**Fall Faculty Caucus**

August 27, 2012

Minutes

Caucus discussion started around 3:15 p.m.

* Mary Jean, as new chair, requests that another faculty member to be on the parking ticket appeals committee in place of the Faculty Chair
* Would like to see Senate address some of the issues of faculty workload; not to write a different policy, but address some of the major initiatives on campus, and let the Chancellor and Provost know we want a timeline for these
* Follow-up to above: would like a prioritization of these initiatives, some things should be taken off that list;
* Comment that if you have ideas for Senate, we also encourage suggestions of solutions you’d like to see and resolutions;
* Comment if someone has a suggestion for Senate, you may be able to find something similar at another university and can help Senate follow up more;
* Some concern about workload in the summer, some workload heavier then because people didn’t do what they should have in the spring semester; (*an example was given but note-taker missed details*)
* Erin McNelis was asked to comment on the relation between Faculty Senate and our new administration – response was that she thinks it is very positive, and gave examples, but admitted she is optimist; Vicki Szabo volunteered that she’s a pessimist but also sees much improvement; some other senators present also concurred;
* Comment that there’s still mind-set, people are a bit afraid to speak out; we want more of a collaborative effort, but think there are a lot of unjust things that go on here that prevent desire to get involved; need to encourage people to voice their concern, fill out surveys, etc.
* On behalf of a colleague who couldn’t come: displeased with the email situation for adjuncts or fixed term faculty who get email cut off too quickly in the summer; we need to balance security (i.e. cutting off email) and work productivity (without email, people are forced to rush at the end or cram work in at first of the semester); Anna McFadden provided update on this issue – new policy (95?) will extend interpretation of end of contract to end of the month and if these faculty have a contract for the next year they’ll get to keep their email over summer; IT worked on this with Heidi Buchanan of Faculty Affairs Council last year;
* An example of a recent hire from another university who got to keep his email at the university as it was just contracted through Google; why can’t we do this? Anna referred back to our previous audit of IT; auditors told us they wanted immediate employee email termination on the last day of work (we chose to define it at the end of the month); Question: auditors don’t have the force of law, right? Anna: Now Board of Trustees has an IT committee, and they asked for our Data Stewardship to work on such issues; it has a faculty member, faculty Dan Clapper, recommended by faculty chair at the time.
* Explanation of a similar situation with a tenure-line faculty who submitted resignation on May 17, resigning their position effective June 30, yet 2 hours after his paperwork was received, his email was cut off; with tenure line faculty this is really problematic; it is understandable if the resignation is not amicable, but that was not the case here;
* Request that we should add that this email policy needs to consider new hires too, they should get emails access early to aid in the transition and ability to be productive
* Another group whose email rights should be addressed are the retirees who get cut off from email immediately, if not emeritus faculty; these people could make future donations; we’re cutting our nose to spite our face.
* A faculty member who was an adjunct the previous year had problems because a student with an issue/need sent her an email after her account was cut off; there was no way she knew the student email was in her inbox and she couldn’t respond until she found it at the start of the next semester; it should be forwarded to someone at Western (e.g. Department Head)
* Comment: This has been going on too long, we need a better solution
* Question: has Faculty Senate thought of talking to the Provost to understand how she plans to address the deans searches? Who will lead those? How they will be conducted? It sets the tone for all deans searches; We also want knowledge of a timeline and prioritization of the searches
* One senator indicated that the Provost stated this Wednesday that she planned to talk about this in her report to the Faculty Senate on Wednesday next week
* Question: is it really the law that the interim has to be called interim and they only have to be interim for one year? It looks bad to the world that we have so many interims; Why do we have to do external searches? Can faculty request/demand/lobby for an internal search? (Wasn’t there an internal search for Scott Higgins? Believe this was the case. Provost Carter asked around to determine if this was satisfactory to others, then appointed Scott the dean.)
* Question/suggestion: Is there a mechanism for faculty to ask for a search to be internal? It would be helpful to identify this.
* This also raises issues of evaluations of deans; do these occur regularly? A desire to see a summary of the evaluations was expressed; Comment: it’s not likely we can do that as these reviews are part of their personnel file
* Perhaps we should say we want an external search where an internal candidate can be seriously considered? This sounds like a reasonable and less extreme approach.
* We don’t want to always be able to say we want only an internal search because administration could opt to do this for all of their searches too.
* This bring up another issue, we should not have internal searches just to save money.
* If the faculty of the college were uniform/in favor (imagine that, uniform agreement!) of an internal search there has to be a way to way for them to do this.
* Chris Cooper as Faculty Affairs Chair – People have been telling me a lot about the bookstore lately; some issues include that there are no standing orders, they have a hard time dealing with ancillary materials, particularly on web, and they also do not deal with eReaders; Do you have some solutions that are constructive? He has one idea: they’re under auxiliary services but if they were under Academic Affairs that may make it easier to deal with these academic issues;
