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Faculty Senate Executive Committee Meeting

Minutes #32

February 24, 2015

1. The meeting was called to order at 3:00 PM on Tuesday, February 24, 2015 in Library Conference Room B, Chairperson Nassersharif presiding. Senators Cerbo, Rarick, Rollo Koster, Sullivan, and Welters were present.

2. Provost DeHayes and Vice Provost Beauvais were welcomed to the meeting at 3:05 PM. The following matters were discussed:

a. The Provost provided an update on the proposed merger of the School of Education and the College of Continuing Education. The individual units are in agreement about the proposed plans. Details are being developed. Dean Ciccomascolo has indicated that plans are progressing more quickly than she had anticipated. The Provost reported that colleges and departments are voting on the revised (February 2015) health reorganization plan. Some units have reported their results, all of which, to date, have been to approve the proposal. When the voting is complete, the Phase II Health Committee will summarize the results and the voting process and forward the proposal to the Curricular Affairs Committee. Discussion ensued about the need to make better use of URI resources in Providence and examine opportunities to increase enrollment.

b. Chairperson Nassersharif expressed concern about different interpretations of the University Manual regarding the Graduate Council and the role of the Dean of the Graduate School. The Chair noted that it is unusual for administrators to chair faculty committees. Recently, changes to the Graduate School Manual that impact faculty were brought to Chairperson Nassersharif's attention. The changes were approved only by the Graduate Council and not submitted to the Faculty Senate. It was also noted that proposed changes to sections of the University Manual defining Graduate Faculty status that were rejected by the Faculty Senate in 2012 have been published in the Graduate School Manual. The Provost responded that he would arrange a meeting of himself, the Graduate Dean, and the Senate leadership to share any concerns and clarify misinterpretations and misunderstandings that may exist. The FSEC reiterated that the past few years have been marked by disagreements with the Graduate School that stem from their assertion that the Graduate Council may legislate decisions in regard to graduate program issues. The Provost commented on the status of graduate enrollment nationally and at URI. The Provost was asked who would be on the committee to select the next Associate Dean of the Graduate School, and the Provost indicated he would discuss the search committee membership with the Dean of the Graduate School.

c. The Committee and the Provost discussed the subject of improving shared governance at URI. Chairperson Nassersharif summarized three goals set by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee: to improve efficiency, continuity, and communication. Continuity has been addressed by creating a new two-year leadership position for the Vice Chair/Chair-Elect, who may then serve an additional year as a past Chair. Improving communication through dialogue and discussion is ongoing. How to improve efficiency has yet to be defined. The Provost indicated that streamlining processes may involve changing processes rather than just the method of implementing a process. Creating an electronic form to replace a paper form will not necessarily produce streamlining. Changing the need for the form will improve efficiency. He said that the Strategic Budget and Planning Council will be asked to articulate a plan for streamlining process. The Provost commented that performance-based funding has captured the attention of the General Assembly and that the institution has made great progress on many fronts because of the hard work of many committed faculty. He noted that URI is well-positioned in a performance-based funding model if the gains in student success in many areas continue to move forward.

d. Chairperson Nassersharif said that the newly formed Committee on Information Technologies, Infrastructure, Computing, Communications, and Networking committee will be meeting soon and invited the Provost to appoint a representative at his earliest convenience.

e. The Provost noted that the active learning class room, featured at the January Academic Summit and soon to be under construction in the Library, has prompted faculty to request longer class times (1.25 hours). He suggested giving consideration to altering the weekly class schedule to, as an example, 1 hour 15 minute classes that meet on a Monday - Thursday and Tuesday - Friday schedule. Wednesdays would be available for 2-3 hour sessions as applicable. Senator Rarick commented that faculty would benefit from an occasional day dedicated to collaborative communication and committee meetings.

Provost DeHayes and Vice Provost Beauvais left the meeting at 4:15 PM.

3. Minutes of Faculty Senate Meeting #31, February 17, 2015 were approved.

4. ONGOING BUSINESS

a) The Committee discussed the Graduate Dean's offer (of Feb. 17) to appoint a FSEC member to the Teaching Assistant Task Force that he has formed.

b) The committee accepted the email offer of Mr. Olerio to present an update to the committee on URI Summer Sessions. Ms. Neff was asked to invite him to attend an upcoming weekly FSEC meeting.

c) The Committee discussed the agenda for the upcoming March 10 meeting with Vice President Sonnenfeld. Redistribution of overhead funds and the URI Center renewal and application processes will be addressed.

d) The Committee discussed the health collaborative proposal. Ms. Neff reported on the discussion about it at the Curricular Affairs Committee (CAC) meeting of the previous day (Feb. 23). The CAC has been provided with the final report and revised report of the health committee (the proposal on which units are voting).

e) The Committee discussed their concerns about communications with the Graduate Dean and how to resolve issues that stem from different interpretations of the University Manual. Ms. Neff recalled that proposed changes by the Graduate Dean and Associate Dean (in 2012) to Manual sections defining Graduate Faculty Status failed because of the inclusion of "faculty who have achieved the highest degree in their discipline." There was concern that, in some rare instances, the terminal degree is not the highest degree available. Another concern was the authority given to the Graduate Dean and the Graduate Council, beyond the authority of the academic dean, to remove graduate status from a faculty member. Ms. Neff said she would locate the documents from two years ago pertaining to these issues and make them available to the FSEC.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Neff