Penn State Berks Faculty Senate
Monday, February 24, 2020
12:15-1:15pm
Multi-Purpose Room, Perkins Student Center
Agenda

1. **Call to Order**

2. **Approval of the Minutes of the January 2020 Meeting** (Appendix A)

3. **Announcements and Reports by the Chair**

4. **Reports of Officers and University Senators**

   Vice Chair Ryan
   Secretary English
   University Senator Bartolacci
   University Senator Dreisbach
   University Senator Snyder
   University Senator Zambanini
   University Senator Maurer
   SGA President Steve Filby
   Student Senator

5. **Comments/Announcements by Administrators**

   Chancellor Hillkirk
   Associate Dean Larson

6. **Unfinished Business**

7. **Forensic Business**

8. **Motions from Committees**

9. **Informational Reports**
   - Grading Practices and Grade Inflation, Academic Affairs (Appendix B)
   - Research Productivity Evaluation, Faculty Affairs (C)
   - Standing Committee Minutes (Appendix D)

10. **New Legislative Business**

11. **Comments for the Good of the Order**

12. Adjournment

Penn State Berks Senate
January 27, 2020
12:15-1:15 PM, Room 121, Gaige Technology and Business Innovation Building

Attendees: Jennifer Arnold, Amir Barakati, Mike Bartolacci, Tara Beecham, Donna Chambers, Alex Chisholm, Valerie Cholet, Tricia Clark, Justin DiAngelo, Deb Dreisbach, Colleen English, Jennifer Hillman, Jinyoung Im, Ben Infantolino, Mahsa Kazempour, Shahid Khan, Jim Laurie, Thomas Lynn, Joseph Mahoney, Cliff Maurer, Caleb Milligan, Pauline Milwood, Jennifer Murphy, Shannon Nowotarski, Meghan Owenz, Dawn Pfeifer Reitz, Matthew Rhudy, Brenda Russell, Holly Ryan, Marietta Scanlon, Jessica Schocker, Jeane Serrian, Allison Singles, Stephen Snyder, Terry Speicher, Hartono Tjoe, Praveen Veerabhadrappa, Bryan Wang, Bob Zambanini (Faculty); Marie Smith (Staff); Kim Berry, Dave Delozier, Paul Esqueda, Keith Hillkirk, Elyce Kaplan, Janelle Larson, Belén Rodríguez Mourelo, John Shank (Administration).

1. **Call to Order**

2. **Additions, Corrections, and Approval of Minutes of November 18, 2019 –**The Chair called for any additional additions, corrections to the minutes; hearing none, a motion was called to approve the minutes, second; *the minutes were approved.*

3. **Announcements and Reports by the Chair –**
   - A reminder, early progress reports are in session until February 5.
   - Election information will be announced from University Park within the next few weeks. Updates will be provided at our next meeting.
   - Several surveys were sent over the last several weeks by the Faculty Senate. I would like to thank the chairs of those committees who compiled the data provided for those surveys and I would also ask that you take the time to complete the surveys. Your feedback is useful in determining areas that are of concern to faculty and plays an important role when it comes to improving the overall faculty experience.
   - Deb Driesbach, who is our University Senator, is stepping in today for University Senator Ansari.

4. **Reports of Officers and University Senators -**
   - **Vice Chair Ryan –** No report.
   - **Secretary English** – No report.
   - **University Senator Ansari** – University Senator Dreisbach, no report.
   - **University Senator Bartolacci –** A letter was recently sent by Chair Rowland to the Chair of Curricular Affairs, which was in response to an issue that occurred last semester concerning a new course proposal within Liberal Arts that was denied. This prompted several scathing rebuttals received by a disgruntled faculty member. The letter sent by Chair Rowland suggested a new process be implemented whereas, if your course proposal receives several refusals you will be able to appeal the decision. More details to follow.
   - **University Senator Snyder –** The Senate Council has approved all recent changes to the Constitution. The Faculty Affairs Committee is looking at an advisory consultative report on advising. Much work is still needed; however, recommendations are not to remove advising from part of our workload but to increase opportunities for faculty in terms of how they are evaluated and transparency when it comes to expectations.
   - **University Senator Zambanini –** No report.
   - **University Senator Maurer –** No report.
   - **SGA President Steve Filby –** Not present.
   - **Student Senator –** Not present.

