THE MINUTES OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE (AS-11)

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO

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Office of the Academic Senate

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March 15, 2021

Members excused: D. Cady, P. De Walt

Members absent: N. Brar, P. Durette, T. Garcia, B. Mason, B. Taylor, J. Moradian Watson

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 3/08/2021

MSC

1. Communications and Announcements:

Interim President Jiménez-Sandoval addressed the Senate with the good news that the vaccination of faculty and staff is going well. He said that the SaveMart Center will not be used as a community vaccination center as was hoped, but that a partnership is being pursued to have a site on campus for student vaccination, and that Vice President Astone is working on this. An initial plan for Fall 2021 will soon be ready for discussion. He also informed the Senate that an in-person component of the Spring 2021 commencement is being explored with more details to be shared soon. He also briefly described that students will soon benefit with funding from the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF). Finally he thanked the staff and faculty on the Alegría Mental Health Task Force for their efforts to date and their collaboration on the video that debuted last week.

Senator Walter (Biology) inquired about the specific nature of the in-person commencement, if it will be college specific, and asked what message senators should take back to their department faculty about it. The President indicated that yes it will be college specific, it will be held in Bulldog Stadium, more details will be announced soon, to please tell faculty colleagues that students really want this, and that we will try to do our best to accommodate their request for an appropriate celebration.

Senator Herrera (Chicano and Latin American Studies) asked for a point of clarification, that our Bulldog Stadium will be used to accommodate commencement level crowds of people. The President answered yes, but at 20% capacity. Senator Herrera expressed concern for staff and faculty, like her, who for safety reasons cannot attend. The President acknowledged that the situation will not allow all to attend but that an effort will be made to allow significant participation.

Interim Provost Fu announced that a workgroup will soon be assembled to address Hyflex classroom use and needs. He noted that the Fall 2021 course schedule posting has been postponed for a week, and that even when it is posted to please treat it as tentative.

Senator Jenkins (Statewide) expressed concern about risky student behavior, and if we can really establish a safe campus. The Provost described that the Hyflex is for those students who can’t attend, but for the rest we will maintain our current high level of janitorial hygiene, and rely on vaccination to reduce risk.

Senator Ram (University-wide) asked if chairs should assume all courses will go on the schedule as in-person, but also assume that this designation will be tentative and that a change in mode to virtual could still happen. Provost said that we should enter all courses with rooms and times, which is our default and that it is easy to move to virtual, but not the other way. He noted that we are awaiting CSU system and state wide guidelines. Senator Ram agreed that rooms and times should remain on the schedule, but asked about if we can designate synchronous v. asynchronous virtual course, so that students can know their options. The Provost told the Senate that we will wait on this decision.

Senator Hernandez (English) asked when students will be able to search for listings. The Provost said the wish list option be available after Spring Break.

Senator Maldonado (Philosophy) pointed out that faculty have previously been told that no faculty will be forced to come on to campus if they do not want to. He asked why we cannot act on that information and assign teaching modes now. The Provost said in essence yes, but we will need to know a firm percentage before making these calls, and the choice of mode (virtual, in-person) will be made at the department level. Senator Maldonado asked if this means that some faculty may need to be reassigned if they wish for virtual mode, in the case that the class they were assigned needs to be taught in-person. The Provost answered that the needs of students and accreditation should be taken into account in such decisions as well.

Senator Ram asked the Provost to please check with the scheduling office on the date on which the schedule would be available to the students, and she indicated that an email she received seems to conflict with what is being said today. The Provost agreed to check on this.

Senator Parra (Accountancy) asked if we need to submit course proposals for courses using hybrid and online modalities. The Provost answered yes it is highly recommended to do so. Senator Parra asked what if a faculty member wants just this Fall to operate in virtual mode, with no plan to move to online teaching permanently. The Provost said he is sympathetic to such anxiety and believes faculty will be accommodated. In addition he noted that we expect to keep a larger portion of courses online after the pandemic is over than before, since we have more trained in this modality, which will open facilities and help to accommodate more students given our limited classroom facilities. He hopes there is a sweet spot we may be able to optimize for. However, he also reiterated the importance of having students on campus for a sense of belonging and community, related to increasing retention.

