

Meeting Minutes – BSC Faculty Senate

Location: Tierney Conference Room

Date: October 7, 2022

Time: 3:00pm

Attendance:

Julie Orr, Deb Chakrabarti, Michelle Taylor, Rodney Montague, James Pruett, Tom LaFone, Amanda Matoushek, Vanessa Godfrey, Amy Atwell, Carol Cofer, Sandy Wynn, Kelli Sarver, Melissa Haye, Mike Lilly, Jerry Wood, Debbie Tonelli, Diane Belcher, Tesfaye Belay, Philip Schall, Peter Ronhovde, Jack Sheffler, Amanda Banks, Adrian Ayersman, James Quesenberry, James Walters, Elizabeth Walters, Sean Connolly, Roy Pruett; Faculty Senate Vice-Chair.

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Roy Pruett; Faculty Senate Vice-Chair at 3:01 pm.

Roy stated that Brent Benjamin had contacted him and wanted to set up a meeting with the faculty senate. He said he had received the comments from the School of Nursing and Allied Health, but had not received any comments from any other schools. Vanessa Godfrey stated that during the BOG meeting on Monday, the comment was made that the BOG and the president would meet with the faculty senate. Carol Cofer stated that according to her notes she took at the meeting, the BOG directed the president to meet with the faculty senate for their input.

At this time, Roy Pruett asked for the members of the meeting to make comments of any concerns that they may have.

Carol Cofer stated that she is the second longest faculty member at BSU. She stated that she had attended the State of the University earlier that day and was very upset that the president had made the comment that before the present administration came to the school, we did not prepare the students to job ready. She has been at the university for many years and knows that the faculty have always had students job ready when they graduate. She stated that she remembers the days of the faculty assembly before faculty senate began. They were poorly attended and nothing ever was accomplished. She said at this time of faculty governance, some were afraid to speak out about issues. She said as stated by Mike Lilly at the BOG meeting on Monday, all schools use the faculty senate model. She said that during her tenure as a faculty senate representative for the BOG in 2020-2021, the faculty senate brought forth the faculty constitution that stated that the president is to meet at least quarterly with the faculty senate to discuss affecting faculty. Past faculty senate chairs and vice-chairs had meetings with previous presidents, they would also set in the president's office monthly to discuss any concerns or ideas. She does not think these meetings have occurred since the new administration started. During this same time, the BOG was also reminded that they too were to meet with the faculty senate on a yearly senate. Her last comment was that

the faculty constitution states that any changes to the constitution are to be initiated by the faculty senate.

Amanda Matoushek made the comment that the faculty constitution policy that the president will meet with the faculty senate is also in the WV State Code 18B-6-3, Sections F and G.

Mike Lilly stated that there is actually a faculty assembly at the WVSOM due to having so few faculty members.

Vanessa Godfrey, commented about the report that was created by Brent Benjamin. The report stated that everything that was decided during faculty senate was illegal after the April 2022 meeting. She stated that Benjamin said the report was from interviews with many people, which was only 2. He said there were no minutes from the meeting, although he never requested to have the minutes from the April meeting. She also stated that the faculty member that was not allowed to run for faculty senate chair was due to the fact that he was a visiting faculty member. She said the wording of the report was twisted to sound as if we were having unfair practices. Another faculty member was nominated to run for faculty senate chair, but did not win, was offered the vice-chair position but refused.

James Quesenberry stated that he was the person that was denied running for faculty senate chair. He says he was asked to join the faculty senate by his dean. He says he has been here for two years as a visiting faculty. He stated that this could have been handled in a different manner. He was nominated for the chair position, but was kicked out from a meeting that transpired by a handful of people. He never got a chance to speak, he received an email that he was no longer on the faculty senate. He said that according to the constitution, clinical faculty are the same as visiting faculty. He has had his attorney looked at the constitution and said it was completely unethical and that he does not state that a visiting instructor cannot be a member of the faculty senate. He said that after the meeting in April, that visiting faculty senate members that had been on for many years were also removed.

Adrian Ayersman commented that she was removed from the faculty senate at this time and was told to not take it personally. She stated that she had been at the college for 20 years and had even graduated from the school.

James Walters asked if procedures were written out in the senate that were to be followed about who was allowed to sit on the faculty senate. He says he sees how the visiting members would be upset since they were chosen to represent their school. He understands the point that the visiting faculty members are trying to make, but there must be a way to fix this problem. Destroying the faculty senate would not be the way to repair the issues. He wants to know if the rules can be changed and all parties be accommodated. He feels that the administration is using this dilemma to do something extremely drastic to the faculty. He stated that by the way this meeting is going, this has shown how a faculty assembly would operate, who could talk the loudest.

James Quesenberry stated that this is strictly business to him and that he is not under anyone's control. He says that he does not care what anyone thinks this is tied into. He says that all he cares about is that 4 people were done wrong over the faculty senate

representation. He feels that a faculty assembly would let everyone have a voice, not just the senate members.

Michelle Taylor said that when we saw the push for faculty assembly from administration it stated that it was the superior model and no pros and cons were given. She wants to know who governs this way. She said the US does not govern like this, nor does the BOG. Committees are selected to make decisions and disperse out to the BOG. She does not know how we would have a voice if we must gather faculty in to get 2/3 vote. This is not a governing model that would be conducive to the faculty.

Adrian Ayersman said that there is representation from faculty, classified staff, etc., but there is no representation from adjunct or visiting faculty.

