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Dalton State Faculty Senate: Minutes of January 30, 2018, Meeting

Members Present: Donna Bledsoe, Susan Burran, Tammy Byron, Pat Chute (Provost), Lee Ann Cline, Jenny Crisp, Cecile de Rocher, Garen Evans, Lorraine Gardiner, Nick Gewecke, Cheryl Grayson, Christian Griggs, John Gullledge, Kent Harrelson, Bob Haverland, Matt Hipps, Cathy Hunsicker, Lisa Hunt, Jean Johnson, Ben Laughter, Annabelle McKie-Voerste, Travis McKie-Voerste, Sarah Mergel (Senate President), Gene Mesco, Sarah Min, Lydia Postell, Vince Postell, Gene Powers, Deb Richardson, Andrea Ridley, Tami Tomasello, Gail Ward, David Williams, Chris Wozny. **Guests Present:** Amy Burger, Michael Hoff, Bobby Whitehead

Call to Order and Approval of Minutes

Senate President Sarah Mergel called the meeting to order at 3:16 p.m. and asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the November 16 meeting. A motion to approve was made and seconded. Senate secretary Kent Harrelson moved to amend the minutes (the proposed changes are shown in Appendix A). The motion to amend was seconded and discussed, then approved by voice vote. The amended minutes were then approved by voice vote.

Academic Conduct Policy

Sarah asked if the senate had questions about the Academic Conduct Committee's proposed changes to the Student Code of Conduct, Article VII, Violation of Academic Integrity Process;

the proposed changes are shown in Appendix B. Discussion followed, focusing on the specific wording of the changes. In particular, senators questioned the use of the word “should” in the third paragraph: “Academic misconduct cases should be reported as a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.” The question arose of whether or not faculty members should be required to report student misconduct—whether the instructor’s discretion outweighed the need for shared information about a student who might be cheating in multiple classes.

The importance of due process was also discussed, as well as the importance of communication between all parties involved—the student and faculty member involved, Academic Affairs, and Academic Conduct. Lisa Hunt pointed out that professional programs need the right to enforce their own individual policies, including measures that might be required by their accrediting agencies.

Travis McKie-Voerste moved to add a timeline to the proposed changes; the motion was seconded and discussed. Bobby Whitehead, Assistant Director of Student Conduct, said that the typical time involved in a case of student misconduct varied considerably over the semester. During most of the semester, cases can be processed in two weeks, but at the end of the semester it takes much longer because there are so many student misconduct cases during final exams.

Sarah Mergel called for a vote on the motion to add a timeline; the motion was lost.

Christian Griggs moved to recommend the changes as they stood to Academic Affairs; the motion was seconded and discussed.

The motion to recommend the proposed changes in the Academic Conduct Policy to Academic Affairs was carried by voice vote.

Final Exam Policy

Nick Gewecke presented his suggestions regarding final exams (please see Appendix C for a list of these). Discussion followed. Matt Higgs stressed the importance of giving final exams at the scheduled time to avoid problems for students as well as for fellow faculty members. After further discussion, Matt moved to refer the matter to an ad hoc committee appointed by the Senate President. The motion was seconded and discussed.

The motion to refer a discussion of final exam policy to an ad hoc committee was carried by unanimous voice vote.

College Statutes

Progress on the revised Dalton State statutes has been held up by a disagreement on the wording of Article V. Dr. Venable has provided the senate with recommended language for this section of the statutes. Senate President Sarah Mergel discussed four possible ways the senate could proceed:

1. Make minor changes to Article V.
2. Make changes based on Dr. Venable's suggestions.
3. Make changes based on campus need and findings from the town hall discussions that were held last semester.
4. Hand the statutes over to the administration to make its own revisions.

Matt Higgs added that a fifth option is to keep the current statutes, which were adopted in 2010. He stated that he does not want a confrontation between the faculty and the administration, but that Dr. Venable's proposed changes give power to other groups at the expense of the faculty. Sarah pointed out that many groups that are currently recognized at the college, including the Senate and the SGA, are not mentioned in the 2010 statutes.

Matt said that the Welfare Committee had looked at language from the statutes of other USG institutions; most schools, large or small, give faculty purview over almost everything. Ben

Laughter asked whether Dr. Venable had seen the committee's proposed changes; Sarah said that she had not. Ben moved to accept the wording proposed by the welfare committee; the motion was seconded and discussed.

Matt Hipps stated that he would prefer to give the complete statutes to Dr. Venable rather than deal with one section at a time; Ben said that he advocated compromise rather than a showdown. Dr. Chute recommended sending the complete statutes; she said that Dr. Venable doesn't want to deal with them piecemeal either. In view of the general sentiment that the senate should send the statutes as a whole, Ben withdrew his motion. Sarah Mergel said that the matter would be referred back to the Welfare Committee.

Announcements

Dr. Chute said that as part of the Momentum Year initiative, Dalton State has been asked to participate in a second round of focus group discussions, which will take place in March. Faculty, staff, and students will be invited to participate; deans and department chairs will be organizing the groups.

