

Villanova University Faculty Congress

Academic Year 2016-2018

FACULTY CONGRESS MEETING

October 20, 2016

**Present**:, Sheryl Bowen, Joseph Betz, Jerusha Conner, Alice Dailey, Angela DiBenedetto, Jennifer Dixon, Rick Eckstein, David Fiorenza, Marylu Hill, Stephanie Katz, Jeremy Kees, Christopher Kilby, Michael Levitan, Mike McGoldrick, James Peyton-Jones, Alan Pichanick, Jennifer Ross, Joseph Schick, Catherine Warrick, Mark Wilson, Dennis Wykoff,.

**Absent:** Aronte Bennett (NIA), Danai Chasaki (NIA), Sohail Chaudhry (NIA), Gordon Coonfield (sabbatical), Mirela Damian (NIA), Diane Ellis (NIA), Ruth Gordon, Shelly Howton (NIA), Rory Kramer (NIA), Eric Lomazoff (NIA), Peggy Lyons (NIA), Joseph Micucci, (NIA), Salvatore Poeta (NIA), Michael Posner (NIA), Rees Rankin, Quinetta Roberson, Kelly Welch, Rosalind Wynne (NIA), Tina Yang (NIA).

**Other Guests:** University Staff Council (Kimberly Reilly) and [Student Government Association (John Puszcz and Robert Roenitz)], Elizabeth Petit de Mangé (NSG).

The meeting convened at 2:00 PM in Rm. 300, Saint Augustine Center.

**Housekeeping**

1. Jerusha Conner introduced the invited guests from University Staff Council.
2. Introductions of Faculty Congress members present.
3. Minutes from the September 21, 2016 meeting were approved by unanimous vote.
4. The Rick Eckstein, the FC Treasurer, announced that professional development funding was available for activities related to faculty governance.
5. FC has been asked by the Provost to gather information from faculty regarding classroom facility needs. Faculty should send suggestions about specific classrooms to the following link: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ACmOYvSpXdrFo0xx-5bXakCnaAp8CE9e1fyX1akoxE8/edit>
6. R&T election results were announced: Paul Rosier (undesignated), Christopher Kilby (VSB), and Vito Punzi (COE). Each is elected to a 3 year term.
7. Kimberly Reilly, the representative from Staff Council, shared information concerning the Parental Leave and Benefits Committee. The Staff Council hopes that FC will support their efforts to improve conditions concerning family leave for staff. In addition, they would like to receive nominations (including self-nominations) from faculty to serve on this committee. Nominations can be sent to Kimberly Reilly at [kimberly.reilly@villanova.edu](mailto:kimberly.reilly@villanova.edu). The full report regarding the Parental Leave and Benefits Committee is appended to these minutes.

**Discussion of Standing Committee Reports:**

In an effort to better focus the discussion of the FC, members are now asked to read the committee reports (appended to the agenda) rather than spending time in the FC meeting reviewing all of the committee reports. Members are asked to identify issues from within the report that need to be elevated to full discussion.

At this point, Jerusha asked if there are issues to raise for further discussion from the standing committees.

Joe Betz, the retired faculty representative, noted a Villanova University ad in the *New York Times* about land mine removal in Cambodia. He also asked that the Student Bill of Rights be passed on to the University police force. He noted that the Augustinian refugee resettlement issue may involve students and faculty. Finally, he noted his concern that students often leave Villanova because they feel excluded, especially due to fraternity and sorority policies.

Jerusha asked if there are any questions regarding the reports from other committees.

Rick Eckstein, representative to the Athletics Committee, pointed out that his report was for the Board of Trustees’ Athletics Committee and not the Athletic Advisory Committee. In addition, he asked that edits be made to the report he filed. Minor changes were noted regarding revenue generated to $5.5 million.

     The AAUP campus chapter president, Michael Levitan, expanded on the report he filed, including data about PA state expenditures on higher education (see appendix for charts).

