GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
MINUTES OF THE FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday, January 23, 2017, 3:00 –4:30 p.m.
SUB I room 3A


I. Announcements
Rector Davis will address the Faculty Senate at its March 1, 2017 meeting, rescheduled from February 1, 2017 per the President’s Office.

Senior Vice President J.J. Davis welcomed everyone back. Pessimistic outlook on the Commonwealth budget situation, including tying rate of tuition increases to the CPI, and prospects for pay raises. We are doing some modeling now, with pricing analysis in tuition fees per credit. We are trying to work with student body – they are vocal but open-minded to tuition increase.

Political scene in DC is keeping us up at night; a lot less certainty than in normal transitions, potential cabinet appointments. Concerning issues include how to manage a sizable tuition increase for those very needy students, concerns about DACA, and concerns about international students (whether on a social, emotional or financial level). The Virginia legislature is supposed to adjourn by the end of February. The atmosphere in Richmond is very political, with a number of gubernatorial candidates in both parties. Mason Lobbies will be there this week.

In response to a question about student demands at other universities to pull out of investments with carbon footprints, J.J. responded that the GMU Foundation view of this is they should have the right to invest without constraints. However, nowhere is there a large concentration of dollars (invested) in fossil fuels, due to having a small endowment.

We received a stable rating by Standard and Poor’s, and Moody's upgraded our bond rating status to A-. If we can become a Tier III institution, then we can get out of quite so much controlled state oversight and supervision. The (salary) data requests are coming, with titles added. We are doing data validity to make sure data is not erroneous.

Questions about the Bookstore should be directed to Mark Fournier, Assistant Vice President of Business Services, Auxiliary Enterprises.

II. Progress reports, business, and agenda items from Senate Standing Committees

A. Academic Policies – Suzanne Slayden
We are still waiting for academic calendars. We are also waiting for a reply from the Registrar for implication of courses <15 weeks, and add and drop deadlines.

B. Budget and Resources – Tim Leslie
Central is investigating a substantial move on tuition, and is considering costs from a number of angles.
Budget and Resources is acting as a focus group for Development information to faculty. Senator Alan Abramson serves as faculty representative to the BOV Development Committee. He noted a group of faculty are meeting with the Campaign/Development staff to talk with them on how to reach faculty, expressed similar concerns. Another EXEC member noted that department chairs should be encouraged to engage, and not to overlap with existing scope.

Athletic expenditures and outreach – a report from the Budget and Resources Committee to the Executive Committee on Athletics – January 2017 was distributed for discussion.

Brad Edwards, Assistant Vice President /Director of Intercollegiate Athletics is willing to come to the Faculty Senate to talk about his plans for the (1) long term financial future of the athletics department and (2) using Athletics as a way to enhance and extend the Mason Community (particularly for non-athlete students, faculty/staff and the local community.) The goal is communicate what the fees are used for and the community's benefits, improving engagement through greater outreach. There was concern that the discussion would not be focused and the time would be wasted. One idea was to quantify the impact/return on investment such as making the Final Four, as some EXC members recalled President Merten's remarks quantifying impact, including a huge jump in SAT scores. Janette Muir suggested that the issues could also be raised at Athletic Council, and not just in the Faculty Senate.

Chair Renshaw will invite Brad Edwards to present at the March 1st FS Meeting.

C. Faculty Matters – Alan Abramson

We are putting the finishing touches on the Faculty Evaluation of Administrators from last year, and then will start on the next survey. Alan asked for feedback.

Discussion and Questions:
Are department chairs included in the survey? Yes, they can participate in the survey.
Will faculty from Mason Korea be included? We will check up on this, they want to be included.
Can we get comparative information – e.g. some Deans did better or worse than previous years? As a way to provide more useful feedback to the deans? Would need to look into this.
Is any of this data used by anybody? Comment sections in this past issue were all colorfully negative. Not clear, but Associate Provost Janette Muir noted Provost Wu has started a new evaluation process for deans and provost-level folk. Amber Hannusch is running the process. Not sure if the FEA is being used.

D. Nominations – Mark Addleson

Election of nominees to serve on Multilingual Academic Support Committee
There are eight positions identified to be filled by certain areas – we have received 6 of 8 responses so far. Three general positions elected by faculty: one nominee must be a
Faculty Senator – Susan Trencher has volunteered. The Committee will shortlist the 7 nominees for the remaining two positions.


IV. Other Committees/Faculty Representatives

A. Faculty Handbook Committee – Suzanne Slayden

Proposed Revisions to the Faculty Handbook: We will have the 2nd reading of the UPTRAC revisions for a vote at the February 1st FS meeting and the first reading of Chapter Two rewrite of Promotion and Tenure process in several sections. We are trying to get this to the BOV for its March meeting, as they do not have an April meeting scheduled.

