Report from Patti Minter, chair
- Committee met November 18
- One item to send forward: Proposed approval of the online Field Trip Authorization Form
- Will continue to examine protection of employees from liability issues on field trips:
 - There are concerns over the current 14-day timeline
 - Committee will continue to review alternatives for professional liability coverage
 - Campus officials have frequently claimed employees are protected by sovereign liability and dismisses concerns about coverage
 - Burch: It is important that employees feel confident that they will not be abandoned if there is a legal issue
 - Minter: and if we don't make employees comfortable, faculty and staff will begin refusing to take responsibility for field trips
 - Shadoan: There are simply too many complications with this coverage. Faculty need to be informed of the potential issues involved.
 - Minter: one of the biggest problems are Study Abroad programs, where the faculty member takes on a lot of responsibility, and where so many things can go wrong.
- Committee is also working on five other issues (see report, linked above).
 - Title IX/Clery Act (training and administration at WKU)
 - Benefits concerns
 - Compensation issues
 - Faculty Handbook issues
 - Instructor rank
- Burch: I am hearing concerns from faculty and other employees being hurt by higher deductibles and other changes in health coverage.
- Minter: these comments need to be sent to the Benefits Committee. At this point the silence of the employees is being taken as approval.
- Siegrist: There are many people that will be affected by this change in coverage. People are going to have to quit working here.
- Burch: Faculty needs to contact the Benefits Committee to let them know we are heading for catastrophe.
- Minter: this program is in place for 2015, but it could be changed for the following year.
- Shadoan: Do we not have Faculty Senate representatives on the Benefits Committee?

- Minter: Yes, we have three representatives. The committee has in the past discouraged reporting information because it will create discontent. I have never agreed with this line of reasoning.
 - Shadoan: We should have heard about the changes before November. The faculty representatives have a fiduciary responsibility to report to the Senate.
 - Siegrist: We need to put out a request in the name of the Faculty Senate asking for faculty to send us their comments on how this change affects them.
 - Motion to approve by Minter, seconded by Foster: motion approved
- c. Colonnade Implementation Committee / General Education Curriculum Committee:
- No Report
- d. [Graduate Council: \(Report posted\)](#)
- Motion to approve by Siegrist, seconded by Chance Fox: motion approved
- e. [Undergraduate Curriculum Committee: \(Report Posted\)](#)
- Motion to approve by Chance Fox, seconded by Foster: motion approved

5. Advisory Reports

- a. Faculty Regent Barbara Burch
- Most of the comments I'm hearing concern compensation
 - Separating benefits and compensation is a false dichotomy
 - We are facing a net loss
 - What assumptions did we make when we changed our health coverage?
 - It is important that we examine our institutional priorities—we need to distribute institutional priority in a balanced manner
 - Please send information about what you need to do a better job.
- b. Academic Affairs
- Report from Vice Provost Richard Miller
 - Not a lot of new money coming down the pike
 - We need to take a look at the assumptions used to make decisions
 - SACS response from off-site reviewers
 - Overall, one of the strongest reports they've seen
 - Only four areas in need of work

C. Old Business: None

D. New Business:

1. WKU Ombudsman Responsibilities

- Dr. Karl Laves, ombudsperson for WKU
- Note: this speaker was moved ahead of the other reports

- He spoke with staff council recently to hear their concerns, so thought he would visit SEC to get feedback from faculty senate
- Faculty he has spoken to seem to wish to have an advocate, but the ombudsperson is meant to be impartial
- Can be confusing and lonely for faculty pursuing a grievance
- Dr. Laves feels that he is sometimes not able to be as supportive as he would like to be.
- He also wonders if there is some mechanism for a faculty member to get an advocate.
- Minter: First question legally is: Have you pursued all internal remedies? My best advice to those going through this process is that I cannot act as legal counsel to faculty in this circumstance. I don't think lay-people would necessarily be best to take this role. Perhaps the faculty governance system might offer the best support.
- Laves: People sometimes choose to engage in the process, but they pretty much have to go it alone. They don't know who to talk to, or where to go for support. That's where the idea came from. I have not been involved in any scenario where legal counsel is considered. Generally speaking, they have just hit a point where all advice is suspect.
- Burch: Do you sometimes feel there is something on campus that needs to be addressed? They come to you as someone in a neutral position, but perhaps you see things that come to you in these interactions that might need to be handled at an institutional level?
- Laves: I think faculty often believe the issue they face should be dealt with on an administrative level, but usually I don't think that's the case.
- Burch: Perhaps I should clarify. Are there parts of the processes, in terms of communication or procedure, which should be considered?
- Laves: I know that often it is a feeling that they are not being heard—that it is difficult to get an audience with the right people.
- Miller: I think many of the people you're dealing with have personal issues, and I believe you listen to their concerns and in many cases you are trying to connect them with the people they need to speak with.
- Laves: Often they are just seeking an opportunity to be heard, to voice feelings of frustration...they are just mad.
- Minter: What if you are dealing with a policy issue; something that needs to be addressed—what do you do?
- Laves: Sometimes that's the frustration, that there is a process, but it moves slowly and takes a long time.
- Minter: How many people come to you?
- Laves: I think the first year or so it was about 42. I think at one point it hit 59. I do not find it overwhelming.
- Minter: Do you think there are more issues for staff than faculty, because faculty have other channels through which to communicate concerns or problems?
- Shadoan: Was there supposed to be a data collection system—not necessarily something that would fall on Dr. Laves—that would be used to report on the workload. Has that happened? I don't think I've seen anything of this sort.
- Laves: I present a report to the President, which is part of my charge.
- Minter: I think having this data made available...not individual issues, but trend-line data on the types of complaints or issues, would be extremely beneficial.

- Crowder: Yes, I think it would be helpful to be able to identify hotspots or trends. I'm wondering if it would be helpful to have some form of advocacy. I have some ideas: use of mentors, for example—perhaps a stronger presence of AAUP, or a part-time position to act as an advocate. Maybe someone with legal experience. This might give the Ombudsperson someone to send faculty to when they have problems.
- Julie: Like a union steward?
- Crowder: I didn't want to use that word...but something like that. But not at a union level, but for WKU specifically.
- Shadoan: There may be a level of distrust of the ombudsperson, if that person is appointed by, and reports to, the President.
- Minter: I do believe that people who come to my office often just want to be heard.
- Hanley: I think it would be good to have someone who can listen, and who can be supportive on a variety of issues.
- Minter: this position is frequently held by a lawyer; someone who will actually give legal advice.
- Burch: It is difficult for anyone trying to fulfill the ombudsmen's role: having to be neutral, being neither fish nor fowl.
- Miller: A really key issue is—does the faculty really respect the ombudsman? Not the person in the position, but the position itself.
- Minter: a suggestion, to draw this to a close. Maybe a faculty-all email from Dr. Laves, just making people aware of the position and what it does. Not to drum up more business, but to inform others. Also, sharing the ombudsperson's report, and sharing information as part of the faculty governance system.

2. Call for Benefits Discussion Items

- Note: discussion of this issue began in Dr. Burch's report, see above.
- Senate Chair Crowder: I will request that everyone send their comments, experiences, and personal stories about benefits changes
- SEC representatives will collect comments and will send to Faculty Senate Chair, identified by College or Department, not as individuals.
- I would hope to send results to the Benefits Committee by February at the latest.
- Our silence is being mistaken for acquiescence—we need to speak, because if we roll over for this, then it will probably become worse.

E. Information Items: None

A motion to adjourn by Hanley was seconded by DeLancey. The meeting adjourned at 4:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
John Gottfried (substituting for Heidi Alvarez, Secretary)