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Faculty Governance at the University of Florida Libraries

Draft Minutes - February 21, 2011: 10:00am
Smathers 1A

Call to Order

Approval of Agenda & Minutes

Member Comments

Chair's Report

Chair Dan Reboussin began by stating that the meeting will primarily be concerned with the By-Law revisions as well as an update from Tom Auxter, President of the United Faculty of Florida.

The Chair announced that nominations have been slow for the Faculty Senate. There are currently 19 nominations for over 100 spots. The Chair reminded those present that faculty governance is a core issue for libraries and that it is an important service issue.

The Chair also announced that a task force has been created to review professional travel policies. The task force has been jointly charged by the LFA as well as Administration. In addition, LFA recommended faculty members for the Dean's consideration in appointing librarians for two seats on the Professional Development Travel Committee that will become available in July."

Lastly, the next LFA meeting will have a discussion of open seats. It was mentioned that LFA officers would have a stronger voice if it was possible that some tenured faculty volunteered for the position.

Administration Updates

Law

None.

Health

None.

Smathers

On Wednesday, Dean Russell will have an opportunity to present the budget to the RCM Budget Review Council. There is also a monthly RCM Dean's Committee meeting in order to make the RCM process more transparent, which Dean Russell and Brian Keith will be attending.

Dean Russell will be presenting the VIVO project to the Academic Deans meeting.

Dean Russell also reminded those present about the ongoing Jim Haskin's exhibit as well as the 30th anniversary rededication ceremony on March 6th for the Price Judaic Library.

A question was posed about the process for the RCM budget presentation. Dean Russell and Brian Keith explained that process gives the taxed departments an opportunity to ask questions. It is primarily composed of business officers and serves as an advisory body to the provost and president. Dean Russell stressed that there won't be much guidance from the university concerning RCM until there is a better picture about the budget from Governor Scott.

Senate Updates

None.

Committee Reports

None.

Assembly Officers Reports

None.

Old Business

Continued discussion on the changes to the by-laws and standing rules. Vernon Kisling, acting Past Chair, presented the changes. He stated that while tremendous change has occurred to LFA, it has been quite a while since the documents have been updated. The three main changes are in three categories: language clean up, procedural change, and for the best interest of LFA. The officers of LFA would like the entire document to be voted up or down, rather than a line by line vote.

Vernon then proceeded to go through the by-law changes line by line (please see document on LFA website) and then opened up the floor for discussion.

The first topic approached concerned the inclusion of FCLA. Dean Russell clarified that there are tenured faculty at FCLA, who while not active, are welcomed to participate and are counted in the Faculty Senate count.

The use of the term libraries was then discussed, with some members advocating for that term to be defined as it generally is used in reference to the George A. Smathers library. The counter argument that the term libraries are in reference to the faculty was made, and it was suggested that maybe the way we use the term should be changed rather than having to define it. It was also pointed out that administration needed to be plural. Another member wondered what other representative voices were available, with the response being UFF and Library Council.

A question was raised about why the chair wouldn't serve as a representative to the administration. It was answered that all officers shall represent the Assembly in discussion with Library administration.

Another issue brought up was that without keeping the majority of the standing committees, wasn't it a move away from shared governance? Vernon responded that with the committees were originally created to serve certain roles; they were no longer doing anything. Shared governance has evolved and the number of committees no longer made sense. Instead, task forces are created when a need is seen and are much more flexible. The Chair further elaborated that while the committees made great progress in issues such as budget transparency, task forces can be created with necessary. This makes LFA more flexible and responsive. Another issue that was raised was that while officers have worked hard, there is not much interest from the general faculty. The room should be full, but only HSCL is fully represented. This lack of interest makes it difficult to get committee work done. It was pointed out that some work established by shared governance should be continued, and it was countered that two task forces remain as

annual. The Chair then suggested the topic be shifted to the standing rules, as only 15 minutes remain and some issues within the standing rules may be more controversial. Vernon then proceeded to go over the changes to the standing rules line by line (please see document on LFA website), and then opened the floor up for discussion.

Dean Russell brought up the issue concerning the language of Article VII, Section 3 regarding membership voting. She pointed out that there are library faculty who fit into this category and who are subjected to tenure and promotion. She wondered if the language needs specific affirmation, such as "excluding issues concerning tenure and promotion." Vernon answered that such language would be tricky and that the Chair should decide what would be an exception. Dean Russell then asked if there would be any ability to appeal. The Chair answered that that is the intent of the language now and that the Chair would need to announce at the beginning of the meeting whether the issue is one which would fall outside of that standing rule. The Chair did concede that it would be reasonable to put in the section that it would not include issues concerning tenure and promotion. Dean Russell stated she only wants to protect faculty rights and the Chair answered that the section can be rejected in its entirety. Dean Russell answered that she supports the issue and that it is clear that administration attend. She has no problem with leaving but just wants more clarity.

Michele Tennant said that there are numerous issues with the language, raising the example of sabbatical. She is uncomfortable with asking administration to recuse them from such discussion.

Brian Keith suggested clarifying the language in section three concerning task forces specifically that elected portions should be handled by the LFA, but that appointments from the Dean will be handled by the Dean. It was responded that the language got accidentally copied forward and can be changed.

Vernon responded to Michele that the recusal of administration is one of the biggest requests from faculty. Library faculty need to feel that they are able to discuss issues openly. The Chair will decide if administration needs to be present. Naomi suggested that sometimes part of the discussion could take place with administration and then part could be discussed without. The Chair echoed that it would set up the possibility for faculty to discuss issues openly, but not necessarily eliminate administration entirely.

The Chair brought the discussion to a close and dismissed Health from the following UFF presentation.

New Business

Tom Auxter, President of the United Faculty of Florida, entered to give a presentation on what is currently happening with faculty rights and benefits. He noted that it has been disturbing for faculty to see the current situation in Wisconsin and other Midwestern states. While Florida has collective bargaining rights in the constitution which makes it impossible to take it away, current actions could make such action underneath those rights very difficult.

Mr. Auxter first discussed job security, emphasizing that there would be no guarantee about tenure. Without multi-year contracts, the university would lose the power of the tenure system. Employment would be at will and would destabilize the entire system. This issue has been a particular problem in Florida, especially within teaching profession. Teachers have also been a victim of salary compression, which is about \$10,000 behind similar positions in other states. This gap is usually made up through pensions and insurance plans.

With the current proposal, this current benefit would disappear. 5% of a salary would be placed in a retirement fund, with the claim being that such fund is disappearing. Mr.

Auxter stated though that this was not true and that the fund has recovered from the recession. It is imperative though that we convince the legislature not to do this. It would create a brain drain in the state, stopping research that is helping to rebuild the economy.

Mr. Auxter does believe that budget cuts will be less at the university level than what will affect primary and secondary schools. There will still be a pinch though, which is why it is important to protect multi-term contracts. He specifically mentioned the firing of 21 FSU faculty, who were rehired thanks to contracts.

A question was raised about faculty who are enrolled in optional funds, rather than the Florida Retirement System. He said that those faculty are still at risk. It is more a question about choice, that the money issues will remain the same. Mr. Auxter also brought up the measure that was defeated last year to use FRS money as seed money for new businesses. While Alex Sink led the charge against such a measure, Rick Scott was in support and that the issue may be raised again. The UFF will vehemently oppose such a measure.

Announcements

None

Adjournment

The UFLFA meeting was adjourned.