THE MINUTES OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO

5200 N. Barton Ave ML 34

Fresno, California 93740-8014

Office of the Academic Senate FAX: 278-5745

TEL: 278-2743 (AS-7)

December 5, 2016

Members excused: A. Alexandrou, O. Benavides, M. Botwin, P. Garcia, H. L. Kensinger, Marshall, A. Mckeith, W. Skuban

Members absent: B. Buckner, A. Canton, L. Cornelio, B. Dermugrdechian, J. Giglio, M. Golden, R. Hall, L. Williams, T. Wilson

The Academic Senate was called to order by Chair Ayotte at 4:06pm in HML 2206.

1. Approval of the agenda

MSC approving the agenda

1. Approval of the Minutes of November 21, 2016

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1. Communications and announcements
   1. Provost Zelezny

Reported that she recently attended a meeting of CSU provosts where they talked about the Statewide Senate’s Quantitative Reasoning Report, which we have already distributed to the faculty for feedback. A few faculty members are expressing some discomfort with the report’s content, as well as the timing of the request for feedback because an unofficial version of the report was released earlier in the year. Faculty comments will come to Vice Chair Holyoke, who will summarize them and pass them on to the Provost, who will combine them with comments from the administration and send it all on to the Statewide Senate. The Provost also noted that the Statewide Senate recently released a report on Ethnic Studies that we also need to take a look at.

The California State Department of Finance is going to be visiting Fresno State in the spring as part of a tour of all CSU campuses. They may have some tough questions for us regarding the four-year graduation rate goals set by the governor.

The Provost thanked us for the feedback she received on the Academic Affairs Strategic Plan. She will be having a kick-off meeting with the task force leaders before the semester is over.

Senator Hall (Physics) asked for an update on the search for a Dean of the College of Science and Math. The Provost said she is negotiating hard with a candidate right now.

* 1. Chair Ayotte

Noted that we have followed the correct procedure in regards to distributing the Statewide Senate’s Quantitative Reasoning Report. He also felt that senate members may end up talking to the staff from the Department of Finance. He has spoken with other senate chairs who have already been through this, and they did not like being pushed by Finance on four-year graduation rates, so we need to be ready.

* 1. Senator Raya-Fernandez (At-large)

Explained a proposed change in the policy at the Student Health and Counseling Center regarding the issuing of letters allowing students to withdraw from classes for medical or counseling reasons. In the past students have been coming at the last moment to request such letters, but now they will only be given letters if the Center already has been seeing them. Also, there will be a five day turn-around period for the letters rather than giving them out on the same day, so students should not come for these letters at the last minute.

The new policy will be placed on the Center’s website, and she will double check with the Registrar’s Office to make sure that this change does not interfere with any of the Registrar’s policies regarding student registration and withdrawal from classes. A message outlining the change will be sent to the faculty.

* 1. Tim Ryan (ASI)

Noted that the ASI Student Senate passed the same resolution on diversity that the Academic Senate passed at its last meeting.

* 1. Presentation by the President’s Commission on Human Relations and Equality on the Campus Climate Survey

Dean Hironaka-Juteau (Health and Human Services), AVP Angel Sanchez (Office of Institutional Effectiveness), and Dr. Francine Oputa presented an overview of the survey results available on OIE’s website. Bottom line from the survey last spring is that our students are fairly comfortable at Fresno State interacting with faculty, staff, and other students. Students, however, are not aware of many of the services available to them. Faculty and staff will be surveyed next spring, and then students again in the spring after that.

Senator Tawfik (Civil and Geomatics Engineering) noted that he could not log into OIE’s webpage to view the survey results. AVP Sanchez said that it was not yet publicly available, but if anybody wanted access they should email him and ask.

