

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
Senate Educational Policies Committee
April 21, 2014
Meeting Minutes

Present: Amy Aggelou, Bonnie Falcione, Zsuzsa Horvath, M. Kathleen Kelly, Mary Lou Liebold, Juan Manfredi, Kimberly Brown-Riley, Laurel Roberts,

Excused: Helen Petracchi, Alberta Sbragia, Cynthia Tananis

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

The March meeting minutes were reviewed and approved.

New Business:

Dr. Chandralekha Singh, Founding Director of dB SERC attended the meeting to discuss the mission of the dB-SERC and a number of initiatives that the center will be undertaking. The mission of the dB SERC is to promote and support evidence-based practices to bridge the gap between teaching and learning in the natural sciences. There are 9 science Departments at Pitt and all will be involved with the Center. The dB SERC will provide awards for innovative projects designed to transform natural science courses; the principal targets will be the introductory courses with high rates of Drop, Fail or Withdrawal. The center will host faculty learning communities where interested faculty members can meet to discuss the practical implications of newly published articles in science education, and it will provide a forum for faculty to develop and adapt innovative curricula and pedagogies. There will also be planned workshops to address a wider audience of faculty and graduate students. The first of these will be held on May 5th, 2014 on the topic of "Improving Student Learning in Large Classes". Another goal of the dB-SERC is to promote interdisciplinary collaboration by creating new courses or transforming existing courses to emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of current science research. The dB-SERC will provide support to faculty who are interested in writing grant proposals which include a significant educational component. Lastly, the website for dB-SERC is coming soon and will provide discipline-specific resources on evidence based teaching and learning; this includes teaching & assessment strategies and online resources (e.g. free research based instructional materials).

Vice Provost updates:

Vice Provost Juan Manfredi and Associate Provost William Shields reported on the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) town hall meeting which was held in Pittsburgh on March 21, 2014. The purpose of the meeting was to comment on the proposed changes to the standards that comprise the 'Characteristics of Excellence'.

For review see: <http://www.msche.org/documents/characteristicsdraft120913.pdf>

- The meeting was opened by MSCHE President, Dr. Elizabeth Sibolski. Highlights of the meeting include:
 - Changes to the Periodic Review Report (PRR) have been delayed until the new standards are approved.
 - New process expected to be in place by 2017
 - Revised version of the standards to be revised by the Commission at their June Meeting June meeting

- If approved, a vote by the members will follow in early Fall of 2014 after which all MSCHE documents will be reviewed to reflect the new standards.
- Dr. Stephen Sweeny, President Emeritus, College of New Rochelle is the new Chair of the MSCHE Steering Committee charged with revising the Standards.

Dr. Sweeny described the philosophy of the revisions as: *To simplify (from 14 to 7) and make the Student Learning Experience the central issue.* He went on to review each of the seven new standards, reinforcing the central theme of renewal and improvement of the Student Experience. He discussed that while the standards will not change, the mandatory regulatory compliance could (would) change. “Fundamental Elements” will now be referred to as “Criteria”.

The commission will be looking for mandatory institutional compliance in the following areas, all of which will be reviewed as part of the Periodic Review Report (PRR) and self-study:

- ❖ student identity verification in distance and correspondence education
- ❖ transfer of credit policies and articulation agreements
- ❖ Title IV program responsibilities
- ❖ institutional records of student complaints
- ❖ required information for students and the public
- ❖ standing with state and other accrediting agencies
- ❖ contractual relationships; and
- ❖ assignment of credit hours

For more information please see these MSCHE Resources:

- <http://www.msche.org/documents/chx2013guidingprinciples070813.pdf>
- <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/reg/hearulemaking/2012/piinegotiators2014.pdf>
- <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/reg/hearulemaking/2012/index.html>
- <http://chronicle.com/article/Senate-Task-Force-to-Assess/143153/>

Faculty Assembly update:

- **Online Speech Policy**

Brought forth for discussion to assembly was the idea of creating an On-Line Speech Policy at the University of Pittsburgh. This discussion was fueled by the controversy surrounding one University of Wisconsin at La Crosse faculty member’s email to her students concerning how the government shutdown might affect their upcoming project. The Chronicle of Higher Education article can be found at: <http://chronicle.com/article/One-Email-Much-Outrage/145227>.

Many members of assembly had opinions concerning this topic; therefore item was tabled until next meeting.

- **Athletics report**

Justin Acierno (Director of Marketing and Ticket Operations) at the University of Pittsburgh reported on:

- Academic achievements of Pitt athletes
- Discount football ticket opportunities available to faculty and staff at the University of Pittsburgh. More information can be found at:
<http://www.pittsburghpanthers.com/tickets/facultyandstaff.html>

ACIE Update:

The ACIE Council reviewed 32 proposals for the Innovation in Education Awards. Ten of the proposals were approved for funding.

SEPC Leadership transition:

The SEPC Chair and Co-Chair positions will both be vacant as of July 1st, 2014. Committee members were queried as to who had an interest in serving in this capacity. Two members - Zsuzsa Horvath and Bonnie Falcione- expressed an interest in serving as Chair and Co-Chair, respectively. Given that there was not a full committee present, the remaining members will be queried via email to make sure there is a consensus on the new leadership which will need to be in place by July 1st.

Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 4:40 PM.

***The next meeting will be held on May 19th at 3 PM.*