5. **Comments/Announcements by Administrators**
   - **Chancellor Hillkirk –**

- I would like to recognize and congratulate Kathleen Hauser and many others who assisted Saturday with the Lego League competition. Hundreds of middle-school students were in attendance. This was the fourth year for this competition and the last one for now due to the upcoming Beaver project.
- An update of the University's fundraising campaign was shared. To date, Berks has raised approximately $7 million of the $13 million goal to date. Recently the University extended the campaign and increased the overall goal for the campaign from $1.6 billion to $2 billion. Dave Delozier along with the campaign co-chairs, Vic and Deana Hammel, have been and continue working very hard on the Berks campaign.
- We anticipate that we will have eight Cohen-Hammel Fellows, which is halfway toward the goal of sixteen. This scholarship was made possible by a $3 million gift from the Cohen's and Hammel's along with a $1.5 million match from the University.
- Recently we received a $500,000 gift commitment from a local company that will be matched by the University creating a $1 million endowment. This endowment will help support the work that we are doing within the community. Work remains on another $500,000 gift, which would also be matched that would create a $2 million endowment. In addition, we recently received a $100,000 gift from a donor that has also been matched by the University. Our goal is to have two endowments, one would be $2 million and the other $1 million to support the work that is going on at St. Joseph's at both their downtown campus and Bern Township locations and at the LaunchBox at GoggleWorks. The work that this will support cuts across the entire college and is helping us to play a more significant role in terms of community and economic development in greater Reading. We are getting closer to announcing an upcoming important event that will be related to some of the things we are doing within the community. Thank you for all your involvement along the way.
- The Board of Trustees will soon be giving their final approval on the upcoming Beaver project. Bids are currently being reviewed and are on target, which is very positive. I would like to recognize and thank our students as they have, through their student-initiated fee, contributed one-sixth ($5 million) of the $30 million project.

- **Interim Associate Dean Larson –**
  - Elyse Kaplan, our new registrar is here with us today; welcome (applause). Elyce was helping during fall semester during Dave Bender's absence but we are pleased to have her officially onboard here at Berks. Elyce brings much experience to Berks as she has been registrar at Penn State Schuylkill since 2006.
  - An email went out early January in-regard to an upcoming grant writing workshop that we sponsor each May. Notice of interest is needed by Friday, January 31 with the full proposals due before spring break (February 28). This year, the workshop will be held at University Park May 11-13 and the college will provide funding for three participants to attend the workshop.

6. **Unfinished Business –**
   - **Drug Abuse Survey, Student Life (Appendix B)** – A overview was shared. The entire PowerPoint presentation of the December 20 workshop that was provided by Doug Tieman, CEO of the Caron Foundation, may be found on the Berks Intranet in the Chancellor folder.

7. **Forensic Business – None**

8. **Motions from Committees**
   - **Faculty Report on Program Coordinator Compensation Reduction, Faculty Affairs (Appendix C) –** A detailed overview of the motion provided; findings and advisory proposals shared. The Chair opened the floor for additional questions; hearing none, called the vote; using clickers, press A for yes, B for no, C for abstain; *the motion is approved (36 yes, 3 no, 1 abstention).*

9. **Informational Reports from Committees**
   - **Physical Facilities and Safety (Appendix D) –** An overview of the Beaver Community Center renovation was provided. As recently communicated by the Director of Business Services, several areas that will have much impact for faculty and staff during the next two years were again highlighted as well as their timeline. All were asked to keep these things in mind when planning any future events

on campus. Floorplans as well as exterior and interior renderings of the completed project were shared.

- **Standing Committee Minutes (Appendix E)**

10.   New Legislative Business – None

11.   Comments for the Good of the Order –

- Chancellor Hillkirk shared, the University is closely monitoring the situation in-regard to the coronavirus. The understanding at this point is the CDC is not sending out any alarms or concerns about any threat within the United States at this time. However, the progress taking place in China and other parts of the world are being closely monitored by the University.
- Dr. Jennifer Hillman shared, in-regard to the Gen Ed Scholar Program and for anyone who teaches a Gen Ed course, there is still money left for the Gen Ed micro-grants for $500 or less.

12.   Adjournment

Penn State Berks Faculty Grading Practices and Grade Inflation
Academic Affairs Committee (Informational Report)

Introduction

The Academic Affairs Committee was charged with the following:

> **Charge #11**: Investigate the issue of "grade inflation" including: background knowledge, faculty perceptions, relevant and accessible data, best practices, and necessary supports to implement any suggested interventions. Prepare an advisory and consultative report with recommendations.

