

Governance Council

Friday, December 10, 2010

3:00 PM

UNH 300

Susanna Fessler, Chair

Minutes

Present: Tom Bessette, Nan Carroll, Liang Chu, Jane Domaracki, Nicholas Fahrenkopf, Susanna Fessler, Andi Lyons, John Pipkin, Donna Scanlon, Laura Schultz, Joette Stefl-Mabry, Daniel White

Guests: William Doane, Robert Pruzek, Richard Matyi

The meeting convened at 3:01 pm.

CHAIR'S REPORT BY SUSANNA FESSLER

Chair Fessler reported that the Charter amendment regarding Chair of CPCA was reviewed and discussed at the last meeting of the Senate Executive Committee. SEC members approved moving the amendment forward to the Senate for discussion only with the expectation it will be voted on next spring. The Chair received a friendly amendment to include full librarians in addition to full professors as possible chairs of the council. She expressed doubt about its chances of being accepted by the Senate as there has been a good deal of resistance to the amendment. One criticism that has surfaced is that GOV did not consult with CPCA.

Chair Fessler informed GOV of her discussion with Provost Phillips concerning CPCA. The Provost explained that CPCA has had a long complex history. Because we are not the Faculty Senate but the University Senate, there is an unusual mix of involvement from the University compared with our peer institutions. Changes to CPCA will be a long term project that is not expected to be resolved anytime soon.

Chair Fessler announced an addition to today's agenda. Provost Phillips will attend to discuss the next steps in the budget consultative process on campus.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of both October 29 and November 19 were approved.

OLD BUSINESS:

Evaluation of Administrators and Administrative Offices:

Chair Fessler highlighted the discussion from the last GOV meeting in which it was decided they would need to identify the charge of the assessment committee as well as how often assessments should be conducted. GOV had also discussed developing a process that is specific to UAlbany's culture. She read an email from former CAA Chair Heidi Andrade who stated that GOV should develop a clear and focused statement of purpose. Professor Andrade also indicated that several types of instruments would need to be considered in the process. The Chair turned the floor over to the panel of experts which included William Doane, Professor Robert Pruzek from the School of Education and CAA Chair Richard Matyi.

William Doane was pleased that the process was happening. He said whether the purpose of the critique of administrators is for them to reflect on their own job or for purposes of transparency, key factors need to be identified in what is to be accomplished.

Professor Robert Pruzek from the School of Education expressed concern about lack of clarity regarding purpose. He stressed the importance of purpose in developing an instrument and survey. Evaluation and assessments make sense if done with an understanding between all parties, and the data being collected serves those purposes effectively. He cautioned about the susceptibility to misuse of the data being collected and encouraged GOV members to think about use and abuse. Professor Pruzek said an argument could be made that this is an outsider attempt to collect information. Chair Fessler clarified that the resolution was part of the Middle States review and it would be in our best interests to have the process in place. She said GOV is sensitive to the concerns and discussions have included the levels of administrators to be evaluated and who would receive the data.

CAA Chair Richard Matyi said his concerns were about the feedback mechanism. If the evaluation ends up in a file, the process becomes a waste of time. Implementation needs to be addressed in order to achieve the goal of feedback which is for continuous improvement. He sees the potential to spend a lot of resources on the process without obtaining considerable results.

Professor Pruzek raised the question as to whether faculty have standing to evaluate administrators and if so, in what ways and what ways are they limited. Chair Fessler replied that faculty have important experience interacting with administrators but did not believe that assessments should be conducted with offices in which there is little contact.

In an effort to move the process forward, Chair Fessler suggested starting with a concrete purpose. She referred again to Professor Andrade's email in which she stated that assessments should improve the health of the institution through job performance with the overall objective being to improve the institution. She suggested that references be made to the Middle States self-study and use it as a blueprint as to what areas need assessment. Nan Carroll was in agreement on this point. She said the lack of having an evaluation process in place by various administrative offices could be explained by the turnover that occurs in those offices. In the

working group discussions for Middle States that she was a part of there was a strong interest in figuring out how to put a process in place and how to make areas better and more transparent. Chair Fessler said that there is interest within the administrative offices to understand how they can improve what they do. If they can be provided an instrument it could provide constructive data. She reiterated a suggestion from the last meeting to do a trial run. She informed the guests that at the last meeting, the discussion was similar to what was being discussed today with concerns raised about what was being overlooked. The Chair said the brunt of the work is figuring out what the instrument will be, how the process will be administered, and what the time span will be between assessments. However, she felt also at issue is that the resolution does not contain any language saying the data would be used for any purpose. She suggested that GOV might want to address this-- what she felt was a missing link--perhaps in the form of an amendment. Secretary Bessette did not believe that governance has any legal right to require a unit to change and that the function of the assessment would be to remind units on a regular basis that they should pay attention to efficacy and efficiency. Mr. Doane said he believed a process was starting to emerge. He reminded GOV to make sure principles are met through transparency. He felt that access to the reports should be available to those people in the same unit who are lower in rank than those being evaluated, as they would be able to identify what is taking place moving down the hierarchy.