Mike Hoff commented on the college's recent closings for weather; some of the closings seemed unnecessary (closing the entire day when snow isn't expected until the afternoon). He asked how these decisions were made. David Williams said that the college should close when the local school systems close for weather; otherwise it would create a hardship for students who are parents of school-age children.

Lisa Hunt spoke of the need for online test proctoring such as ProctorU so that students in fully online classes don't have to come to campus to take exams. Jenny Crisp said that we will have to deal with the issue at some point; SACS is likely to require online proctoring in the future.

Adjournment and next meeting

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 4:52 p.m. The next senate meeting is scheduled for February 8, 2018.

Respectfully submitted

Kent Harrelson, secretary

Appendix A: Proposed Amendments to Minutes of the Nov. 16, 2017 Senate meeting

Wording from the draft of the minutes:

Dr. Chute said that she had spoken with David Elrod about a name for the program; he said that there is interest in the idea and potential for financial support. She added that the college is in the process of hiring a coordinator of advising who could supervise the program in its early stages. Barbara said that the committee expects that the coordinator would be a faculty member.

Proposed wording:

David Elrod was informed of the honors program and it was suggested that if the foundation supported the program that the students could be known as Dalton State Foundation Fellows. He was not averse to the idea but it will require more discussion and investigation regarding funding.

Wording from the draft:

Dr. Chute said that the Committee on Academic Excellence is in “limbo.”

Proposed wording:

Dr. Chute said that the CAE charge this year focused on new faculty as Marina’s release time had been reduced in order to put her back into faculty due to the increased needs for Biology classes.

Appendix B: Proposed revision to the Student Code of Conduct, Article VII: Violation of Academic Integrity Process

Allegations of academic misconduct, including those which could result in the sanction of suspension or expulsion will proceed through the disciplinary process outlined below.

In cases of academic misconduct, the faculty member teaching the course is responsible for assigning any course-related sanctions, which can include but are not limited to mandatory recompletion of an assignment, reduction in grade, grade of zero (0) for the assignment, or failure of the course. The faculty member determines course-related sanctions based upon the situation and course syllabus.

Academic misconduct cases should be reported as a violation of the Student Code of Conduct. Once reported, the Academic Misconduct Process allows the student to have another party, not affiliated with the course, hear the alleged violation(s). The process will also result, when necessary, in non-course-related sanctions, such as educational workshops and assignments, and/or disciplinary warning, probation, suspension, or expulsion.

When an alleged violation of academic conduct is submitted, a hearing officer will contact both the faculty and the accused to gather all information available, including but not limited to incident reports, course work, the course syllabus, and complainant, accused, and/or witness statements. Based on the information gathered, the hearing officer will decide if there is enough information to charge a student with a violation. Charges are only warranted when a preponderance of evidence is found.

- If a student accepts responsibility for the specified violation(s) the hearing officer can determine and assign non-course-related sanctions. The process in which responsibility is accepted and sanctions are assigned is considered an administrative hearing. The outcome of the administrative hearing cannot be appealed. Only the non-course-related sanctions assigned can be appealed by a student after an administrative hearing.
- If the student does not assume responsibility, the student can choose for the hearing officer to resolve the case or for multiple hearing officers in a student conduct panel to resolve the case. Resolving a case means determining if the accused student is responsible or not responsible for the charge and assigning non-course-related sanction(s) if a decision of “responsible” is reached.
- Following a hearing, the accused shall be provided a written decision via College email of the outcome and any resulting sanctions, details on how to appeal, and a summary of the information in support of any sanction.

Appendix C: Exam Policy Discussion Items

1. A "No Exam" period at the end of the semester preceding Final Exams. Every other institution I have attended or taught at had something of this nature, typically worded as "No quiz or examination counting more than 10% of the total course grade is permitted during the last week of classes before the Final Exam period." The intent behind such rules is to give students ample time to focus on their Finals. It was a rule I appreciated as a student. This semester, I have several students reporting two (or more) exams scheduled for tomorrow, the last day of class, and so they are not focused -- for good reason! -- on reviewing for final exams in my classes, which has diminished the value of review sessions. While the students are in a 2000-level course with me, I worry about a similar situation arising with students in my 1000-level courses.
2. A clear policy regarding Final Exam conflicts. The Final Exam schedule opens the possibility for a student being double-scheduled for an exam slot. It would be ideal to have a policy for what happens in such an instance, such as "If the two courses meet at different times but are schedule for the same Final Exam block, then the students must initiate contact with the instructor of the later course at least two weeks prior to exam to identify an alternate testing accommodation." Such a policy would help to mitigate confusion and frustration between a student and the related instructors -- policy should indicate which class is considered "in conflict" and then indicate how the student should go about dealing with it.
3. A policy related to an excessive number of Final Exams in one day, numbering three or more. This policy would protect students from excessive mental load on a given Final Exam day. Once again, every other institution I have been at has had such a policy, and it was invoked on occasion by some of my students. (Georgia Tech also has such a policy)