

Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Council
September 23, 2009
Excerpts

Present: S. Andrews, V. Bentley-Condit, C. Lindgren, R. Osgood, M. Schneider, P. Smith, B. Trish, A. Vishevsky

The meeting came to order at 4:15 p.m. in the Nollen House conference room.

The minutes of September 16 had been approved via email.

Marci Sortor, Vice-President for Institutional Planning, joined the meeting at 4:15 p.m. to update Executive Council on plans for an external review of the Staff Handbook. She presented an issues overview which included a history of governance issues, the proposal for an ombudsperson, and the perceived need to revise the Staff Handbook. She reminded Council that the Self Study performed by the College in preparation for the Reaccreditation also drew attention to the need to review performance assessment.

She summarized the goals of the review to include obtaining 1) an independent external review of written policies in regard to hiring, performance review, and disciplinary action which will lead into a revision of the Staff Handbook, and 2) advice on whether an ombudsperson is needed. She stated that this review will not be based on past or present cases. Since she became responsible for this effort, she has received input from an advisory group in relation to four key elements of planning the review including 1) selection of outside reviewers, 2) selection of background materials for the reviewers, 3) organization of the reviewers' time on campus, and 4) focus on staff related questions of diversity, disciplinary action, governance issues, appropriateness of participation, and appeals and grievance procedures.

She asked for Council's reactions to the questions of participation in and scheduling of the review. She also asked Council members to have dinner with the review team to answer questions they may have about what they have heard.

M. Schneider noted that the ultimate objective of this review is to be able to produce a report which will establish credibility of process and receive widespread acceptance. There was discussion about adequate participation in the review by various segments of the College community. Sortor asserted that she is working hard to make sure that this process is perceived by all as one that is focused on staff and not faculty.

Sortor then moved into a brief presentation on the status of implementing the Expanding Knowledge Initiative. She noted that, in addition to the EKI faculty expansions, there are four interdisciplinary study themes at present, four larger initiatives, and three areas of curricular coherence, and many productive activities (such as common ground lunches) that have served as catalysts for faculty development. In particular, these activities are resulting in curricular coherence, where a number of courses address a particular interdisciplinary topic. In terms of an agenda for the Interdisciplinary Advisory Board, she sees moving forward in the areas of linguistics and environmental studies. She then noted that she needs three additional members to

be appointed to the Advisory Board and asked Council to respond to a list of suggested faculty members who might be invited.

Sortor left the meeting at 5:15 p.m.

President's Remarks

The President commended the Communication Office for creating the web piece which brought great attention to a MAP on northern Ireland and hence our academic program.

He mentioned that both he and the Dean will be away from campus while conducting reaccreditation assessments during the week of November 2nd.

Finally, he noted that the Board of Trustees will be meeting on campus beginning on Friday. The primary activity will be that of a joint meeting of the Budget and Investment Committees and he invited all Council members to attend.

Dean's Remarks

The Dean noted that the town of Grinnell has had its first confirmed case of the H1N1 flu.

She mentioned that the work of the Board on budget and investment at their upcoming September 25-26 meeting will enable the on-campus work to move ahead more realistically. She also noted that the Board will be updated on the Presidential search, approve December degrees, and asked to approve the new Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies major.

She also mentioned that Mickey Munley would like to come to Council to talk about his plans to boost participation in giving to the College by alums and employees. M. Schneider responded that the timetable for such a visit would be dictated by what other matters were pressing on Council's agenda.

Council Remarks

M. Schneider asked if there has been any concern being expressed by faculty regarding the proposed revisions of the merit review process that he presented at the last faculty meeting. Council members responded that this has not been the case. Schneider suggested that, in the absence of feedback, the Dean should move ahead with the planned revisions.

President's Draft Outline of Report to the Board

The President discussed the outline of his report to the Board which will present achievements in capital projects and academic program over his term in office.

Student Membership on the Committee for Academic Standing

The Dean noted that this was intended to be an update on the experiment involving student membership on the CAS. M. Schneider noted that the experiment, which is in its second semester, has been quite successful and he reports that the Committee is ready to move ahead to institutionalize said membership. It was noted that for student participation to be regularized it would require a change to the Faculty Handbook. After discussion, it was recommended to delay formal action to regularize student participation until the spring semester when the faculty will have been able to consider the matter and have voted. Then any proposed changes to the Faculty Handbook can be provided to the Trustees in time for their spring meeting at Grinnell.

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Secretary
Karen Wiese