To address this charge, the committee decided to gather information from the following sources:

1. Historical GPA records from Penn State Berks
2. Literature review of relevant research regarding grade inflation
3. Survey to assess faculty perceptions on grading practices

After reviewing the collected information, the committee decided there were no recommendations to make to the administration, but the information could be of interest to the faculty. Therefore, the report has been prepared as informational.

Information

The committee approached the Office of Planning, Research and Assessment regarding GPA records from approximately the last 20 years at Penn State Berks. Jayne Park-Martinez and Maureen Carr provided the committee with data on average semester and average cumulative GPA from Fall 2000 to Spring 2019, as shown in Figure 1.
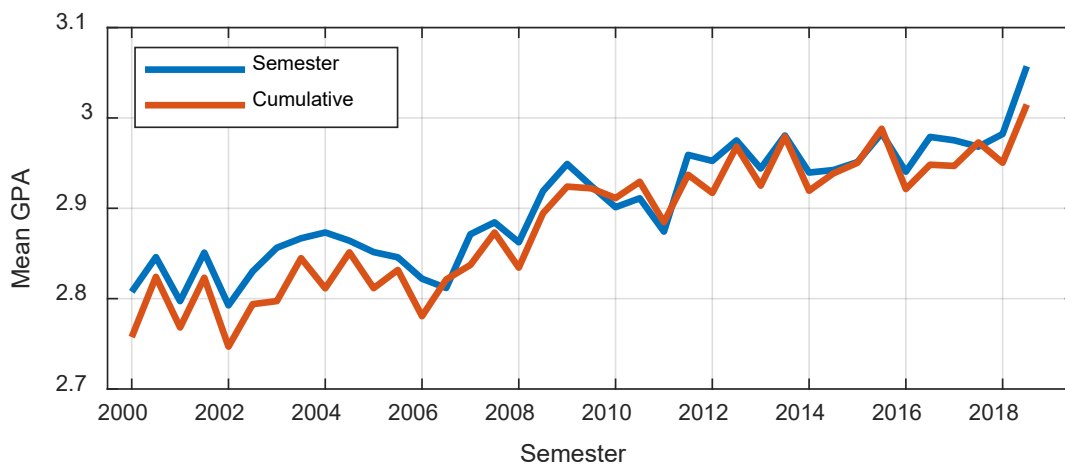
Figure 1. Historical GPA Data from Penn State Berks Students

It is shown in Figure 1 that there is an observable increasing trend in GPA data over time. This increase has been identified as approximately 0.0059/semester (slope of linear regression, with $R^2 = 0.84$), with an overall change from Fall 2000 to Spring 2019 of 0.26. Although there is an increasing trend in this data, the change is fairly small (~1/4 of a letter grade over ~20 years).

A literature review was conducted by Alexandria Chisholm, which identified relevant articles which discuss grade inflation:

- Chowdhury, F. (2018). Grade inflation: Causes, consequences, and cure. Journal of Education and Learning, 7(6), 86-92. https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v7n6p86
- Ehlers, T., & Schwager, R. (2016). Honest grading, grade inflation, and reputation. CESifo Economic Studies, 62(3), 506-521. https://doi.org/0.1093/cesifo/ifv022
- Kostal, J. W., Kuncel, N. R., & Sackett, P. R. (2016). Grade inflation marches on: Grade increases from the 1990s to 2000s. Educational Management: Issues and Practice, 35(1), 11-20. https://doi.org/10.1111/emip.12077
- O'Halloran, K. C., & Gordon, M. E. (2014). A synergistic approach to turning the tide of grade inflation. Higher Education, 68(6), 1005-1023. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-014-9758-5

The following items summarize the important findings from reviewing the literature:

- The concept of "grade inflation" is not always clear. One definition of "grade inflation" that helps to clarify this is "student attainment of higher grades independent of increased levels of academic attainment." The important takeaway here is that higher grades do not necessarily mean grade inflation. Higher grades without a corresponding increase in academic achievement constitutes grade inflation. This can be a bit problematic, because it is challenging to quantify changes in academic achievement.
- Why do educators engage in grade inflation? (Chowdhury, p. 87)
  - Student feedback as a form of performance evaluation – can lead faculty to give better grades due to potential financial benefits and job security
  - To save time – faculty can avoid spending office hours discussing grade disputes
  - Part-time and adjunct faculty have less incentive and time to dedicate to rigorous grading
  - Concern for students' mental health, job prospects, degree completion, etc.
- Why do institutions engage in grade inflation? (Chowdhury, p. 87-88)
  - Greater competition for student enrollment
  - Satisfy students and parents due to the increasingly consumer-based business model of higher education
- How are students affected? (Chowdhury, p. 88)
  - May have unclear or inflated sense of their knowledge/capabilities
  - Students who are truly exemplary are not acknowledged with distinctively higher grades due to "grade compression"
  - Deterioration of student work ethic
  - Impact on course selection – students may select classes with a professor who is an "easy grader"
  - Majors may be selected based on the ease of the program
- How institutions are affected (Chowdhury, p. 89)
  - Forms of academic credentials (transcripts, degrees, etc.) may lose value in the real world – in admissions, hiring, and other decisions

