

Western Kentucky University
University Senate
Senate Executive Committee (SEC) Meeting Minutes
3 December 2018, 3:15 p.m.
Helm 108B

A) Call to order

- A regular meeting of the SEC was called to order by Chair Kirk Atkinson at 3:15.
- Members present (substitute): all members present
- Guests present: Amber Belt, Merrall Price

B) Approve November 2018 minutes

- J. Berger motioned to approved. S. Davis seconded. Passed unanimously.

C) Reports

- ***Chair – Kirk Atkinson***

- 1) New template has been implemented for Senate web site.
 - Some of the information from past years have been moved off the Senate site to the shared drive.
 - The “Committees” tab on the Senate page has links to two old committee reports (benefits and athletics). Those two committees have been asked to update them. It’s been suggested that faculty members on these committees provide these updates so the information is presented from a faculty perspective.
- 2) Kudos to D. Clark for putting together the RAMP and CAPE committees together.

- ***Vice Chair – Dan Clark***

- 1) University Complaints committee needs student representatives. Students appoint some of the members, but the Senate appoints some also.
 - M. Price – I think you are supposed to get reps for the University Complaints committee from the college complaints committee.

- ***Secretary – Jason Bergner (no report)***

- **Committee Chairs**

- 1) ***Academic Quality – Heather Strobe (report posted)***

- Peer observation of teaching instrument and teaching process
 - We aren’t advocated for this to be implemented as part of any type of evaluation process, merit pay, etc.
 - K. Atkinson – Over time, this could be become quasi-mandatory. Some might start using it, and it could proliferate to the point where admin is expecting it to be in there.
 - S. Davis – I appreciate the inclusion of the process.
- H. Strobe motioned. Unanimous approval.

- 2) ***Faculty Welfare and Professional Responsibilities – Lauren McClain (report posted)***

- Faculty welfare report
 - Still need to fill in a few cells...minor modifications will be made before going before the Senate
- Faculty welfare work-life 5-year results
 - We added a general comment box

- Our plan was to break up those comments and send those to whatever unit was appropriate.
 - Nearly all the comments were geared towards morale and salary.
 - We looked into the job posting where the office hours were required five days a week.
 - The department head who actually wrote that description gave the impression that this was a position that had an emphasis on the coordinator part, and that was the impetus for the requirement for them to be here five days a week
 - The committee will continue to look at this and will bring something forward at the next meeting
 - J. Applin – Is the reason we don't get to see the comments?
 - L. McClain – There are anonymity concerns with comments going to specific people (Board, President, Provost). As someone who does research with survey, I don't feel comfortable just releasing comments (including the general ones) for public consumption. You could join the committee and see them.
 - We will tackle the proposed leave policy and the FMLA component in the spring.
 - L. McClain motioned. Unanimous approval.
- 3) ***Budget and Finance Committee – Jim Berger (no report)***
- 4) ***Colonnade General Education Committee – Mary Wolinski (report posted)***
- We have approved four courses
 - We took a registrar-requested action concerning students registered before 2014 (on the old catalog)
 - Deadline is approaching for them to finish their old general education requirements
 - How do we handle them? The easiest way to this (per the registrar's suggestion) was to eliminate the deadline. We agreed with this option.
 - They still have the deadline to finish the overall degree (7 years)
 - The subcommittee working on the international component addition to the Connections requirement is still working.
 - J. Lindsey – How are we looking in the number of Connections courses in comparison to the earlier deficit? Is it better?
 - M. Wolinski – We're making progress. We probably approved more than a couple of dozen. We've held off on approving courses with variable topics since it's difficult to tell what's being covered in those courses due to unpredictable topic coverage.
 - K. Atkinson – Are the section offerings better?
 - T. Ballman – Yes.
 - M. Wolinski motioned. Unanimous approval.
- 5) ***Graduate Council – Carl Dick (report posted)***
- Provost Ballman updated us on the graduate dean search. Her comments were well received.
 - We got some carryforward that added to our research grants budget (total is about 90K).
 - Council has said the grant proposals this year are especially good.

