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-11)

March 11, 2019

Members excused: L. Burger, D. Cady, B. DerMugrdechian, D. Lewis, A.M. Tawfik

Members absent: P. Adams, T. Botts, M. Golden, D. Wack

The Academic Senate was called to order by Chair Holyoke at 4:02 p.m. in HML 2206.

1. Approval of the agenda

MSC approving the agenda

1. Approval of the Minutes of February 25, 2019

MSC approving the Minutes of February 25, 2019

1. Communications and announcements
   1. Dr. Janell Morillo

Dr. Morillo announced the upcoming campaign for a student fee increase that will support the Student Health and Counseling Center. If the fee is not increased, by Fall 2020 expenses will exceed current funding. Senator Alexandrou (Industrial Technology) asked how great the fee increase will be. Dr. Morillo stated the fee is currently $226 a year and would increase to $642 a year if the proposal is approved. Senator Kensinger (Women’s Studies) asked for clarification as to students will get to vote on this fee increase. Dr. Morillo confirmed that this increase would go through the alternative method for increasing fees, which involves consultation rather than a student referendum. However, students have been consulted as part of the process. Senator Kensinger asked why the state is not providing more funding for these state-mandated services. Dr. Morillo stated that the mandatory fee structure is due to an executive order from the CSU.   
  
Senator Gillewicz (English) asked why expenses are projected to increase at the Student Health and Counseling Center in the coming years. Dr. Morillo stated that the Center must cover both the salaries and benefits for staff members, which is increasing expenses. Senator Gillewicz suggested that the campus statewide senators address this issue at a future meeting of the Statewide Senate.   
  
Senator Cronin (Social Work) asked how much longer a student referendum would take rather than the proposed course of action. Dr. Morillo stated that it would likely take longer, and if it did not pass services would have to be cut. Senator Singh (Physical Therapy) asked how much cheaper the Health Center is for students versus private insurance. Dr. Morillo stated that she did not have a specific number, but another benefit is the decreased waiting time for visits. Senator Raya Fernandez (Student Services Prof -AR) stated that the Center provides critical services to students, and some students choose to use the Center instead of private insurance.

* 1. Student Involvement

Two representatives of Student Involvement were introduced to inform senators about the Bulldog Leadership Contest on March 30.

* 1. Chair Holyoke  
       
     Chair Holyoke reminded Senators about the upcoming Provost search open fora. Senator Hammons (Child, Family & Consumer Sciences) asked how faculty feedback is taken into account during the search process. Chair Holyoke stated that all faculty forms that are filled out will be reviewed by the search committee and taken into account.

1. New business

Senator Bryant (University-wide) proposed a resolution regarding proposed changes to General Education at the CSU level. The item was added to the bottom of the agenda by unanimous consent.

1. Student Ratings.  
     
   Chair Holyoke reminded Senators that the choice before the senate today is whether whichever vendor is chosen will be asked to use their own battery of questions, or whether the campus will provide questions and the vendor will merely process the results. No vote between vendors will be made.  
     
   Senator Alexandrou (Industrial Technology) made a point of order stating that senators should be allowed to consult their departments prior to a final vote being taken. Chair Holyoke stated that the point was well taken, but the expectation is that senators have already had an opportunity to consult their departments. David Low (Personnel Committee) was recognized to introduce a statement from the Committee regarding the discussion. The letter read as follows:

“The University Personnel Committee wishes to remind the Academic Senate of the importance of valid and reliable assessment instruments, those that contain valid and reliable questions. These instruments, used to assess student ratings, are critical in the overall assess of teaching effectiveness as noted in APM 322 – Policy on Teaching Effectiveness. APM 322 II.B “Departments shall select questions having demonstrated reliability and validity from a campus-wide pool approved by the Academic Senate and Provost.” The impact of these instruments are most relevant to tenure-track faculty and lecturers, in particular. These two groups are most venerable to poor instruments. New lecturers might be terminated or given a significantly reduced reduce workload if they receive poor ‘student ratings’. Junior faculty could be faced with additional reviews from colleagues based on these invalid and unreliable results. Tenure denial will be easily grieved, and reversed with the use of unreliable rating instruments. Additionally, departments would be faced with tenuring poorly performing faculty if results were falsely positive.

While both options appear acceptable at this moment, we strongly believe that developing a pool of reliable and valid questions by next Fall semester is not possible, as reliability and validity require several years of data for proper assessment. We hope that the Senate acts to protect both our lecturers and junior faculty from invalid and unreliable ratings instruments.”

