Faculty Advisory Committee to the President (Regular meeting)

Minutes
Date: 9/15/22
Time: 2-3.04pm
Location: Zoom

Committee members in attendance: Bethany Goodier, Bob Podolsky (chair), Margaret Hagood, Chris Mothorpe, Will McCorkle, Brooke Permenter, Wendy Sheppard, Thomas Spade, Jennifer Baker, Rebekah Compton,

Other attendees: President Hsu, Provost Austin, William Veal (Faculty Speaker), Rosario Meek (ACE Fellow)

Recorder: Jennifer Baker

I. Provost: Description of a “teaching excellence” track to offer “different ladders for tenure track faculty.”
The issue is being discussed with the AAUP rep and Faculty Speaker.
This change would require a long discussion with faculty that would take at least a year.
Resolved: The Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) to the President will discuss the topic off-line.

II. Introductions

Preface: The goal of the FAC in these meetings is to hear from the President and Provost about their views of issues directly, rather than to gather information from representatives.

III. President’s Topics for the Committee
President: Important improvements have occurred with *faculty compensation, *revenue, and *enrollment.
Ongoing concerns are *reduced student enrollment (200 students fewer than last year),
*student retention, *retention of faculty.
Given recent events, this is the President and Provost’s first year at the College to see what we can achieve without the constraints of Covid.

Question: Are the College’s financials being impacted by lower enrollment?
President: A: Since the College budgeted conservatively: no.
We have slightly more students enrolled than were in the budget.

Announcement
Provost: Schools will soon be given an overview of an outsourced report on student retention, which identified several issues for the College to address. One of these issues is student advising, which was discovered to have an impact on retention of students at the College.

IV. Committee’s Topics for the President
A. Fort Johnson Master Plan and the future of marine programs

Question: Is the College in a position to reject plans from the state concerning the Fort Johnson facilities if the plans do not meet the requirements of the Biology department?
President: A: Yes. We will only agree if it is a “win-win” situation. Currently it is not clear if the resources will be made available so that the offer can be made. Of concern is the status in 50 years of the land at Fort Johnson where our marine lab is located, as seawater encroachment is anticipated.

Resolved: Members of the Biology Department should bring concerns over support of programs to the President.

B. Integration of efforts to achieve REI goals across campus

Question: How involved will the new Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) be with academic programming such as (but not limited to) REI and general issues of culture change on campus?
President: A: The REI is something the OID should participate in. Yet the OID has a wide agenda that includes faculty, employees and students and must preserve this focus, as has been done at other institutions.

Example provided: There was an academic and practical aspect to the “Sustainability” QEP, and a lack of communication between those involved with either proved a hindrance.

A2: The Provost will work very closely with the new CDO, and they will decide together how to partner.
Provost: Currently the Office of Institutional Diversity (OID) does provide education on matters of diversity. There are concerns such as culture in the classroom, and the OID may work on such issues.
Efforts between REI and OID could be aligned, this could work to mitigate the impact of working in “silos” on campus.

C. Class policies (from the parent & student town hall questions)
a. Costs of textbook publisher’s homework software

Question: Is the College aware of the impact the cost of software programs, in addition to textbooks, have on students?
A: The Provost is keenly aware of the textbook issue and worked on this issue for some time in the past.
She has checked with the Dean of Libraries about the College’s efforts to utilize open educational resources (OER), and offered incentives for departments to adopt OER.

Comments:
The library had to change its procedures due to COVID.
Listing the expected maximum cost of a text or software program is helpful to students but not yet expected of faculty. There can be tax implications for students/families if required resources for a course are listed on the syllabus.

Resolved: A committee will be formed to consider these issues.
President: The College’s contract with Barnes & Noble should be consulted.

b. Faculty responses to quarantine absences

Question: Is there any uniformity in these responses?
Provost: A: Issues parents have had are few of late and handled well by Mark Del Mastro. The College maintains the principle that faculty be allowed to cater their response to their students, using their judgment.

c. Hurricane continuity policy—are expectations based on faculty feedback?
Provost: A: The policy has been based on what other coastal Universities have in place and on the successful responses taken to the pandemic. It seems irresponsible to not have a policy.

Question: Have faculty been consulted on their likely ability to provide continued instruction in the case of a hurricane or hurricane warning?
Provost: A: Perhaps not. That would be welcome. The point was made that not only faculty preparedness to continue instruction but student preparedness to receive instruction may be compromised by power outages, and faculty should not assume their students are available even if they can continue instruction.
Resolved: The policy can receive feedback and be taken to the Senate. Faculty will be contacted for input to further develop this policy.

Question: May FAC meetings be scheduled for 90 minutes?
President: A: We can give it a try. Of concern is that committee members had to leave a 60-minute meeting early and only half the agenda was addressed. Can we find ninety minutes in which to meet?

Remaining agenda items were tabled until next meeting.