Senator Raheem (Counselor Education and Rehabilitation) asked why buildings on our campus are not named for prominent Hispanic leaders. Nobody knew. He asked if there were places students could go to feel comfortable speaking their own languages? No, though AVP Sanchez said he felt everyone seemed comfortable speaking their own languages all over the campus. Senator Raheem also expressed concern that with only 21 African American students answering the survey, their concerns might be getting drowned out in the aggregated data. Dr. Oputa showed how one could drill down into the available data to learn more about how particular groups responded.

1. New business – There was no new business for the Academic Senate
2. Task Force on Faculty Workload

Chair Ayotte noted that we need two senators for the task force. Senators can nominate others or self-nominate. Senator Forcags (Mathematics) nominated himself. Senator Maldonado (Philosophy) argued that confirmation of nominations should be postponed until the spring.

MSC tabling nominations until the first spring meeting of the Academic Senate.

1. APM 215 – GE Policy. Second reading.

Melissa Jordine (Director of Assessment) and Vince Biondo (GE Committee Chair) continued their presentation of the proposed changes in GE policy.

Senator Henson (English) asked several clarifying questions regarding the obligation on students, especially in terms of graduation and whether the reflections are actually required. The answers were that uploading the assessment assignments is a graduation requirement, but the reflections may be optional. Somehow the proposed GE Assessment Committee would work out issues dealing with transfer students and students coming in with AP credits. Students may also file petitions requesting exemptions from some submission requirements. Senator Henson pointed out that students could submit poorly done work and still meet the requirements, so was this really a fair means of assessment? Chair Biondo felt most students would take this seriously. Finally, Senator Henson felt this would only work if faculty continually tell students they need to submit assignments to their eportfolio. Dr. Jordine said students would be trained during orientation regarding the importance of submitting material and would continually be told during their time at Fresno State.

Senator Bryant (Political Science) asked if assessment assignments were going to be tied to student grades, and how students would know what the course objectives to be met actually are? No, assessment must be kept separate from grades, and faculty would have to clearly state the course objectives for the assessment assignments.

Senator Wu (Construction Management) argued that Pathbright is a confusing system to use, and even to access. Dr. Jordine said these problems are being solved.

Senator Kim (Economics) said the Economics faculty felt that assessment might be hard because assignments fulfilling objectives may vary across classes. Dr. Jordine responded that since the learning objectives have to be the same for the same courses, the assignments should be similar enough for the assessment committee to evaluate them all. She also noted that a specific form of assignment is beyond the committee’s power to mandate.

Senator Müller (Biology) noted that we are changing GE assessment because this is what WASC wants us to do. Does this meet their demands? Yes, it seems to. Senator Fulop (Linguistics) argued that this new system really will help assess GE and should also deal with the problem of faculty members not wanting to comply with GE requirements.

Senator Maldonado (Philosophy) argued that requiring students to upload assignments for assessment as a graduation requirement is inconsistent with the philosophy that students should be granted degrees based solely on their course work performance and grades. Dr. Jordine argued that the reflections should help students think about what they have learned and thus be valuable to them. Senator Maldonado disagreed with that. Chair Biondo said that no student would be denied the right to graduate based on whether he or she had or had not uploaded all of their assignments.

Senator Ram (University-wide) reiterated Senator Henson’s concerns that students would be comfortable uploading bad assignments just to comply with requirements, and that faculty would need to indicate clearly in their syllabi what students would need to do and how to do it. She also pointed out that students frequently fail to turn in assignments for class, so they may not do it at the right time for assessment either, and thus be in a position where a couple of years later they have to create an assignment and will not know how to write it. Dr. Jordine said that if there was a real problem, students could petition for an exemption. Senator Ram asked how online classes could be assessed if the assignments were discussion-board posts. Dr. Jordine said the student could just cut-and-paste material from the discussion board into a word document for uploading.

The Academic Senate adjourned at 5:16pm.

The next meeting of the Academic Senate will be on January 30, 2017.

Submitted by Approved by

Thomas Holyoke Kevin Ayotte

Vice Chair Chair

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