

November 21, 2024 Meeting of the SAU Faculty Senate

Faculty Senators in Attendance: Nelson, Valenzuela, Faucett, Tucker, Wise, J. Logan, Ivory, Lowther, D. Wilson, Djiguimde, Al-Shami, McLelland, Filbrun, Greathouse, Karim, Fanning

Proxies: McLelland served as proxy for Samples, Ivory served as proxy for Oden, Ahmed served as proxy for Islam

Ex-officio and guests: B. Hicks, R. Sronce, M. Grippo, K. Landry, G. Plumlee, B. Logan, C. Baker, J. Rowsam, D. Allen, C. Wilson, K. Bloss, Bachari, R. Giles, S. Jennings, A. Womack, S. Reed, J. Bland, M. Bryan, K. Cribb, B. Leonard, A. McLaughlin, J. Greaves

Minutes:

Call to Order 3:41

Nelson – Call to order, identification of proxies, request for motion to approve the minutes from September

1. **Approval of Minutes** – Sen. Tucker moved to approve the October 2024 minutes. Sen. Logan second. No discussion regarding minutes. Motion to approve October minutes passed.
2. **Special Orders of the Day** –

Invitation to Dr. Hicks for remarks. Dr Hicks began by greeting the senate. He gave updates on the following:

Dr. Connie Wilson has been named Vice President of Advancement.

The Next Step Guarantee has gone live and recruitment has begun. One of the social media posts regarding the NSG was picked up by the Office of the Governor and reposted. We have currently had 1.9 impressions on social media regarding the NSG, 800 clicks on the portal, and 118 applicants as a result. This is good news and we hope progress will continue.

Dr. Hicks reminded everyone that next Monday and Tuesday (11/25 and 11/26) will be remote days and the Thanksgiving holiday will begin on Wednesday.

Dr. Hicks also answered one of the questions for administration regarding the VPAA search. He has asked Sen. Tucker to put together a group to work on collecting information from the faculty regarding the qualifications and dispositions of the next VPAA to be included in the search process. Dr. Hicks also noted that all timelines established in the faculty handbook will be followed.

3. **Questions for Administration** –

Invitation to Dr. Sronce to Address Senate. Dr. Sronce started by greeting the senate and noted that she hoped we were all looking forward to the Thanksgiving break.

Dr. Sronce started by looping back to a couple of questions that were on a previous faculty senate agenda. First, she started with a question regarding student course surveys. She mentioned that surveys for merged classes will also have merged results. If there is a faculty member who merged classes on Blackboard and would like for the surveys to be done separately would need to reach out to get the classes separated. (example given was a faculty member who taught two face-to-face sections of

a class but merged the Blackboard courses and wanted the results of the two classes to be separate). She noted that for those faculty members who are not yet tenured, they may want to break up the merged classes for the student course surveys.

Question from Sen. McLelland – What about two sections of a class that have been merged and the class is team taught by both instructors.

Answer from J. Bland – There is a function in the survey for team taught courses and results will not be merged. Can split the course surveys up if need be, just reach out to him.

Dr. Sronce remarked that these student course surveys are not supposed to be punitive on the faculty.

Dr. Sronce went on to follow up on the previous question regarding lighting on the farm road. She updated the senate that some of the bulbs have been changed and that new poles need to go up. The physical plant is working on getting to it.

Dr. Sronce reminded the senate of some upcoming events on campus including: the theater production of Much Ado About Nothing, the emergency event simulation being conducted by the nursing department, cookies with the Provost, and an active shooter training for campus police.

Dr. Sronce then moved on to the current questions for administration:

Question 1: Online Learning has been monitoring and entering online classes to check for QM compliance without the knowledge of faculty. Can protocols be established to allow faculty notice of the class entry by Online Learning prior to their entrance?

Answer: Online Learning began entering online classes to check for QM compliance back in 2019 when QM was adopted. Colleges were evaluated on 3-year rotations; however, HLC noted that 3 years between reviews might be too long. For that reason, each year 10% of online courses are randomly chosen for QM compliance in addition to the College reviews. The reviews are looking for QM specifics only and course content, assignments, and grades are not looked at. Online Learning will start notifying faculty members if their courses have been chosen.

Question 2: What is the status of the VPAA/Provost search?

Answer: This question was addressed by Dr. Hicks in his remarks so that Dr. Sronce – Interim VPAA – didn't have to answer the question about the search process for her current position.

Question 3: Is there an initiative by administration for revising our longstanding policy of WF, withdrawal deadlines, and academic probation? There are concerns that an overly permissive policy is not in our students' best interests, especially at a time when SAU is making a concerted effort to prepare students for career readiness and being academically accountable.

Answer: Advising and registration staff brought concerns that led to these changes. Changes to the "academic probation" language have to do with the name only. "Probation" typically has a negative connotation to it and so it might be unnecessarily stressful on some students. The standards for academic probation will remain the same. The name is being changed to "Academic Warning".

