

College of Arts and Sciences
Minutes of the MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY
January 24, 2017, 3:30 p.m.
Oakland Center, Banquet Room B

Members present: *Andrews, Barry, Battle, Berven, D., Berven K., Cheng, E., Corso, Dulio, Eis, Freed, Guest, Herrold, McDonald, Miller, Navin, Pobutsky, Rigstad, Roth, Spagnuolo, Tucker, Wang, Welling, Westrick, Yang*

Members absent: *Bekele, Benz, Jones (Mercado), Orces, Reger, Walwema*

Ex-officio present: *Stewart, Hitt*

Associate Dean Robby Stewart called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

I. Approval of Minutes of November 15, 2016

The minutes of the November 15, 2016 meeting were approved, with one correction, namely Ms. Welling to be added to the list of members present.

II. School of Music, Theatre and Dance

Associate Dean Stewart opened the discussion with a reminder that Assembly members had received the minutes of the February 2011 Assembly meeting when the Resolution to approve the name change of MTD from 'department' to 'school' was approved. He noted that five years have passed since then, and this matter is now going forward.

Mr. Guest expressed his agreement that MTD was now ready to go forward.

Ms. Miller had a contract question about whether the name change would also involve a change in an academic unit, and would it create a unit exception.

Mr. Andrews observed that five years ago it was just a name change without contract changes. He added that if this is different now, it will result in bigger changes, such as contractual language and regarding a redistribution of resources.

Mr. Stewart said that the minutes from February 2011 indicate this is just a name change.

Mr. Guest said that MTD has been operating as a school for some time, and noted that being a department had made it difficult because the unit has grown so much. He said that a name does a lot, and the change to "school" will help with recruitment.

Mr. Rigstad pointed out that the title of chairman will stay the same in MTD.

III. Update on the Provost's Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness Initiative

Jay Meehan was present in his capacity as a member of the Task Force for Teaching Effectiveness, to lead the discussion on the Provost's Teaching Effectiveness Initiative. He distributed a handout (attached) to Assembly members summarizing the membership of the Task Force, their meeting times, tasks, potential recommendations and goals for Winter 2017. He stated that he had met with the CAS Executive Committee, and noted that the ultimate goal is to enhance teaching effectiveness. He said that the Task Force had spent the fall semester discussing the basic goal, looking at evaluations, considering the feasibility of standardized forms that would work across the university, and discussing whether there would be benefits or issues with a standardized evaluation system. He informed the Assembly that presently, there are 28 different formats being used at the university, and he added that he thought this makes sense, even if it was a surprise to see so many different formats. However he stated that the matter of teaching evaluation format is in the contract which gives the units a lot of

power. He observed that there are three basic methods for teaching evaluations, including off-line, scantron and online, and he noted that the CAS tends to use scantron. Regarding participation rate, scantron has 77% participation, whereas online has 33% participation. He said that the CAS faculty focus group said they would like to have some core questions.

Mr. Andrews interjected that this was news to him since he was part of the focus group and he was not aware that they had said this.

Mr. Meehan went on to say that 50% of chairs are not satisfied with the faculty feedback survey, 25% are satisfied or somewhat satisfied, and the primary concern of the “not satisfied” group was the response rate. He said there is concern about how the standardized teaching evaluations would be used.

Ms. Welling said that questions of validity are important. She asserted that the 1-5 scale is confusing, where 1 is highest and 5 is lowest, because this scale is not consistent across the university since some units use 1 as lowest and 5 as highest, and she said this should be standardized. She added that research has shown that such a rating system is more beneficial for white males than it is for women and she recommended that we look at that issue.

Mr. Meehan agreed that we need to collect demographics on students, because presently, not all units ask about demographics.

Ms. Welling clarified that she was talking about the demographics of faculty and that a contextual part should be built in because there is an implicit bias against female faculty members.

Mr. Tucker said that changing the name on the evaluation form does little to do anything with how it is used.

Mr. Berven said that the reason for having evaluations has to do with the departments’ use of evaluations for tenure reviews, to decide whether the person is a good teacher or not. He said that it seems clear to him that a standardized teaching evaluation would be needed for a post-tenure review and the idea that it has to be standardized would make it a tool for the administration to use after tenure.

Mr. Meehan added that there are also merit considerations involved because chairs tend to use evaluations for part-time faculty and merit increases.

