

Faculty Senate Minutes

August 26, 2015

Members Present: Tammy Byron, Lee Ann Cline, Richard Collison, Robert Culp, Cecile de Rocher, Brent Evans, Chuck Fink, Fernando Garcia, John Gullede, Richard Hambrock, Kent Harrelson, Celeste Humphrey, Cathy Hunsicker, Ellie Jenkins, DK Kim, Sarah Mergel, Gene Mesco, Jacqueline Mesco, Andy Meyer, Sarah Min, Cheryl Owens, Vince Postell, James Rich, Robin Roe, Jason Schmurr, Jane Taylor, Kay Wagner, Christy Walker, Christopher Wonzy, James Wright, Molly Zhou

Members Absent: Cynthia Fisher, Matt Hipps, Regina Ray, Marge Shirilla

Guests Present: Baogang Guo, Barbara Tucker

Robert Culp called the meeting called to order at 3:35 PM and established that a quorum was present.

DSC Statutes and Policies and Procedure Manual Revisions

Sarah Mergel presented an overview of the current progress on revision of the statutes Andy Meyer mentioned at the August faculty meeting. The college has not revised the statutes since 2010. They are out-of-date; therefore, they do not reflect the current functioning of the college. At the same time, the committee is working on making updates to the *Policies and Procedures Manual*. About ninety percent of the manual contains procedures such as when the mailroom is open. Ten percent of the manual relates to faculty and staff job functions. The *Policies and Procedures Manual* is replacing the Faculty Handbook, but in effect, it will combine various different manuals governing campus life all in one place.

Robert Culp mentioned how the revised statutes would no longer contain job descriptions of top administrators; those would go in the *Policies and Procedures Manual*. Sarah Mergel further explained the committee thought it best to pare down the statutes to the essentials because the Board of Regents must approve all changes to the statutes. Job descriptions can change when administrations change. Therefore, some of the language in the revised statutes will seem more general than the old statutes. The revised statutes, however, will clearly define Faculty Senate committees and administration committees, and they will clearly explain how administration committees will be staffed going forward in absence of the old Committee on Committees.

Sarah Mergel also said the hope of the committee is to present the revised statutes to the full faculty at the December faculty meeting. When the faculty approves the statutes, then the Senate would need to update its bylaws to ensure they matched the statutes. However, it would also allow the Senate to address some of the procedural problems in the current bylaws. The Senate leadership would ask volunteers to serve on an ad-hoc committee to revise the bylaws and present them to the full faculty at the April faculty meeting.

Andy Meyer also mentioned the promotion, tenure and evaluation standards. Along with Barbara Tucker, he is working on drafting a manual to cover the promotion, tenure and evaluation process. They are using the procedural guidelines of the former evaluation committee and the departmental evaluation standards drafted in the 2014-2015 academic year. Celeste Humphrey noted the former committee hoped everything related to the evaluation process be included in the manual, such as references to the BOR policy. Andy Meyer said as long as the manual could have hyperlinks to the relevant outside references, he did not see a problem with including those references.

Honors Program

Robert Culp then asked Barbara Tucker to speak about the possibility of reviving an honors program at Dalton State. Academic Affairs, she said, thought this might be a good time to bring back an honors

program. She provided some history of the program at the college, especially why it ended about eight years ago. In support of reviving it, Barbara mentioned many access institutions have an honors program.

Typically, the requirements require students write an essay, have a recommendation from their high school, and a certain GPA to qualify. Then they are required to take six courses in their first two years with an honors designation or they can work with a professor to complete an extra project to receive the honors designation. Given the strong program in undergraduate research and study abroad, Academic Affairs saw an honors program fitting in with the efforts to help retain good students. Barbara then asked if the senators had any feedback.

Gene Mesco asked how honors classes would be structured—namely would there be separate sections. Barbara Tucker noted with the large freshman class and the higher profile of the college now might be the time to consider offering honors only classes. The program would also serve as a means to attract and retain college-ready students. Ideally, when the new residence hall opens, there could be rooms or a section reserved for those students.

Vince Postell expressed concerns about creating an honors program. He feared it would not be that attractive to grade conscious students. In other words, students who wanted to have A's might not choose honors classes if they would end up with a B's in a harder class. He recommended the honors students would be evaluated in the same way, more or less, as other students. To receive an honors designation, students would have to do other things not tied to the grade. They would complete the additional requirements and present it, but it would not affect their grade.

Chris Wozny noted there are really two parts to this issue to address—defining what students would do differently and identifying interested faculty. First, given that core courses have the same learning outcomes (and in some cases similar assessments) honors becomes something extra not something harder or different in terms of content. Still, the honors students would have a sense of belonging to a cohort. Second, the college would have to identify faculty who are interested and willing to work with students as opposed to just assigning faculty to teach an honors section. The college needs buy in from the faculty and require faculty to show what they would do differently (similar to the FYES 1200 proposals). Overall, he thought an honors program would be good for creating a pool of interest as students move into their majors; it would serve as a motivation for students especially those who want to go into advanced studies. In addition, the honors program would help shift the college identity from community college to state college.

Andy Meyer suggested creating honors portfolios of all the work. With each class, they would do reflection on what they got out of the class, and those reflections would serve as their extra work for the course.

Gene Mesco wondered instead of thinking about the honors work being something that would bring a grade down, perhaps it could bring a grade up. In other words, could the college offer plus grades to value the work students complete?

Robert Culp pointed out there was a benefit to faculty teaching the courses because in lower-level classes faculty did not have to spend so much time on basic material because there was an expectation students would catch on quickly. Therefore, the pace of the classes could move faster.