- C. Dick motioned. Unanimous approval.
- 6) *Undergraduate Curriculum Committee – Janet Applin (report posted)*
 - UCC report
 - J. Applin motioned. Unanimous approval.
- 7) *Faculty Handbook Committee – Kate Hudepohl (no report)*
- **Advisory Reports**
 - 1) *Advisory Report, Faculty Regent – Claus Ernst*
 - RAMP sheets have been posted and make for interesting reading
 - J. Applin – Where are these posted?
 - C. Ernst – On the RAMP web site.
 - C. Dick – Have you corresponded with P. Bale on his presentation and his thoughts about it?
 - C. Ernst – He thought it went well. I think there needs to be more interaction with the Board.
 - C. Dick – If the Senate could have advised him about certain important items without any hostility, that could be beneficial. I thought a few of the questions at the Senate meeting were a tad bit hostile.
 - J. Applin – I think people were overwhelmingly appreciative about his visit.
 - D. Clark – I think we set a pretty low bar for him. I don't think the questions were hostile, and I think he sidestepped a number of questions. I think it's a start, but I'd like to see more. I wasn't as enthusiastic as others.
 - K. Atkinson – Many issues raised often need to be addressed off the floor.
 - T. Ballman – The press is in the room, and that makes it more difficult. You have to be aware of every word spoken.
 - C. Ernst – He's aware that if he makes a strong statement, it could come across as being the opinion of the Board.
 - K. Atkinson – If you think there are questions that need to be asked, get those questions to C. Ernst.
 - 2) *Advisory Report, Provost – Terry Ballman*
 - Regarding leave for faculty: At the beginning of the year, a policy for staff was presented to the Cabinet. That's great, but we need a policy for faculty as well.
 - What's great about this is that the policy is applied to faculty as well as a domestic partner and dependent child
 - In cases of illness, etc., etc., a faculty member would be entitled to 12 weeks of paid leave.
 - This is going before the cabinet and is quite an investment in people. It's the right thing to do.
 - E. Gish – Will this apply to maternity leave also?
 - T. Ballman – That is nebulous and isn't clear to me. Faculty wellness committee is working on this.
 - E. Gish – But since FMLA does apply, we don't know if this new policy would also apply?
 - T. Ballman – We need a separate policy.

- There's a policy that WKU has had in place (1.200) since 2012 which says that a faculty member's contract (full-time non-tenure eligibility) must be notified by December 15 if they aren't going to be rehired.
 - This is an information item (no vote). This is a draft of potential changes.
 - The university is undergoing CAPE and looking carefully at class sizes. We are seeing a proliferation of small class sizes across campus (including lower division). There's an inordinate number of single-digit enrollments.
 - We need to send out a letter to all faculty in this category saying that they may not be rehired even though we know that most people will be rehired. This protects the campus because there may not be sufficient work for some of these people starting next fall.
 - As soon as we know there will be demand, they will be rehired.
 - E. Gish – These have to be sent out in 12 days with respect to the spring?
 - T. Ballman – No. These are for the fall of 2019.
 - I'd like to work on a new policy to state that the employee will be notified as soon as possible [eliminate the date in the old policy]. The current policy with the current date is not good for the institution because we may not know what our needs are by that deadline.
 - L Hill – I think it would be helpful to have some date in the policy so faculty would know when/if they were going to be rehired.
 - T. Ballman – The policy we plan to propose would say something like “as soon as possible and preferably no later than April.”
 - L. Hill – I would also suggest telling the faculty [in the letter] why they are getting this letter. If they understand the background and the reasoning, it may make it easier to swallow.
 - T. Ballman – That would be awful. I am going to send out an email with the letter saying that most people are likely to be rehired next year. We are in a position where we need to do a careful review of all of our courses and programs.
 - C. Ernst – How many people are affected by this?
 - A. Belt – Approximately 153
 - T. Ballman – This doesn't mean we don't value people or their contributions to the university. We have to match our scarce resources with student needs.
 - J. Bergner – How do you know when there will be demand? You said as soon as there is demand, these people will be hired back, but what kind of guarantee do I have (if I'm in that position)?
 - T. Ballman – There are many courses that are healthily enrolled where there's a lot of student demand. As we go through the CAPE process, we realize there are certain programs that maybe should not continue as is. There may be demand to finish a program, so we would finish out that program. That decision would have to be made locally. This may take several years to work this out. We have to have these conversations. We have to invest in programs that are growth areas.

