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Faculty Senate Minutes November 2021

UNO Faculty Senate

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2021-2022 Faculty Senate Minutes
Wednesday, November 10, 2021

Present: Benenson, Bragg, Carroll, Circo, Cliver, Erikson, Feng, Fox, Germonprez, Gandhi, Gift, Harbour, Jawed-Wessel, Jenkins, Jones, King, Kopp, Krause, Melanson, Moore, Nero, Ostler, Rech, Robinson, Sample, Schulz, Shafer, Shaw, Sim, Siy, Strasser, Vnuk, Volkman, Wessling, Wisneski

Absent: Ammons, Chalecki, Clinkinbeard, Maher, Park, Perkinson, Podariu

- I. Official Call to Order** by President Wessling at 2:04 p.m.
- II. The Minutes** of October 13, 2021 were approved as submitted.

The senate was placed at ease at 2:06 p.m. so SVC Kopp could speak. The meeting resumed at 2:45 p.m.

III. Officers' Reports

A. President's Report: Senator Wessling

- 1. Spring 2022 Update SVC Kopp.** Starting in Spring 22 (including 3-week January session) we will go back to the capacity allowed in each room by virtue of the fire code. This means we will no longer require 3' distancing.
 - a.** Of 331 classrooms on the campus
 1. 164 classrooms will have no change (in other words, the pre-covid fire code seating was evidently already at 3' distancing)
 2. 104 classrooms will have <10 seats added, ranging from a 2% to 30% change in seats in those rooms
 3. 63 rooms have >10 seats added. The most added seats are in Strauss Concert Hall and CPACS101, since those had been set for every other seat to be conservative.
 4. The average number of seats added in a classroom is 16%
- 2. UNO's 2021 Top Risks and Related Risk Mitigations Update from Barbara J Brey, CPA, CIA, Director of Internal Audit and Advisory Services**
 - a.** Attached PowerPoint is the risk assessment presentation that Chancellor's Li and Gold finalized and presented to the Audit, Risk, and Compliance Committee of the Board of Regents on Thursday, August 12. (Attachment 2)
- 3. Strategic Planning Faculty Sessions update from Dr. Deborah Smith-Howell**

UNO will host facilitated conversations around UNO's strategic plan. Facilitated conversations are web-based, structured discussions where participants can provide input about UNO's strategic direction. The discussions will be facilitated by Dr. Doug Derrick, associate dean of the College of Information Science and Technology. Check out the article in the Maverick Daily <https://www.unomaha.edu/news/events/strategic-planning-forum.php> for more details. These are primarily brainstorming sessions where participants will provide input on UNO's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

The facilitated conversations mark the first step in this renewed process that will build upon our previous successes. While this is certainly not the only opportunity to provide input into UNO's strategic plan, input is especially important. We need the perspectives and expertise of a broad range of students, staff, and faculty—please [register to be part of the facilitated conversations](#) and encourage your colleagues to participate in this effort.

Please note: all sessions will include up to 30 participants and comments made are completely anonymous. Each session will last approximately 90 minutes and can be done anywhere participants have a network connection. After the facilitated conversations, a thematic analysis will be created and a survey will be sent to all campus stakeholders to gather additional feedback.

Faculty session dates: Nov. 3 10-11:30am; Nov. 12 11:30am-1pm; Nov. 18 3:30-5pm

B. Secretary's Report on EO&A Meeting: Senator Siy

1. Attendees: Li, Kopp, Edwards, Batton, Smith-Howell, Steed, Wessling, Nero, Ostler, Shaw, Siy
2. Vaccination mandate for university personnel on federal contracts. The university is working to comply with the presidential executive order (Executive Order 14042) requiring everyone working on federally funded contracts to be vaccinated. There are 136 UNO faculty, staff and students affected.
3. Funds from American Rescue Plan. President Carter has put in a request to the legislature for \$195M from the American Rescue Plan. Of that amount, \$25M represents UNO requests.
4. Discussion on lifting the mask mandate. UNK lifted their mask mandate on 10/15. UNL could potentially lift theirs at the end of October when Lancaster County lifts their mask mandate. Chancellor Li is considering the possibility for UNO. While each campus has independent masking policies tied to local conditions, the campuses attempt to operate with consistent policies. The chancellor is aiming to balance the requests of stakeholders who want the mask mandate lifted with those who want to keep the mandate and anticipates pushback either way. It was noted that the H&K workout area no longer requires masks. UNO is keeping a close eye on any possible spike arising from this. If the current infection rate holds, the mask mandate might be lifted. Should the mask mandate be lifted at some point in the future, faculty will still be able to require masking in their classrooms.
5. Chief Diversity Officer search. The search is underway, with the assistance of a national search firm. The challenge is getting a pool that is big enough. Dr. Sydney Ribeau, past president of Howard University, is helping with the search process. The closing date for applications is end of October.
6. Spring and J-session calendar is live. There are about 80 courses for the J-session. 5-6 courses are study-away (local versions of study abroad courses) and are mostly full, speaking to the degree of student interest in experiential learning.
7. Research grants update. UNO received \$17M in sponsored grants in the first quarter of the year, a high number compared to previous years. This speaks to the