Pushing the date to withdraw from classes is to help with the post midterms panic that some students experience if they do poorly on their midterms. Pushing the drop date will allow students time to pull their grades up instead of withdrawing when it wasn't necessary due to panic.

Changes to the W/WF policy surround a couple of concerns. First, standards and specifications regarding when to drop a student with a W or WN vs. a WF aren't clear and faculty are using these grades in different ways and for different reasons. Additionally, the WF hurts the student's GPA. Many colleges and universities have moved to a W instead of a WF. Suggestion for this adjustment came from the registrar's office and advising. If faculty have concerns, please consult with their Academic Affairs representative.

Question 4: Why was our policy regarding the transferring of "D" grades to SAU changed over the summer without discussion among chairs, faculty senate, or other affected parties?

Answer: These grades don't automatically transfer, rather they have to go through the dean of the college of the student's major and the dean of the college the course comes from. Dr. Sronce acknowledged that communication may have slipped for this one and she is open to suggestions on how administration can better communicate with the faculty.

Question 5: Are there any plans to hire a grant coordinator for SAU? As our research profile grows, we are competing with universities that have more resources finding, writing, and managing grants.

Answer: Dr. Sronce agrees that we need a grant coordinator and administration is currently looking for funds to hire one. There is also a grant being written to help support this initiative.

Question 6: Would it be possible to announce Preview Day dates in advance of semester so that faculty can be better prepared to showcase our departments and campus?

Answer: Dates are already being announced however Dr. Sronce acknowledges a better job can be done of communicating this to faculty. The next preview day is 4/2/25.

Question 7: Can contracted/consistently employed part-time colleagues be considered for the one-time payment to be distributed in lieu of a COLA at a prorated value?

Answer: Colleagues who are part-time and receive benefits received the one-time payment. Those colleagues who are part-time and do not receive benefits did not receive the one-time payment.

4. Invitation for a Special Presentation by B. Logan regarding the CESS –

Mr. Brian Logan addressed the faculty senate to provide a report on the results of the campus employment satisfaction survey that was conducted last year.

He began by noting that the PowerPoint presentation has been emailed to all of the faculty senators. Because of the length, he did not print off copies for distribution.

The CESS is a national product and data is collected every 3 years. When the survey was conducted last year, there had been significant changes to nearly all administration leadership positions and so the results of that section of the survey are difficult to interpret. Colleagues have reported confusion over whether the administration questions were about the leadership that had just left or the new one coming in that we didn't know yet.

There is an issue with the comparison groups of the CESS. There was an error made regarding the selection of the comparison group and somehow SAU 'requested' a specialized comparison group although there is no record of that on the SAU end. As such, Mr. Logan is working with the company to get the correct comparison group (all national colleges and universities) so that the interpretations can be more appropriately made.

He briefly touched on some of the results that included areas we had for the most improvement: communication, resources (budget, person, etc.), and written processes. The highest noted goals concerned student retention and strategic planning. There were aspects of the work environment that were highly rated including teamwork and collegiality.

As a result of the CESS, the Quality Executive Council is administering a survey to better understand the communication needs and issues.

Comment from Sen. D. Wilson – Only 140 respondents out of over 400 employees is a low response rate. That is something that should be noted and weighed by administration.

Question by Sen. Karim – Is the respondent data broken down by position? (Faculty, staff, administration)

Answer from B. Logan – Yes.

If we would like more information or the data broken down in a different way Mr. Logan said we should feel free to reach to him.

5. Reports of Committees –

Handbook Committee – Sen. Greathouse reported that the Handbook committee has begun consulting with the Provost's office regarding clarification for the Tenure and Promotion language in the faculty handbook. Once clarification has been made, the handbook committee will meet to start making changes.

Budget Committee – Nothing to report

Parking, Building, and Grounds Committee – Nothing to report

6. New Business –

Dr. Sronce addressed the faculty senate with new business.

There is a Back-to-School faculty meeting scheduled for January when we come back from the holidays. During that meeting there will be several things that are covered however Dr. Sronce wanted the input of the faculty senate about anything else that needs to be added. Currently we are slated to talk about:

- Updates to emergency procedures
- Update from Disability Services
- Important ADA updates from the Office of Online Learning
- Discussion of budget process

If faculty senate has any additions please reach out to Dr. Sronce to discuss.

Sen. Greathouse commented that the information the faculty senate received from the Counseling Center during a previous faculty senate meeting was helpful and suggested that this be added to the whole faculty meeting.

Dr. Sronce concluded by wishing everyone a happy holiday.

Sen. Nelson asked if there was any other business. No.

Motion to adjourn – Sen. J. Logan

Second – Sen. Valenzuela

Vote to adjourn the meeting passes.

Meeting adjourned at 4:18.