Approved Governing Faculty Meeting Minutes

September 23, 2016

French Hall 111, 11:00am-12:30pm


The meeting was called to order at 11:04am

1. Minutes.

The minutes of the 4.7.16 and 5.18.16 Governing Faculty meetings were approved.


A. Lutzker presented a report on process and work done by the ad-hoc committee. He indicated that although not all issues of faculty concern were addressed in the report, the committee worked together to respond specifically to the given charge.

C. Douglass informed that President Schlissel called him for a meeting in July. The President is interested in the chancellor’s evaluation current process, and deeply cares about these issues of the Flint campus. C. Douglas also indicated that the president’s office is very collaborative and that we have a good direct line of communication with them.

A. Lutzker indicated that the Chancellor wants CAC/BSP to be the principal line of communications between her and the faculty; furthermore, that she indicated faculty should not be stressed about the budget. Several faculty members pointed out specific examples in their department budgets that call for concern.

Several questions arose, regarding possible next steps, the frequency of administrators surveys and ways to improve lack of communication of the leadership team with Academic Affairs.
C. Douglas and A. Lutzker responded, indicating the need for more inclusive meetings, inviting the Chancellor to our meetings, and articulating the enormous amounts of skills from faculty members, unrecognized by the administration, to help the leadership team.

It was pointed out that interaction with administration seems top down, and that we need to make sure that formal interactions with them are used to express our concerns; as well as seeking the possibility of a follow-up survey next year. S. Roach expressed the need for an annual follow up of the report and recommendations of the ad-hoc committee report. This was supported by several other faculty members, who also indicated their distress regarding the third paragraph of the Chancellor’s response. It was suggested we should communicate officially to the Chancellor that the aforementioned paragraph represents a fundamental misunderstanding about what we, as faculty, are concerned about. The concerns are specific to the Chancellor’s brand of communication and consultation, and that she seems to be dismissing this on her response.

C. Larson asked if we can request the Chancellor to address each of the recommendations of the report; indicating that we need to respect her trust but we also need to address the recommendations to the faculty as a good faith effort. C. Schellenberg expressed concerns about how the Chancellor talks about the fine status of the budget while the “trenches” (departments) have poor budgets and new expensive administrative positions are being created. A. Lutzker indicated that the Chancellor has asked the VC’s to publicize their organizational charts. C. Thomas said he does not remember at any time having a leadership team completely new without knowledge of the past of the institution. This brings isolation of the leadership team which exacerbates the problem. Point in case is the misspelling of SHPS in the 60th anniversary light show at the Mott Building. Faculty seems to feel that the administration considers anything we do wrong, and that anything new would be better.

S. Newport finds disturbing the low level of representation of Academic Affairs in the Cabinet. A. Lutzker said that the Chancellor rejected the suggestion of having any deans in the Cabinet. He suggested we should push for a similar position as the discontinued Senior Advisor to the Chancellor’s position. There was concerned among several faculty members that the current situation obstructs Academic Affairs from shaping the direction of the university. A. Lutzker said the ad-hoc committee failed to get to the interaction between chancellor and provost, and maybe we should invite the Provost to explain how Academic Affairs guides the university mission. Another issue not addressed by the report is faculty and staff morale. Several faculty members expressed the need to invite the Chancellor and the Provost for an honest and fair discussion face-to-face, as the current situation is affecting our jobs; in particular, to make them conscious that the faculty role is beyond academic affairs.

H. Wehbe-Alamah stated that the chancellor’s immediate response to ad-hoc report is impressive and shows good faith. However, the faculty still has many unanswered questions and concerns that need to be addressed. She proposed to invite the Chancellor and Provost to a special Governing Faculty meeting in October to address the Faculty concerns.

A. Dorfman proposed adding that Faculty Council should present a follow-up on the recommendations of the ad-hoc committee report by the end of this academic year.

Several issues were suggested to be addressed at the proposed meeting, which can be categorized as follows:

- Representation of Academic Affairs in the Cabinet,
- Consultation with faculty before university decisions are made.
- Turnover on administration positions and lack of institutional memory which may be associated with low staff and faculty morale.
- Communication between faculty and administration (structure, how and what).
- Extensive use of outside sources (including consultants) on issues that can be achieved more effectively and properly internally.

Additional issues included: information about admission and retention results after two years of aggressive work; climate of fear as a trend to management techniques regarding governance. It was suggested that Faculty Council structures the proposed meeting to make it efficient, focused, and productive. T. Wrobel indicated that we could use this opportunity to channel concerns of staff members, who have requested faculty to speak for them. H. Wehbe-Alamah requested that faculty should have the opportunity to directly present their concerns at the meeting, in addition to submitted concerns by Faculty Council to the Chancellor. S. Banerjee suggested staff can also channel their concern through established UM Ann Arbor offices for this purposes. H. Laube announce the launch, in about two weeks, of a Survey of Living and Working at UMF, and encouraged everyone to complete it, specifically the comments section, which will not be seen by the Chancellor prior to the committee’s report. T. Wrobel called to vote on the motion presented by H. Wehbe-Alamah. Motion will go to electronic ballot as follows:

Motion A:

_The Governing Faculty will invite the Chancellor and Provost to a special Governing Faculty meeting in October to respond to the Faculty concerns. Faculty Council will be in charge of structuring the meeting. In addition, Faculty Council should present a follow-up on the recommendations of the ad-hoc committee report by the end of the academic year 2016-2017._

C. Douglas said Faculty Council will be glad to start the process for such a meeting and annual report, since this is appropriate for the recognized organizational body of the faculty of UM-Flint.

C. Thomas and T. Wrobel, thanking the ad-hoc committee for their work, presented the following

Motion B:

_The Governing Faculty Formally accepts the Ad-Hoc Committee Report with gratitude._

Motion was approved unanimously.

3. Matters Arising.

It was indicated that we need to discuss implications to the Faculty Code as the new School of Nursing is forming.

H. Laube asked about the recent visit of 3 faculty members to the SACUA meeting. C. Douglas indicated that Faculty Council found out about the meeting through reading the “Michigan Daily.” He has contacted the Chair of SACUA, who has indicated he was unaware of the faculty governing body at UM-Flint. C. Douglas indicated we will work directly with SACUA on improving the relationship between the
two governing bodies. D. Lair pointed out that the “Michigan Daily” is a student newspaper. J. Lawand said the faculty members that attended the meeting were invited by SACUA, and that any faculty members can talk to SACUA as we are member of the Senate Assembly. D. Lair said that although people have the right to speak in SACUA, they have the responsibility of making clear they are acting on their own, and not acting in representation of UM-Flint Faculty. J. Lawand stated that the Michigan Daily had made a correction to their report clarifying that the faculty had appeared invited by SACUA as individuals, not representing UM-Flint Faculty, to speak on their own personal experiences.

Meeting adjourned at 12:22pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ricardo Alfaro
Secretary Faculty Council