- volume of faculty research and creative activities going on in the past year.
8. Concerns about reduced social distancing in classrooms. SVC Kopp noted that there did not seem to be any significant negative impact in changing the social distancing policy from 6 feet to 3 feet, even accounting for the fact that some classrooms may already not be following the 3-foot distancing guidelines since desks and chairs can be easily moved around. Going forward, the plan is to return classrooms to full density, relying on a mask mandate (possibly faculty-driven) and encouraging vaccination.
 9. Book orders. Steve Dubey, the new course materials assistant manager at the UNO Bookstore, is looking for suggestions on how to get faculty to send in their book orders in time for the J-session. ER&S Committee will meet with him at the next committee meeting.
 10. Updated Winter Weather Policy. The proposed winter weather policy will change snow days to remote learning days. Pres. Wessling shared faculty concerns that this change could make it easier to the administration to call inclement weather days more frequently, which would be detrimental to some courses that are unable to conduct lessons remotely, e.g., science labs. SVC Kopp sought to allay those concerns and reassured faculty that inclement weather announcements will not be increasing just because it is easier to call them. The weather committee plans to call inclement weather days using the same weather conditions as in previous years.
 11. Using the J-session as a way for failing students to catch up. Pres. Wessling also relayed concerns from faculty about an apparent directive from Academic Affairs to use the J-session as a way for failing students to catch up, as this seemed to imply forcing faculty to give Incompletes to failing students and forcing faculty who are off-contract to work during the J-session. SVC Kopp clarified that this is not a mandate. He merely wanted to share the solution from one department that offered a creative way of using the J-session to help their students in a high DFW course. SVC Kopp stressed the importance of getting DFW rates down and felt we should celebrate such departmental initiatives.
 12. The lack of consistency in how Incompletes are handled. Following up on the previous point, AVC Edwards raised a concern that there is no consistency in how Incompletes are dealt with. She cited the need to have a contract between the student and faculty to have a plan, a set of expectations, and an end date for resolving the Incomplete. Additionally, a policy is needed to handle the situations where the faculty is no longer with the university. SVC Kopp also suggested to use Incompletes as a way to help students who might otherwise be failing. Pres. Wessling will bring this to the Senate to see if there is interest in reviewing the Incomplete policy.
 13. Follow up to the gap in new faculty health insurance. SVC Kopp clarified that offer letters to new faculty come out of Academic Affairs, with language from HR regarding insurance information. Cari Zimmerman in Academic Affairs is the point of contact to follow up regarding offer letters.
 14. Variability in how colleges offer course releases to new faculty. SVC Kopp explained that course releases are part of the negotiation between deans and new faculty and there is no expectation that there would be the same policies across

colleges.

15. Student retention initiative. Pres. Wessling shared the pushback from faculty on the language used in the campus priority message on student retention focusing on lowering DFW rates, which appears to imply that faculty are solely responsible for high DFW rates. SVC Kopp clarified that the intention is not to penalize faculty for students' final grades, but to encourage them to help students through early intervention, frequent feedback, high impact practices, etc., and to encourage departments to have consistency of expectations and objectives across sections of the same course, to consider adding prerequisites for high DFW courses with no stated prerequisites, to explore guided pathways for struggling students, etc. While there is agreement that faculty and administration both want students to succeed, and that faculty should explore ways to do better, it is important for administration to also acknowledge that many external factors contribute to the loss of 30% of our students every year. Many urban students live very complicated lives, a wicked problem that cannot be adequately addressed despite the available support services from the university and faculty. Efforts from universities with similar student populations that have managed to increase their graduation rate should be studied and perhaps we can learn about what more we can do at the faculty, department, and institution level. SVC Kopp urged faculty and administration to work together to get a more favorable outcome for our students.

Res.#	Date Senate Passed	Title	Admin Accept	Status
4442	10/6/21	University Committees (a-c)		Completed

C. Executive Council Report: Senator Shaw

1. The Executive Council voted to forward all the feedback collected during the committee meetings to SVC Kopp and Charley Steed in his capacity as the chair of the Weather Emergency Committee. President Wessling has sent them the information.
2. The Committee on Academic and Curricular Affairs will be assisting Dr. Sarah Edward's with the incomplete policy implementation review process.

