Minutes of the Faculty Meeting  
Date 2015/16

I. Report from the Secretary.

The previous minutes were revised to reflect that the people who were identified and thanked for their efforts as part of the Committee on Academic Honesty were last year’s members.

II. Reports from College Officers

A. The President’s Report – President Greene began by thanking Laura Seay, Dan Shea, and Cheryl Townsend Gillkes for facilitating the community session in response to yesterday’s stunning political upheavals. For many, it was so unexpected, ominous, and even traumatic that any help that could be offered to make social, emotional, or political sense out of it was sure to be appreciated. Faculty have autonomy regarding whether and how to respond in class. Tilar Mazzeo reminded the faculty that there are many Trump supporters among our students (as well as among the faculty and staff, Greene noted) and that some of them feel uncomfortable by the expressions of anger, frustration, and shock. Greene agreed that tolerance for political diversity does indeed have to be a cardinal value at an institution of higher learning in the liberal arts tradition, and some students do feel vindicated and supported by the election results, but that does not obviate the need to recognize the sense of complete “devastation” and how genuinely threatened other students feel. During her report, later in the meeting, Lori Kletzer also acknowledged that important point – political diversity must be respected – and added that one student was reported to have said that he did not sign up for “therapy sessions” in his course selections. Even so, Kletzer reminded us, for many students, we on the faculty are the people to whom they look to for advice and counsel and perspective and support. There is a responsibility that comes with that, and where there are competing responsibilities, profound and weighty in their own ways, there is the additional challenge of balancing them.

In the remainder of the President’s Report, Greene gave a shout out to Tamae Prindle for being recognized by a visiting Minister from Japan for her contributions to inter-cultural understanding, occasioning a hearty round of applause. He then announced that, as part of the on-going discussions on faculty teaching loads, the 1996 policy calling for faculty to teach an overload course between sabbaticals to be eligible for 80% sabbatical salaries was being ended, effective immediately (occasioning another hearty round of applause applause). He then broached the latest meeting of the Trustees and the issues of transparency and sharing information among different committees, turning the floor over the Faculty Representatives to the Board, Arne Koch and Jen Yoder (inexplicably not occasioning applause, hearty or otherwise).
Yoder opened by reporting that they sat in on three sessions, two meetings of the Committee of the Whole and one of the People and Programs subcommittee. They heard discussions and updates on the Waterville development projects, plans for fundraising, and the subject of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity. The recently formed People and Programs subcommittee discussed its purview and mandate, and then heard from Catherine Besteman on the Global Colby Task Force. Koch addressed the avenues of communication among the Board, the faculty representatives (to the Board, as well as to specific subcommittees), and the faculty as whole, with emphasis on the roles that Division Chairs can play.

B. The Provost’s Report – After her aforementioned remarks in connection with the gloom-and-doom of the fear-filled, anxiety-ridden post-election campus atmosphere, Kletzer offered up an array of “perky” announcements, hoping to restore some emotional balance.

1. Mary Ellis Gibson, the Arthur Jeremiah Roberts Professor of Literature was awarded tenure by the People and Programs subcommittee of the Board.
2. Ghada Gherwash has joined the faculty this month as Colby’s first ever Multilingual Writing Specialist.
3. The end of the 6th overload course for an 80% full-year faculty salary was re-announced (perky news being in shorter supply than our lengthy need).
4. The calendar will revert to having first classes on Wednesday in response to the cacophony of complaints regarding this year’s Tuesday start.
5. A Childcare advisory committee has been formed to resolve at long last the persistent frustrations of faculty and staff.

The rest of Kletzer’s announcements and discussion points, while inarguably important, arguably fall short of “perky” status.

It is a standing concern of the Committee on Academic Standing that faculty are not making sufficient use of the academic warning system. Academic warning serve to do more than just notify students that they may be in academic trouble; they also put the whole academic support team from advisers to advising deans and coaches, on notice. Perhaps they need to be renamed to reflect their role better.

