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FSEC Minutes September 23, 2015

University of Rhode Island Faculty Senate

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THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND

FACULTY SENATE OFFICE

**Faculty Senate Executive Committee Meeting #9
September 23, 2015 2:30 PM**

MINUTES

1. The meeting was called to order at 2:35 PM on Wednesday, September 23, 2015 in Library Conference Room B, Chairperson Rollo-Koster presiding. Senators Kusz, Rarick, Sullivan, Tsiatas and Welters were present.
2. Minutes of FSEC Meeting #8, September 16, 2015 were approved as amended.
3. **ANNOUNCEMENTS/CORRESPONDENCE/REPORTS**
 - a. Chairperson Rollo-Koster reminded the Committee that Provost DeHayes, Vice Provost Beauvais, and Vice President Sonnenfeld would be joining the meeting at 3:30 PM.
 - b. Chairperson Rollo-Koster reviewed email communications received recently from faculty with varying concerns.
4. **ONGOING BUSINESS**
 - a. The FSEC discussed the status of the General Education Program requirements subsequent to the amendments approved at the September 17 Faculty Senate meeting. At that meeting, the Senate voted to approve separating the student learning outcome, Arts and Humanities, into two distinct outcomes, Humanities, and Arts and Design. Limiting the number of general education courses within the same disciplinary code to three courses (up to 12 credits) was also approved. The proposal to eliminate the Integrative student learning outcome was defeated. The Committee reviewed a proposal for a Foreign Language Overlay requirement forwarded by the General Education Committee on September 1. Discussion ensued. Concerns were expressed for both the lack of a foreign language requirement at an institution with globally impactful programs and the difficulty of accommodating another requirement in general education. Globalization and the value of learning a second language were discussed. The Committee questioned the efficacy of a single course described as a language “overlay” in developing language proficiency. The FSEC moved approval of forwarding the Foreign Language Overlay to the Faculty Senate at a future meeting.

5. Provost DeHayes, Vice President Sonnenfeld, Vice Provost Beauvais, and Director Barrett joined the meeting at 3:30 PM. The following matters were discussed:
- a. Chairperson Rollo-Koster confirmed with the Provost that he was planning to present a report to the Faculty Senate at the October 15 meeting on the 2014-15 administrator evaluation of Vice Provost Katz.
 - b. Chairperson Rollo-Koster asked for an update on the status of the FY15 and FY16 overhead funds. In March 2015, the FSEC had been informed that the institution anticipated a shortfall in overhead funds (Facilities and Administration funds) for FY15, and that the Subcommittee on Distribution of Overhead Funds had been asked for recommendations to balance the shortfall and to propose a strategy for avoiding an anticipated shortfall in FY 2016. The anticipated shortfall is associated with a (nation-wide) downward trend in available grant funding and subsequent awards. Vice President Sonnenfeld reported that, by the end of FY15, the institution had received awards exceeding \$86 million, an increase of \$17 million over FY14, surpassing earlier estimates. The Vice President credited the faculty with this success. Faculty maintained a high volume of quality proposal submissions in FY15. He also credited the work of the Office of Sponsored Projects. The Vice President said that this success does not address all budget concerns. He said that the distribution to Sponsored Projects Administration (SPA) would be cut by \$400,000. Chairperson Rollo-Koster asked if this reduction would impact faculty negatively through a reduction in internal awards (Council for Research grants) or with assistance with patent applications. The Vice President said that the overhead fund issue would be discussed at upcoming meetings with the Council of Deans and the Council for Research. The Provost said that the overhead funds available are a reflection of research expenditures and, as such, are a moving target and that the institution is forced to set budgets based on projections. He said that he would go to great lengths to ensure that any reductions to the distribution to the Provost's budget would not impact his support of faculty start up funds, which is the focus of the Provost office allocation of those funds. The Provost and the Vice President commented on the funding climate in Washington. The Provost was asked if there were any plans in place to avoid the retroactive summer recontracting dilemma of 2014 brought about by the 3-year delay in settling the AAUP contract that was resolved by utilizing overhead funds. The Provost said that those conditions were unusual because of the extended time period and that they are always difficult to predict. The Provost praised the faculty for their commitment and determination in seeking awards. He also noted that, in the post-ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009) funding climate, the University has benefitted by transitioning to a new model of overhead distribution. Previously, the colleges and the administration received shares of

the balance only after the needed allocation to SPA was taken off the top. In the new model, any adjustments will include reductions to SPA.

Vice President Sonnenfeld and Director Barrett left the meeting at 4:12 PM.

- c. Chairperson Rollo-Koster informed the Provost that she had been contacted by the Chair of the Mathematics Department with a concern that university advisors had reportedly disregarded math course pre-requisites (placement testing) while registering in-coming freshman during orientation (June 2015). She said that the Chair of the Mathematics Department was seeking an amendment to the University Manual establishing instructor control of course permission numbers. The Provost said that he had met with the Chair of the Mathematics Department and summarized his understanding of the circumstances. He indicated that the Math Department is developing an effective placement test that will be able to analyze student deficiencies and offer students online tutorials to strengthen weak areas and improve their results. He indicated that the test + diagnostics + tutorial is not yet fully developed and that the department had requested resources for its completion. The Provost said that he would be pleased to meet again with faculty from the department and urged the FSEC to have the department contact his office directly if there are further questions.

- d. Chairperson Rollo-Koster asked the Provost about the plans to hire a Director of General Education. A discussion followed about the long process of developing the revised general education program, the difficulty of achieving progress given annual committee turnover, and the need to adhere to stated committee charges, which the FSEC had carefully and thoughtfully developed. The Provost indicated his support not only for a Director of General Education, but also for an institute for innovation in general education. He said that the SBPC (Strategic Budget and Planning Council) did not fund the request this year because the general education program was still in an implementation phase but that he will continue to pursue resources for it when the approved new program is implemented.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Neff