

Student Life Committee Minutes
February 13, 2007

Attending: Nick Kontogeorgopoulos, Mike Segawa, Jan Leuchtenberger, Carrie Washburn, Mita Mahato, Cathy Hale, Ryan Dumm, Danni Simon.

The meeting was convened by Chair Kontogeorgopoulos at 9 a.m.

The **first** order of business was discussion of the proposed change to the faculty bylaws. The Faculty Senate is debating a change in the bylaw which some members felt might have an impact on our committee and put into question the need for its existence. The change consists of the following:

Current language:

Sec. 2. **Responsibilities of the Faculty.** The Faculty shall create and maintain a superior academic climate in the University. To this end, the Faculty shall prescribe, subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees, the graduate and undergraduate courses of study, the specific courses to be offered, the nature and requirements of graduate degrees to be conferred, the requirements for graduation and recommend all candidates for baccalaureate and advanced degrees and/or honors to the Board of Trustees, the standards of instruction, and the general rules and methods for the conduct of educational work of the University and any rules for the regulation of student publications, musical, dramatic and literary clubs, and other student affairs related to the academic life of the University.

Revised language:

Sec. 2. **Responsibilities of the Faculty.** The Faculty shall create and maintain a superior academic climate in the University. To this end, the Faculty shall contribute to the development of the University.

The Faculty shall establish the standards and methods of instruction and oversee how the educational work of the University is conducted. The standards of instruction are subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees.

The Faculty shall create the graduate and undergraduate courses of study in schools, departments, and programs. The Faculty shall approve the specific courses to be offered and establish the requirements for undergraduate and graduate degrees.

The Faculty's decisions regarding courses of study and requirements for degrees are subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees.

The Faculty shall recommend all candidates for baccalaureate degrees, advanced degrees,

and honors-at-graduation to the Board of Trustees.

The Faculty shall advise students' media, including, but not limited to, newspapers, magazines, radio programs, video programs, and electronic publications, when such media are related to the academic and co-curricular life of the University. The Faculty shall advise students' artistic, dramatic, literary, and musical organizations, insofar as such organizations affect the academic and co-curricular life of the University.

Some questions raised in this Committee by this change in the bylaws included:

1. Why was this change proposed in the first place? What deficiency was the change trying to correct?
2. Does the change in language make our committee unnecessary?
3. How does this change in faculty bylaws square with language in the faculty code about faculty service requirements?
4. In broader terms, what is the faculty's responsibility when it comes to student life?

Some discussion and conclusions about these questions included:

1. The language change was initially proposed as more of a technical/grammatical change, but some on the Faculty Senate believed it represented a substantial change in the faculty's role in student life. They believed the language should be vetted by more people to make sure the change did not have unexpected outcomes. For that reason this Committee is discussing it.
2. The new language seems to define the role of faculty as advisors to student organizations but not beyond that in a more general sense.

The Chair does not believe that the new language directly questions the existence of our Committee because there are many standing committees whose existence is not explicitly justified in the language of the bylaws. The original language did not explicitly justify our committee's existence either, so a change would not necessarily question it.

Therefore, the conclusion of the Committee is that the language change would not challenge the existence of this Committee.

4. The language change brings up a broader question about the faculty's responsibility when it comes to student life.

This committee has spent a lot of time recently trying to define the purpose of its existence, and two major roles have been articulated:

- a) As advisory committee for the Dean of Students which in many ways is the only connecting body between the faculty and the office of the Dean of Students.
- b) As a “low stakes” place for students to go for help on student life issues without having to go through the administration immediately.

It seems that in fact the faculty’s role in student life is broader than that articulated in the new language. Furthermore the new language seems to conflict with the expectations as they are laid out in the Faculty Code. This brings us to question 3:

3. Since the new language creates a disconnect between the Faculty Bylaws and the Faculty Code, a revision to the new language which would repair that breach could be proposed at the next meeting of the Faculty Senate. The Committee decided to propose the following changes to the new language (highlighted in red):

Sec. 2. **Responsibilities of the Faculty.** The Faculty shall create and maintain a superior academic climate in the University. To this end, the Faculty shall contribute to the development of the University. **The Faculty shall participate in service that advances the mission of the university, including participation in departmental and university governance, in co-curricular programs, in promoting intellectual vitality and a high quality of life on the campus, and in activities which help convey the nature and purpose of the university to its constituencies. [This language is taken from Ch. I, Part D 2e of the Faculty Code]**

The Faculty shall establish the standards and methods of instruction and oversee how the educational work of the University is conducted. The standards of instruction are subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees.

The Faculty shall create the graduate and undergraduate courses of study in schools, departments, and programs. The Faculty shall approve the specific courses to be offered and establish the requirements for undergraduate and graduate degrees.

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and musical organizations, insofar as such organizations affect the academic and co-curricular life of the University.

The **second** order of business was to discuss the need for a new Sexual Assault Policy.

As was noted at the last meeting, the current Sexual Assault policy falls under the general Harassment Policy. Under this policy, if a woman wanted to bring a student through the conduct process for alleged sexual assault, the perpetrator would be allowed to choose the venue from among the following: the Dean; a smaller committee that includes students; or the Honor Court, which includes mostly students. This policy is perceived as a reason why some students might refrain from reporting attacks. In order to bring charges the school needs the cooperation of the student victim, but because that victim loses control of the process under the current policy, she/he might not want to cooperate.

Currently, a committee composed of faculty and students is writing up a draft of a new sexual harassment policy that includes:

- More definitions of sexual assault, rape, etc., using language borrowed from other institutions.
- An adjudication process that creates a Sexual Harassment Board of three people (one faculty member, one student, one staff member), ALL of whom will be trained to deal with sexual assault. This takes the adjudication process out of the hands of the alleged perpetrator.

The draft will be sent to this Committee for review before sending it on to other relevant committees for approval.

The Chair thanked Mike Segawa for this update and asked him to keep us informed about the progress on this policy.

The Chair informed the Committee that the next meeting would be devoted to the committee self-study and, in the remaining time, to a discussion of student focus groups and student reflection as seniors.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55.

Respectfully submitted,
Jan Leuchtenberger

The next meeting of the Student Life Committee will be Tuesday, Feb. 27 in Dean Segawa's office.