Guided by the information provided in the literature, the committee discussed these ideas in the context of Penn State Berks, and identified the following additional items of interest:

- This is a global issue. This is not an issue that is specific to Penn State Berks, or even the entire Penn State University. Because of this, it is extremely challenging to implement strategies to reduce or eliminate grade inflation at any single institution due to pressures from other institutions.
- While the data has indicated a small increase in GPA over the past ~20 years, there are multiple possible explanations for this increase, such as:
  - Increase in the number of 4-year programs at Penn State Berks. Upper level courses may be more likely to have higher grades. This increase would not necessarily indicate grade inflation, as the upper level students may be performing at a higher level of academic achievement.
  - There used to be a limit on the number of credits students could late drop. Now with Lionpath, this is no longer enforced, so students can late drop more credits, which could lead to higher GPA without any real change in academic performance.
  - There have been changes to financial aid policies, which could lead to more underperforming students not returning to campus. Similarly, the academic warning policy could have this same effect.
  - There has been an emphasis in recent years for improving retention rates at Penn State Berks. These additional efforts by faculty and staff could serve as early interventions for identifying student issues, which could lead to improved performance within courses.
  - Due to various support and training on campus (e.g. the Center for Learning and Teaching), higher grades could be the result of a higher quality of instruction.

In addition to the literature review on grade inflation, the committee also wanted to gather faculty perspectives on these issues. A survey was developed for faculty which focused on grading practices. The survey used a Likert-scale (Strongly Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat Agree, Strongly Agree). The survey was developed based on information gathered from the relevant literature and committee discussions surrounding this issue. The survey prompts are provided as follows:

- Please rate your response to each of the following items as honestly as possible for the given prompt:_____ affect(s) my grading practices within courses that I teach.
  - Student evaluations (SRTEs)
  - Having to discuss grade disputes with students
  - Concern for students' mental health, job prospects, and/or degree completion
  - Retention efforts on campus
  - Academic warning and/or financial aid policies
  - Grade distribution within the course (e.g. bell curve)
  - Other items not listed here [with opportunity to fill in]
- Please rate your response to the following prompts which consider how your

grading practices may or may not have changed over time. For each of these prompts, please rate relative to when you first started teaching.

- o My grading has become more lenient over time
- o My grading has become stricter over time
- o I update my grading practices based on grade distributions from prior semesters
- o I update my grading practices based on feedback from students
- o I do not update my grading practices

- Please provide any additional comments that you would like to provide to the committee regarding grading practices.

This survey was administered to full-time faculty only, therefore data from part-time/adjunct faculty is missing. This population has been identified as a possible contributor to grade inflation in the literature, therefore the missing data could have implications to interpretations of the survey results. Informal feedback from faculty and discussion from the committee noted some flaws with the wording of the survey questions, and possible different interpretations of the prompts. Due to possible interpretation issues in the survey, the committee would advise that these results be used carefully, and more of a guide for discussion than formal and robust data. Due to possible confusion between disagreement and "neither agree nor disagree" resulted in the committee considering the result primarily using two categories: one category for agreement (strongly agree and somewhat agree), and the other category for other responses. As in, the committee decided it was more meaningful to divide the results into agreeing or not. A total of 72 faculty members completed the survey. The results for the first set of survey prompts are given in Table 1, and the second set of survey prompts in Table 2.

Table 1. Results for the Survey Question "Please rate your response to each of the following items as honestly as possible for the given prompt:_____ affect(s) my grading practices within courses that I teach."