B. Mason Core Committee

Ethics Across the Curriculum Requirement – Janette Muir and Bethany Usher

The committee welcomed Bethany Usher, now Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education, succeeding Janette Muir (now Associate Provost for Academic Initiatives and Services) in the role. Janette introduced the proposal (pasted below).

Proposal for the Mason Core: Ethics across the Curriculum Requirement

Background:

George Mason University recognizes the importance of Ethics as both a time-honored intellectual pursuit, and crucial component of personal conduct and character. Characteristics of a Mason Graduate include “an engaged citizen” who is “ethically oriented and committed to democratic ideals; respectful of individual differences, rights, and liberties; knowledgeable of important issues affecting the world; focused on the well-being of others; and committed to building a just society.” Mapping to the Mason Graduate is the Mason Core learning outcome that promotes the development of “Ethical, Inquiry-Based Citizens” who are tolerant, understanding, and able to “conceptualize and communicate about problems of local, national and global significance, using research and evaluative perspectives to contribute to the common good.”

The Mason Core Curriculum Committee acknowledges and embraces the challenges that accompany Ethics, and welcomes the opportunity to weave the intricate interdisciplinary threads that comprise the well-rounded, globally engaged, Mason graduate. In looking specifically at the ethics component several issues arise:

- Student surveys have revealed moderate satisfaction with their ethics education at Mason with some noting that they receive no education in this area;
The current learning outcomes for Ethics are included in the IT/Ethics category, complicating outcomes that more specifically focus on issues related specifically to information technology;

The current connection only to IT limits the potential for students to understand the various applications for ethical issues and decision making in their course of study or future profession.

As a result of these concerns, the Mason Core Committee voted to decouple the Ethics requirement from the IT requirement. While ethics certainly apply to the ever-growing field of IT, the committee believes that an “Ethics across the Curriculum” approach would be beneficial in a number of ways, in particular removing Ethics from IT would allow for each department to play a more active role in crafting discipline-specific curriculum or identifying existing courses from other disciplines that would provide the most useful tools for graduates when approaching ethical problems in their field of choice.

Requirements for Ethics across the Curriculum

Motion: Each Local Academic Unit will designate 1 course that contains the equivalent of 1 credit of Ethics (approx. 15 hours) in its content to satisfy the Mason Core Ethics Requirement. This may be a 1 credit stand-alone course or a 3 credit course with 1 credit's worth of Ethics embedded in it. All students are required to complete the Ethics requirement (including those who transfer in through the Guaranteed Admission Agreement).

The Local Academic Unit may:

- Propose a course within a specific major that meets the learning outcomes for the Ethics across the Curriculum category (NOTE: this could be any level course, provided it meets the learning outcomes)
- Utilize an offering that is listed on the Mason Core approved list for the Ethics requirements
- Utilize an existing approved traditional ethics course offered by the Department of Philosophy

Ethics across the Curriculum- Learning Outcomes (approved by Mason Core committee on 11/1/16)

A successful course proposal will illustrate that the new or existing course satisfies the requirements for Ethics across the Curriculum by demonstrating that it meets the two following learning objectives:

1. Students will identify, explain, and use different frameworks for understanding ethical problems.

2. Students will be able to recognize, evaluate, and respond critically to ethical problems in personal, social, or disciplinary context.
Implementation
Once approved by the Faculty Senate, the Ethics requirement will be removed from the Information Technology Core category and the creation of Ethics across the Curriculum would be reflected in catalog changes for the 2017-2018 academic year.

Overall Advantages
- Highlights Ethics as a core value for the Mason Graduate
- Promotes the study of ethics in the appropriate disciplinary contexts and applications
- Creates more flexibility for both students and faculty in terms of course offerings

Janette also noted the Quality Assessment Task Force sponsored by SCHEV is already working on this and will make recommendations to the State Board. Our idea is to get it out and have some conversations in the units.

