Council for Faculty Affairs

November 14, 2017

Minutes

Present: Shawn Ladda - Chair, J. Patrick Abulencia, Natalia Boliari, Kim Fairchild, Tom Ferguson, Ira Gerhardt, Jeff Horn, Rebecca Kern-Stone, Scott Lowe, Quentin Machingo, Nevzot Ozturk, Kashifuddin Qazi, Sarah Scott, Parisa Saboori, Patricia Sheridan, Meg Toth, Lauren Trabold, Sr. Remigia Kushner, Bernadette Lopez-Fitzsimmons

Meeting called to order: 3:35 pm

I. Approval of Agenda

II. Approval of October 17, 2017 minutes

III. The Chair provided updates on the following

* A memo regarding the faculty contracts was sent to the Provost. The Chair spoke to the Provost about the same and was informed that the Provost was out of town when the contracts were signed electronically, resulting in inconsistencies in some contracts. It was assured that this is not a recurring event.
* A memo regarding the facilities and the STEM building was sent to Provost Clyde. An additional addendum was requested to include concerns related to Communications and Biology Departments who are also impacted by the STEM building construction. Currently, some faculty members are losing office space in Leo this spring, due to construction of the door to the STEM building. No information is available about where teaching spaces will be allocated. The Provost is addressing lack of communication and a plan going forward.

IV. Faculty Welfare Committee update on Salary Structures

The FWC reported fruitful meetings with faculty members from the School of Liberal Arts and the School of Science regarding salary structures. Some CFA representatives were also present for those meeting. FWC has received sets of questions from engineering, and believes that the purpose of the meeting being satisfied. This feedback will be used to construct final conclusions. It was discussed that it would be helpful if CFA representatives talk to colleagues for concerns, and feedback. This would enable an informed vote, if a proposal arrives to CFA for a vote.
Further, the FWC is planning a meeting (January - February 2018) with general faculty, and administration to discuss plans, concerns, and questions.

V. Faculty Student Evaluation Committee

There is a concern (also previously raised) that since online student evaluations, the highest evaluation scores have dropped. This was expected. A suggestion was made to compare the hard copy evaluations with the soft evaluations for the same course. This would however, require some faculty members to reveal the scores. A concern was expressed because of this effect for junior faculty members. It was pointed out that while different systems are being looked at, interpretation of data should be done carefully. It was also noted that sometimes online evaluations result in less respectful comments. It was suggested that the Sub-committee send a memo to P&T, various Chairs, and Deans reminding them about the pitfalls of these evaluations. There may be a call to revisit school guidelines to have language better reflect this. The committee mentioned that the number of evaluations compared to hard copies, increased in the first year, but has now reduced. An additional suggestion was made to remind students about civility, language, etc. for evaluations. It was also pointed out that hard copy evaluations may sometimes be inaccurate. Finally, gauging the effect of the rate of ‘A’ grades on the evaluations was deemed not part of the committee’s goals.

VI. Provost was a guest at this CFA meeting. He was provided a list of talking points in which he responded and then there was discussion.

Facilities:
The Provost acknowledged challenges in facilities in general. He indicated that while 3 million dollars are now for facilities, 7 million dollars are needed for deferred maintenance. The plan is to get to 4 million dollars. He additionally cited staffing growth issues, and work overload as causes for issues with facilities. A possible solution to this would be appointing a second-in-command to overlook various projects.
The provost further acknowledged that a plan should be created as quickly as possible for the ongoing STEM building construction, including the actual building, and updates to RLC and Hayden. He indicated that alumni, faculty, and board members support this. It was suggested, and the provost agreed that once a plan is made to vet it with affected departments, and schools. Currently, the Chair of Civil Engineering has been added to the committee, while the Deans of Science and Engineering are already on the committee. The Provost suggested faculty members to reach out to the deans for specific questions, and add more members to the committee if needed. It was also proposed to add someone from Communications to the committee.

Adjunct unionization update:

The Provost informed CFA that the NLRB board in Washington is now at a full five members (as opposed to 3 at the time of Manhattan College ruling). It is the general stance that the law does not support NLRB imposing itself in Manhattan College’s situation. It is currently, indefinitely unknown whether the issue goes to court, or back to NLRB. In the meantime, the Provost indicated that a variety of things are being done for adjuncts. This includes getting together adjuncts from each school in a listening committee to hear what would be beneficial to them in terms of resources. It was suggested, that a larger listening committee be created rather than one from each school.

Faculty contract issue:

The Provost acknowledged that issues with certain Faculty contracts shouldn’t have happened. In general, the Provost signs all contracts, except adjunct contracts. The mistake occurred due to the Provost being out of campus. With a complicated process for promotion, the final check should be that the Provost always signs contracts. It was suggested that reporting of salary on contracts should be done clearly in terms of the baseline. The work with the FWC in terms of salary structures should result in clearer reporting of salary. The salary information could be sent jointly from FWC, and the Provost, before contracts arrive, to all faculty members. It was pointed out that the main issue with the contracts was the time frame of two and a half months before the error was noticed. Another issue was the new contract simply replacing the previously signed contract. A question was raised as to how the college will solve the problem for the affected faculty members this year. The Provost suggested individual talks with the affected faculty members if needed.

Adding new programs and quality control:

The Provost indicated that all new programs and any change in a program that is more than 9 credits must go through the process and CCC. Camino went through the process, the state, as well as discussions with the BOT. He specified that it was discussed to raise the language scores from what was initially planned. CCC was asked to contemplate a third year review for programs, however, it was judged then that it was not an appropriate workload. Quality control is an existing process as per the memo. A suggestion was made to share the results of objectives, and practice of the program based on the three year CCC review. The Provost mentioned that the program is being fixed as soon as the problems were realized. There was an additional suggestion for external review every 7 years.

School of Continuing & Professional Studies (SCPS) - It was pointed out that a faculty member is approved by the Chair of the department. A question was raised as to whether there is available material to look at concerning standards for a faculty hired for the school. The Provost pointed out there are no standards, other than faculty members’ ability to teach the required courses, and their credentials.

Guidelines for P&T:

It was noted that no clear process exists on how schools should revise the P&T guidelines. A suggestion was made for senior faculty in schools to help spearhead a subcommittee. Additionally, a consensus with faculty be reached before changes are made. The Provost is supportive of a transparent process. The Provost discussed the hand book language of ‘accomplished’ and ‘competent’ were not always ethically, and legally well defined. The guidelines only explain, and do not super cede what is in the handbook. The Dean’s role in the process was specified as coordinating the teams writing the guidelines, and engaging faculty members. It was suggested that when these guidelines are revised, they should come back to the CFA subcommittee so that the five schools are reconciled. The Provost mentioned that lower standards for tenure compared to promotion is uncommon, and not healthy. He suggested changing ‘competent’ to ‘accomplished’ for tenure. It was pointed out that there was no consensus among faculty to do this.

Additional Discussion points:

* The Provost discussed that the faculty dining room cost structure was not attractive enough to run in Kelly Commons. This also meant less attractive food choices. He suggested moving it back to 1853. This would result in lower prices, and better choices. The money saved could be used for faculty grants, etc.
* A query was raised about the 25th percentile salary adjustments for the current salaries. The Provost responded that the details are still being worked on.
* A query was raised regarding hiring a dean without a terminal degree. The Provost responded that a terminal degree is expected, but exceptional candidates can be considered.

Meeting adjourned at 5:07 pm. Submitted by Kashifuddin Qazi