

Council of Faculty Representatives DRAFT

Meeting Minutes

Friday, January 19, 2024

Present: Praveen Sekhar (chair), Dene Grigar (vice chair), Paul Bonamy, Laurie Drapela, Yijun He, Kristin Lesseig, Sam Lohmann, Kelsey Pascoe, Samantha Reisz, Aaron Whelchel.

Guest: Mel Netzhammer, WSU Vancouver Chancellor

Recorder: Lohmann.

1. Weather closure. Chancellor acknowledges the level of frustration with the prolonged closure (campus was closed due to weather from the afternoon of January 12 through January 19). Facilities team has done an excellent job checking campus safety.
 - a. Historic WSU policy has been that if a campus is safe, it should be open, but faculty and students will make decisions based on their own safety. There was a CFR recommendation earlier that weather closures be tied to Vancouver Public Schools, which was discussed but ultimately rejected. Out of those discussions, Chancellor's office has tried to be more accommodating of closing and consider decisions by regional school districts but kept open the possibility of "digital learning days" when courses can be switched to online modality. Chancellor notes that this week's campus closure matches closely with what Clark College and other institutions are doing.
 - b. The general practice is that Facilities staff check the status of campus at 3am, VCFO and Chancellor discuss at 5am, and a decision is made for the day before 6am.
2. Question about the discrepancy between general university policy that WSU Vancouver courses need to be in person, and snow day policy that online courses and high flexibility are encouraged.
 - a. Chancellor notes WSU policy that any course that is more than 75% online must be taught through Global Campus under Global Campus policies. This year there was a pilot for "Vancouver Online" courses (over 75% online but taught through Vancouver), and Chancellor's office is looking at changing policies and continuing this program. He stresses that this is not an issue of trust, and that the Vancouver campus has been pushing back on this system-wide policy.
 - b. Chancellor notes that students want flexibility and want the option to join remotely when possible. He states that "simulcast" courses (in-person but with a Zoom connection to the classroom) are permitted, and he hopes this option will be used in a way that does not harm pedagogy. CFR members note that this may work best for upper-division courses and that in-person attendance may be especially important for first-year students.
3. Evaluation of administrators. Summary of 360 Evaluation process for cabinet members. They are evaluated every other year, and each member submits a list of people to provide feedback on their work. This list is reviewed by Mel and Renny. Deans and directors are on contracts and are evaluated by every faculty member in the unit when that contract is up for renewal.

- a. At one point there was a process by which every faculty and staff member could comment on every cabinet member's evaluation, which produced an excessive amount of feedback which could not be used easily. HR proposed a "more organized" process with feedback from a smaller group. Chancellor does not want to go back to the earlier system but is open to making modifications. This year he chose not to do 360 evaluations but to work with CFR and Staff Advisory Group to design a new evaluation system.
 - b. CFR Chair notes that annual feedback (as opposed to a 3+-year review) gives important opportunities to respond to feedback and correct problems before they get out of hand.
 - c. Chancellor notes that in the past, anonymous comments were not always productive and sometimes quite hurtful or unprofessional. His priority is for feedback to be meaningful.
 - d. Chancellor notes that directors with faculty appointments all go through the annual faculty evaluation process.
 - e. CFR members note longstanding problems with the annual review process for faculty.
4. Budget.
- a. WSUV is down 800 students from 2019 numbers. Decline rate is less than anticipated, which suggests that enrollment and retention work is paying off, but there are still budget issues. Annual budget has dropped \$8M since 2020. This has mainly been addressed by holding positions open. This means no layoffs for permanently funded positions, but also a lack of strategy or planning. There remains a gap of about \$5M which has mainly been covered using one-time funds, spending down "central" funds. Additional income (for example, from cell phone towers) has also been used. The year will end "positive" with the deficit covered.
 - b. For next year, there remains about \$2M not covered.
 - c. In Pullman, budgets for colleges are not directly tied to enrollment and tuition funds, so the conversation is quite different.
 - d. WSU has an annual audit that is publicly available, but there is still a lack of transparency in the financials. Some things are simply undetermined: for example, there is a new contract for graduate students that amounts to \$9M, but the sources of funding are still unclear.
 - e. Question about "Franchise Fee" for central support paid to Pullman. It is paid at a rate of 11% of Vancouver tuition going to Pullman. There was negotiation about reducing this fee prior to 2020. Pullman is currently working on a new budget model, and the franchise fee will be part of this discussion.
 - f. There is ongoing discussion of the budgeting system including how to handle "noncore" funds (for example, from summer tuition). Chancellor notes that there are many incorrect assumptions in the budget model and Vancouver has needed to push back on many issues.
 - g. After the chancellors retreat there will be more detailed information about funding sources covering next year's budget deficit.
5. Tri-Cities Resident Faculty Organization (RFO) chair and its members will join CFR meeting on 2/13.
6. Follow-up questions for Chancellor's office, with responses, are attached as a separate file.