

ACADEMIC SENATE MINUTES

DATE: September 27, 2007

PRESENT: Agnes Samples
Rakesh Sah
Bruce Brumley
Lorrie Steerey
Keith Edgerton
Mark Hardt
Tasneem Khaleel (ex-officio)

Jeff Sanders
Sandie Rietz
Audrey ConnerRosberg
Johanna Mitchell
Gershon Bulgatz
Craig McKenzie
George White (ex-officio)

ABSENT: Alicia Esteves (student)
David Garloff (ex-officio)
Mary Susan Fishbaugh (ex-officio)
Karen Heikel (ex-officio)
Stacy Klippenstein (ex-officio)

James Ellis (student)
Gary Young (ex-officio)
John Cech (ex-officio)
Terrie Iverson (ex-officio)

GUESTS: Dan Carter
Michael Barber

PRESIDING: Audrey ConnerRosberg, Chair

Audrey ConnerRosberg called the meeting to order at 3:45 p.m. in the Beartooth room.

The minutes of September 13 were accepted as presented.

I. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

A. University Relations Promoting Academic Programs

Guest: Dan Carter, Director of University & Government Relations

Mr. Carter stated that he is now the Director of University Relations (replacing Shelly Van Atta) and Government Relations. He would like to request that if any of the Senate members know of anyone on campus worthy of publicity, to contact him. The piece that ran in last Sunday's Gazette about what faculty did on their summer vacation is an excellent example. Mr. Carter also noted that he is busy so he can't always jump on a story right away, but he will get to it as quickly as he can.

A concern was raised that with two jobs combined, Mr. Carter might be in greater danger of burning out. Mr. Carter noted that the University Relations Office has several grad assistants to help him, but he will try not to get burned out.

Mr. Carter stated that the Commissioner, Associate Commissioner for Fiscal Affairs, and local Regents (which would most likely include Todd Buchanan, Janine Pease, and possibly Lila Taylor) will be at MSU Billings on Thursday, October 25 for a “Listening Session.” They would like to meet with the Gazette and community members in the morning, and in the afternoon with faculty, staff, and students. Mr. Carter would like to know if the afternoon sessions should be divided into separate sessions for each group. Other units have done a general session in which everyone is invited, including community members. The Senate agreed that separate sessions for faculty, staff, and students would ensure that the different concerns of the groups did not get garbled together.

Finally, Mr. Carter passed around a list of the University Relations Office’s CQI efforts. The Senate thanked him for attending.

B. Required Use of eCompanion

Guests: Michael Barber & George White

It was noted that the Senate does not want “listening” to mean “agreeing” to use eCompanion.

It was observed that eCompanion resides in just one teaching paradigm and there are three paradigms. It should be the Senate’s responsibility to protect faculty decisions to teach in any of the three paradigms.

It was noted that eCompanion is also labor intensive—exactly what the Academic Foundations Committee was trying to avoid. The question was raised as to whether the AFC already had a measurement software for assessment. Mark Hardt, Chair of the AFC, noted that the Committee had decided on the method for assessment but had not yet created and/or found the data collection software.

It was cited that eCompanion does have a good use for adding additional materials to enhance the student’s learning. However, faculty don’t really seem to understand how they are to use eCompanion to track assessment results.

It was noted that some faculty are being told that the five different instructors who teach a five sections of a course all have to use the same *assignments*; i.e., your class has to be that way because that is how the others do it. This is a restriction of academic freedom.

Dean Tasneem Khaleel noted that the University needed a consistent tool to give us computerized data across all courses. Since we already subscribe to eCollege and eCompanion is used widely on campus, we chose eCollege for assessment measurement. We don't have any other way to capture assessment data.

It was noted that the same outcomes have to be reached for a course (or a program if we are talking program outcomes) no matter who teaches. However, it is up to the faculty member how those outcomes will be reached, but software is needed to capture those results.

It was observed that we seem to be giving away our sense of "university" to meet a reporting need. There are different kinds of knowledge and eCollege condenses it all down to a number. It was observed that grades do the same thing. It was responded that grades do not limit the knowledge behind the grade. We need to have different ways to measure knowledge, not just one way. It was cited that no matter which assessment measuring tool we choose, it is not value or problem free.

The question was raised as to how the decision was made to use eCollege and eCompanion. Provost White responded that after getting feedback from faculty and other groups and viewing multiple demonstrations from vendors, the administration chose eCollege because we already subscribe to it, many faculty are already familiar with it, and it most likely would have been more difficult to learn an entirely new system. Michael Barber also noted that the time to secure a new product would include a year-long RFP process, which is something we don't really have time for with our NWCCU accreditation coming up in 2009. Dr. Barber also noted that eCompanion is a stop-gap measure until we can get a full assessment package running.

It was noted that some faculty are being required to change their syllabi to match across all sections of a course. It was noted that faculty are allowed to reach the outcomes in whatever way they want, but we have to show those students have reached those goals. This assessment package is a work in progress which will never be finished. This process will continue to evolve as we learn what works and what doesn't. All universities across the country are struggling with these same issues, because there is a nation-wide movement toward outcomes assessment.

Provost White stated that eCollege is the fall-back. We must produce scientifically valid assessment results from student outcomes. The results can come through the eCompanion or, if a department has better software for their needs, they can use that software. Regardless of the software used, we must have those scientifically valid results. It was noted that it needs to be made very clear that there is latitude in how the faculty measure the student's success in meeting outcomes.

Dr. Barber stated that he is the technical manager for the Academic Foundations assessment project. Brent Roberts is the implementation manager who actually works with the users. Dean Khaleel noted that there are also faculty mentors in each college who have been through training and can help if faculty have questions.

It was stated that we do a lot of *compliance*. We need to make sure we do not lose our sense of *community* due to compliance.

The meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

rjrm