Chair Fessler believed they had reached a point where GOV could consider delegating to the ad hoc committee. The first steps would be to develop the charge of the committee and decide who will be on the committee. She said she could go ahead and draft a purpose of the proposal. At GOV's first meeting next semester, they will decide how the ad hoc committee will be formed and who the stakeholders are, both in terms of a pilot program and in the longer term. It was suggested that non-academic units might be the best place to start for a pilot program. Chair Fessler said that, over the winter break, she would canvas various administrative offices in an effort to find a volunteer unit for the trial run.

Report from Provost Phillips:

Provost Phillips spoke to GOV members about what the next consultation process concerning the budget would look like. She spoke with Chair Fessler earlier today regarding what has occurred so far in constructing a formal consultation process. She asked for input about what needs to happen in the next round of budget making decisions and said the issue was time sensitive.

The Provost shared a few issues concerning the process, one of them being representation by people in different roles, functions, unions, areas of the university, disciplinary perspectives, and so on. The BAG groups were designed to be broadly representative, and no one person represented just one constituency. In addition, she noted concerns about the size of a consultative group, and about how public its deliberations should be. There is also an issue of concern in that union members may not be willing to serve in a capacity in which they might be making recommendations about other union members. She said members of a newly formed group would also need sufficient time to be educated in the process and have enough opportunity to deliberate. In selecting representation, she noted that GOV functioned as specified in the Bylaws but also suggested there may be need for a broader designation of

people going forward. The Provost said one option would be to use those in BAG3 who are already educated and who are willing to continue to serve but would also want GOV to have the opportunity to “restock” where membership vacancies occur. She hoped to go into the next phase without provoking concern about whether or not the consultation process was legitimate, and to design a process that might be better than what has been employed to date.

A discussion ensued at this point. Secretary Bessette said those on BAG3 thought the process was informative and well done. Although they did not know which programs would be cut, there was sufficient information to see what might happen. He said there would continue to be those who would say proper consultation did not occur even if it had. We have an opportunity to call for volunteers or inform people that the administration will be making decisions that need to be done. He supported Senate Chair Lifshin’s suggestion to assume the worst, see what pool of money will be available in five years and think about what we would build if we had no university.

SUNY Senator White said one issue from the SUNY-wide perspective is following the governance process to deactivate programs. Their view is that decisions were made without consultation from the Senate. He believed that the Senate needs to be involved in the process of curriculum changes, and combining salaries and union issues with the academic component makes the process more difficult. The Provost noted that in the recent process at SUNY Geneseo there was no full Senate vote to deactivate programs. She said the Bylaws do not specify what happens at the end of the full consultation process. It only defines inputs into the governance process and providing a written accounting if the ultimate decision is different from what governance had recommended. Also at issue is identifying how public the process is.

Senator White felt there had not been complete transparency. He said certain information had been reserved. He added that programs that are still being considered for deactivation are no longer on the SUNY web site and questioned how that could occur if consultation was still in process. Andi Lyons, Chair of the Theatre Department, said that in terms of timing even before BAG1, she was hearing enough about the state budget and fearing that the University was not in a position of strength. When the decisions were made, the Provost and the CAS Dean had the decency to tell her that her department was targeted before going public with that information. While she was grateful for that opportunity, she sees transparency as a problem. At this point she has concerns that those who become involved may be those who have an axe to grind and make the process worse. GOV needs to find a way to move this to an end so we can begin to rebuild.

Chair Fessler asked the Provost when she anticipated the need for the next consultation group to be formed. Provost Phillip responded that the NYS budget process does not foster planning. Given the lack of a planning environment, she is hopeful to start the process in February with time in January to educate whatever group is assembled. There should be a period of deliberation of one to two months. She was uncertain if there would be a public phase and if there would be anything to go to the Senate by the end of April. Senator White said the Senate could begin to act proactively and begin looking at curriculum and think about streamlining.

Chair Fessler said if GOV is to have input in advising what the next group will look like, it should be over the next few weeks. Since GOV will not meet again until after classes begin in the spring semester, she suggested that thoughts and ideas be exchanged via e-mail and she would compile them for the Provost.

Senator White said one criticism of the consultation process is the need for someone to report back to the Senate. GOV members were not certain how that could be accomplished while maintaining confidentiality. Senator White said information would have to be discussed before being made formal and this where governance needs to do some policing of its own process.

Provost Phillips thanked GOV for their comments, and said it was helpful to hear what should and should not have been done and what should be done in the next round. Chair Fessler thanked her for coming.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:57 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,
Gail Cameron, Recorder