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2015-16 FACULTY SENATE XX - September 14, 2015 Minutes Summary

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UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
2015-16 FACULTY SENATE XX

The fundamental function of the approved minutes of the Faculty Senate is to accurately document actions taken by that body. Additionally, the minutes traditionally seek to provide context by capturing some statements of Senators, faculty in attendance, and guests. The minutes do not verify the veracity, authenticity, and/or accuracy of those statements.

Meeting called to order at 3:43 p.m. Monday, September 14, 2015 MINUTES SUMMARY

I. Roll – The following senators were absent: Benoit, Dowd-Solorzano, Samuels, Wu, and Yalcinkaya. Aytur and Freedman were excused. Sheila Curran and Mary Rhiel were guests.

II. Remarks by and questions to the senior vice provost for academic affairs- Mary Rhiel addressed the senate as Interim Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs in the absence of the provost. She spoke about the new Study Away program, which is actually a semester in the city of Boston. Participating students will take part in a 30 hour a week internship in fields such as social justice, community development, health, education, environment, or others. The plan is to have this project in place by fall 2016.

She spoke about Frank Bruni's article in the New York Times on the Gallup Purdue Index results on the well-being of college graduates. A joint project of Gallup and Purdue University, the poll of recent college graduates produced some interesting findings in 2014. One emergent finding was no appreciable difference (1%) between a private undergraduate experience and a public undergraduate experience. Another finding was that there seemed to be minimal advantage in employment for students from private versus public institutions. Students whose undergraduate degree was in a more diverse setting reported greater well-being. Mary noted that the new Semester in the City in Boston project will provide many of the positive experiences cited in the study.

Bruni's article noted several indicators of success from graduates which included developing a relationship with a mentor, taking on projects that lasted a semester or more, and becoming deeply involved in a campus organization. Bruni's conclusion was that what college gives to students hinges largely on what students give to their own experience.

A senator asked about how the Study Away program works beyond the 30 hour/week internship. Mary responded that there will be a weekly seminar on the theory and practice of social change, and a weekly workshop.

III. Remarks by and questions to the senate chair – The chair announced that the university's Academic Standards and Advising Committee (ASAC) was charged by the senate to implementing a system for adding and dropping classes online. The new process was implemented this fall, and over 2,500 students used the new system to add and drop over 5,000 classes in a generally successful launch. The Registrar and ASAC report confidence in the effectiveness of the new system. A senator asked if there were any faculty reports of issues with the system. Another senator reported that in some cases wait-lists were being jumped, and some professors of large classes were reporting difficulties. A senator suggested

that the online system seems effective up to the point of the class cap being met. There was some discussion of confusion caused by faculty promising spots to students which are then taken through the online system by other students. The new system will require some changes in the way that faculty deal with adds/drops, and may result in less control for faculty of who can add or drop any particular class. The senate chair recommended that any faculty with concerns about the new system should take those concerns directly to their college's associate dean.

IV. Minutes – It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of the last senate meeting, August 31, 2015. The minutes were unanimously approved with no abstentions.

Discussion/Report Items:

V. Report from Sheila Curran – The senate chair introduced Sheila Curran, CEO and Chief Strategy Consultant at Curran Consulting Group in Providence, Rhode Island. Her company was asked by President Huddleston to gather information to assess the effectiveness of UNH's efforts in preparing students for successful lives after graduation. Sheila came to UNH in April 2015 to conduct about 50 interviews with students, faculty and other stakeholders. Her report can be found [here](#).

Sheila said that her desire now is to gather feedback from faculty on her report. She said that the goal of the report has been to examine what determines success for our students as they go forward after their undergraduate degree, either to seek an advanced degree or gain employment. She said that the report seeks to address what can be done to provide opportunities and experiences that will improve students' lives. She noted that, nationally, 86% of the students interviewed reported that their primary driver for seeking a university degree was to get a better job. Parents, on the other hand, are far more concerned with the cost of education today than they were ten years ago.

Sheila said that according to the statistics gathered, one in four UNH graduates (25%) is not settled nine months after graduation (meaning not employed nor enrolled in post-graduate studies). This number varies from college to college at UNH. The national average is 18.7% still seeking employment six months after graduation. Sheila shared some of the report's findings as to why UNH is behind the national average: the staff/student ratio for career counseling professionals is very low, the methods and policies of academic and career counseling between colleges is inconsistent, limited technology in this area, and no real strategic support for what needs to be done. Sheila noted that the report's criticisms are of the system, not of the people who are doing their best in the current climate to accomplish this work. She said that President Huddleston has made this issue an institutional priority, but that he does not want to rush into making changes. The UNH Task Force on Professional Success has been established with twenty-five members from across the campus community to determine how to best implement the report's recommendations. Eventually there will be a single individual in charge of orchestrating the use of resources across the institution and provide consistency in that implementation.