* A faculty member has materials that are to come with the book but are bundled and the bookstore won’t distribute them (they expect the faculty to do this, but the faculty have no way to get these back at the end of the semester); Commented they would love to have the bookstore under Academic Affairs
* They [the task force under Dianne Lynch and Craig Fowler] are going to be looking at organization of the staff side of things; if the bookstore is doing all of these paper reports of what book will be used/needed, why not put it in Banner and have them look there; these support units are supposed to support the academic side, but they’re not … they’re silos; there’s also a problem that they’re not competitive, but have a monopoly; Would love to know how we judge the efficiency of any group or area like this
* Claim that a significant percentage of faculty by-pass the bookstore (by requiring a supplemental text that must be purchased); the faculty member thinks the rental program will just disappear
* Another problem is that our students graduate and get to senior years without reference materials
* Belief that the bookstore won’t exist in future because of eBooks; we don’t need a bookstore with these
* Concern that textbooks for graduate students aren’t available at bookstore and graduate students have to buy them through an outside vendor [some faculty indicated they knew that their graduate texts were available in the bookstore for purchase by their graduate students]; who determines if the bookstore will carry a graduate textbook?
* We may have an issue that the bookstore has the right, as indicated in the handbook, to require students to buy books for courses that aren’t offered more than once in two years … as we may need to shrink program offerings, this could be an issue as we may have more electives offered less frequently and students may be forced to purchase books they should be able to rent
* There are also issues about students who receive financial aid; they have to get their books through the book rental; they don’t get reimbursed if they have to purchase them.
* There are issues for students in 4+1 or certificate programs; they are caught in the middle; they have to purchase texts and can’t rent;
* Suggestion, as we’re probably still not the only UNC institution with the rental system, we should check into other rental systems in the system to see how they are handling these issues
* Recall back to the time when Erskine Bowles made a statement about purchase vs rent books; a scary email that said you need to implement rental books;
* One faculty member indicated a publisher wouldn’t allow them to use a book as a rental which meant they couldn’t use supplementary web materials which were superior to other options
* Laura Cruz, Director of Coulter Faculty Commons – they’re facing a lot of pressure from publishers who have building blocks that go straight into Blackboard; thus far they’ve said no to this because there would be one of these publisher tabs in every course in Blackboard – not CFC’s call to make; In response to a question: no, they aren’t able to “turn off” the publisher tab
* What pressures is bookstore under from the state? How can we better understand this pressure? Someone said the Chancellor pointed out that we are model in state b/c of our rental policy, indicating that it’s something the state wants (though it was questioned if the bookstore itself, as an auxiliary, actually has pressure from the state as they don’t get funding from the state)
* Going back to workload: we have a real issue with faculty retention; there are other ways besides salary, such as sabbaticals and money for research, that would help with retention; would like to see some creativity in ideas for this; think it’s an issue for the Senate;
* It was pointed out this issue is in the strategic plan, but it’s a real small point in strategic plan;
* Question: How many new faculty did we have this year? Answer: about 44, only 10-ish were tenure track; The claim was made that there was more demand for tenure-track hires than adjunct recently and that we’re not in line with the national trend
* Can we look at salary and promotion? A change in title has an associated raise; In the past ten years it appears amount for promotion hasn’t increased. Maybe we could increase the raises on moving from assistant to associate and associate to full; maybe it doesn’t have to be a fixed amount for each but a percentage;
* A faculty member commented they are bothered that you have to go and do a bogus job search that spends so many hours of someone else’s time (at other institution) to get a job offer to get a raise (and screw up their search); Faculty present indicated that they knew of people who have done that
* One faculty member, speaking as a family guy, suggested that instead of or in addition to salary, our health care package could improve greatly as it sucks; you get 70% coverage for people with families and pay $543 per month for health care; We could also bump up the retirement fund a couple of notches; it’s not just what you bring home every week but what you’ll have in the future
* Request that Faculty Assembly harp on this as it isn’t a WCU issue but a UNC system issue (mentioned to Mary Jean as she’s a new delegate)
* Maybe we could have a health insurance program like the politicians have?
* Question: what is the promotion salary increase now: $2000 asst to assoc, $3000 assoc to full (some faculty indicated they’d love for this to be retroactive!)
* We can suggest that this promotion amount can be indexed to include inflation; what’s a number we could suggest they move to? We need to look at peer institutions
* A faculty member was asked to mention their faculty expressed grave concern that there are no sidewalks out to the new campus; told it’s in the budget but not sure when; afraid students will be killed first; hasn’t been surveyed out; very unsafe
* Some people have asked if Faculty Senate can investigate the Grievance and Hearing Committee processes – Response from Erin and Vicki: it will be something we address with Rules Committee, Collegial Review Committee, and Legal Counsel; we started looking at this during the summer;
* It was mentioned that if you take your Department Head to grievance and you win, then it’s your Department Head who gets to determine result!
* Jayne Zanglein pointed out that Mountain Mediation, a local mediation group, charges just $650 for 10 mediations; Surely this is something the university would find worth the small cost.
