Senate Educational Policies Committee
Meeting Minutes for November 19, 2019

Attendance: Bonneau, Chris(absent); Cecchini, Nicole; Dang, Lynn (excused); Falcione, Bonnie; Hampton, Marian (absent); Horvath, Zsuzsa (excused); Jacqueline, Camille (absent); Kelly, M. Kathleen (Pro-tem); Kucinski, Barb; Landsittel, Douglas (excused); Lausberg, Cyntnia (absent); Lotz, Andrew (excused); McCarthy, Joseph; Molinaro, Lori (absent); Oh, Eunjoo; Polini, Lorraine; Rikstad, Pam; Roberts, Laurel (Pro-tem); Schein, Michelle; Shaver, Kevin; Stoner, John; Urban, Nathan (absent); Wilson, Frank (excused); Vento, Barbara.

Call to Order: the meeting was called to order at approximately 3:00pm by Co-Chair John Stoner.

Approval of Minutes: the minutes for both the September 2019 and October 2019 meetings were approved.

Old Business

- Spring meeting schedule: Co-Chair Stoner is conducting an availability poll for committee members and then will schedule the Spring semester meetings accordingly.
- Holiday observance: Co-Chair Stoner sought input on continuing the discussion, recognizing this as a discussion pertaining to practice rather than policy. Committee members indicated this conversation should continue, offering input on the following – that there should be a timeframe specified for students to contact the faculty member; that by including a statement pertaining to this in course syllabi this would provide students with "permission" to seek out accommodations, would assist faculty to have pre-approved syllabus language, and this could be accomplished by embedding a statement into course skeletons or by making available pre-approved text in the sidebar of the course management system of which perhaps Canvas could help to accomplish this; that there may be a concern amongst students in identifying themselves to faculty with a religion and thus students approaching faculty is a problem and instead looking into the disability office's process as a model for an alternative process with a de-identified aggregate report that would be provided to course faculty prior to the semester start; and if the office of diversity and inclusion could provide the service along with student input on the process and then maintaining a database; that individual units may have unique needs; and that a process for making accommodations already exists for athletes and veterans. Co-Chair John Stoner requested a subcommittee to continue this work including a draft of a resolution to propose to the faculty assembly; Barb Kucinski and Kevin Shaver expressed interest.
- Pathways platform: Co-Chair Stoner will reach out to invite Amanda Brodish as guest speaker to address the committee about items including student confidentiality, appropriate use of student data, and addressing the potential concerns of access to this data.
- Guests for upcoming meetings: Cynthia Golden, Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning (early spring 2020 to focus on Canvas), and Marc Harding, Director of Admissions (late spring 2020 for most complete data) will be invited.

New Business

Electronic Information Technology (EIT) Accessibility Policy:
Guest Angie Bedford-Jack, Digital Accessibility Coordinator at the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (accesbiity.pitt.edu) joined the meeting via conference call to provide the committee with an overview of the policy that was proposed for the university to meet compliance with federal law. She reviewed background pertaining to legal risk, recent Department of Civil Rights resolutions, complaints received by other institutions, that the ADA and Rehabilitation Acts have been interpreted by the courts to apply to the digital realm, and that there are national and international standards for accessibility. The policy applies to everything digital for the purpose of university business, and outlines exceptions and consequences for noncompliance. She pointed out that companion guidelines for the policy provide two- and four-year implementation timelines for compliance and that everybody will be responsible for this. Committee members posed questions pertaining to contracts with vendors, experiential learning sites, early adopters, and the importance of faculty input as this moves forward. It was pointed out that induvial units will need to prioritize needs and the Council of Deans is aware, and early adopters include examples such as the Center for Teaching and Learning have already adopted practices that will comply. The policy was proposed at Faculty Assembly, it was tabled and sent back to the office of diversity and inclusion (see Faculty Assembly meeting update below).

Vice Provost Updates

Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies Joe McCarthy described Pitt's response to the request to pilot courses with the startup company founder of Outlier (and founder of MasterClass) for online higher education courses for credit. This was mobilized as a pilot for one semester for one course in Math and one course in Psychology, designed by Pitt faculty, each open to 50 students, viewed as a potential future option for affordability and access and includes access to 24-hour TAs. Two models were used. In the psychology course top faculty teach the lesson in their own research area and for each subject matter there is also a world renown person teaching. Whereas in math there are three instructors (one nonfaculty former professional athlete and two faculty) who teach the whole course. One instructor uses pencil and paper to illustrate the concepts; the former athlete uses a chalkboard/greenboard, and the third instructor uses an iPad with animations. The course also includes essentially infinite practice problems and associated solutions. Pitt credit is offered for these classes; Pitt students would pay the course fee and would still have to pay Pitt tuition. No Pitt students are enrolled in the pilot courses this semester. Questions from committee members focused on course fees, course credit, course titles, course assessment (goal is for learning objective assessments to mirror existing courses) and involvement of other institutions (Pitt has first right).

Updates from Meetings:
- Faculty Assembly: Co-Chair Stoner reported that there were three policies proposed, two were approved and one was tabled:

1. Provost Cudd proposed a nomenclature change for non-tenure stream (NTS) for a more positive title. Lecturer 1 and 2 name change and master teacher versus lecturer were identified for overlap problem. As a side note from Co-Chair Stoner, the survey of faculty salary indicates that Pitt is lagging in the instructor/lecturer category. The policy was approved.

2. Establishment of Pennsylvania residency: questions brought up were if foster care for children sent across a border should still be a PA resident, it was reported that there are appeal case processes and these always favor the student. Also, what if adult student who moved back home to care for an elderly parent – same appeal solution was described. The policy was approved.

3. Electronic Information Technology (EIT) Policy: concerns were raised that the policy is unfunded, that workshops with guest speakers will require subtitles and PowerPoint slides will require alternate text for pictures, without financial support there be disincentive to continue to provide such learning tools, there was a strong call for the university to pay for this and conversation ensued to vote this policy down. The policy was tabled and sent back to the office of diversity and inclusion. Co-Chair Stoner explained that technically the faculty assembly doesn't need to approve the policy but it is being addressed in good faith.

- Senate Council: Co-Chair Stoner reported that the AAU climate survey was mentioned by Chancellor Gallagher and that additional reserved funds are being set aside for seed grants to lessen incidence of sexual assault and position the ODI to address this.

- Provost's Advisory Council of Instructional Excellence (ACIE): Co-Chair Falcione reported that the first meeting was held in October when new members and last year's members were invited to hear the Provost's response to the report submitted by the council last summer on the topic of evaluation of teaching. The Provost was agreeable to and appreciative of the report with the exception of her request to include graduate students. An overarching goal of the report is to have multiple methods of evaluation of teaching that are appropriate for the unit. A timeline for implementation was asked of the Provost who indicated that it will take the necessary time to do it right. The next step will be for the Provost to bring this to the Council of Deans.

- Steering Committee for Canvas Implementation: Co-Chair Falcione reported that she and SEPC member Frank Wilson attended the November meeting. The two items previously identified as problems have been addressed – instructors/TA's can now be added by faculty and the "new" quiz will available when Canvas is fully implemented in summer 2020. A survey of faculty early adopters piloting Canvas this semester was conducted but not fully analyzed and a survey of students using Canvas is planned. The plans for communication of the upcoming implementation will be discussed at the next meeting however faculty should expect to begin to receive information in early December.

Adjournment: the meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:30pm.