THE MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO

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February 7, 2022

Members present: Raymond Hall (Chair), Tinneke Van Camp (Vice Chair), Rich DeJordy (At-Large), Kathleen Dyer (Universitywide), Xuanning Fu (Interim Provost), D’Aungillique Jackson (ASI Executive President), Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval (President), Jennifer Miele (At-Large), Rebecca Raya-Fernandez (At-Large), Susan Schlievert (Statewide)

Members excused:

Guests: Venita Baker (Academic Senate), Bernadette Muscat (Dean of Undergraduate Studies), Jim Schmidtke (Interim AVP Academic Affairs), Laura Yager (Registrar’s Office)

The meeting was called to order by Chair Hall at 3:02pm on Zoom.

1. Approval of the Agenda.

MSC

1. Approval of the Minutes 01.24.22.

MSC

1. Approval of the Minutes 01.31.22.

Correction: Dr. Kevin Ayotte is in the College of Arts and Humanities, not in Arts and Design

Minutes as amended: MSC

1. Communications and Announcements.

Communications from the President:

There will be a stock of rapid tests on campus. Self-tests will be made available to everyone on campus. The mask mandate has been upgraded; surgical and KN95 masks are required this semester. These types of masks are also being made available.

The Governor’s proposed budget includes 50 million for four CSU farms. There is a strong partnership with other CSUs to maximize this budget and advocate for sustainability and water use within the four farms to promote the future of agriculture in California.

The President has finished community listening groups and will be holding employee listening groups.

The library research into Henry Madden is moving forward. The task force is expected to produce a report on April 18.

The searches for a permanent Provost and VP for Student Affairs are underway.

Last Friday, USA Today published an article about complaints of harassment against former Fresno State VP for Student Affairs Lamas and how this was poorly dealt with under former President Castro. The President met with staff at Student Affairs and they expressed strong emotions about what happened during the former VP for Student Affairs’ tenure and the response to complaints about this behavior. Students have demonstrated on campus over the weekend. The President will be bringing in an outside consultant and establish a task force. He also sent a message today in Campus News, and an additional video message will be distributed tomorrow.

*Questions for the President:*

**Senator Raya-Fernandez** added that she was in attendance at the meeting with Student Affairs over the weekend and confirmed that this was a delicate meeting. She commended President Jiménez-Sandoval for being sensitive and compassionate.

**Senator DeJordy** asked whether there will be interaction between the new task force that will be established in the wake of what happened and the search committee for a new permanent VP for Student Affairs.

**President Jiménez-Sandoval** confirmed that they will affect each other. The search will now not only have to emphasize a concern for facilitating a sense of belonging for students, but also nurturing trust within the Student Affairs team. Both the team and our students are hurting.

**Senator Dyer** wanted to know how people will be appointed to this task force.

**President Jiménez-Sandoval** will ask the Executive Committee to appoint faculty and will ask ASI to appoint a student representative. The task force will also include staff. The aim of the task force is to empower the entire campus community.

**Senator Schlievert** wondered what the impetus was for the USA Today article to come out now.

**President Jiménez-Sandoval** responded that the same reporter had also already disclosed Title IX issues at San Jose State.

**ASI President Jackson** commended President Jiménez-Sandoval on his leadership and for his understanding, and expressed confidence in how this is being taken forward.

Communications from the Provost:

Provost Fu will provide a follow-up to the President’s video message in the wake of the USA Today article with a message to the faculty, in which the importance of maintaining a culture of mutual respect will be communicated. He also mentioned that the entire campus community should be a part in the steps that will be taken in response to this.

Today is the first day back to in-person instruction after having started the semester virtually due to the Omicron variant. The Provost has provided guidelines to the campus for the cases in which faculty need a course modality change. The process overall has gone smoothly and accommodations were provided where needed.

The provost held a virtual office hour with JCAST last Friday and will be holding one in the Craig School of Business next Friday. The virtual office hours are an opportunity to connect with faculty.

*Questions for the Provost:*

**Senator DeJordy** enquired about the estimated time within which faculty who requested course modality accommodations would get a response.

**Provost Fu** responded that the goal is to have the requests settled by the end of this week. He only received a few requests and is working with HR to quickly process them. They are adopting a fair and equitable approach across the campus but are also taking individual situations into consideration.

Presentation: Course Drop/Withdraw Process, Laura Yager and Dean Muscat

Dean of Undergraduate Studies Muscat and Laura Yager (Registrar’s Office) presented remedies for barriers and challenges for students who want to drop a course or withdraw from all of their courses.

**Yager** explained that the Registrar’s Office has been working with Technology Services to develop an automated drop and withdraw process, to be included in PeopleSoft and to replace the paper form that students have to get signed by multiple people.

