

# Council of Faculty Representatives

## APPROVED Meeting Minutes

Friday, February 2, 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:** Christine Portfors, Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education

**Recorder:** Lohmann

### Discussion items

1. Committee reports
  - a. President's Commission on the Status of Women met last Friday. The Commission is focused on issues regarding childcare and compensation. Pullman has had problems with providing childcare since 2020 and is apparently seeking a contractor. (There is an active children's center run by the Human Development department.) Commission is pushing to prioritize this issue. Institutional Climate Subcommittee has not yet met this semester. (Drapela)
  - b. Salary Step Subcommittee will deliver its report to faculty senate in April, then sunset in May. They are using the list of peer institutions from the strategic plan for comparison and making recommendations. Drapela notes that there was a 2007 report by another ad hoc committee with very similar concerns.
  - c. Chancellor's Advisory Council meeting was a presentation from participants in Future Leaders project. (Lesseig)
  - d. Updates from Campus Leadership Council (Sekhar):
    - i. The next COACHE survey is coming soon.
  - e. Accessibility Council has funds to support universal design and course materials remediation. (Lohmann)
2. Discussion of childcare options at WSU Vancouver and on other campuses. The Vancouver childcare center is now running and has added a toddler space. There seems to be a considerable amount of flexibility, and the childcare center currently has room for new enrollment.
  - a. Drapela's notes on Pullman childcare:
    - i. "Drawing on minutes from the PCSW Executive Committee meeting in late December 2023, concerns were raised about the fact that the Director of the WSU Children's Center is still open (and has been the better part of one year). The Associate Directors have stepped in to fill the gap, but PCSW leadership feels this is not sustainable; the WSUCC deserves a full-time director. Leadership cited the 200-child waiting list for WSUCC as evidence of unmet demand for childcare in the immediate Pullman area. The PCSW

Subcommittee on Student and Family are investigating other ways to meet childcare demand in the Pullman-Moscow area. The WSU Children's Center did offer childcare services in the evening but ceased the practice for the 2023-2024 academic year. It is unclear when this practice will resume. Time was, there were two childcare options on campus in Pullman: the Children's Center and the Child Development Program (CDP) - both run through Human Development. These programs were merged in 2015 during Elson Floyd's presidency. <https://news.cahnrs.wsu.edu/article/early-child-care-and-education-programs-at-wsu-merge/>”

### 3. Discussion with VCRGE Portfors

- a. Union contract was ratified last week with about 95% acceptance. This was a 10-month process of bargaining with the graduate student union.
- b. Union includes teaching assistants, research assistants, graduate student staff assistants, and undergraduate students who teach in a lab or do research.
- c. Bargaining covered wages, health insurance, dependent care, vacation time, sick leave, retirement benefits, and details of appointment letters including defined job duties and workloads with set weekly hours.
- d. Portfors notes there will need to be detailed training for faculty and other supervisors of graduate student workers. There is now much less flexibility about hours per week, and this will entail a culture change. There is a grievance process student workers can use if the contract is not followed.
  - i. Another challenge is how to distinguish between paid work by student employees and unpaid work on theses and dissertations. WSU is working with UW, MIT, and some other institutions to create templates for faculty guidance. This is a challenge at many institutions.
  - ii. HR is working on training modules for supervisors.
- e. Discussion of financial impact.
  - i. There is a change in the minimum stipend rate, but students also negotiated a 26% location differential for Vancouver graduate students because of the higher cost of living compared to Pullman. There are step increases for experience level. This will have a significant financial impact on the campus and is not paid for centrally. WSU has made a supplemental budget request to the legislature, which is currently in session. Legislature is sympathetic but Portfors is not sure what to expect.
  - ii. The hourly minimum for undergraduate students has gone up as well, with a 7% location increase above the Pullman rate.
  - iii. Cost increase from benefits can only be estimated at this point, possibly around 10%
  - iv. Lowest salary step with new contract in Vancouver would be about \$29K for a 9-month appointment at .5 FTE.
  - v. What happens with hourly wages for graduate students? They need to be equivalent to assistantship wages, with a specific number of hours per week, but they are not required to be .5 FTE.
- f. Discussion of impact on campus operations.

- i. Some units routinely hire graduate students to teach courses in the summer. They have had to rethink this approach, and there is concern that this will lead to hiring adjunct faculty rather than graduate students. The current practice is that in summer a graduate student can be hired to teach a course, paid at the same rate as adjunct faculty. That is permitted this summer, but in summer 2025 any graduate appointment for teaching a course will need to be at the contract rate.
    - ii. There will be a “freeze” on new graduate student hires this fall, with exceptions for grant funded RA positions. This freeze may be lifted if funds are forthcoming from the legislature. WSU Vancouver has a commitment to funding the students who are already here and can support them with their pay increase but does not have the funding to bring in new students on TA lines. Portfors expects the situation to stabilize eventually with a set number of lines that the campus can support.
    - iii. Portfors notes that this will have a similar impact in Pullman, at a much larger scale. It will impact the number of class sections that can be taught.
    - iv. Chair notes that some departments are changing course offerings and reducing lab courses.
    - v. Faculty supervising RA’s are concerned about being asked to “rebudget” their grants to support continuing RA positions. Portfors notes that there is no central money to absorb increased costs for grant-funded RA positions. She recommends faculty work with Diane Rathbun on rebudgeting and look at the possibility of return of F&A funds. When units pay F&A money into the system, some of the funds are returned to the unit and can be used if needed. (50% goes to Pullman, 38% to Vancouver Campus, and 12% to CAS in Vancouver, for example). The 38% to Vancouver supports the research office budget, which goes to salaries, Research Showcase, and research minigrants). WSU is not able to change the F&A rate, which is set federally.
  - g. There will be detailed announcements on the WSU website soon, including full details of the contract.
4. ByLaws Edit Discussion, 10:30 to 10:45 AM
- a. Some changes were suggested by constituents and by the administrators after bylaws were approved in December. CFR has discretion to approve these or not.
  - b. Discussion of institutional research data sources and the differences between data from Vancouver Academic Affairs and central Institutional Research.
  - c. Discussion of CFR chair’s role in review and ranking of WSUV budget requests (bullet point in III.F.1.). This was previously established in the bylaws. CFR decided to retain this bullet point; chair will discuss with Chancellor’s office.
  - d. Discussion of stipulations for CFR Chair compensation, including flexibility for 12-month faculty positions. CFR slightly revised this to reduce ambiguity.
  - e. Edits will be discussed and finalized over email.

## **Action items for chair:**

1. Verify whether the Childcare Center offers drop-in childcare options.
2. Work with CFR members over email to finalize edits to bylaws and bring them back to Chancellor's office. Note that the bullet point about budget review was in the previously approved bylaws and was approved by Faculty Assembly in December.