Vanessa Godfrey stated that there was an executive committee meeting in April and that they had made a determination if visiting and adjuncts were qualified to be on the faculty senate. She stated that Mr. Quesenberry failed to say that on the following Monday, the entire faculty senate met and voted for that decision. Some remained silent, but there were not any "no" votes.

James Quesenberry stated that he received an email before the Monday meeting that he was to step down from the senate. During the Monday meeting, no visiting faculty members were present.

James Walters stated that he feels like this is wrong if the visiting or adjunct faculty does not have representation on the faculty senate.

Vanessa Godfrey read the constitution policy pertaining to who can be a member: the Bluefield State College faculty shall consist of all individuals holding the rank of instructor, assistant and associate professor, and professor, who are full-time employees of Bluefield State College. Professors emeritus and emeriti shall be welcomed as ex-officio, nonvoting observers at faculty meetings. She said that we worked this summer to make the policy more clear cut and sent out to all faculty for a vote. At that time, we received a message from the BOG that we were operating illegally, so all came to a stop.

Amanda Matoushek stated that as a faculty senate body, we have a code that provides us with some kind of guidance, who has to meet with us when. With an assembly, there is nothing in code about meetings, etc. Her concern with the board putting forth motion for comments on the disbandment of the faculty senate and that the president will put together bylaws on how the faculty assembly. Until we have seen the bylaws, how can we let them dissolve the senate where we have protection?

Sean Connolly stated that this sets a very dangerous precedent for faculty representation.

Peter Ronhovde stated that he feels that after a visiting faculty member has been at the college for more than 3 years that they then could move into a permanent position.

Carol Cofer stated that according to the constitution, a decision was to be made by the end of a visiting instructor's third year whether or not the instructor would be offered a contract or let go.

Vanessa Godfrey stated that during our meetings this summer, the senate was working on the membership policy to allow visiting/adjunct faculty to be members of the senate, but no able to run for office. That would give representation to all faculty.

James Quesenberry asked why was the decision to not allow visiting faculty on the senate after he was nominated for senate chair. He also asked why the decision wasn't made to allow him to stay on the senate, but not allow him to run for office.

Kelli Sarver stated that when you become a member of the faculty senate you must learn policies and procedures. Someone who has only been at the college for one year, does not know all that needs to be known to run for senate chair.

Rodney Montague stated that when he was a member of the senate, he worked with many great members. He has communicated with members from all schools wanting to make the experience better for their students. The faculty senate should work for the betterment of the student.

Sean Connolly stated that we needed to distinguish between senate misconduct and senate mistakes. Governing bodies make mistakes and these need to be addressed and what measures need to be taken to resolve these mistakes. He feels that whatever misconduct the senate has had in the past, does not constitute the dissolution of the faculty senate all together. The faculty senate needs to ensure that a change needs to be made to allow a representative for visiting and adjunct.

Amanda Matoushek stated that in the report by Brent Benjamin on 9/1/22, he stated that the senate need to have another election to allow for visiting to be a part. Then before the senate had a chance to have another election, the BOG sent out a memo stated that the faculty senate would be dissolved. We were not given an opportunity to go back and have another election. She stated that this is what would happen if we went to an assembly. We would not have a voice.

Mike Lilly, who is the faculty representative on the BOG, stated that he was the only person that voted against the BOG to move forward with a faculty assembly. He stated that even the staff representative voted with the BOG. He asked for support his opposition of the proposal for a faculty senate. At that time, Mr. Lilly made the motion to move forward with his opposition of a faculty assembly, Deb Chakrabarti seconded the motion, the vote was a unanimous yes, with no one voting no.

Carol Cofer stated that we can't give our power away. That all the policies for faculty that the BOG and president is creating, like the new promotion and tenure policy, should not hold water with WV Code.

At this time, Roy Pruett asked to move to an executive meeting with only faculty senate members. He asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the July 26, 2022 meeting. Michelle Taylor made a motion to approve minutes, Vincent Mateescu seconded the motion. Minutes were approved with no changes to be made.

Michelle Taylor made a motion that we would like to remain as a faculty senate and reject the faculty assembly model. Also, we would like to amend the current policy to add visiting and adjunct faculty to the senate for an adequate representation of all faculty. These members would be voting members, but not allowed to run for office. Vanessa Godfrey seconded the motion. All were in favor, no one opposed.

Vanessa reminded the senate that at the present time the proposal for a faculty assembly is out for a 30-day comment and that everyone should send in their comments to the president.

Mike Lilly stated that under the new policy guidelines, there are no longer a faculty position known as a visiting professor on this campus. A visiting professor is now someone who teaches on another campus or university and teaches a class for us. It is now known as a fixed contract employee and is a one-year contract.

Roy stated that Brent Benjamin contacted him asking for the members of the faculty senate and a date the he could meet with the senate. Vanessa stated that we had asked for a meeting with Benjamin for an entire year and he wouldn't even answer our emails. Deb stated that the president also needs to meet with us. Roy will contact Benjamin and let him know that we will be happy to meet with him and would like to schedule a meeting with the president, also.

Peter Ronhovde made the remark that if we lose our faculty senate, all other schools will also.

Michelle stated she would send out a doodle poll to get a good day and time for the meeting with Brent Benjamin.

Adjournment:

At this time with no other issues, Roy asked for a motion to adjourn. Mike Lilly made a motion to adjourn, Vanessa Godfrey seconded the motion, meeting was adjourned at 4:25 pm.

RP/aa