Rick Eckstein, the representative for the Athletics Committee of the Board of Trustees, encouraged faculty to read his report (appended to the FC agenda) and to send him thoughts and concerns regarding the relationship between intercollegiate athletics and the university’s educational mission, especially in light of our reclassification as an R3 university. He can be contacted at [rick.eckstein@villanova.edu](mailto:rick.eckstein@villanova.edu).

**New Business:**

1. Priority registration for athletes pilot program.

Jeremy Kees, the Faculty Athletics Representative, reported that the Provost has decided to move forward with the pilot priority registration program, and the pilot would include all student athletes for the spring semester (rather than a small sub-set to start). A lengthy discussion ensued, with multiple concerns raised. The AAC representative acknowledged the FA representative’s good work with the task force, but expressed disappointment that the appropriate processes and governance structures were not followed. The issue was not given its due diligence, and faculty and students were not allowed an adequate opportunity to weigh in. In addition, it is problematic that the pilot study includes all athletes rather than a preliminary sample, and no caps have been placed on class sections to prevent athletes taking all available spots in any given course.

The FA representative noted that the current system within the Registrar’s office does not permit capping of courses in this way, but the AAC representative countered that provisions could have been made if the process had not been rushed.

Other concerns were raised about equity issues for non-athlete students in registration. The impact on academic advisors was also a matter of concern, especially in its impact on their workload.

The discussion returned to the question of due process. The main objections were that the process was rushed, it excluded faculty governance, and it did not draw upon available data to craft policy. There was a general sense that the recommendations of the task force had been largely ignored in the effort to move quickly into implementing the pilot program. In addition, many of the questions now being raised could have been avoided by not rushing into the pilot program.

There was a strong recommendation to continue collecting data, especially data generated from the current registration period. Areas to assess include: which classes fill immediately due to priority registration; who requests course overrides, and whether they are granted; which courses the athletes tend to choose; whether the priority registration genuinely helps the athletes get into classes they need. Several faculty also emphasized the need for meaningful caps for numbers of athletes enrolled in any given course. Reasons given were: helping athletes learn alongside other students (rather than ending up in classes that are filled only with other athletes); preventing adjunct faculty from being pressured or over-burdened by a concentration of athletes in one class.

The FA representative was asked if the task force should continue to meet, and he stated that he hoped AAC will take over that role once the University Council re-organization plan takes effect. In the meantime, the task force should remain ready to act and work on these issues. The FA representative also reminded the FC that athletes genuinely struggle with the limitations of classes open to them, and as a result their choice of major can suffer.

The conversation returned to the governance issue, and the FC chair asked whether the FC should address the process issues with the Provost. There was an objection from the FA representative that the process was followed, but the task force simply didn’t get what it asked for. A counter-objection arose that the task force worked under very limited conditions under which they could not do a good job: there were only two meetings, with no data in advance of the first meeting, little more available for the second, and the report was required immediately after the second meeting. The process was described as “indefensible.”

A further suggestion was made to draw upon outside accrediting bodies like the NCAA and Middle States to give more weight to faculty concerns about governance with this issue. Drawing on the experiences of other universities with similar programs would also provide more useful data. It was noted that the task force was in the process of collecting that data when it was derailed.

The final point was made that there are positive reasons to include faculty input on this pilot program. These reasons include: improving teamwork and unitas; increasing faculty buy-in to the pilot; and generating useful data to share and disseminate.

FC will continue to reflect on and monitor the impact of the pilot program, with reports of a systematic study expected from the AAC.

2. Conversation with Millicent Gaskell, Director of Falvey Memorial Library

FC invited Millicent Gaskell, Director of Falvey Library, to share information about the library’s budget and the impact of budgetary constraints on procuring and continuing subscriptions for electronic resources, as well as for increasing and maintaining the print collection. Discussion points included the rising costs of subscriptions, the “flat” budget of the library, and the need for faculty to work with the librarians to identify how the library can best support student and faculty research. There were questions concerning the University’s move to R3 status, and how it impacts the centrality of the library to faculty and student research. Ms. Gaskell noted that the Provost is aware of the need to invest in the academic side of the house, including the library.