Survey Prompt	Not Agree	Agree
Student evaluations (SRTEs)	66.7%	33.3%
Having to discuss grade disputes with students	76.4%	23.6%
Concern for students' mental health, job prospects, degree completion	66.7%	33.3%
Retention efforts on campus	76.1%	23.9%
Academic warning and/or financial aid policies	81.9%	18.1%
Grade distribution within the course (e.g. bell curve)	84.7%	15.3%
Other items not listed here [with opportunity to fill in]	79.6%	20.4%

Table 2. Results for the Survey Question "Please rate your response to the following prompts which consider how your grading practices may or may not have changed over time. For each of these prompts, please rate relative to when you first started teaching."

Survey Prompt	Not Agree	Agree
My grading has become more lenient over time	69.4%	30.6%
My grading has become stricter over time	79.2%	20.8%
I update my grading practices based on grade dist. from prior sem.	84.7%	15.3%
I update my grading practices based on feedback from students	51.4%	48.6%
I do not update my grading practices	90.1%	9.9%

It is shown in Table 1 that generally faculty do not agree with the different items from the prompts affecting their grading practices, though *some* faculty do agree (primarily "somewhat agree"). The most significant items that faculty consider in their grading practices are SRTEs and concern for students. From the results shown in Table 2, the most significant agreement was shown for updating grading practices based on student feedback. The interpretation of grading practices was unclear from the survey, so many of the comments explained how the survey was completed. Faculty indicated within the comments changing grading practices due to the following:

- Faculty do not always have enough time for grading for example due to additional responsibilities on campus, large class sizes, etc.
- Student comments could be used to identify places were grading was unfair or unclear
- Feedback from students could be used to identify the difficulty of assignments, including past performance from previous semesters
- Rather than revising grading practices, faculty can revise expectations based on student population and level of preparedness

Discussion and Conclusion

Faculty take different things into consideration when determining their grading practices. There are many different interpretations of grading and teaching philosophies among our faculty. Results from the survey indicate that, at least for the most part, faculty are trying to avoid bias within grading. Although there is some evidence of an average grade increase from historical GPA data over the last ~20 years, there are multiple possible explanations for this increase that would not constitute "grade inflation." Research has revealed that there is little that individual institutions can do to combat "grade inflation," as it is a global issue within higher education. However, it is important for faculty to have a good understanding of these issues, and reflect upon individual grading practices to ensure fair, unbiased grading that is in the best interest of Penn State Berks students.

Respectfully submitted,

Academic Affairs Committee 2019-2020

Jennifer Arnold
Michael Bartolacci
Flavio Cabrera
Alexandria Chisholm (vice-chair)
Ebonie Cunningham-Stringer
Lisa Glass
Elyce Kaplan
Janelle Larson
Dawn Pfeifer Reitz
Matthew Rhudy (chair)
Bryan Wang

Charge 9. Unfinished charge from last year: Review and compare how research productivity is evaluated across disciplines and in comparison to other campuses. Prepare legislative report with best practices and campus policies to understand disciplinary differences and value work equitably.

Informational Report

Introduction

Faculty are evaluated by their peers and by administrators, who do not necessarily share the same research fields, and compensation is tied to evaluative decisions that include research productivity. It is therefore of interest to the faculty to be aware of how research productivity is evaluated, both to prepare materials for evaluation to their best advantage and to perform the duties of peer evaluators competently.

The committee gathered information by interviewing the Division Heads at Penn State Berks and from research in the literature available to the non-expert via electronic searches. The nature, volume, and field of applicability of the information varies widely from source to source. In the current document, the salient trends observed in the sources are summarized, and some insights about issues that have been studied are shared with the caveat that results from the literature may not be directly applicable to particular cases at Penn State Berks.

Discussion

The evaluation of research productivity across the disciplines is a multifaceted endeavor which requires criteria developed over time and with careful study and consideration, that are appropriate for the unique faculty at an institution[1]. Few comparative studies of research norms and practices across disciplines are available in the literature[2]. The output generated by individuals in different disciplines, which is considered of value by their disciplinary communities, and which would be the natural starting point for evaluation, is not uniform[1,2]. For example, the value of publishing articles versus books varies greatly across disciplines[2].

In searching for factors that correlate with higher productivity, it was found that research productivity must be measured in a simple, easily understood, well rationalized and goal-directed manner in relation to each discipline[3], while a productivity index must not be confused with the goals and values of the institution[3]. At the same conference, concerns were raised about bibliometric practices being ineffectual and about the erroneous assumption that productivity is monotonic[3].