Sheila shared six conclusions of the report:

1. Professional success cannot be solely the responsibility of the career center

2. A common vision is needed
3. Each college/school will require a customized approach
4. It is important to engage all students (currently 90% of students who use career services are likely the 10% who don't need it)
5. Alumni, parents, and friends of the university need to be engaged in this process; we are currently underutilizing these resources
6. Colleges/schools cannot succeed in this area without paying attention to post-graduation outcomes

She emphasized that a “tweaking” of the policies and procedures currently in place will not suffice; that the current model of letting the career center handle this matter is not working. She also said that bringing our campus to the national average of 18.7% of students “settled” nine months after graduation will require time, energy, and money, and said that innovation provides advantages.

Sheila then talked about “catapulting” students to place them in charge of their own destiny, giving them tools to take ownership of their own professional success, and providing strategic data and support to students as part of that process. She talked about helping students find the classes that will enable them to fill their competency gaps, and guiding them to find their hook; the skills they need to make them more prepared than the competition as they go out into the job market. She stated that, nationally, only two in five employers said that students are prepared for employment upon graduation, but emphasized that this is not a curriculum problem, but is about getting students into the right classes to build the skills they need.

A senator asked about the comparisons made at nine months post-graduation versus eighteen or twenty-four months post-graduation. He also suggested that a salary is not necessarily a singularly meaningful indicator of professional success. Sheila responded that very few universities have effective alumni surveys. She said that graduate salaries are an easily quantified data set, but that the greater issue is whether the students have a job at all. Another senator asked if the study found any variables dependent on where the student was looking for work, geographically. Sheila responded that geography did not seem to matter. The senate chair, who is also on the Task Force, clarified that being “settled” includes being enrolled in graduate school; being employed is not the only measure of professional success in the study. The Task Force actually changed their name from “Career-” to “Professional Success” to reflect this.

A senator asked about implementing “high impact experiences” for students, such as Study Abroad, publishing, presenting scholarly works, etc., and how these experiences fulfill the recommendations of the report. A senator asked how the anticipated head of the professional success efforts on campus will work with various departments and colleges with their various needs. Sheila responded that each college will have a point person to coordinate with whoever heads up this work to provide consistency across colleges. A discussion followed about what those “high impact experiences” really are. Are they by definition Honors courses, or can students have a high impact experience that is not labeled Honors? How important is it to have a high GPA to be engaged in high impact experiences? Is study abroad truly a high impact experience if the program does not involve immersion in the language, studying in the language, and residing with a local family, rather than having an “American” experience in a

foreign country by eliminating these elements? The senate chair also emphasized that experiences such as the Undergraduate Research Conference and the Capstone courses absolutely qualify as high impact experiences.

A senator asked if there was evidence in the research that a year away from regular coursework between high school and college, if the student is participating in some kind of internship or other meaningful program, is beneficial to the student's employability after graduation. Sheila responded that the maturity gained from such experience is evidenced in increased student success, and in their eventual employability. Another senator suggested that such internships could be arranged for some sort of college credit. Sheila noted that some parents and first generation students may have a hard time buying into the idea of a "year off," holding to the traditional notion that time away from the classroom will make it harder to resume coursework later on.

A senator asked how such a "gap year" after finishing college might affect the kind of data gathered for the Curran report. Sheila agreed that such students would appear as unemployed, unless the program in which they participated was an actual internship or other formal program affiliated with an institution of higher learning.

Another senator brought up the concept of students' "avoiding coping," noting that sometimes the challenge is not how to give the students the skills they need to succeed, but rather to help them to decide what it is they want to do with their lives. He suggested that, as a faculty, we are poorly equipped to deal with this issue, and asked what experiences and services can be offered to such students. Sheila responded that a consistent agreement across the colleges to engage in professional success advising will be meaningful, but that drawing in parents, alumni, and friends of the university will also be a significant means to this end. She pointed out that faculty advising is important, but that there are other resources available to students that can only come from outside the campus community: parents, alumni and community members can help connect students with employment opportunities in tremendous ways.

A senator asked how the cost of career services at UNH compares with other universities. Sheila responded that UNH is well below the average in dollars spent per student on such services. The senate chair noted that it is not feasible to implement all of the changes recommended in the Curran report immediately, and asked the senators to consider what elements we can incorporate now, and what things we are already doing that we can connect with these goals. A senator noted that many parents hold faculty responsible for their children's employability, and asked if the report's concept of "catapulting" students to take charge of their own destiny might be perceived negatively by parents. Sheila said that part of the process is to educate and engage parents so that they can better support their sons and daughters.