Senator Miele (Finance and Business Law) asked if a survey is still going out to faculty about these matters. The Provost said yes and that it was going to go out today, but that we realized the survey was already outdated given new CDC and vaccination circumstances. The survey will still go out once we make sure that it will gather data that will help us.

Senator Walter (Biology) expressed concern for faculty who have innovated with online modalities, and whether a formal faculty process should be put in place to protest if our assigned classroom modality is not our preference. She noted that AVP Baum told us we would not be forced to teach in person and asked if this promise had been revoked. The Provost indicated that he was not sure what “forced” means in this context, and that the best operational modalities should be used. If a faculty objects for health reasons, they will not be coerced to teach in person, and in this area too we are waiting on CSU system-wide guidance. Senator Walter elaborated that student success is paramount, and that her online courses may serve students better than in-person modalities. The Provost also mentioned that federal funds may also have strings attached, and that emergency funds for internet connection and hotspots for students may not remain in the coming months. If some students return to unreliable internet, online modalities may not serve our population with equity.

Senator Jenkins (State wide) described workload issues as a concern, and cited examples increased workload in virtual modalities that have not been addressed by consideration of WTUs assigned or other mechanisms. The Provost said that we will have some draft proposals from Academic Affairs that might use HEERS funds to give some relief. However, he noted that, to put it bluntly, regular state funding levels will not allow such relief. Release time allocations are being explored where he says research time will be prioritized, and he welcomes faculty collaboration on new plans.

1. Consent Calendar
   1. Student Ratings

Dr. Dyer (Chair of Student Rating Committee) described her committee’s work with faulty in Kremen to accommodate their need for student ratings of instruction in Student Teaching classes. To do this they need to add items to the pool to make it clear which “instructor” is being evaluated. The committee proposes uses existing items but replace the terms used to describe the instructor and student, in much the same way that was done when the items were identified in the first place.

No objections. Questions will be added to pool.

1. New Business.

Senator Jenkins (State wide) added a resolution concerning faculty workload (agenda item 11)

1. APM 203 Special Majors for a Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science Degree. Second Reading.

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1. APM 320 Policy on the Composition of Search Committees for Designated Administrative Positions. Second Reading.

Dr. Low (Chair Personnel Committee) briefly discussed what was changed.

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1. APM 241 – Proposed Changes. GE Assessment Subcommittee.

Senator Bryant (speaking as member of this subcommittee) described the change. We simply needed to add to the policy what is already in the syllabus template for GE assessment, the required submission of a signature assignment, to bring policy up to date.

Senator DeJordy (Management) Offered that the language in the policy may want to include a statement to specify this is a GE only requirement.

Senator Pooya (Food Science and Nutrition) expressed concern that different GE courses have different specific requirements depending on the type GE course, and that there is confusion when advising transfer students. She asked if we should include these specifications in this policy. Senator Bryant said it would be impractical to put such specifics in to the policy, and she noted that transfer students are exempt for any GE not taken on campus.

Senator Maldonado (Philosophy) mentioned that students can upload these files at any time after the course is complete. Senator Bryant agreed and noted that sometimes faculty can help by giving students access to expired courses on Canvas to allow students to reobtain lost or unsaved work to submit.

1. APM 125 – Policy on Department Chairs.

David Low (Chair Personnel Committee) requested to withdraw this policy change request for now. After consultation with the Council of Chairs, the Personnel Committee will discuss further before bringing to the floor of the Senate.

1. APM 335 – Policy on Periodic Review of Academic Administrators.

Dr. Low (Chair Personnel Committee) described how this change will require Deans to be assessed more frequently.

1. Resolution on Faculty Workload

Senator Jenkins (State wide) briefly described the resolution and its origin from the state wide committees.

The Academic Senate adjourned at 5:14 p.m.

The next meeting of the Academic Senate will be March 22, 2021.

Submitted by Approved by

Raymond Hall Thomas Holyoke

Vice Chair Chair

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