In searching for causes for higher productivity, it was found that more full professors at an institution correlated with higher research productivity, except in social and behavioral sciences[4]. The same authors found that departments in which all the faculty are productive did well[4], and that research productivity for an institution did not depend on having a "star" researcher. The number of publications produced was found to correlate with the number of faculty and the rank of an institution[5], in a study that also noted that time off teaching or service may, but does not necessarily, boost publications[5], and that large grants improved research productivity, but not so small ones[5].

In work on professional legitimacy, tenure and promotion committees were cautioned to consider achieving a balance between local and cosmopolitan scholars to provide a more

dynamic environment, once again highlighting the differences in evaluation of research productivity from one individual to another[6]. Also focusing on the faculty as individuals, the Education Advisory Board reported that faculty would probably dispute administrators' choices for formulas or composite scores for evaluations, rather than try to improve their productivity scores[7]. In the same work, it was seen that third-party assessment tools were convenient but lacked transparency and should be avoided. Similarly, including external reviewers for yearly faculty activity reports would provide more discipline-specific insights, but would be too costly to be practical[7].

Advisory Proposal

Although there is no set of "Best Practices" since the evaluation of faculty must necessarily be on a case-by-case basis for each discipline and each career path, there are strategies that may lead to positive outcomes already in place at Penn State Berks:
- Promotion committees should be based on elections rather than appointments by the administration.
- Institution-wide formulas (composite scores) to weigh research productivity indicators should not be considered, because of the disparities between programs and subjectivity of such a composite score.

The committee recommends considering the following issues:
- The criteria used to select external reviewers for tenure and promotion should tend to include reviewers from similar four-year baccalaureate degree-granting institutions[7].
- Administration should ensure mentoring, from working towards a climate in which collaboration is appreciated, to setting up formal mentoring programs as needed, and including generating opportunities for low performing faculty to engage with high performing faculty.
- A deeper understanding as a campus community of the issues of evaluation across the disciplines, as developed for example through periodic seminars given by visiting experts, may be valuable.

In conclusion, there is no set of criteria for the evaluation of research productivity because the output varies greatly across disciplines. Neither direct quantification nor standardized outcomes are appropriate for the diversity of disciplines and career paths of faculty at our institution. However, this informational report discusses research results from the literature and provides recommendations that are amenable to implementation to our college.

1. Summary of input from Division Heads at Penn State Berks
   Khaled Abdou and Lorena Tribe, Spring 2020. Attached.
2. Comparing Research Productivity Across Disciplines and Career Stages
   Meghna Sabharwal
   Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis, 2013 Vol 15, No. 2, pp 141-163
3. Evaluating research productivity - A compilation of papers originally presented at a
   conference sponsored by The Merrill Advanced Studies Center
   Editor: Mabel L. Rice – MASC Report No. 105 - University of Kansas – June 2001
4. Determinants of research productivity in higher education
   Halil Dundar and Darrell R. Lewis
   Research in Higher Education, 1988 Vol 39, No. 6
5. What can university administrators do to increase the publication and citation scores of
   their faculty members?
   Nabil Amara, Rejean Landry, Norrin Halilem
   Scientometrics, 2015 Vol 103, pp 489 - 530
6. From the faculty perspective: Defining, earning, and maintaining legitimacy across
   academia
   Leslie D. Gonzales and Aimee Lapointe Terosky
   Teachers College Record, 2016 Vol 118 pp 1- 44
7. Assessing faculty research productivity at public research institutions
   Kevin Danchisko and Allison Thomas
   Education Advisory Board – Academic Affairs Forum – 2012
8. Variability of research performance across disciplines within universities in non-
   competitive higher education systems
   Giovannin Abramo et al
   Scientometrics 2014 Vol 98 No. 2, pp 777 - 795

Holly Ryan, Chair
Khaled K. Abdou
Nathan Greenauer
Joseph M. Mahoney
Marissa J. Ruggiero
Ike Shibley
Stephen J. Snyder, ex officio
Lorena Tribe, Vice-Chair

Academic Affairs Meeting Minutes
Monday February 3, 2020
12:15 pm – 1:15 pm, Gaige 206

Attendance: Jennifer Arnold, Michael Bartolacci, Flavio Cabrera, Alex Chisholm (vice-chair), Lisa Glass, Elyce Kaplan, Dawn Pfeifer Reitz, Matthew Rhudy (chair), Bryan Wang