* Concern that it’s a really fast time to determine if you want to fill out a grievance; there are issues to be weighed in making this decision;
* One problem is a degree of constraint because of the [UNC] Code (being system-bound); it ended up we were one of the more well organized campuses on hearing and grievances; Faculty Assembly had a report coming from this summer that we hope to see soon about this;
* Not trying to advocating change something we can’t change; Believe there is great benefit of a mediator or ombudsman, someone who could listen and help them with the procedure;
* A lot of times [grievances] happens spur of the moment, such as when given your AFE and told to sign it; People need to know their options better; Perhaps an educational process;
* There are untenured people who have heard from their Department Heads’s not to write a rebuttal because it would look contentious;
* Comment that it depends on situation; sometimes are better than others to rebuttals than others; a Department Head could have actually been giving sincere advice for the benefit of the faculty member, or they could have been a jerk
* What about working on educating faculty about options through the CFC and having faculty mentors able to advise faculty on options; Laura Cruz indicated that the Faculty Mentor programs is “sort of” still going, and you don’t want to put a mentor in a sticky situation like this, especially having them advise
* Vicki – we’re doing these workshops each semester with the Provost’s Office on TPR and related issues; we can do it more regularly if it would help;
* Jayne commented they just hired a new faculty member whose expertise is helping people with these processes; might be something the new faculty member could work with a group and have her explain some of the very common issues and get feedback on how we could better educate people
* One faculty member finds the informal networking systems are better for making connections; think the formal forced process is kind of awkward; encourage junior faculty to get out and make connections; network more, it will help the whole process informally;
* Comment that all faculty for Graduate Nursing is at Biltmore Park … getting that connection is not easy to do because of the distance; maybe having some of these meetings set up in a video conference capability;
* We need to think of how to incorporate our more distant bodies in our faculty governance; it was referenced that there are tenure track faculty at Asheville
* Question: isn’t there a Faculty Forum that comes out monthly for these issues;
* We may need an Asheville U Club Branch (somewhat jokingly)
* Maybe encourage having at Biltmore Park a common meeting places for different programs
* Comment that a faculty member understands that now DH’s do not actually send a recommendation outside the college at any point; This was corrected – Department Heads do have a block to write on AA-21 that goes on to higher collegial review levels
* Request for clarification for the review of teaching material; some departments interpretation is that the whole department participates in this review? Clarification that this is a DCRD issue rather than something to be addressed in the handbook; review of materials required for tenure-track non-tenured faculty, how and by whom is up to department;
* AFE materials –people are given until May to do it; can we back that due date up? Response: the dates up to the department. Comment that some require student evaluations which means you have to wait until May;
* Should I mention General Education? That goes back to the point on prioritization. Too much going on at the same time. But Senate sets that [General Education] timeline. Should it be put off for a year? We can do that. Noticed that neither the Chancellor nor Provost have spoken about the General Education review.
* If prioritization is going to be shaped by the strategic plan and it’s going to shape the university, than pushing the Gen Ed right now is mistimed; it is unfortunate for all the works that’s been done, but it’s still the fact.
* Would like to know from current senators and new chair, do we think there’s a possibility of real shared governance and you can re-energize faculty and get them committed to having a voice?
* One senator personally feels there’s a chance for real shared governance from the Chancellor and what we’ve seen of the Provost so far; the Chancellor will listen and may disagree;
* Another senator commented that even when the Chancellor disagrees he articulates why and that he will comeback and revisit this; Example: Chancellor said he didn’t support Ombudsman and gave reasons why, which senator was grateful for;
* Follow-up from another senator: but he said if we had good policies and good people then an ombudsman shouldn’t be needed; but we don’t have good policies.
* Comment that one faculty member was disappointed she didn’t see more of the Chancellor last year;
* Another faculty member responded that Bardo did come meet us and sucked us in the first year, and this same faculty member too was disappointed in not seeing more the Chancellor Belcher last year, but at Opening Address hearing he how much he reduced our debt … I don’t care that he wasn’t out seeing everyone; what he did was worth it.
* Comment that Bardo left us is such a miserable !$%#-ing state;
* Someone heard there was a request to remove name of Bardo from the Performing Arts Center, but the Board of Trustees determined never to name a building after a former chancellor, just someone who donates money;
* Why not make it the Bardo Theater in the Fine and Performing Arts Theater (downsize)? Some were interested in this; not worth FS time; recommend moving name in R25 though.
* Comment from a colleague: the person stated that if the Chancellor believed faculty and staff were important, he should have given raises from the outset (even though GA said we couldn’t use local tuition for this), he should not needed to do this only after hearing others used local tuition towards faculty raises.
* One faculty member heard there’s a real pressure not to ask questions in faculty meetings; they referred to example from the past; it’s hard to believe that faculty and academics would be afraid to ask questions;
* Another faculty member thinks it’s going to take time for people to be comfortable speaking out publicly; there were reverberations affecting not her [after speaking out to the previous chancellor], but the people around her;

