THE MINUTES OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE (AS-9)

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO

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Office of the Academic Senate

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February 22, 2021

Members excused: F. Chen, J. Wakabayashi

Members absent: D. Cady, J. Crane, S. Laha, Y. Luo, B. Mason, B. Ong, F. Parra

The Academic Senate was called to order by Chair Holyoke at 4:01 p.m. via Zoom video conferencing.

1. Approval of the Agenda.

MSC

1. Approval of the Minutes of 2/1/2021.

Senator Ram (University-wide) made a correction to a statement made by the Interim President at the last Senate meeting concerning high failure rate courses, pointing out that Political Science 2, does not in fact, have a high failure rate.

MSC

1. Communications and Announcements:

Interim Provost Fu discussed the “wish list” request email sent to chairs through deans. He noted the planning will take a few steps, where we first start with the same in-person on-campus enrollment that ran in Fall 2020 (approximately 4600) and to that we ask: “What classes should be added with highest priority for accreditation and similar needs?” Next: “What courses would better serve if offered face to face compared to virtual (but not mandatory). Finally we wish to offer face to face some courses for incoming freshmen. In essence we have a lot of moving parts which include plans at all levels including mandates and guidance from county health officials. He also stressed that we must take into consideration psychology; will people feel safe coming back?

Vice President Astone added that some large venues not normally used as classrooms could be made to work as classrooms in case of social distancing needs, and that all facilities are being put on the table, and the current assumptions include masks and 6ft distancing in the Fall.

Senator Walter (Biology) mentioned that the passing rate was down in 2020 for freshmen and asked if this was due to teaching online, or if there is a synch v. asynch issue. She also expressed concern about what would happen if we offer face to face classes and student don’t want to come, and if we have a plan to address this potentiality. Dr. Fu confirmed that the freshman pass rate was lower, but that we do not have detailed analysis on causes. However, he does not feel this was due to being online since seniors through sophomores did not have the same experience, but a working hypothesis is a lack of “belonging” and campus experience may have impacted the freshmen. To the concern of coming to campus, we are equipping 25 classrooms for “hy-flex” which would allow students remote connection while other attend face to face. He also noted that it is hard to prepare for given enrollments (and lack of cohorts) so solutions are hard to implement, so we are working on a range of solutions.

Senator Crowell (Sociology) noted that computer lab classrooms are needed for at least a portion of the students in some classes who do not have reliable wifi at home, and asked if this can this be made a priority. Dr. Fu answered that we will look into this as we need to work with faculty addressing such specific needs, but noted that in this case cleanings may be a concern. VP Leon noted that, if wifi is the problem, students might also be able to come to campus to use space that is not a computer lab.

Senator Herrera (Chicano and Latin American Studies) expressed a concern about a Fall repopulation, specifically if there will there be mask enforcement. VP Astone told the Senate that we are assuming mandatory masks, but we will not know until we get guidelines from the state, and screening and checkpoint needs will also assessed. In addition, the CDC has revised disinfectant guidelines and associated “deep cleaning”. She noted we are planning for most restrictive requirements and know that can relax them if needed.

Senator Cronin (Social Work Education) noted that he has experienced spotty internet access on campus and wanted to bring this to VP Leon’s attention. VP Leon described the situation that with hundreds of access points and no easy way to know if one is down, so right now any connectivity issues on campus should be reported as soon as possible to his office so they can be addressed.

Presentation 1

VP Orlando Leon: Discussion of “hy-flex” classroom options.

Special technology, at DiscoverE standards, is being installed into classrooms which will enable Zoom use and other virtual and hybrid resources. The assumption is that on occasion if a student cannot access a face to face class, this will allow remote connection options, and we are working on training for faculty to use this equipment. Dr. Berrett (CFE) discussed what is being testing and showed a photo of a room outfitted with the technology. He cautioned that this will not be made mandatory for any particular courses (as far as he knows), and that CFE is training special student assistants that would participate.