Ellie Jenkins mentioned her undergraduate honors experience. In the program she completed, the college brought potential students in for interviews prior to entering the program. Students accepted into the program then became a cohort, especially for the first two years. The students took content-based classes together, and the curriculum was more specialized or more advanced. Barbara Tucker mentioned DSC tried

those specialized classes in the past, but they could not get a critical mass of students in one semester who needed an honors course in a given subject. Going forward, the new dual enrollment policies as well as the prevalence of advance placement credits would make it harder to get a cohort coming in who need traditional first year classes.

Richard Hambrock noted how making a certain number of courses honors only could be problematic for some departments. For example, in the more advanced classes such as calculus, there were not going to be enough students for honors only. It would make scheduling difficult, and the more advanced the course the more problematic the issue would become. In some areas, such as English or Psychology, it might be easier to have honors sections whereas in other disciplines it might make more sense to go the extra work route.

Sarah Mergel mentioned her undergraduate institution combined three core requirements—philosophy, theology, and history—into one course. Students took that course for four consecutive semesters and fulfilled their core requirements using fewer credits. Therefore, there was not an honors course for every core requirement. Having the core be fewer credits for honors students made it easier for students the program to pursue a double major. The final element of the honors program was a thesis done as a capstone project in conjunction with the honors program and the home department.

Robert Culp asked the Senate by a show of hands to indicate whether they thought an honors program was worth pursuing at the time. The support from the Senate was mixed, with just under half supporting further investigation. Andy Meyer then suggested those who said they were interested were the “volunteers” to look into the matter. Celeste Humphrey suggested asking how many people were interested in seeing the college move in this direction—not interested in volunteering for anything at this point.

Sarah Mergel and Barbara Tucker all noted the Senate is not deciding whether we should or should not have an honors program, simply whether a program merits further investigation. Sarah Mergel also mentioned if we are looking at ways to make our courses more rigorous or challenging our students, then an honors program might have the potential to move the college in that direction. However, the college would need to think seriously about how to implement the program to meet the needs of various campus constituencies. Perhaps, the college-wide honors program was best for some programs, but for other programs discipline-specific honors programs might be more appropriate.

Chris Wozny thought the administration or the Senate should consult student life/enrollment services on how this might make the college more attractive to perspective and current students. Moreover, it would be useful to know how many new students might qualify for an honors program of some kind. Gene Mesco said someone should come back to the Senate with an analysis if it is feasible with our student population before more effort is put into developing a program since faculty and staff are stretched thin.

Robert Culp asked if the Senate wanted to form an ad-hoc committee to look into this issue. Sarah Mergel then asked Barbara Tucker and Andy Meyer, if they wanted the Faculty Senate to create a committee or they would prefer to draw up a campus-wide committee to explore the issue. In other words, how is the best way to proceed? Andy Meyer asked if the issue would fall under a currently existing Faculty Senate committee; Sarah Mergel explained the only committee that might have oversight on this issue was the Academic Programs Committee. Robert Culp suggested the Academic Programs Committee to look into this issue further. Andy Meyer suggested academic affairs would check with the Center for Academic Excellence as it might relate to their mission. No official Senate action was taken at this time.

Request from Enrollment Services

Robert Culp brought up a request from Jodi Johnson, who is looking for six to eight faculty members to participate in a focus group to speak with consultants about the our campus processes and policies. She suggested recruiting faculty members who had been around for a while and had some familiarity with these issues. Robert Culp then sent around a sheet for people to sign up. Jason Schmurr asked how Robert would define people who had been around a long time. Sarah Mergel noted that it might be beneficial to get the perspective of faculty at various stages in their careers. Several senators volunteered to serve as part of the focus group; Robert Culp will forward the list to Jodi Johnson.

Committee Staffing

Robert Culp then moved onto the issue of appointing senators to serve on Faculty Senate committees. Sarah Mergel then explained how senators had the opportunity to serve on the Faculty Senate committees. She asked members of the Senate already serving as their department representative for a given committee to not select that committee to serve on as a senator—senators can be department representatives, but they cannot be the department representative and the senator on the committee. She then distributed a form to all the members to give them an opportunity to indicate what, if any, committees on which they would like to serve.

Discussion ensued about the responsibilities of various committee and level of work associated with those committees to give the senators an idea of what they would expect in terms of time commitment for the various committees. Further discussion followed regarding the role of senate service and committee service toward promotion and tenure. Finally, Sarah Mergel mentioned there is a Faculty Senate Workspace in GeorgiaVIEW. Once the committees are organized, each committee will have a closed discussion board for conducting work and keeping a record of the committee work.

Future Meetings

Jane Taylor asked about the date for the next regularly scheduled meeting, Wednesday, September 9, 2015. Sarah Mergel confirmed the date and explained the Faculty Senate regularly meets on the second Wednesday of the month when classes are in session. The Executive Board called the current meeting mostly to staff committees, as we were not in session on the second Wednesday of August. She further noted last year's decision to meet twice a month in the spring semester ended when the academic year ended. At any point this year, the Senate could vote again to meet more frequently.

Andy Meyer informed the members that Margaret Venable would like to attend the Faculty Senate meetings when she was available. She, however, did not want to come if the members felt it would infringe on the discussion of issues. Robert Culp, speaking for the members, welcomed her presence. Robert Culp and Sarah Mergel also reminded the members at any point in our meetings, the Senate can vote to go into executive session meaning all non-voting members and guests would be asked to leave.

Meeting adjourned just after 4:15 PM.

The next Faculty Senate meeting will be held Wednesday, September 9, 2015 @ 3:30 PM.