Caucus adjourned at 4:48 p.m.

(see next page for additional concerns submitted via email)

Additional concerns submitted separately to a senator who couldn’t attend the caucus:

1. *Examination of policies relevant to 9- vs 12-month paychecks, how benefits are taken out of “extra” pay earned for summer teaching or from grant salary.* As it stands now, the tax rate is reportedly higher if you earn “extra” pay during the summer if it comes as part of your WCU paycheck. This bears upon the overall topic of salary issues: In an age of (virtually) no raises, compression, etc., how can faculty best make decisions about additional income?
	1. Are there choices? If not, why not?
	2. Can faculty help change policies or procedures to streamline related processes?
	3. Can there be a workshop to educate faculty on strategies as to how consulting, contracts, etc., can be best handled? This may be from an external financial advisor, but with HR involvement.
2. *Classroom space utilization policies need meaningful faculty input that meets utilization requirements without impacting teaching methods.* Classroom assignments have changed over the last few years in that faculty seem to have a lot less input into where their classes are taught. This has become a significant concern for some programs because classsroom activities and faculty morale have been negatively impacted (see examples below from faculty in three programs). This may affect only a few faculty, but it’s hundreds of students each year. **The goal is to work with the Registrar and space committee to develop effective and creative procedures for making classroom assignments, and possibly eliminating some classrooms from the list.**  The same effective classroom utilization level can be reached while being more consistent with educational goals. Prior attempts to do this through DHs has not resulted in any change, so faculty wish the senate to try.

