

Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Council
January 28, 2009
Excerpts

Present: J. Cummins, B. Ferguson, K. Jacobson, C. Lindgren, R. Osgood, M. Schneider, P. Smith, B. Trish

The meeting came to order at 3:30 p.m. in Macy House conference room. The minutes of 12/10/08 were approved.

President's Remarks

The President congratulated the men's basketball team for a great game played against Monmouth at the Des Moines Wells Fargo Arena on Tuesday night.

He noted that the draft budget for 2010 is close to being balanced. Those involved are modeling using various assumptions over three years. He noted that, if we can find additional savings, we need to increase the building maintenance and equipment fund. The Board will be asked to approve the budget at the April meeting this year.

Dean's Remarks

The Dean read into the minutes those personnel and honorary degree actions taken by Council electronically during break.

Continuing reflection on the importance of outside funding, the Dean noted that the confluence of the EKI and HHMI grants has made it possible to simultaneously move forward with new interdisciplinary initiatives across the curriculum, which has been rare in the past.

She updated Council on the status of faculty searches.

Finally, she noted that she is finalizing the staffing situation for next year.

Council Members Remarks

M. Schneider reminded all that the official request for approval of the Commencement and Honorary Degree recipients will be presented at the next Faculty Meeting.

There was some discussion of seeking conditional Board of Trustees approval of the voting rights amendment to the Faculty Handbook at their winter meeting in Grinnell next week. Their approval would need to be conditional on the amendment taking effect after this academic year.

J. Cummins noted discrepancy in the plan to move forward with teaching space planning in the humanities and social sciences because the President's recent memorandum to the community stated that all new facilities would be put on hold until the economic situation stabilizes. He asked the President what he should say to the faculty of his division. The President replied that

he should inform them that effective facilities planning takes quite a bit of time...time which we are being afforded at this moment.

J. Cummins asked what can be expected to happen with regard to any new EKI proposals and what can be expected to proposals to replace regular faculty. The President responded that 1) if the situation gets worse, then all bets are off and 2) regardless of short-term future economic shifts, no one should expect that we will conduct a search to fill an EKI position next year and 3) no department coming forward with a new expansion position request for next year is likely to have the proposal considered. He gave Council the latitude to tell the faculty what they want to about whether or not to go ahead and prepare/submit EKI proposals. M. Schneider decided that the Council should prepare a memorandum to the faculty regarding the President's decisions regarding consideration of EKI and new position proposals this year, and that this issue be put on the agenda for next week's Council meeting with the objective of producing agreement on the wording of the memorandum. B. Trish asked if the current budget situation would affect the Senior Faculty Status program. The President replied that the budget has not introduced a wrinkle that would change the way we approach SFS. However, the Dean suggested that she would like to begin a discussion with Council about the SFS program—its shortcomings and possibilities.

M. Schneider reminded Council that the new season for requesting position proposals is upon us and Council needs to revisit the memorandum which will be sent out reminding departments that the deadline is coming. This needs to be done soon.

Finally, M. Schneider noted that Council members have agreed to meet informally and without administrative representation with a few faculty members who would like to talk about current issues. This meeting will take place next Wednesday at noon.

Unpaid Leave Requests

The Dean noted that she has received three requests for unpaid leave for next year which require Council action. In preparation for this discussion the Dean distributed the minutes of 12/12/07 which record actions taken by Council regarding setting policy regarding unpaid leaves. It appears below for the convenience of future readers.

The Executive Council discussed the need to balance supporting faculty scholarship with remaining flexible with respect to faculty schedules, staffing our courses with tenured and tenure track faculty members, and providing adequate time for pre-tenure faculty members to develop as teachers and construct a strong record prior to the tenure review.

In the end the Executive Council has recommended the following policy components.

- We continue to provide Harris leaves competitively awarded and set as a goal to increase the number from two to three annually beginning in 2009-2010.

- We generally limit other pre-tenure, scholarly leaves to the one-semester research leave.
- If a faculty member has an unusual opportunity or project, the Executive Council will consider a proposal for an additional semester of leave. Under normal circumstances an additional semester of leave will require that the faculty member has been awarded a peer reviewed fellowship or grant to support the leave. In order to facilitate planning, faculty members should normally submit applications for such additional semester leaves in the fall semester with confirmation of the grant and leave no later than February 1. In the event that a candidate for an additional semester of leave has not received confirmation of the fellowship or grant by the February 1 notification date, the candidate's absence from campus for the additional semester can be delayed until the next academic year, so that departments can make adequate plans for replacements. As with a Harris Leave an additional semester of leave (beyond the one semester research leave) requires that the Personnel Committee has assured that the teaching up to the time of the complete review is of high enough quality that the additional semester of leave will not interfere with establishing a record of excellent teaching prior to the tenure review.

B. Ferguson moved, J. Meehan seconded, approval of the policy, as stated above, regarding requests for unpaid leave from pre-tenure faculty which would result in a full year leave for pursuit of scholarly work. The motion was approved.

The three faculty members who have requests for unpaid leave before Council for next year are arguing on the basis of the third bulleted item above.

There was discussion.

The President left the meeting a 4:35 p.m.

Council will continue its consideration of the requests for unpaid leave at a subsequent meeting.

Discussion of Computer Science Response to the External Review

The Dean reminded Council that they had decided last semester that they wanted to review and discuss departmental responses to their external reviews. She previously distributed the response of the Computer Science Department to their recent external review. The Council discussion focused on some major findings/resolutions of the department stemming from the review.

The meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

Secretary
Karen Wiese