

ACADEMIC SENATE MINUTES

DATE: August 22, 2008

PRESENT:	Sandie Rietz	Bruce Brumley
	Kay Streeter	Lorrie Steerey
	Craig McKenzie	Gershon Bulgatz
	Mark Hardt	Matt Redinger
	Steve Coffman	D'Ann Campbell
	Ronald Sexton	

ABSENT: Rakesh Sah
Jeff Sanders*

Keith Edgerton*

* *excused*

PRESIDING: Lorrie Steerey, Chair

Lorrie Steerey called the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m. in the Missouri room and welcomed the Senators and our new Provost, D'Ann Campbell, to a new year.

The NWCCU Institutional Report was distributed. It was noted that the report should be read along with the PowerPoint presentation for the accreditation visit in October.

I. Reminder – Senate Vacancy: CAHP representative

It was noted that no faculty in the CAHP are willing to serve on the Senate at this time. Perhaps an at-large member could be elected to stand in for the College (like the Senate Budget Committee) and stay in contact with those faculty. It was cited that if the College cannot send a representative, it is not our job to keep them informed by reporting back to them. However, an at-large representative for the CAHP having a three year term will be considered.

II. Notes from the Chancellor

The Governor's Office sees online as the solution to a lot of issues in the MUS. MSUB is down about 150 FTE this fall, and the Board of Regents predicts a loss of 700 students MUS-wide. Adult learners are the biggest population we need to tap into.

III. Discussion Items

A. Program Quality and Productivity Committee

The idea for this committee came from discussions generated in the Academic Senate Budget Committee regarding criteria for both cutting programs and allocating resources for our “core.” The faculty need a place to discuss the many pressures on the University and also become a part of the decision-making process. Our “core” is the very purpose of the University and those programs integrally tied to that purpose which must be defended from cuts. This group would consider what happens to the “core” when we fall short of funding.

It was noted that recently faculty have experienced a low point, with the idea that faculty and their opinions don’t matter. Also, related to online teaching, the idea that if a faculty member won’t teach a course online, administration will buy someone to teach it instead. It was cited that the Senate Budget Committee and the new Provost are steps in the right direction for this issue.

It was stated that at the spring Budget meetings, it was suggested that “non-productive” programs could be cut. If this is a possibility, we must establish criteria to make such decisions, and in a hurry.

It was suggested that the Senate could set up a forum to discuss possible changes in shared governance and the interface among faculty, staff, administration, and students. It was noted that the Senate Budget Committee was a good model for such discussion. The CQI Committee was suggested as a possibility, especially after the accreditation visit is finished.

It was noted that deciding what is “core” is the ultimate issue. It was noted that we cannot escape outcomes assessment. However, how we choose to assess has always been up to us. It comes down to knowing what you are teaching, showing how you assess your students, and how you improve your teaching. It often appears that quantitative measures are better, but they are not.

It was stated that perhaps the Senate’s task this year is to get faculty and administration working together and understanding our different roles.

It was cited that with the Academic Foundations assessment conducted in Spring semester, instructors only had to indicate if students met the outcome objective or not. Maintaining all the data behind this decision is the responsibility of the faculty member. It was noted that some examples of how to assess students might be useful to distribute to the faculty. It was suggested that the Academic Foundations Committee look at the data that was collected from the Spring semester, especially the comments faculty made about what they needed to change. It was cited that the only flaw with the software for collecting the assessment results was that there was no place for the faculty to indicate

what they would be changing and there isn't a way to follow up on those changes. It was further noted that the AFC should also look into why so many faculty did not complete their assessment data entry.

It was cited that we really just need to document what we are already doing. Faculty make changes in their teaching methods all the time—we just need documentation of those changes. For instance, Cooperative Education has hundreds of students placed in field experiences every year, and we have absolutely no data on what they learned!

It was noted that the BOR is moving to a system-wide general education core, with outcomes already established, and the next step will be common course titles and numbering. It was cited that many disciplines have already moved to the common titles and/or numbering. It was stated that the driving force behind the common general education core is the legislature—from anecdotal complaints legislators receive from frustrated parents of transfer students.

The question was raised as to whether the faculty have ever really discussed what the “core” of the University is, what the purpose of the University is. It was noted that we have noted that our core is liberal arts and how we're shifting away from that. Perhaps we need a group similar to the Academic Senate Budget Committee to discuss this issue and formulate a response. It was noted that the actual Budget Committee could hold such discussions and also send two members to Provost Council for their budgeting discussions. It was noted that new programs should probably come before this group before going on to UCC.

It was suggested that an agenda item be added to the first Senate agenda to create a committee to discuss the University's core purpose and becoming a smaller and more efficient University. The group should also stay in contact with the CQI Committee, which will have a role especially after the accreditation visit. This group could look at multiple strategies, including different models of staffing and resource allocation, joint appointments of faculty, and more collaboration across colleges.

It was stated that often, bringing in an outside consultant could give us both ideas on how to improve and outside validation, which could then be used as a spring-board to justify more resources for a program. It was noted that the issue with consultants is often paying their fees. It was put forward that many consultants will do the work for free, as long as we pay travel costs.

It was stated that, with the budget cuts we continue to experience on a regular basis, we cannot keep teaching all the programs we currently offer. We must have a means to decide which programs we can no longer sustain. It was noted that we can either cut everywhere, which leaves everyone bleeding, or devise a plan to cut programs based on reports written by the faculty. Our biggest problem may be trying to be everything to everyone. The faculty must be involved in this process, or someone else will do it for them. Perhaps developing a template for these program reports which is flexible enough for a variety of programs is a first step. The hard part of the cutting process is the

majority of our budgets are people. One has to think about the program first, not the people, and then be creative about what to do with the people.

The question was raised as to any collaboration efforts with Rocky Mountain College. The Chancellor noted that Rocky has experienced some serious financial issues in the last several years, but as they work those issues out, discussions of joint projects will likely blossom.

B. Junior Faculty on UCC and IRB

Junior faculty on these committees have expressed their concerns about making tough decisions while in a non-tenured position. It was cited that some faculty are simply not interested in serving on committees, and maybe we need to look at our hiring practices to find out ahead of time a candidate's views on service.

It was noted that most of the UCC and IRB members are tenure-track, fixed-term, or lecturers. The Senate can't offload the curriculum work to them—they have no history! It was noted that over time, the UCC has moved to a simpler proofreading approach. Junior faculty members are on the committee to learn how to author proposals of their own. Perhaps two or three Senators could be assigned to read through all the curriculum proposals which come forward from the UCC for any issues of budgeting or staffing that the UCC may be unable to deal with. It was noted that the best balance would be half tenured and half non-tenured faculty on the UCC.

Lorrie Steerey and Matt Redinger will go to the first UCC meeting of the year to share the Senate's concerns and talk to the chairperson about attending Senate meetings.

The meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

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