“[I have been given classrooms that are] unacceptable to teach in. There was no space in front by the white board, there were no windows so it was dark, and there was no room to move desks around to accommodate the active learning exercises the my daily classes are based on for my liberal studies courses. Comments from students on my course evaluations also noted the above problems.”

“It’s frustrating knowing that some faculty don’t see this as an issue, because their teaching materials are hosted on the web, on the board, or on the classroom computer. If your teaching materials aren’t that transportable, you’re going to eliminate activities and some teaching styles because it just isn’t practical to move that much stuff halfway across campus. Now that we have even larger class sizes in our “hands-on” general ed classes, it’s even more of a problem.”

“I actually stopped teaching with microscopes last semester due to the hassle and damage risk that comes with transporting scopes across campus.”

From a peer teaching evaluation: “The room in which this class was held was very poorly suited to a geology course, limiting options for instructional methods. The contrast on the old, green chalkboard was way too low even with different colors. The chalkboard was too small for drawing large concept diagrams, much less if you want to use the screen as well. The tables were too small for maps or samples, and the air handling system was too loud in the back. However, [she] did a good job making the best of it, for which she should be commended.”

“Another issue with classrooms across campus is last fall during final exams when we went into lockdown I was not supposed to walk over to yet, but no one could find a name of a person to call in Reid who could put a note on the board or go see if any of my students were already in the classroom waiting to take the exam. Even the Dean’s office couldn’t figure out who to contact. Thus, the few students who were already in the classroom waiting for me to show up to take the final exam had no way to find out information about what was going on.”

“If we are going to teach all over campus, faculty need to be supplied with building contact information so that we can immediately find someone to help us if the classroom is locked or if there is an IT problem. Teaching in Belk last spring required me to leave Natural Science a minimum of 30 minutes before my class so that when the classroom was locked I could wander the halls trying to find someone with a key. Or, if the computer did not work (there was no call button in the classroom I was in) I could find someone to call IT for me. I had the same problems when I taught in Reid Fall 2011.”

“GEOL140 is one of our most popular courses for non-majors affecting large numbers of students throughout the University. GEOL140 does not have an official lab associated with it. However, like my fellow instructors, I believe strongly that we need to incorporate hands-on exercises in any science class and therefore I typically use part of class time for in-class laboratory-style exercises. Prior to 2011, we were able to schedule our GEOL140 courses in the Stillwell building, which houses the geology teaching collections. I was able to bring significant quantities of lab supplies to class. However, recent changes in classroom scheduling have resulted in some of my classes being outside the Stillwell building, significantly farther from our supplies. I have, unfortunately, had to scale back the types of exercises I do by choosing fewer and smaller rock samples to bring to class (rocks being relatively heavy!). In addition, I have stopped bringing the bulkier items to GEOL140 classes I teach in the Stillwell building because I want to maintain consistency between sections. While I always strive to bring the best education I can to our students, I cannot help but worry that our students are being cheated in subtle ways by our inability to schedule geology classes near our supplies. If the senate can assist in finding a solution to this issue, I would be very grateful.”

“I used to take students to lab rooms here in my department for part of a class time, for a quick demonstration or to take advantage of maps or samples that are too large to move. I do this rarely now, because it takes a whole class time to walk over rather than 20 minutes.”

Email to DH and registrar regarding a particular situation in 2011: “[I teach] a class in 214 Forsyth. I wanted to let you know that someone needs to re-code the room in Banner. It is not a traditional classroom layout, rather something more akin to a conference room. The screen completely blocks the only usable whiteboard and the computer cart blocks the other small whiteboard. Thus, one cannot use a whiteboard and PowerPoint simultaneously. Most importantly, there are not enough chairs in the room for 35 students. I had 3 students standing through the entire class, taking notes on a counter in the back of the room. I have since switched to a different room in Killian.

 However, this gets at the larger problem that has been presented by room assignments over the last few years. For example, when Stillwell was renovated, the renovations were done with math, theater, geology, political science, etc. classes in mind. Stillwell faculty gave input into how the classrooms should be designed prior to the renovations.

 By randomizing the process, these programs’ classes now get assigned to rooms that were originally designed for business or other disciplines. The room assignment process applies a “one room fits all” model to classrooms, when those that teach know that this is not the case.”