- J. Bergner – So let me ask this a different way. Let's say you had some classes that were low count and you needed to eliminate a position. Is it necessarily the instructor of that class that is going to be eliminated, or does the dean have discretion? How closely is the enrollment tied to the actual position?
- T. Ballman – There are different types of faculty as well, so those considerations have to be made. I would hope that instructors teach classes that are healthily enrolled. If an instructor's courses are no longer offered, then his/her services will no longer be needed.
- H. Strode – So these 153 individuals...they'll get this letter. Is this something that is going to happen every year? Are they going to feel vulnerable every year?
 - S. Davis – Yes, we are.
- J. Fulkerson – I am an instructor. I advise 132 students in addition to my teaching. Will advising be part of the calculation, or is it all based on course enrollment?
 - T. Ballman – This will be a case by case basis. However, the fundamental thing we do is teach. I'm not making the decision. These decisions will be made by deans and department chairs.
- C. Ernst – We have 750 full-time faculty, so this number [who are getting the letters] is about 20% of the total. This is a really large number. Sending out such a letter means that some of the best of these might just leave because of the uncertainty. As far as I know, requests for schedules will come out in January. We are preparing to have 1/5 of our classes listed as "TBA," which will do us no good in terms of anyone wanting to register. Do we really need to have a number that large?
 - T. Ballman – Under the policy, we would automatically issue contracts to everyone [if we don't issue the letter]. Probably, the majority (or vast majority) will be rehired next year. We don't know that yet, though. This policy requires us to send this letter to protect the institution.
- S. Mayer – Say that we have two instructors, and one is much better [in terms of quality/skill]. However, the better one has the lower enrollment. How do you decide who gets cut?
 - T. Ballman – In that scenario, you would want to make sure that we are offering the courses that we need. The department would decide who should go.
- K. Atkinson – According to the current policy, we are forced to send out letters by the 15th. This letter is going to tell the employees...what?
 - T. Ballman – We're still working out the language.
- S. Davis – When people who are rehired that have already attained a higher rank, will they retain that rank? Can they anticipate a lower salary?
 - A. Belt – There haven't been any conversations about either of these questions. If we had time to change this policy, we wouldn't send out a single letter.
- C. Farrell – I just came from a department meeting where our chair said the dean stated that there's another \$10M deficit this year. Assuming that's

correct, is the decision to send out these letters tied to this unexpected decrease in available funds?

- T. Ballman – This is related to finances in general. We are running in the red. This will take time. This is why we have the CAPE process. This is going to take years. We are down 1% in enrollment more than what we anticipated. Enrollment doesn't look great for the future.
- K. Atkinson – We are in a firefighting mode, which is very reactive. Who is working on the proactive side (i.e., generating revenue)? Has anyone been assigned to step away from the firefight and look into this?
 - T. Ballman – There are active efforts with regards to recruitment and fundraising. We need to work on retention to continue to help the budget situation (80% is the goal). Our retention numbers are looking better.
- C. Ernst – My understanding is going to be told about merit on the 12th. Then, three days later, they are going to get a notice. This is an awful situation. Is there no way this can somehow be cut down?
 - A. Belt – The challenge with “some” is that we don't have enough time to figure out what metrics to use and/or how to arrive at that decision.
- J. Lindsey – As an instructor, if I'm getting a letter, I need to know by a certain date to have enough time to look for a job. I can't find anything if I'm not told until April.
- K. Atkinson – We have to be careful about wording of the policy. We have to look at the future, as future administrators may not look at the wording with the same spirit as currently.

3) *Advisory Report, SGA President – Stephen Mayer*

- I am pulling the SGA resolution permanently
- Graphic regarding course evaluations (encouraging students to fill out evaluations)
- L. McClain – If you could put something in there about students filling them out honestly. Can that be reworded?
 - S. Mayer – Sure. We can change it before we send it out.
- Tobacco policy – We decided to write up a campus policy to go tobacco free (including vaping).
 - L. Hill – When will this be implemented?
 - S. Mayer – Hopefully within the next academic year
 - J. Berger – Will there be guidance as to what to do when we see someone breaking the policy?
 - S. Mayer – I'm not on the enforcement committee, but I believe they will have guidance.

D) Old Business

1) Decision vote on National Council of Faculty Senates (to take the full Senate)

- J. Berger moved. D. Clark seconded.
- C. Dick – Do you see this work as falling on the Senate chair?
 - K. Atkinson – Generally, but other people could go.
- L. McClain – Have you found out about dues?
 - K. Atkinson – No. I don't foresee it as being outside of the Senate's budget.

- M. Wolinski – Your impression that it’s a positive thing to join?
 - K. Atkinson – Yes. You can always drop out if the organization turns out to be something different.
- J. Berger called the question. Unanimous approval for taking for forward to the Senate.

E) New Business

- 1) Benefits committee member will be contacted about willingness to continue serving
 - Current member will considered to be active for the time being

F) Information Items

- 1) Second reading of Senate Charter draft at December Senate meeting

G) Adjournment

- J. Berger motioned, L. McClain seconded. Unanimous approval.