

Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Council
April 22, 2009
Excerpts

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

The meeting came to order at 3:30 p.m. in Macy House conference room.

The minutes of 4/15/09 were approved.

President's Remarks

The President was travelling.

Dean's Remarks

The Dean has received the Mathematics and Statistics Department response to their external review. This will be on the next agenda for discussion.

She reported that the Curriculum Committee voted to bring both motions of the Prison Program proposal to the May 4th faculty meeting for a vote. They also voted to bring the Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies proposal to the same faculty meeting for a vote.

She noted that she and M. Schneider have moved their weekly meeting to Thursday from Friday with the aim of publishing the next Council meeting agenda earlier in order to give faculty more time to approach their divisional representatives regarding concerns they may wish brought to Council for discussion.

Council Remarks

M. Schneider asked if there was any value in having Council's formal expression of support for the Prison Program in advance of the May 4th faculty meeting. J. Cummins noted that there were questions raised at the Humanities Division meeting where this proposal was discussed which will need to be addressed by the proposers at the faculty meeting on the 4th. B. Trish noted that the Social Studies Division took note of the pilot nature of this program and wanted to see what metrics would be used to conduct the mid-term evaluation. It was decided to delay further consideration until the next Council meeting.

M. Schneider asked Council if they felt any need to take meeting time to reflect on the faculty meeting held today. Schneider referred to the following statement read by Bill Ferguson, on behalf of Council, during the Committee of the Whole discussion at the April 22nd faculty meeting in response to the April 20th faculty meeting.

Colleagues,

We, the elected members of Executive Council, are profoundly disappointed with the events that transpired at the outset of yesterday's faculty meeting. In particular, we were deeply saddened by three aspects of this event:

1. We feel it was highly inappropriate to present a damning document that relies almost exclusively on information from a source who might well have been disgruntled. This flies in the face of how we as academics gather and use evidence to further the common good.

2. We strongly feel this document should have been made available ahead of time to the people whom it criticizes. Because it was not, faculty members attending the meeting heard almost exclusively one view of the issue. This seems to contradict our efforts at free and open dialogue.
3. We are distressed at the practice of publicly airing characterizations of college personnel and charges leveled at them with apparent disregard for the norm of confidentiality. This is potentially damaging to individuals named in these documents, and to a great extent precludes counterarguments that might be offered by supervisors, members of search committees and others whose voices would appropriately be heard. It is also distressing to read commentary in public outlets about candidates, including those who were not hired, for positions at the college.

Moving forward, we believe there has been some substantive progress made on issues related to faculty governance and staff procedures over the course of this year. The administration has agreed to review the staff handbook, to review faculty governance, and has agreed to an outside review of staff hiring and retention practices on campus including in Student Affairs. We support continued progress in all of these areas and hope that recent events do not detract from any of them. Currently, a faculty governance group is working in a constructive manner to address issues of faculty representation and governance procedures, in consultation with Executive Council. We are pleased to be able to assist these efforts. Further, we encourage all faculty to become involved in the ongoing discussions, so far scheduled every other Monday at 4:15, that are a direct outcome of this group's deliberations. In particular, we want faculty to give serious consideration to faculty representation and to procedures and issues relating to the academic budget. We feel it is essential that faculty have opportunity to provide substantive input into next year's budgetary decisions. This is particularly important in these times of recession when budget cuts have been planned for the next two years. We want to ensure that the academic mission of our institution remains secure. Faculty needs to be involved.

There was discussion. After 1 ½ hours Council turned back to the agenda.

Tenure-Track Faculty Position Proposals

There was discussion of faculty position proposals.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Secretary
Karen Wiese