Office of the Faculty Senate, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Secretary's Notes
13 December 2016

The 763rd regular meeting of the Faculty Senate, the last of the fall 2016 semester, will feature a manageable agenda beginning with a Committee of the Whole discussion of considerations entering into formulating the academic calendar before having the usual rounds of announcements and questions, receiving one Council’s annual report, approving new courses and programs under our consent agenda procedure plus two items of new business to be taken up separately, and one item of old business.

The General Education Council has received comments on the substantive and logistical aspects of the proposed revisions to the diversity requirement from other Faculty Senate Councils, the Committee of the Whole discussion at the November meeting, and other members of the faculty writing individually or in groups (all these comments are posted on the Faculty Senate webpage; go to the home page and click the link “Comments on Proposed Revision to General Education Diversity Requirement”). The logistical comments have brought home the point that implementing a revised requirement in September 2017 is not feasible. With a September 2018 start date in mind, the Council is continuing to address the substantive issues identified in the comments.

Committee of the Whole

We will use the period often given over to presentations to have a discussion of the considerations involved in formulating the academic calendar. Over the years, this process and the particular results for any year have been the subject of comments from the floor, particularly on the matter of how many class days are included. This is an opportunity to exchange views, hear concerns, and gain information so that there is broader understanding among the faculty of the considerations that need to be balanced in calendar-making.

Representative Ellen Story, who has served the Amherst area by representing it in the State House of Representatives for many years, must be in Boston on Thursday for legislative business. We will have an opportunity to mark her retirement and thank her for her public service at the January meeting.

Announcements and Question Period

There will be some announcements.

We will also have the general question period.
Annual Report

At this meeting, we continue the effort to get Councils back onto a more regular reporting cycle. This month, we have the report for 2015-16 from the Commonwealth Honors College Council.

New Courses: Consent Agenda

As always, any Senator may request that an item on a consent agenda be separated out for separate discussion and consideration. It would be helpful if anyone seeking a separate discussion notify the Senate Office in advance, but advance notice is not required.

This month’s consent agenda includes 13 new courses – 5 at the undergraduate level recommended by the Academic Matters Council, and 8 at the graduate level recommended by the Graduate Council.

New Business: Consent Agenda

This month’s consent agenda includes an accelerated master’s degree program recommended by the Academic Matters and Graduate Councils plus another master’s degree program, one graduate certificate, and two concentrations within master’s degree programs recommended by the Graduate Council.

New Business: Policy for All Students Declaring a Primary Major and Those Making Subsequent Changes of Major

This item has been separated out from the consent agenda for two reasons. It involves adoption of a formal policy in an area that has been covered by campus practices that have not always been aligned with one another. It establishes a strong reference that undergraduates entering as new freshers declare a primary major by the preregistration period of their third semester, while allowing for exceptions in cases of special circumstances justifying a delay. It is also separated because, after consultation with the chairs of the Academic Matters Council and its Policy Subcommittee, the Rules Committee is oaring an amendment to specify more clearly how students will be made aware of the requirement and related policies. The original version included a paragraph indicating that students should be aware; statements about advising in related policies suggested a better way to state the policy. Thus the Rules Committee will be proposing that the current paragraph 3 be replaced by a new paragraph 3 reading:

This policy must be prominently displayed in the academic regulations, college handbooks, and the Academics and college student-related web pages, together with reminders that the university requires successful academic progress in the major and compliance with the university's rule to graduate in 10 semesters or fewer (see the 10 Semester Rule in the Academic Regulations). The Bursar's Office must also ensure through its website or other appropriate notification that students know
school/college fees already assessed for that semester are not refundable when they change major after the end of the enrollment add/drop period.

New Business: Approval of an Exchange Agreement between the University of Massachusetts Amherst and the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid.

This is the first new exchange agreement approved since September 2013. Our partner university is a public university established in 1989 drawing 20% of its students from outside Spain, with greatest strengths in business and economics.

New Business: Nominations to Faculty Senate Councils and Committees

Members of Councils and Committees have three-year, renewable terms. They are staggered so that some begin in the fall and others in the spring. This report of the Nominating Committee nominates faculty for terms that will begin in January.

Old Business: Amendment to the Comprehensive Policy on Approval and Review of Centers and Institutes

This is an amendment to clarify that faculty interested in forming a new Center or Institute should first seek Interim Approval from the Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement, and only after that – but within the 3 years during which Interim Approval – submit a proposal through the Course and Curriculum Management System for full Approval. The rules confused three groups of proposers during the fall term, and the amendment is intended to make everyone’s life easier by reducing ambiguity about how those working on a new center or institute should proceed.

MJ Peterson
Secretary