**Educational Policy Committee**

**April 17, 2019**

**Minutes**

**Committee Members Attending:** Watkins (chair), Webb, Bodzin, Hoelscher, Liu, Lotto, Zhang, Piispanen, Tremblay, Chen

**Guests:** Tonkay, Zalatan, McClaind, Jensen, Bell, Wilson, Allen Taylor, Student Senate representatives (Z. Vinik, E. Chansky, A. Connors).

The chair called the committee to order. Minutes from the 3/20/2019 and the 4/3/2019 meeting were reviewed and approved without changes.

**First agenda item: Student Senate request for a vehicle for students to provide formative feedback to faculty.**

The Student Senators proposed that the University create a vehicle for students to submit feedback anonymously in mid-semester during a course. Students may not be as inclined as they might be to complete the end-of-term course evaluations because they will not see the benefits of the feedback.

Discussion centered on who could provide such a tool, and how students and faculty could use it. It would be important that the feedback be used strictly for formative purposes. Could colleges create and administer a formative evaluation to all faculty? No—limited bandwidth. Could the Office of Institutional Research and Strategic Analytics? Probably not—wrong stem. Perhaps, the consensus was, a simpler process might be e.g. a brief centralized form (in Coursesite, available within each course?) that students could use at any point—akin to a similar Coursesite form used in the College of Education, or the online form for exam policy violation reports that the Office of Registration and Academic Services recently developed in response to student senate and EdPol directives last year—or encouraging faculty to collect formative feedback through an in-class, hand-written mechanism.

Action item: The committee agreed to continue to explore options in the coming semester as part of continuing the broader discussion of teaching assessment and evaluation. Added to the fall 2019 agenda.

**Second agenda item: Proposal for a clear written policy that would allow athletes to be excused from exams due to athletic competitions.**

The Student Senate representatives provided language from other Patriot League schools’ policies that require faculty to give makeup exams. Lehigh has no such policy—the faculty member can refuse to give a makeup or can transfer the exam weight to a final exam, leading to an overly heavily-weighted final in the course grade.

The committee discussed the proposed language and how to create rules that provide more protections for all students, including but not exclusive to athletes, while still recognizing faculty members’ needs regarding exam provision. While some faculty members should be more flexible, it is difficult to put in place a policy that gives no room for exceptions.

Action items: The committee recognized that there was low hanging fruit in terms of establishing and communicating expectations, norms and standard procedures that could help improve fair and equitable treatment across students and across faculty and reduce tensions for students. The committee resolved to consider ways to improve procedures and agreed to combine this request with an upcoming discussion next fall coming from the Faculty Senate about attendance policies and class scheduling. Added to the fall 2019 agenda.

**Third agenda item: Student Senate proposal to “allow a minimum of a week’s worth of classes to be excused from every class (for example, a MW class would allow a student to miss 2 total classes without penalty); any absence beyond this would be at the professor’s discretion.**

J. Jensen pointed out that this policy, without some provision to make up the learning/time, would put Lehigh in violation of federal credit hour regulations. Z. Vinik, Student Senate president, clarified that makeup work would be allowed. G. Tonkay asked if this would excuse assignments or other work, or just remove the penalty for class attendance. Just attendance, with ability to submit late work, Z. Vinik replied.

The committee discussed how this would work. Chair T. Watkins stated that the Faculty Senate Academic Affairs Subcommittee had just contacted him to ask the Committee to discuss the issue of class attendance—both missing class, and class meetings outside of the regularly scheduled course period.

Action item: The chair agreed that the Committee could review these issues collectively at the start of the new year. Added to the fall 2019 agenda.

**Fourth agenda item: Proposal to update Ed Pol membership language in R&P 1.3.2.1 to make Ed Pol membership parallel with GRC (1.3.2.2 as revised) re: cross-membership with new Faculty Senate:**

* Add 2 Faculty Senate Members, appointed by Faculty Senate, as ex officio members on EdPol.
* “The committee chairperson or another designated member of EdPol serves as an ex officio member in Senate Subcommittee on Academic and Student Affairs.”
* Also to parallel GRC revisions, add: “The minutes of the committee are sent to the Faculty Senate President and posted on the Lehigh University faculty website.”

The committee reviewed the suggestions and the benefits of the proposed rules, and agreed by consensus to recommend them to the Faculty Senate.

**Fifth agenda item: Discussion about merits & precedent of establishing entry requirements to a major**

K. Zalatan raised a concern from the College that some students recognize very late—after getting poor grades in a required course multiple times—that they will not succeed in a major; then it is too late for them to change majors and graduate on time. What would be the way forward if programs put in place some minimum requirements, such as a required GPA or course grade higher than the current C-minus needed to progress to the next course?

A wide-ranging discussion centered on the need to prepare students and to signal appropriately likely success in a major, while maintaining flexibility, including the ability to pursue majors and even transfer freely between colleges without an additional application or screening process. Raising the grade standard would be a significant culture change.

Recognizing that this would be a significant change, and that issues of rigor and performance also link to F. Gunter’s grade inflation and teaching assessment proposal, the committee chair suggested that this issue would benefit from understanding student success data.

Action item: The Committee will include in the request (to be developed in the May 1 meeting) to Institutional Research [via F. Gunter] for data on student workload and teaching evaluations to be examined by the committee in the fall.

The committee adjourned at 4:32 PM.