Ms. Gaskell shared with FC the bind that the library finds itself in regarding the rising costs of subscriptions. Due to the tenure-process, faculty need to publish; they also need access to the key journals in their disciplines. The publishers know that university libraries need that access (and that the libraries are unlikely to cancel their subscriptions); as a result, they can raise their subscription prices at will, knowing that libraries have to pay. The publishers know that these resources are essential and often required for accreditation in the various disciplines; thus they are generally not willing to negotiate the prices. There was a general discussion of the possibilities of an open access model, and it was acknowledged that if enough universities went the open-access route, it would help, but at present, that is not the norm.

Jerusha asked what sorts of things faculty can do to support the library. Ms. Gaskell recommended that FC work through the budget committee to advocate for the library; she also hoped that grassroots campaigns might arise for open access. She also recommended that faculty contact the liaison librarians (for each discipline) to work with departments directly on what resources the library should prioritize. She especially emphasized that faculty should encourage their students to do research, and to use the wide range of materials that the library has available.

Meeting adjourned at 3:28 p.m.

Submitted by Marylu Hill, Faculty Congress Secretary

November 16, 2016

APPENDIX

**Report from the Parental Benefits and Resources Committee**

An ad hoc parental leave task force was formed by members of USC as of last spring to address staff concerns re: the new policy effective August 24, 2016. We have been working closely with Kathryn Getek-Soltis on this initiative and have broadened the scope of what we hope to accomplish to include transparency of parental leave benefit information, lactation rooms, university-supported mothers groups, and more.  That being said, we will likely re-name the committee the Parental Benefits and Resources Committee.

You may remember that the staff policy is now as follows: Staff members are granted 8 weeks of paid parental leave days.  If the staff member wishes to take the 12 weeks guaranteed by FMLA, they can, but they must use their vacation days to be paid for the remaining 4 weeks (20 days). Staff members may not used accrued sick days for this purpose.

Some of our concerns include:

1. The maximum amount of vacation days afforded to an exempt staff member is 23. For these lucky individuals, it IS possible to be paid through 12 weeks of FMLA. However, this is not the case for many staff members, particularly non-exempt employees and those in the lowest salary bands (whose families may be most adversely affected by unpaid time).  For a full breakdown of staff vacation time, click [here](http://www1.villanova.edu/villanova/hr/benefits/family/timeoff/vacation_fulltime.html).
2. Staff may only use 4 sick days to care for unexpectedly ill family members or to accompany a family member to a doctor’s appointment. There is no clear policy on sick leave for mental health concerns (postpartum depression).
3. The accessibility of lactation rooms on campus is limited and locations are unclear for new mothers on campus (staff and faculty).
4. The transparency of parental leave and benefits information (policy, protocol, and implementation) is limited. This includes the childcare benefit. There is no clear guide or brochure online for new or expectant parents, and most information must be obtained via phone call to a single member of the Benefits team.
5. A new mother’s group exists on campus, but is housed and paid for by the Center for Peace and Justice Education. This should be supported by the university.
6. Parental leave days are counted against calendar days, not university open days (e.g. If leave occurs over a holiday like Thanksgiving or Christmas, those holidays are still deducted from the parental leave days, regardless of whether the campus is open).
7. Supervisors are not educated on the ethics and implementation of the university parental leave policy, resulting in unreasonable expectations re: an early return to work, miscommunication, and sometimes termination or transfer.
8. Granting faculty members 15 weeks paid and staff members 8 weeks paid is problematic as the needs of new parents do not differ according to faculty/staff designation. The University Senate endorsed a proposal that supported 12 weeks paid for both faculty and staff on April 21, 2015. The new policy effective August 14, 2016 goes above and beyond for members of the faculty while falling short for members of the staff.

We know Faculty Congress has worked tirelessly to improve the parental leave benefit offered and is pleased with the outcome of the new policy.  We celebrate this victory with you, appreciate our own progress, and value any assistance you have to offer your staff colleagues as we move forward.

We hope that you will consider providing a Faculty Congress representative (or representatives) to serve on the Parental Benefits and Resources Committee.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

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All the best,

**Kimberly Reilly**

Director of Marketing & PR

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VU AAUP Report (Appendix)

PA State System of Higher Education (SSHE)