

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
Senate Educational Policies Committee
September 22, 2014
Meeting Minutes

Present: Aggelou, Amy E.; Beck Jr, David C.; Falcione, Bonnie A.; Horvath, Zsuzsa; Kelly, Kathleen M.; Leibold, Mary Lou; Manfredi, Juan J.; Petracchi, Helen E.; Tananis, Cynthia A.; Weinstein, Aliyah

Cynthia Golden, Director, Center for Instructional Development & Distance Education (Guest)
 Nancy Reilly, Director, Office of Measurement and Evaluation of Teaching (Guest)

Excused: Roberts, Laurel Bridges; Brown, Shelly Renee

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Zsuzsa Horvath (Chair) at 3:05pm.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes from the May 2014 meeting were approved as written.

Introductions: Committee members were introduced.

SEPC Review:

An overview of the SEPC was presented by the Chair. The SEPC mission statement was reviewed with examples of committee work that had been conducted in recent years (Handout posted in SEPC Box folder).¹ The attendance policy was reviewed. Members were encouraged to contact the Chair or Co-Chair if unable to attend a meeting. The Committee's website (<http://www.univsenate.pitt.edu/committees/educational-policies>) was highlighted as a resource where member names, meeting dates, minutes and other related documents can be found. A box folder has also been created for the committee to house resources (<https://pitt.box.com/s/529jeigloqlv1n4utjwu>). Members were sent an invitation from the Chair and she should be contacted for any needed assistance in accessing the folder.

Meetings for AY 2014-15 were also reviewed: October 27th, November 17th, December 15th, January 26th, February 16th, March 16th, April 20th and May 18th from 3:00-4:30pm in Room 826 of the Cathedral unless otherwise noted. Meetings will be recorded by the Chair or Co-Chair on a password protected local (non-cloud based) recording device for the purpose of providing meeting minutes. Recordings will be deleted once the minutes are composed.

The committee is represented by the Chair at Faculty Assembly (once monthly on Tuesdays, open to all faculty, dates are posted at <http://www.univsenate.pitt.edu/faculty-assembly>); by the Co-Chair as liaison to the Provost's Advisory Committee on Instructional Excellence (ACIE) Council, and by the Chair (required) at the University Planning and Budgeting Committee (UPBC). The committee Chair provides an annual report, the date for this will be determined at the upcoming Senate Expanded Executive Committee meeting on October 13.

Guests:

Cynthia Golden, Director CIDDE and Nancy Reilly, Director OMET:

An update was provided on the online student opinion of teaching survey in order to review the current survey process, the service provided by OMET, the online implementation and efforts to identify best practices (slide set posted in SEPC Box folder).² The overview of the online implementation included a description of the response rates and ongoing efforts to further increase response rates, including: advertisements, banners, social media, email reminders (increased from 3 to 5 this year), and reminders

by faculty. Tips for increasing response rates were shared including: talking to students, listing the survey in the syllabus, announcing the survey period in class, conducting the surveys during class time.

Input was sought from SEPC committee members about their experiences with the current system as well as ideas for features of the survey process that the committee members would like to see implemented in the future. Discussion ensued pertaining to questions surrounding logistics of emails sent to students, the process for requesting surveys from OMET (requests can be made up until 2 days before the end of the survey period if no additional survey questions are added), timelines for survey availability (for Fall 2014 will be 11/17-12/7) as not all courses run on a semester-long schedules (condensed courses). Committee members requested the following features: adding teaching assistants to the survey, a video tutorial for making survey questions, an email for faculty explain the process in steps after an initial request for a survey is made to OMET, a survey system that retains questions that have been added in previous years, a link embedded in individual courses in CourseWeb/Blackboard (rather than only on the landing page). Discussion included awareness that future developments via OMET must be able to apply to all units to use if they choose; however some schools use their own instruments and processes. Another suggestion was made to take a screenshot of the CourseWeb landing page for faculty so they can see what the students see in order to tell students what to look for.

