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FSEC Minutes January 28, 2014

University of Rhode Island Faculty Senate

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Faculty Senate Executive Committee Meeting

Minutes #23

January 28, 2014

1. The meeting was called to order at 9:08 AM on Tuesday, January 28, 2014 in the Dorothy Vocino Conference Room in the URI Library, Chairperson Byrd presiding. Senators Brady, Cerbo, Davis, Nassersharif, and Rice were present.

2. Provost DeHayes and Vice Provost Beauvais joined the meeting as it was called to order. The following matters were considered:

a. Resolution #12-13--4 and the Memorandum of Agreement with the Town of South Kingstown between URI and town of SK was discussed. In December, the General Counsel had determined that the Dean of CELS was not in a position to obligate the University by signing the MOU but had indicated that the Provost could sign the Agreement. The Provost asked that the document be properly prepared and brought to his office for his signature.

b. The Provost was asked about the status of the recommendations made in the final report of Administration and Management Review Committee that was released to the community on December 12, 2013. He responded that he has reviewed the final report and that the Council of Deans has reviewed it, too. The Council was asked to identify 1) high-priority recommendations to be considered for further development, 2) lower-priority recommendations that are easy to achieve, and 3) issues that were overlooked. Discussion ensued about the report of the Administrative Process subcommittee. Although this subcommittee recommended creating a single employment classification system at URI so that all employees could be included in the non-classified service, it was noted that there were no direct recommendations to restructure the systems of the Human Resources Administration or the ways in which users interact with HRA.

The Provost commented that he had met with the Information Technology subcommittee. He thought that they had produced a good report. The subcommittee performed an internal review, but did not make any cost estimates of their recommendations. The priority recommendation was to bring in an outside consultant to help articulate the best organizational structure for IT at URI and to help develop a strategic technology plan. Discussion ensued about the efficacy of Sakai in its applications to teaching.

Senator Brady raised the issue of the possible reorganization of health-related academic programs. As a member of the Psychology faculty, she said that there are mixed opinions in her department about being structured under a new college or division of health. She expressed concern to the Provost that the impact of the re-organization has not been studied and that the faculty, not the AMRC subcommittee members, should convene to discuss the idea. Provost DeHayes agreed and indicated that the AMRC has and would continue to play a minimal role in this possible reorganization. He further responded that the initial exploratory committee was all faculty and that the committee that will comprise the next phase of reorganizational planning to explore the details will be largely faculty from the health-related departments. Senator Davis expressed concern to the Provost that groups that continue to meet to assess the AMRC report and its recommendations need to avoid describing their purpose as "implementation." She said that "implementation" implies that decisions have been made and that plans are moving forward. Senator Davis said that these ideas are still in the discussion and planning stages. Provost DeHayes said that no decisions have been made and the reference that some are making to "implementation" is to exploring the details, which will be critical to understand for departments to make decisions.

The Provost said that he has visited the departments involved in the health-related re-organization and has received both positive and negative responses. He would like to see the development of a model that captures the positive and addresses the issues perceived to be negative. He believes that URI has substantial strength in the health fields but, as currently structured, this strength is difficult for students and other stakeholders to identify. There is no structure for supporting our expertise. The Provost stated that the affected departments will decide their futures and that decisions will follow the shared governance process. He also stated that there is no reason to expect changes for the worse in workload or department funding levels. The Provost indicated that the College of Pharmacy will retain its structure as required by its accreditation standards. He stated that a re-organization of health programs should be seriously considered only if it has the potential to make a positive difference and that moving departments within the same academic unit could facilitate their ability to collaborate and contribute to inter-professional education, interdisciplinary research, the potential for new models for health, and the development of new health-related programs. Because the world of health and healthcare is changing rapidly, he said, how URI organizes and delivers health programs is worthy of serious consideration. The discussion continued.

c. Senator Brady asked the Provost about the process through which the Dean of the College of A&S makes requests for faculty positions. She expressed concern that Deans were given only 15 minutes, in a public forum, to present their needs and priorities. The Provost indicated that she had incomplete information and then described the annual strategic budgeting process that occurs in early spring. Each academic dean shares his/her priorities in a meeting in which the FSEC is invited to participate and then each Dean undergoes a lengthy budget hearing (~2 hours) to discuss the details of their needs and priorities with the Provost. The priorities are set by the Deans and are supposed to include explicit input from the departments and faculty. The Provost said that resources follow the need and the priorities articulated by each of the Colleges. The positions allocated to each college are subsequently shared and included in the annual budget presentation to the Senate.

Provost DeHayes and Vice Provost Beauvais left the meeting at 10:50 AM.

3. Minutes of FSEC Meeting #21, January 21, 2014 were approved as amended.

4. ONGOING BUSINESS

a. The FSEC continued the discussion about the health-related academic re-organization. The committee discussed the potential for changes in resource allocation, overhead distribution, and the impact on the colleges that are "losing" departments.

b. The committee discussed their ongoing concerns about offering online degree programs at URI. Their concerns included questions about the hiring authority of the faculty who will teach the online programs and the source of the funds to pay the faculty. The committee expressed concern for the loss of control of the curriculum and the quality of the teaching.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:25PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Neff