

Washington University Faculty Senate

December 6, 2006

1. The meeting was called to order at 4:04.
2. The minutes of the May, 2006 meeting were approved.

3. The chancellor's report

It has been a fantastic fall. The Danforth Campus was dedicated on September 17th and celebrated with the lecture series "A Higher Sense of Purpose" with former chancellor William Danforth, former senator Jack Danforth and former CEO Roy Vagelos. More events are already scheduled for the spring.

The Sam Fox School of Design and Visual Arts now has new facilities and a new leadership team in place. Carmen Colangelo (Sam Fox School) and Bruce Lindsey (Architecture) join Jeff Pike (Art) and Sabine Eckmann (Curator/director). Steinberg Hall will be renovated over the next nine months.

The first group of McDonnell Academy Scholars began this fall with seventeen scholars from twelve different institutions. In the spring the university will host its first official McDonnell Academy-related symposium: "Energy and the Environment." The president (or equivalent) of each participating institution will be invited to the annual conference that will be a major component of the initiative. Jim Wertsch is director of the academy.

Now that most of the objectives of Project 21 have been realized, the Plan for Excellence, the university's next major planning process, has been launched with participation from the national councils and the trustees and will continue with input from each school and department. John McDonnell will chair the trustees' steering committee.

The university center is slated for completion in Fall 2008, as is the new social sciences and law building. The parking garage on the northwest corner of the Danforth Campus will be completed by the end of this month.

4. The chair's report.

The Senate Council has met four times since the last faculty senate meeting, three this semester. The Benefits Committee and Ralph Thaman from facilities have presented reports. Mr. Thaman invites comments from all faculty regarding the facilities. The council will continue to invite standing committee reports in the spring, beginning with the Library and Safety Committees. The policies on administrative suspension and demonstrations and disturbance were also presented to the council. (See attached and below.)

Following the revisions in the constitution, the council has appointed the executive committee: Mark Rollins, chair, Nancy E. Berg, Susan Appleton, Pamela Woodard.

Administrative Suspension:

Executive Vice Provost Ed Macias and the Board of Trustees implemented the policy on administrative suspension after substantial input from the Senate Council. The writing of the policy began in response from a request by the ECFS chair Dan Schuster for clarification and articulation of guidelines. Then Faculty Senate Council Chair, Linda Pike, appointed the committee: Mark Rollins, Dan Schuster, Kathy Goldwasser, Glen Stone (then chair of Faculty Council). After researching existing policies, they drafted the policy. It was then revised by the Office of the General Counsel and presented to the Senate Council where it was voted unanimously to recommend that the executive vice provost implement the policy.

Ed Macias implemented it with a minor change (allowing the administrator two working days rather than one to provide the suspended member with the document required by the policy). The committee began with the fact that administrative suspension was a preexisting practice. The policy was not intended to create new administrative powers. The document underscores that the action of administrative suspension is to be taken with care and that there be subsequent due process. It articulates the specific conditions for the suspension, and requires that there be a written notice that specifies the charge against the faculty member. The faculty member could appeal the charge to the Advisory Committee of the Senate Council.

AAUP members, who could not be in attendance, contacted the chair and asked that their concerns be voiced. They felt that the language of the policy should reflect a balance between the administrator's responsibility and protection for the faculty. Furthermore, that there be definite limits of the suspension and that the faculty member continues to get paid during the suspension.

In the discussion following the report a number of concerns were voiced:

There was concern that the new policy permits the curtailment of academic freedom without any process at all. If the faculty's actions are against criminal or civil law there exist other measures. Even with the means of redress, an action such as administrative suspension cannot be fully undone as relationships and reputations have already been compromised. At the minimum, the policy should be modified to create a rapidly convenable committee to make the determination that suspension is the appropriate response, and that the appeal process be made less cumbersome and timelier.

The first sentence of the policy was seen as too vague, and should be replaced by a list. There are federal and local laws that would deal with charges of sexual harassment.

There were concerns regarding the process by which the policy was created and implemented without more faculty input and a vote from the full faculty. In response it was pointed out that since this policy does not change the tenure document and thus is not subject to a faculty vote.

Faculty present at the meeting and others through e-mail were troubled that the document expanded administrative powers. It was pointed out that actions of administrative suspension have already been undertaken, and that this power is already in place. Until this policy, there were no guidelines, restrictions or apparent faculty protections.

Without compromising confidentiality, past cases were referred to in which immediate action was seen as justified because there was imminent risk of records being destroyed, or in another matter, patient safety was threatened.

Neither the chancellor nor the executive vice chancellor could recall cases of administrative suspension on the Danforth Campus, nor was it clear that the top administrators knew the most recent cases in the medical school that had been brought to the attention of the chair of the ECFC. This policy would counter the secrecy and raise the accountability of the administrator.

A number of hypothetical scenarios were described in attempts to delineate the parameters of the policy, and to challenge its necessity.

Faculty suggested amendments that would limit administrative suspension to situations in which no other existing measures would suffice, and only until the hearing. Input from a larger body of the faculty was urged.

It was agreed that a preamble offering a few examples for illustration and explaining the need for such urgency would help put the policy in context. Cases of administrative suspension should be limited to when not to take action could cause harm to others, to situations in which there was credible imminent threat. The preamble should be drafted as quickly as possible so that the policy can be included in the current revision of the faculty handbook due to go to press shortly.

Policy on demonstrations and disruption

The Board of Trustees has adopted the new policy on demonstrations and disturbance. John Klein and Don Strom presented the policy in draft form to a number of groups, including the Faculty Senate and the Student Senate, and revised it accordingly. The policy explicitly affirms the university's commitment to academic freedom and freedom of speech. There is a commitment to communicate the policy at the beginning of 2007.

There was some concern among the faculty present that the policy sounds more stringent than what we have had, and that disruptions, obstructions are a time honored practice through which we have worked out social and political issues.

5. Other business

It was suggested that the location of the meetings of the full Faculty Senate alternate between the Danforth and Medical School Campuses.

Having reached a consensus that this had been the liveliest Faculty Senate meeting in many, the meeting was adjourned at 5:31.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy E. Berg, secretary