Discussion and suggestions included:
- Mason Core Committee needs to work with the Academic Policies Committee as mandated in the AP Committee's charge (See Appendix 1).
- With the whole process of piecemeal changes to General Education, need a more holistic approach. Not against ethics, but problem in some units not able to offer additional courses.
- COS Deadline for Catalog 2017 has passed. Not to have General Ed. Changes without unit input – need for conversation. Composition of Gen Ed. Committee faculty representatives elected by the Faculty Senate, Provost clearly makes an effort to round out membership by units (appointees). We do not hear from Gen. Ed. Committee members in our college about proposed changes. There is also a need for better communication of objectives and information from deans. Example of learning about Synthesis/Capstone requirement from the Faculty Senate.
- Associate Provost Muir responded: As with a number of committees, there is not a huge list of people trying to be on committees. There are hard conversations; the Mason Core Committee is a very engaged committee. We tell them they are representatives and need to talk with faculty – not just Mason Core, also the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, Graduate Curriculum Committee. We try to use Provost appointees to round out college representation. There are also subcommittees working on special topics. Suggests O&O look at committee structure. We are very careful in process of replacing members.
- Virtues of ethics course in tying in to whatever else you’re working on in a practical, experiential context, particularly for undergraduates, to look at critically in context. At least some of the description sounded a lot more like civic engagement than ethics. To combine both and keep the old way to get the learning objectives... it seems like there is a little disagreement. Outcomes seem mostly to be about this.
- Some units are very attuned to any changes in Gen Ed. Requirements as their degree requirements are so rigid. We cannot add another 3 credit course with all our degree requirements.
• Saluted the FS Nominations Committee in bringing in many more candidates to serve on committees. Important to find committed faculty willing to serve.
• There are no minutes of Mason Core Committee meetings, unlike other curriculum committee which have minutes.
• SACS objectives require 30 credit hours of General Education, also SCHEV requirements. The Philosophy course being offered as something that can fulfill the requirement for all has implications, given the new budget model – may be seen as attempt to increase FTE in CHSS.
• Remodeled OSCAR (Office of Student Scholarship, Creative Activities, and Research) – Robert Matz teaching a class with similar class he’s teaching – ethics engagement and other ways we make decisions and how to do it. Not easy to pin this down – Ethics and Civic Engagement.
• Mason Core Committee approach is to let departments decide how best for students to get this piece. Pushbacks as unfunded mandate, there could be something already on the books. There will be many IT courses which will suffice (for) requirement. It is a department’s choice to decide what to do. Many courses will still stay there. One of your existing requirements may subsume this request.
• If you look at present Mason Core requirements section for IT, there is a section for IT with ethics, a section for IT without ethics – it is a complicated process in the way it exists (now).
• Need to “sell” this great idea, to make people want to do it – without adding on more credits.
• Bethany Usher: We need to take this back to the Mason Core Committee first to clarify issues, to think of how to make it easier, then bring suggestions to the Academic Policies Committee.
• O&O Committee, as you are just stepping into this, might be better to ask the MCC to revisit its own committee charge and then after a few months, to share with O&O

V. New Business, Updates, and Discussion

• Professor Watchlist

Discussion:
The issue seems to have died down, do we need to engage in this at Faculty Senate level? There is one Mason person on this list. One faculty member interested in raising this. On one hand, might be better not to draw attention to ourselves or give this list any extra attention. On the other hand, some EXC members support acting on this to register our dissatisfaction and disgust, to be on the record. The person who opposes the watchlist is not against conservatives, but wants transparency. We would need to have a proposal to present to President Cabrera
(who was unaware of it at the last FS meeting) and Provost Wu. What have other schools done? To look into and revisit at next meeting – communication via email.

**New room for FS meetings:** Research Hall Room 163 reserved for AY 17-18.

**Electronic voting (during and between meetings):** Catherine Sausville is working on this.

**VI. Agenda Items for February 1, 2017 FS Meeting**

- Draft FS Minutes December 7, 2016
- Announcements
  - Provost Wu
- Committee Reports
  - Nominations Committee: election of nominees to Multilingual Academic Support Committee
  - Faculty Handbook Committee: Proposed Revisions to the Faculty Handbook
  - Mason Core Committee: Ethics Across the Curriculum Requirement

**VII. Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Meg Caniano
Faculty Senate clerk

**Appendix 1**

**Charge of the Faculty Senate Academic Policies Committee**

**Academic Policies Committee**

**Charge:** This Committee of the Senate shall concern itself with the applicability, appropriateness and reasonableness of academic policies that are University-wide in their scope and have implications for the standards and procedures of the various schools and colleges. Senate reviews of new or existing programs shall take into account the purpose and nature of the particular college or school as well as the goals of the University. It is recognized that while it is desirable for some academic policies to be University-wide, it is not the function of the Senate to enforce uniformity. Within these guidelines this Committee’s responsibility shall include, but not be limited to:

A. Existing degree programs;
B. Standards and policies concerning admissions, retention and suspension, graduation requirements, examinations and grading system, student academic records, and University courses;
C. The academic calendar;
D. Studying the need for new schools, colleges, centers, institutes, and degree programs; and
E. Coordinating inter-college matters of an academic nature.