1. Summary of Survey Questions for Charge #11

   - Charge #11: *Investigate the issue of "grade inflation" including: background knowledge, faculty perceptions, relevant and accessible data, best practices, and necessary supports to implement any suggested interventions. Prepare an advisory and consultative report with recommendations.* [February]
   - Please rate your response to each of the following items as honestly as possible for the given prompt:_____ affect(s) my grading practices within courses that I teach.
     [Strongly Disagree, Somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, Strongly Agree]
     - Student evaluations (SRTEs)
     - Having to discuss grade disputes with students
     - Concern for students' mental health, job prospects, and/or degree completion
     - Retention efforts on campus
     - Academic warning and/or financial aid policies
     - Grade distribution within the course (e.g. bell curve)
     - Other items not listed here [with opportunity to fill in]
   - Please rate your response to the following prompts which consider how your grading practices may or may not have changed over time. For each of these prompts, please rate relative to when you first started teaching.
     [Strongly Disagree, Somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, Strongly Agree]
     - My grading has become more lenient over time
     - My grading has become stricter over time
     - I update my grading practices based on grade distributions from prior semesters
     - I update my grading practices based on feedback from students
     - I do not update my grading practices
   - Please provide any additional comments that you would like to provide to the committee regarding grading practices.

2. Discussion of Survey Results for Charge #11

   - Informal feedback from faculty and discussion from the committee noted some flaws with the wording of the survey questions, and possible different interpretations of the prompts
     - Faculty may have answered questions differently based on their interpretations

- o For the affecting grading practices prompts, what is the difference between disagreement and neither agree nor disagree if you something does not affect your grading practices?
    - ▪ Likely best interpretation would be to separate responses into agreement (somewhat or strongly agree) and combine the other responses to avoid confusion
- SRTEs were one of the more significant factors and should be mentioned in the report
    - o Some concerns about reliance on SRTEs for reviews, job security, etc.
- General takeaways from the survey
    - o Faculty take different things into consideration when determining their grading practices
    - o For the most part, faculty are at least trying not to introduce bias
    - o Missing data from part-time/adjunct, which is known to be a contributor to grade inflation, and training for these faculty members is limited
    - o Comments about difficulty of assignments and expectations changing could affect grades, without affecting grading practices
    - o Time management is an important factor, especially related to class sizes and overload
- Grade inflation needs to be carefully defined
    - o What is the difference between changing grading and changing expectations?
- Should possibly consider the impact of Penn State 2025
- **Action Item: Matthew Rhudy and Alex Chisholm will prepare an informational report draft and distribute to the committee for review before presentation at the February Senate Meeting**

3. Chair Position Open Next Academic Year

- Matthew Rhudy is completing his 2nd term as chair of Academic Affairs
    - o Will still be on the committee for one year, but cannot be chair
- Alex Chisholm has reached her term limit on the committee (total of 4 years)
- **Action Item: Committee members should consider if they would be interested in serving as chair next year and discuss with Matthew Rhudy if interested or have any questions**

Meeting 4 – Physical Facilities & Safety

2/3/2020

Agenda

1. Attendance
2. Discuss charges
    a. Charge 6
    b. Charge 7
    c. Kim Report
3. Plan for next meeting

Minutes

1. Present – Ada, Megan, Shannon, Allison, Rosario, Kim, Jinyoung, Mahsa
2. Discussed Charge 6 progress
    a. Read charge – similar charge to make campus more environmentally friendly and sustainable every year, this one suggests targeting single use plastics, collaborating with Sustainability Team, etc…
    b. Brainstormed directions to go with report
        i. Mahsa reported on current initiatives of the Sustainability Team
            1. Composting – Team members have placed compost bins around campus in faculty office suites that are dealt with entirely by the volunteer Team. Compost is deposited on site behind the sheds
            2. Reducing single-use plastics – requires buy in by Housing and Food Services, thus far has been difficult to break through to this group
            3. Awareness – Team hosts fall and spring events and is promoting the UN's Sustainability Goals, also runs a website that contains initiatives and student projects
            4. Cooperation – Team requests support from experts in all areas across campus to promote sustainable efforts. Sustainable farming, sustainable turf maintenance, communicating sustainable practices, sustainable chemicals, sustainable business practices, sustainable technology, etc… Cooperation could include a range of levels of participation as small as listing student projects on the website, or participating in panel discussions for events.
        ii. Heard from Kim to better understand the physical plant's capacity to increase composting efforts
            1. Site can be expanded, but not by much without infringing on the space of others and maintaining accessibility
            2. Insufficient staff to help with the composting bins
            3. Housing and Food Services may not have the capacity to take on composting without the support of the campus M&O staff
        iii. Need a way to incentivize participation in Sustainability efforts