Senator Ram (University-wide) asked about which 25 classrooms are being modified, and if faculty who might be assigned to these rooms were consulted. Dr. Berrett explained that the classrooms were selected strategically with the help of Debbie Donner, and consultation with Interim Undergraduate Dean Muscat. A preliminary list of these rooms was shared via Zoom:



Senator Walter (Biology) expressed concern that this might become a mandated modality and asked what would happen if faculty reject using hy-flex technology, and what would be the impact on the student experience. Dr. Berrett and Associate V.P. for Faculty Affairs Dr. Baum told the senate that these concerns and decisions are all in flux and faculty are currently engaged in consultation.

Senator Walter (Biology) followed up asking how this will be implemented physically, for instance, instructors in a plexi-glass box, or will we have the ability to move around. VP Leon explained that we should be able to walk around, and that the technology will allow the camera to track instructor (working on this feature). VP Astone noted that with the current plan, we just have the 6ft distancing and masks, and no other changes, from current face to face procedures.

Senator DeWalt (Liberal Studies) shared his concern for collaborative experience type classrooms for the Fall. VP Astone mentioned a few proposals including alternate sessions and staggering for some classes. VP Leon added that what is offered will involve a balance of affordability and available tech. Dr. Baum further added that any associated workload issues will be discussed with CFA and that faculty and staff are part of the working group deliberations, with communications and messaging coming out soon.

Senator Tawlik (Civil & Geomatics Engineering) expressed concerns about multimodal teaching, in that reaching to both in person and remote learners may not be easy. On another issue he discussed the use of air filters in classrooms, and that findings show the current filters are not the best choice.

Presentation 2

Dr. Kathleen Dyer (Chair of Student Ratings Committee): Report on Student Ratings

Dr. Dyer described the successful transition to our new instrument, which is working well, is a scientifically sound instrument and therefore defensible in a court of law, and that with it we are for the first time in compliance with our own policy. She noted that there were some bumps in getting this online, but now most installation issues are resolved. On the horizon we will be able to select which questions to use, as well as the dates and times to administer the rating, at same time (should be implemented for this semester). So we will see one email instead of two concerning these tasks.

Dr. Dyer discussed a concern about lower response rates, a problem that was not apparent during the initial semester the new system was implemented (Fall 2019) but seems to be a COVID phenomenon. The Student Ratings Committee is launching an initiative to engage students to convey the importance of hearing from them, in hopes of making sure we bring up the response rates to ensure statistically reliable data for use by personnel committees.

Senator Cronin (Social Work Education) described how he moved student ratings to the beginning of class, and in so doing achieved a much better response rate. Dr. Dyer thanked the senator for his efforts, and noted that current policy actually mandates that ratings will be done at beginning of class.

Senator DeJordy (Management) asked if he could share this supplied report with his department and faculty. Dr. Dyer said this should be shared with all faculty.

Senator Van Camp (Criminology) offered that perhaps we can get students to convince other students as a strategy. Dr. Dyer welcomed the comment and said her committee has already tasked a faculty member to pursue this strategy.

1. New Business.

None

1. APM 113 Policy on Academic Organization and Governance. Second Reading.

Senator Ram (University-wide) inquired if there is a particular goal in mind for making these changes. Dean Hornbuckle (HML) described that she is looking to have two faculty chairs added and an associate dean, changes that will allow a similar structure to that of other CSU libraries. Dr. Baum described that many parallels exist between college and library structure.

Senator Jenkins (Statewide) inquired if will we renumber the foot notes. Chair Holyoke indicated that we would.

Senator DeJordy (Management) asked if there will be any impact on policy or budget. Dr. Baum noted that this has been discussed for over a year and no issues have been identified. Dr. Fu added that there could be a potential budget impact if chairs are given release. Dr. Baum answered that those that those who would be designated chairs are already assigned release in their current roles. A follow up question was asked if these policy changes went through the personnel committee. Dr. Baum said she will take the request to the personnel committee to make sure.

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The Academic Senate adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

The next meeting of the Academic Senate will be March 8, 2021.

Submitted by Approved by

Raymond Hall Thomas Holyoke

Vice Chair Chair

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