Two proposals were suggested by the Chair, 1.) that an evaluation be conducted of the level of inappropriate language in the responses to the open-ended survey questions, and 2.) that an evaluation of the survey instrument be conducted to determine its ability to provide an evaluation of a given course versus its ability to provide an evaluation of teaching. It was agreed that these proposals could be addressed. Committee members were asked to submit by email to CIDDE any further comments or suggestions.

Old Business: See New Business

New Business:

Goals & Priorities for 2014-15:

The Chair presented an overview to the committee members. This included 1) proposing a recommendation to the Faculty Assembly on the prior work of the committee pertaining to the course summary form (a summary will be provided by the past Chair at the next meeting); 2) continuing committee work on educational materials pertaining to plagiarism/academic integrity/digital ethics including collaborating with ongoing efforts and with CIDDE to develop educational modules and a central access point for faculty and students; and revisiting the classroom recording statement that was developed by this committee due to advances in technology, 3) continue work pertaining to OMET student opinion of teaching survey with other involved committees relative to intended use of the surveys for improvement of teaching, 4) offer collaboration with ongoing efforts in Biology for best practices with undergraduate teaching and course assistants, and 5) explore training and usage guidance for faculty for iThenticate via the Office of Research. Also, committee members were asked to recommend topics for the committee to discuss and explore for the upcoming year as well as any individuals or units at the University that should be invited to attend future meetings to inform members of new or related issues pertaining to the work of the committee.

Vice Provost Updates:

Vice Provost Manfredi presented the report on behalf of himself and Vice Provost Sbragia. This report focused on new federal and state requirements pertaining to institutions participating in tuition assistance programs for veteran students and their dependents. He reviewed the memo sent to the Council of Deans, Associate Deans, Directors of Advising Centers and members of the ad hoc working group on veterans services pertaining to new state requirements, particularly the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Act 46 (PA Act 46) that affects registration and advising of veteran students for the Spring 2015 term whereby it provides veterans with scheduling preference. As a result, veterans will be able to enroll beginning at 8:30am on October 24th, 48 hours in advance of the general registration period October 27th -November 5th. Student questions can be directed to the Office of Veteran Services (412-624-3213 or by email veterans@pitt.edu or by visiting the website at <http://www.veterans.pitt.edu>).

Vice Provost Manfredi also described a Federal Law enacted August 7, 2014 that provides in-state tuition benefit to veterans discharged within a specified time-frame and for their specified family members, regardless of residence. An upcoming requirement will require participating institutions in the tuition assistance program to provide a personalized education plan to these applicants within 60 days of application.

Vice Provost Manfredi also described a new military (“M”) withdrawal that will be implemented for any course withdrawal due to military responsibilities that will be applied rather than the current withdrawal (“W”) notation.

Faculty Assembly:

An overview was provided by the Chair who attended the assembly, including 1) a reference to the proceedings in the University Times (<http://www.utimes.pitt.edu/?p=32062>) 2) a summary of the report of the president, 3) acknowledgement that comments pertaining to the visitor policy are being directed to Vice Provost Carey Balaban, 4) summary of the report by the Tenure and Academic Freedom Committee pertaining to resolution (passed) to create an Ad Hoc committee to review current evaluation of tenured faculty and salary decisions, and 5) the resolution (passed) pertaining to implementation of the intellectual property right’s agreement policy and subsequent action by the Provost to delay September 16th signature deadline and create a task force to make recommendations for implementing a process consistent with our existing policy on Intellectual Property.

ACIE Council:

The Co-chair reported that the first ACIE council meeting for AY 2014-15 had not yet taken place.

Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 4:46pm

Documents posted in SEPC Box folder

Location: SEPC recourses >> References Resources from Meetings

Link to folder: <https://pitt.box.com/s/x3d6qb24xo9sc79i2xzm>)

Documents:

¹ 2014-09-OMET SEPC September

² 2014-09 SEPC Mission Statement-Handout