While it may be early for the community to focus much energy on it, we are up for re-accreditation next year. The re-accreditation Self-Study committee will include Kletzer Sandy Maisel, Adrianna Paliyenko, Andy McGadney, Brian Clark, Kate Carlisle, Jim Sloat, Rich Majerus, Scott Jones, and Becky Brodigan. The outcome is not really hanging in the balance, so we should not treat the process as trying to win a gold medal in the reaccreditation Olympics. Rather, we should follow the “skinny mode” (and try insofar as possible to “contain the pain in Sloat’s office”). “Re-accreditation thoughts should importantly be had by the denizens of the third floor of Eustis,” but the rest of us need to keep our eye on what matters to us, including long-term planning, the Global Colby initiative, and diversity, inclusion, and equity in the community. and

Conversations are underway with departments and programs about the curricular feasibility of converting to a 4-course teaching load and how a transition could be effected. There are no guarantees but certainly nothing can be done until we take a systematic look at all the costs and benefits.
III. New Business

The responsibility for presiding over the remainder of the meeting were handed off to the “esteemed professor and faculty moderator” Martha Arterberry. Two motions were introduced by the Academic Affairs Committee, mandating later action, and one previously introduced proposal was withdrawn, permitting current inaction:

1. In light of all the problems that were raised and the opposition it generated, the motion restricting first-year students from independent studies will not be put forth and so will not need to be voted down.
2. The first new motion would change the name and amend the requirements for the Computing in Biology/Computational Biology major.
3. The other motion would drop the Economics-Mathematics major and modify the requirements for two of the other majors based in the Economics Department. Jim Fleming asked if the effect would be a net reduction in the total number of courses now required, to which Michael Donihue, chair of the Department, answered, “Yes.”.

IV. Committee Reports

Stacey Sheriff rose to report on behalf of the Writing Across the Curriculum committee (Paula Harrington, Jonathan McCoy, Margaret McFadden, Adam Howard, Adrian Blevins, Laurie Osborne, and Samara Gunther). This year there are 38 sections of W1 courses in 14 different departments and programs, 16 courses designated as W2 or W3, and 12 new proposals were reviewed. As previously reported, Colby was awarded a $270,000 grant from the Davis Educational Foundation for multilingual writing and writing-in-the-major initiatives. During the summer, 24 faculty were involved in first-year writing assessment.

Maisel asked about the final writing assignments from past W1 course that were collected by the WAC: he never received any feedback. As someone not formally trained in writing instruction, he would appreciate anything that would give him a sense of how well he is doing and what he could do to improve. Sheriff replied that the student work was collected for the purposes of creating rubrics for assessing outcomes by the first summer group, which were then implemented in the second year and revised in the third year. The results are encouraging: students reported on our survey that they do think their writing has improved. To Maisel’s point about instructor assessment specifically, Arterberry suggested that the results of the Davis report summary, which has given rise to topics for faculty development workshops, would also contain information that could be useful for W1 course instructors. Still, Sheriff, added, the aggregate assessment was designed for assessing the program; it was specifically designed not to assess individual faculty. That would be a different project.
V. Announcements

An announcement was made on behalf of Walter Hatch about the topical and timely event on Humor and Hate in political cartoons, featuring the Oak Fellow Khalid Albaih and George Danby, editorial cartoonist from the Bangor Daily News: Nov. 16 at 7:00 in Ostrove Auditorium.

Kerill O’Neill announced the Humanities Revolutions theme keynote address by McArthur Award winning photographer and videographer Latoya Ruby Frazier, Nov. 17 at 7:00 in the Page Commons Room.

Cheryl Townsend Gilkes reminded the faculty that the final screenings of Daughters of the Dust, as part of its 25th anniversary, are this week.

At 5:00, Maiselmovedweadjourn.

Resignedly submitted (bigly),
Dan Cohen
Faculty Secretary
November 13, 2016
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