A senator asked who is on the Professional Success Task Force. The senate chair will send that information along. The senate chair thanked Sheila for her work, and encouraged the senators to forward any questions on to her throughout the year, or to send those questions to the senate chair herself. Contact information for the Curran group is in the report linked above, and Sheila's email address is scurran@curranconsultinggroup.com

Action Items:

VI. Discussion and vote on motion from senate Agenda Committee on creating ad hoc committee to investigate the feasibility of a tri-mester system – Jim Connell presented the following motion, prepared by the senate Agenda Committee and discussed in the last senate meeting:

Motion: The Faculty Senate will undertake a feasibility study on the potential move from a dual- to a tri-mester system, and particularly the implications for the academic mission. The Faculty Senate will form an ad-hoc committee which will have faculty representatives from each college, UNH-Manchester, the School of Law, the Library, and undergraduate and graduate student representatives. The Agenda committee will appoint the committee and invite selected non-faculty members who could contribute to the study to serve on the committee. The Agenda Committee will charge the committee to meet these goals. The committee should report its findings to the Faculty Senate by the end of March 2016.

There was hearty discussion of what the impetus for this motion was. Some senators reported that their departments were very concerned that by forming such a committee, the senate was implying that this is something that faculty want, when in fact many faculty have responded negatively about the idea of such a change. There was concern about committing the time of committee members to investigate something that doesn't seem to have much support. Some senators asked if the administration is pushing to make such a change a reality. The senate chair reminded the senate that the intent in forming this committee would be only to gather information so that, should the administration ever want to consider implementing such a change, the faculty senate would already be well versed on the issues and concerns, as well as any advantages, so that the senate can speak cogently and with one voice, rather than scrambling to gather information at the last minute in response to an administrative initiative. This is the kind of proactive stance that the senate chair would like the senate to take.

A senator who once taught at Dartmouth spoke about the requirement there that all rising sophomores take courses during the summer. He asked if it is possible to examine the possibilities, knowing that departments' opinions may vary significantly on the matter. Another senator, who suspects that a change is not the best option, recommended that the senate should examine this now rather than scramble later to catch up.

Several senators expressed concern that the wording of the motion makes it appear that this is something that faculty want to have happen. It was noted that such a change could be damaging to small departments, could negatively impact faculty quality of life, and will have significant impact on the shape of faculty contracts and obligations. Other senators talked about the potential for growth, opportunities to teach more classes, hire more faculty, and have more flexibility for research time/travel. The senate chair reminded that all of these comments are predictions, and that what the formation of a committee would do is provide an opportunity to investigate the actual implications.

A senator asked if this proposal is being driven by finances. The chair responded that while there are financial limitations to our current schedule. We can't continue to raise tuition

without eventually losing students. Such a change might allow some students to graduate more quickly. Pressures on overfilled classes could be reduced. However, her concern is that the faculty should not abdicate our voice regarding academic decisions to the administration.

A senator said that with such obvious differences of opinion in today's conversation, it is clear to him that there are enough issues involved to warrant the formation of an ad hoc committee to investigate these very issues using data rather than opinion. He noted that the committee's work might result in an overwhelming negative recommendation. Another senator acknowledged that change can be a frightening prospect, but also said that being forced into a change from the top down is unappealing. Another senator agreed that forming a faculty senate committee is preferable to having an administrative-based committee, and that taking control of this investigation is safer.

A senator asked how the committee will be chosen. The senate chair responded that the FS Agenda Committee will choose members from each college, from faculty who are interested in participating. Volunteers are welcome, but the agenda committee will have the final say in who serves on the committee, and they will be seeking those who are willing to entertain a variety of options and possibilities. The committee will then report their findings to the senate for further discussion, without any particular recommendations. The senator above asked if it might be a good idea to invite someone from Dartmouth to discuss with the senate how their university schedule works. The senate chair agreed that is a good idea, whether or not this motion passes. A senator suggested compiling a list of issues for the committee to discuss to append to the motion. The senate chair suggested that such a list might become part of the charge to the committee, should the motion pass.

Another senator suggested that changing the wording of the motion might alleviate some of the concerns expressed today. She suggested removing "potential move" from the first sentence, as well as using the words "...to gather the pros and cons of alternatives to the current semester system..." She offered the new wording as a friendly amendment. There was additional discussion to change other wording in the motion, bringing it to appear as follows:

Motion: The Faculty Senate will undertake a study to gather the pros and cons of alternatives to the current semester system relevant to the UNH academic mission. The Faculty Senate will form an ad-hoc committee which will have faculty representatives from each college, UNH-Manchester, the School of Law, the Library, and undergraduate and graduate student representatives. The Agenda committee will appoint the committee and invite selected non-faculty members who could contribute to the study to serve on the committee. The Agenda Committee will charge the committee to meet these goals. The committee should report its findings to the Faculty Senate by the end of March 2016.

This friendly amendment was seconded. The amended motion was then put to a vote, and passed with 33 votes in favor, 4 votes opposed, and 2 abstentions.

VII. New business – The senator from the Library announced that the Library home page is changing tomorrow (9/15) so that the catalog search will default to the UNH Library Catalog instead of the Boston Library Consortium Worldcat catalog.

VIII. Adjournment- It was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 5:40 p.m.