1. Allison suggested recommending a new Senate committee focused on sustainability to recruit faculty involvement in a way that would be more respected by current administration
2. Mahsa pushed back against idea in order to preserve the nature of the Team and not create division in Sustainability efforts.
3. Team's strength is in its representation from students, faculty, and staff, making it a Senate Committee it would become more of a rotating cast of people who are not as passionate about the cause, that may detract from the Team's initiatives rather than support it
4. Committee was in favor of incentivizing participation in sustainability efforts
5. Senate Chair, Jessica Shocker visited to provide guidance on this charge - In favor of strong wording to incentivize participation on Sustainability Team

    iv. Ways to promote Sustainability team on Annual Faculty Activity Report and Dossier

        1. Incentivize participation by more heavily weighing contribution to service on FAR
        2. Acknowledging that commitment to the Sustainability Team encompasses service to the community, service to the campus, service to the college, service to the division, and student engagement.
        3. Encourage faculty to separate out individual activities (non-redundant) to make sure service to all areas is well understood.
        4. Encourage DH and PC involvement on Sustainability Team email list-serve so that requests for expertise can be passed along more effectively.

c. Group centered discussion around a report that would strongly encourage more faculty participation in Sustainability Team's efforts
    i. Summarize current initiatives
    ii. Present key gaps in Team's representation
    iii. Recommend participation in the Sustainability Team be more heavily weighted (strong tangible FAR and Dossier benefits) by DH's in order to encourage faculty participation – voting motion on this aspect
    iv. Recommend faculty separate out activities to various service areas and student learning experiences to better demonstrate the time and value of Sustainability Team participation
    v. Recommend that DH's and PC's join Sustainability Team email list serve

d. Group volunteered to assist Mahsa in report writing and review where needed – draft expected at next meeting 3/3/2020 and due 3/16/2020 (final 3/23/2020)

3. Kim presented BCC Renovation progress
    a. PDRB approval completed
    b. Showed floorplans and 3d renderings
    c. Board of Trustees approval scheduled for late February
    d. Ground breaking expected in March

4. Discussed Charge 7 collaborative seating report
   a. Jinyoung reported 48 surveys completed
   b. Allison will send out last call on 2/7/20
   c. Results will be tallied after 2/7
   d. Group offered to support report writing and statistics in any way possible.
   e. Will have draft prior to 4/6 meeting report due 4/13

Student Life Committee Meeting Minutes, Monday, February 17, 2020:

1. Introduction: Define the issues germane to the faculty's interest, and state the reason why the report is necessary.

The second charge for the Student Life Committee during 2019-20 has been to review practices among educators, including in relation to student identifiers in the classroom (such as proper nouns and pronouns), to help support students of diverse backgrounds and orientations and to help make all students feel comfortable in the classroom. Our committee is supposed to recommend to the Senate and faculty best practices in terms of student identifiers and creating a safe, welcoming space in the classroom for all students. However, our committee is delaying this recommendation, per the explanation in the item immediately following.

2. Information: Present the data or other information as needed.

The reason for this delay is encapsulated in the comment from one of the members of the Student Life Committee, Chery Nicholas, about a University Park report nearing completion:

> The work is being done by Hil Malatino and Lars Stoltzfus-Brown at University Park. They are still working on a name for it but it is about best practices for ethical teaching & research regarding gender & sexually diverse populations. At our last meeting they reported that the project is going through a final review and should be ready soon – in a couple of months or so?
>
> There is also plenty of info online if we ourselves are looking to put something together – but as I mentioned to the group today, it may be unproductive to do something that is already being done and vetted by the university.

Also, in a subsequent message, Cheryl says this:

> I am curious about the final project by Hil and Lars at UPark – I saw an earlier version which looked good. Let's see what their final project looks like and if need be we can add to it? There is plenty of info about this online and similar initiatives by other institutions.

3. Discussion and Conclusion: State the implications for the faculty.

The Student Life committee feels that while it is important that we make a recommendation to the Faculty Senate as soon as possible about classroom best practices in relation to diversity, including student identifiers, we also believe that we should wait to hear what is said in the Hil Malatino and Lars Stoltzfus-Brown report (done at University Park). We then plan to adapt, as necessary, what is said in that report in our own recommendation to the Senate.

4. Ending: List the committee members preparing the report.

Thomas Jay Lynn, Chair of the Faculty Senate Student Life Committee, and Chery Nicholas, member of the Senate Student Life Committee, prepared this report.