IV. Standing Committee Reports

A. Committee on Academic and Curricular Affairs: Senator Circo

1. Present: Chris Moore, Harvey Siy, Jodi Benenson, Todd Robinson, and Deb Circo.
2. **Survey Question Development for Study Days/Prep Week.** The committee is working on developing draft questions for a survey regarding faculty experience with study days and prep week. The goal is to have draft questions ready for Executive Council review on December 1st and then present to the faculty senate on December 8th.
3. **Hate and Bias Statement.** The committee has reached-out to student government regarding the Hate and Bias Statement that was developed last year. We are aware

that the University of Nebraska system-wide group is discussing the matter, so we reached out to student government to determine if we need to revisit this issue, or let it work its way through the larger bureaucracy. The issue is how the policy regarding hate and bias, and how to report incidences, can be added to master syllabi or placed on Canvas.

B. Committee on Educational Resources & Services: Senator Shaw

1. Steve Dubey, Asst. Manager for the UNO Bookstore, described how supply chain disruptions are slowing the receipt of textbooks ordered by faculty. He strongly encouraged faculty to submit orders as soon as possible, because most publishers/distributors are taking four to six weeks to ship textbooks.
2. Committee members recommended that the UNO Bookstore work with University Communications to post reminders in MavDaily. We also noted that the several UNO colleges have faculty email lists, and that the Deans' offices may also be willing to send reminders. Reminders are very likely needed, because in previous semesters only 20% to 30% of faculty have submitted orders by the UNO Bookstores optimal deadline.
3. Senator Vnuk suggested that faculty could stagger orders so that books that will not be needed until mid-semester are ordered later. This can help reduce the UNO Bookstore's workload at the beginning of a semester.
4. The committee also recommended that the UNO Bookstore prepare a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document specifically for faculty, to help address any recurring issues.
5. In related conversation, Mr. Dubey stated that about 70% of UNO students charge their textbooks against their UNO account. When faculty direct them to Amazon, Chegg, or another source, students must front the cost of the textbooks and seek reimbursement.
6. Mr. Dubey also noted ebook versions obtained through the VitalSource.com (the UNO Bookstore's partner for ebook purchases) can help with supply bottlenecks, but many UNO students still prefer print textbooks. Senator Shaw stated that the library can look into purchasing ebooks, but the major textbook publishers (Cengage, Pearson, McGraw-Hill, etc.) rarely sell institutional licenses for individual textbooks.

C. Faculty Personnel & Welfare Committee: Senator Gandhi

1. We met on Oct 27th. We are working on a document intended to be a webpage for grievance-related resources for faculty. We will begin sharing it with stakeholders that were interviewed by the committee last year for feedback.

D. Committee on Goals and Directions: Senator Jones

1. The committee met on 27 Oct 2021 and discussed the following:
 - a. The first Part-Time Instructor Advisory Committee meeting will be held on Nov. 9th. We report outcome after it is held
 - b. The Winter Weather FAQ Draft was discussed. As requested by Katrina Jenkins, the feedback was sent separately to her.

E. Professional Development: Senator Rech

1. Present: S. Ammons, J. Rech (Chair); Absent: S. Jawed-Wessel, W. Melanson, M. Perkinson, D. Volkman (Due to accidental meeting cancellation on Outlook by the Chair)
2. The committee met to follow up with Dr. Kopp on the motion passed by the Senate last year regarding training for directors/chairs regarding maternity/paternity leave. Dr. Kopp referenced pages 49-51 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement and specifically states “a female faculty member will normally be excused from instructional duties during the semester...”. He indicated he had spoken with the Deans and given them direction this summer, which was to be communicated to Chairs/Directors. When Senator Ammons suggested that policy some scenarios could be shared to suggest how leave is to be handled, Dr. Kopp responded that he felt that “limited” the Chair/Director and was concerned that the interpretation could be that all leave was to be handled in a specific way. He encouraged us to report to him if we were aware of any concerns regarding leave. After Dr. Kopp left our meeting, Senator Ammons suggested that possibly sharing “what not to do” vignettes would be useful with Chairs/Directors. We will explore this option further. The committee urges anyone with concerns regarding leave to contact a member of the committee.
3. Discussion of the limited travel funds available for faculty this year. This item will appear on the November agenda.
4. The committee will meet next on 11/23 (new meeting date) with Dr. Ken Bayles (ORCA) to discuss how our committee can work with ORCA to support faculty.
5. The committee would like to meet with Dr. Connie Schaffer to discuss how the PD committee can work with the Office of Faculty Excellence to support faculty. An invitation to the December or January meeting will likely be extended.

F. Committee on Committees: Senator Nero

1. **No meeting; no report**

VI. Non-Senate Committee Report(s)

- A. **University-Wide Fringe Benefits Committee Meeting Report- John Erikson Jr. (Attachment 2)**

VII. Adjourn at 3:39 p.m.