Chair Dyer (Student Ratings Internal Option Task Force) was recognized to make a presentation regarding the evaluation option in which the campus would produce its own questions. *[The full PowerPoint presentation is available from the Vice Chair.]*  
  
Midway through the presentation, Senator Hooshmandrad (Music) asked how each item would actually be chosen by faculty. Chair Dyer stated that they would be chosen by faculty or administrative assistants. Senator Wilson (Computer Science) asked whether individual faculty would be able to choose their questions. Chair Dyer stated that the APM requires this to be done at the departmental level. Senator Ram (University-wide) asked for clarification that each item had been pulled from an existing question bank and cannot be changed. Chair Dyer stated that generally this is true, though a few items had been changed in the proposal for clarity or to make them apply in multiple scenarios.   
  
Senator Gillewicz (English) asked whether it would be better to line up the Likert scale on evaluations from positive to negative, rather than vice-versa. Chair Dyer stated that there is research on the topic, but the most important aspect is validity. Senator Kim (Economics) asked whether departments could make their own additional questions since they would be able to choose their own forms. Chair Dyer stated that this would be possible, but those items would not be counted toward a final score to make the evaluations comparable.   
  
Following the presentation, Senator Kensinger thanked the committee for its work. In addition, the Senator asked about the process for adding new questions, and whether there would be an approval process for new questions. Chair Dyer answered that this would be done by the committee proposed in the presentation. Senator Hooshmandrad asked for clarification as to how the proposed form would physically look. Chair Dyer stated that the final design would be done by the vendor. In addition, there would be a section for comments. Senator Sun (Viticulture & Enology) asked where there would be a cost difference between the proposals. Chair Dyer stated that she does not know. Senator Ram (University-wide) asked whether there are any questions in the proposal about student behavior, such as whether the respondent frequently attends class. Chair Dyer answered that this could be explored. Senator Ram asked whether there would be a “don’t know” option that would effectively zero-weight the question. Senator Bryant stated that generally those questions are just left blank by the respondent. Chair Dyer stated that this is generally not done because many respondents choose that option.   
  
Senator Kim (Economics) asked to see the question set once again. The Senator then asked whether the proposed question about assignments being returned in a timely manner is appropriate given the variety of assignments that are sometimes given. Chair Dyer stated that faculty may be able to choose an alternative. Senator Kim then stated that the question about connecting content to future work might harm evaluations in theory-heavy courses. Chair Dyer stated again that in chose classes another option might be chosen.

Senator Bohlin (Curriculum & Instruction) asked whether some questions might be changed for online courses. Chair Dyer stated that other optional questions might be created for online courses.   
  
Chair Holyoke asked for an extension to 5:30. The senate agreed.  
  
Senator Dangi (Geography and City and Regional Planning) asked for the range of the proposed Likert scale. Chair Dyer confirmed that it would be from 1-5. The Senator asked how customizable the questions would be. Chair Dyer stated that the form would be customizable at the department level. Senator Hooshmandrad asked whether a question could be removed entirely. Chair Dyer stated that the questions could be changed and there would be options within each general category of what is being evaluated.   
  
Senator Alexandrou (Industrial Technology) cited APM 322 to argue that the questions used on any instrument should have already been tested for reliability and validity by the time they are used. Chair Dyer replied that if an item was found to not demonstrate reliability it would be removed from the possible options, and all new items would have to be approved. Senator Alexandrou asked whether testing would be done on every question in the pool. Chair Dyer stated that the remaining items would be evaluated by subsets of students this coming May.   
  
Senator Kim (Economics) stated that she was concerned that one vendor had not shown its questions. Chair Holyoke agreed.  
  
Senator Cronin (Social Work) spoke in favor of the general proposal due to the ability to tailor the questions to the campus’ specific student population.  
  
Senator Kensinger asked the Provost whether it would be possible to convene and support a committee that would oversee monitoring this process. The Provost replied that the administration would provide as much support as possible.   
  
Senator Lone (Agribusiness) asked what research had been done by the source universities as to the reliability and the validity of the questions that had been chosen. Chair Dyer stated that the entire instrument would be tested, not individual questions.  
  
Senator Botwin (Psychology) asked what would happen if the reliability and validity testing simply did not succeed later this semester. Chair Holyoke stated that presumably either of the vendors could step in.   
  
Chair Holyoke adjourned the senate with an exhortation that a vote would need to be held. In the meantime, Senators should consult with their departments.

The Academic Senate adjourned at 5:29 p.m. The next meeting of the Academic Senate will be on Monday, March 18, 2019.

Submitted by Approved by

Bradley Hart Thomas Holyoke

Vice Chair Chair

Academic Senate Academic Senate