**Chair Hall** mentioned that this is about turning this process into an online, automated process. In addition, the proposed new process would require less signatures and, hence, less people students have to disclose the compelling reasons for dropping a course or courses to. The Senate will have to have a look at the policy in order to match it to the proposed process and consider who needs to sign and, hence, know about a student’s compelling reasons to drop.

**Yager** added that census date for spring is February 16. The online process could be up and running by February 14.

**Yager** went over the proposed new process, aligned with the various drop deadlines in the policy:

Through the 19th day of instruction, students can drop without permission, and no W grade will be recorded. From the 20th day of instruction through before the last three weeks of instruction, approval would be required from the Department Chair. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies or Dean of Graduate Studies would receive an automated appeal in case the Chair denies a drop request. Currently, appeals of denial by a Department Chair go the College or School Dean; in the new process, this is no longer the case. Overall, there would be less exposure of a student’s drop reason and potential documentation of it. This was a concern for students. This process also allows for automated emails to be generated. The course instructor and student would be notified of the response to the request automatically once the request is processed by the Registrar.

**Senator Schlievert** wanted to know why people have denied these requests in the past.

**Dean Muscat** responded that these are typically denied by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies when the reason for dropping is not compelling beyond the student’s control, or when there is no documentation, in which case she makes every attempt to have the student try and get documentation before making a decision to approve or deny.

**Senator DeJordy** asked whether there is also a requirement that students are passing the course they wish to drop.

**Chair Hall** reminded the committee that that is a requirement for an Incomplete grade (two thirds of assignments completed with a passing grade), but not for dropping a course. For dropping a course, a student needs to have a serious and compelling reason beyond the student’s control.

**Senator Dyer** sought clarification on when the Dean of Undergraduate Studies or Dean of Graduate Studies, in the new process, would get to see requests submitted prior to the last three weeks before the end of the semester.

**Yager** clarified that in the first 80 percent of the term that would be the case if the request is denied by the Department Chair. Requests submitted in the last three weeks of instruction always go to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies or Dean of Graduate Studies.

**Senator Dyer** appreciates this change because the Dean of Undergraduate Studies or Dean of Graduate Studies can see whether something can be done to help those students who have not documented their request, which may have been the reason a Chair denied it.

**Senator Raya-Fernandez** mentioned that instructors may have more insight into a student’s situation through their interactions with them. In the proposed process, a request would go to the Department Chair to sign, not to the instructor. Will the Chair have enough knowledge about the student’s circumstances?

**Chair Hall** added that this change to the process would require a policy change as well.

**Dean Muscat** responded that the vast majority of these requests are approved. It was also noted that students who do have documentation or a reason listed currently have multiple people looking at this, and there is an interest in minimizing the number of people who know about a student’s private matters. That is also why it is proposed here to drop signatures from College Deans; when a student is taking courses in multiple colleges, and is dropping all of their courses, various Deans get insight into their private matters. Students have indicated that they are concerned about having to disclose very private information to so many different people. Some of their circumstances are quite traumatic. Dean Muscat added, however, that there is nothing stopping a Department Chair from reaching out to the course instructor to ask about the student if their drop reason is vague or when there is no documentation.

**Senator Raya-Fernandez** suggests to make Department Chairs aware of this possibility.

**Chair Hall** noted that with the new automated process, a student initiating the process cannot seem to submit the drop request without attaching documentation.

**Yager** confirmed this.

**Yager** continued the overview of the proposed online process. For instance, students will be able to access a drop-down menu to select which one or ones of their courses they want to withdraw from, and will be blocked from requesting more than the 18 units allowed to drop. They will also see a series of acknowledgments to review, *e.g.* about potentially loosing catalogue rights, informing them what a withdrawal means and how to enroll again, specific acknowledgements for veterans and athletes etc. They can choose from a variety of categories of the reason to drop and there is a textbox for them to provide more justification. They will then be required to attach documentation. Once submitted, they will see a screen confirming that the request was submitted. They can go back to the request at any time to see if it is pending or processed, or to cancel it. Once submitted, the Department Chair will get an email, one for each course for which a drop is requested if a student wants to drop multiple classes within a Department. It was also discussed whether to request a response from Chairs within 72 hours, to allow for a timely response to the student.

During the first 80 per cent of the semester, only denials would go to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies or Dean of Graduate Studies; in the last 20 per cent all the requests go to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies or Dean of Graduate Studies.

**Senator DeJordy** suggested to add a button in the online form for the Chair to notify the instructor of a request to drop their course. Students might be anxious about their course grade, and the benefit of having the instructor involved in the drop process allows the instructor to reassure the student that they are actually doing OK in their course, something a Chair would not be able to do. Students can be given make-up opportunities if they are experiencing a crisis that motivates them to request a drop, potentially preventing them from having to drop.

