

MINUTES – SAAA Committee Meeting

Wednesday, September 28, 2016

1. INTRODUCTIONS

Dr. Taboas called the meeting to order at ~3:00 PM. Members in attendance introduced themselves. Dr. Juan Taboas and Dr. Harvey Borovetz will serve as SAAA Co-Chairs for AY 2016.

2. HISTORY OF COMMITTEE (ROBIN KEAR)

This Committee originated as Admissions and Financial Aid, which focused on topics related to admissions raised by the Senate. 1.5 years ago Senate officers decided to merge the Student Affairs Committee with the Admissions and Financial Aid Committee. Last academic year, our newly merged Committee focused on graduate students, and their entire lives at Pitt, before and after arrival.

3. FINALIZE OPTIMAL MEETING TIMES ON WEDNESDAYS

Dr. Taboas inquired regarding everyone's availability for meetings on Wednesday. The time of future Committee meetings will be 1:30 PM – 2:30 PM.

4. VOTE ON ADDING SAC (STAFF ASSOCIATION COUNCIL) NON-VOTING REPRESENTATIVES

SAC is requesting to add one non-voting member (in addition to the two voting members) to our Committee. The SAC person to be added is involved in student life. Dr. Taboas called for a vote which was unanimous in favor of adding one non-voting member (in addition to the two voting members) to our Committee.

5. DISCUSS THE PROPOSED REVISED POLICY ON FACULTY-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS. (POLICY 02-04-03)

As expected this topic engendered considerable discussion. Comments submitted on this topic by one Faculty Assembly member, Professor Pat Loughlin, were shared with Committee members/guests in attendance. In particular, Professor Loughlin noted the following "potentially problematic and/or ambiguous statements" which are presented on page 2:

1) “*Engaging in prohibited supervisor conduct, even if self-reported, can also lead to disciplinary action.*” This statement could have the unintended consequence of actually discouraging people from reporting conflicts; for example, if a faculty member is promoted such that she now has supervisory authority over another faculty member with whom she has been having a consensual relationship (perhaps even married!), why should she fear the threat of disciplinary action for reporting what was previously ok but is now a potential issue?

2) Prohibiting relations between faculty/staff and students “*whose academic work, teaching, residence life, athletics, employment, or conduct they are directly or indirectly responsible for supervising or evaluating, or for whom there is the reasonable likelihood of future supervision or evaluation*” seems susceptible to varied interpretations and judgments, potentially resulting in inconsistent enforcement of the policy (particularly with regard to potential future employment or future supervision or evaluation). Why not simply prohibit consensual relations between Pitt faculty/staff and Pitt students, period, regardless of any supervisory or evaluation role (or “likely future” role)?

3) The policy seems focused on what Pitt faculty/staff should not do, but is there not also a responsibility on behalf of students to not solicit a relationship with faculty or staff? If this is covered in a separate policy, perhaps it should be cross-referenced here.

4) As stated at the beginning of the document, this policy applies to “*..faculty, staff and students at the University.*” What about situations where Pitt faculty serve on thesis committees of students outside Pitt, and non-Pitt faculty or staff advising or supervising Pitt students? I assume the same prohibitions would apply, but the current language is not clear on these points.

University Senate President, Dr. Frank Wilson, and Dr. Taboas led the lively discussion. Dr. Wilson indicated that the former policy has now been expanded to include relationships among faculty/staff/students. One point of agreement by our Committee was that the term “disciplinary action” needed to be clarified. Dr. Wilson indicated that the revised Policy will be discussed and voted on at the next University Senate Meeting. It was suggested post meeting in small group that perhaps splitting the policy to address student-faculty vs. all other relationships would be useful to address concerns voiced.

There being no additional agenda items, Dr. Taboas concluded the meeting at ~4:15 PM. Our Committee will next meet in 3 or 4 weeks; details to e-follow.

Respectfully Submitted,

Harvey Borovetz