Mr. Andrews said that the role of student opinion for tenure review should be evaluated in the contractual processes and units can decide how and what they will use the student opinion for. He said that he did not think it was a surprise that there is variation in teaching evaluations and in fact, this variation needs to be respected. He predicted that there will be a “rating” question, with the rest made up of comments, and this becomes problematic. He suggested that if anyone is unhappy with their present evaluation forms, they should talk to their department. He said that participation level is not a small thing, and that in a recent sample with math and biology, there was clear evidence that doing evaluations in-class is very beneficial for participation rate. He added that he believes the standardized evaluation information will be used for other purposes which should be a concern, and he expressed his conviction that using comments on teaching evaluations gives an infinitely better result than using numbers for teaching evaluation because you get a much better idea of a pattern of conduct.

Mr. Corso said that he agreed with what had been said so far, but he wondered whether the standardized teaching evaluations could be an advantage. He said that AAH had recently redesigned their teaching evaluation form and now there is a scale as well as an area for narratives, and he was interested to know how teaching evaluations work elsewhere.

Mr. Navin said that he would like to commend the committee for their work in looking into developing teaching evaluations using best practices.

Mr. Meehan said he agreed that we need to look at how things are done elsewhere but on the other hand, he thought at OU we tend to do that first without looking at ourselves first and he believes it is important to know what we do here first, and why we do it, and design questions that work specifically for us.

Mr. Andrews asked how there could be a rationale for using a method that gets less participation, and he said that he thought faculty member should be in charge of the Task Force.

Ms. Berven expressed her concern that moving to a standardized teaching evaluation suggests that there is some kind of standardized teaching and she does not think that the way faculty members across a variety of disciplines teach their subjects can or should be standardized.

Ms. Miller said that the timing of this is not coincidental and the standardized teaching evaluation will be used to justify women being paid less. She said this information will be used as a tool against departments and also against individuals whom the department does not like. She said that she is deeply concerned because she was at a presentation at CETL and this matter had been presented as a done deal. She is concerned that the standardized teaching evaluation is a way to identify poor performance for post-tenure review and a way to fire faculty members that they do not like.

Ms. Battle said that every unit has its own process, and they cannot be compared against each other because if they are compared it will pit faculty against each other. She added that the part about finding out best practices is nice, and she suggested that it would be useful to create a database somewhere that could be used by any department to design their teaching evaluations. There was a murmur of approval for this.

Mr. Guest said that in MTD they do not use scores, they use comments. He said that there is so much variation in what they do from one day to the next. He added that where he was prior to OU, there was an aggregate number for teaching, research and service.

Ms. Eis asked if the standardized teaching evaluation is a done deal, because she questioned whether this can be done since it is tied to tenure and promotion.

Mr. Meehan said that some people may not have realized how evaluations are used, and this may be something for the AAUP to consider.

Mr. Cheng said that he does not like the numbers and said that even an innocent-sounding common question could be problematic. He gave as an example the question, "Does the faculty member return tests quickly?" He was concerned that this seems like an easy question but noted that it is problematic, because it is easier to quickly return some kinds of exams than others, and so this would not be a fair question.

Mr. Rigstad said that this issue is a solution in search of a problem, and he asked for clarification of what the problem presently is. He suggested that the university should trust the current unit-level faculty review process.

Mr. Berven observed that given the emphasis on retention at the university, the teaching evaluation issue will be linked somehow to retention.

Mr. Andrews reiterated that it should be up to each department to decide. He added that he is all for looking at improvements, but it should be the departments' decision. He said that as to the mindset that "teaching is teaching," or that there is a standardized teacher, that is the direction we would be going in with standardized teaching evaluations, and he does not approve of that.

Mr. Navin suggested that there could be two parallel systems, one that the department uses and the university could have its own, in which case the university's evaluation would be redundant. Mr. Andrews disagreed, and said that it would be the departments' evaluations that would become redundant if there were two parallel systems, and he emphasized that is something we do not want to see in any way, shape or form.

Mr. Meehan concluded by thanking members for the discussion and inviting anyone with questions or further ideas to let him know.

IV. Good and Welfare

Mr. Guest announced that the play "Rumors" was opening on February 2, and he encouraged everyone to come and see it.

V. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Dikka Berven (secretary)