**Chair Hall** asked how many requests are generally denied.

**Dean Muscat** mentioned that very few denials come through to her. Her concern is that people just approve and do not look at the reason for requesting a drop, which they should do. Conversations should happen with students request a drop. She also added that when Chairs are involved, they can identify potential patterns or problems in certain courses. Chairs can also reach out to instructors before making a decision based on the reason and documentation given.

**Chair Hall** asked how many drop requests are submitted each semester.

**Dean Muscat** responded that last semester about 450 requests were received for a full withdrawal from the semester, and on average about 1,200 course withdrawals are received per semester. She added that she is working with advising centers to offer resources when drop requests are submitted to make sure the students are OK and have a clean pathway to coming back.

**Chair Hall** then asked whether, in the online process, a drop request will still trigger outreach to students, because they are dropping for a serious reason.

**Dean Muscat** confirmed that would be the case.

**Senator Schlievert** added that students struggle with tracking down their instructors for signatures. She proposed, however, to still require an instructor to sign off, but to give them a time limit to do so, and only if they fail to do so, will the request go to the Department Chair.

**Chair Hall** asked Yager and Dean Muscat to prepare a redlined version of the APM reflecting the required changes to the policy for debate in the Senate. He will look into potentially making this a priority on the Senate agenda. The amended APM will be treated as a first reading item.

**Chair Hall** will run the amended APM by AP&P as well.

**ASI President Jackson** supported the decision to get Senate approval on this. She added that asking for documentation up front is a phenomenal move and is good for students. She expressed full confidence in the compassion displayed by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies or Dean of Graduate Studies, but added that instructors might have a better insight into an individual student’s circumstances, and that they could help explain why a student wants to drop. But if faculty agree that they do not need to be a part of it, she would understand that too.

**Senator Raya-Fernandez** added that we might want to consider allowing an instructor to include comments on the drop request form in order to assist the student.

**Senator Dyer** mentioned that the current policy on dropping all classes requires consultation and financial aid conversation. Has that disappeared in the newly proposed process?

**Yager** responded that that is indeed the case.

**Action Items**

1. Email dated January 24, 2022, from Laura Yager, University Registrar, to Raymond Hall, Chair of the Academic Senate, re: Course Drop/Withdraw Process. Email has been received.

Suggestion: plan in action

1. Memo dated February 3, 2022, from James Mullooly, Chair of the Academic Policy and Planning Committee to Raymond Hall, Chair of the Academic Senate, re: APM 232 (Policy on Student Absences). Memo has been received.

Suggestion: on Executive Committee agenda

1. Memo dated February 3, 2022, from James Mullooly, Chair of the Academic Policy and Planning Committee to Raymond Hall, Chair of the Academic Senate, re: APM 225 (Teacher Education). Memo has been received.

Suggestion: on Executive Committee agenda

1. Email dated February 7, 2022, from Jim Schmidtke, Interim Associate Vice President of Faculty Affairs to Raymond Hall, Chair of the Academic Senate, re: APM 125 Policy on Department Chairs. Email has been received.

Suggestion: on Executive Committee agenda

1. New Business.

**Senator Miele** wanted to know whether APM 206 is being amended and where that process is at.

**Senator Dyer** mentioned that AP&P is working on APM 206.

**Chair Hall** will invite the Chair of AP&P to give an update to the Executive Committee.

1. APM 360 Policy on Sabbatical and Difference-in-pay (DIP) Leaves – proposed changes.

**Interim AVP for Faculty Affairs Schmidtke** explained that during the Chancellor audit it was raised that reports were not being turned in. According to the current policy, sabbatical reports are due ten weeks after the conclusion of a sabbatical leave. Hence, reports on fall sabbaticals are due end of February, and reports for spring sabbaticals are due end of July, when faculty are not on contract. He, therefore, recommended to suspend the deadline for sabbatical reports to the end of the semester following the semester in which a sabbatical leave was taken.

*Suggestion: Send amended APM to senate floor*

*The committee agreed.*

1. Executive Session – Provost Awards Committee.

The Executive Committee unanimously agreed to nominate the following faculty to serve on the Provost Awards Committee:

Paul Price (College of Science and Mathematics)

Katie Dyer (College of Social Sciences)

Andrew Fiala (College of Arts and Humanities)

Jen Miele (Craig School of Business)

Beth Weinman (College of Science and Mathematics)

Meeting extended.

The Executive Committee discussed the possibility of inviting senators with an expertise in victim advocacy to write a response to the revelation of sexual harassment on our campus.

ASI President Jackson referred to the statement ASI already put out.

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The Senate Executive Committee adjourned at 5:25 pm.

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be held on February 28 via Zoom.

Submitted by: Approved by:

Tinneke Van Camp Raymond Hall

Vice Chair Chair

Academic Senate Academic Senate