Office of the Faculty Senate, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Secretary’s Notes
24 January 2017

The 764th meeting of the Faculty Senate has an agenda featuring a large number of courses, some policy changes, some program additions or changes, and four decisions relating to academic calendars. This reflects the amount of work accomplished by Councils before winter break. We will also hear a number of statements.

Before providing item-by-item notes for this month’s meeting, two other topics merit notice.

Vacancy in the Rules Committee

By longstanding Faculty Senate practice, faculty members who accept appointment as an Associate Dean are not eligible to serve as elected Senators and, as a consequence, may also not serve as at-large members of the Rules Committee. Deans’ ongoing search for leadership talent affects the Faculty Senate occasionally, at this moment because Dean Tim Anderson has persuaded Jim Rinderle to become an Associate Dean in the College of Engineering. I know I speak for all in thanking Jim for his excellent service as a Senator and as a member of the Rules Committee. His term on the Rules Committee expires in September, so this election would be to replace Jim for the rest of the spring term and the summer. The election will be held at the February meeting.

Revision of the General Education Diversity Requirement

As we left for break, the proposed revisions were still a topic of much discussion. The General Education Council’s meetings in November, after our Committee of the Whole discussion, and in December, after our discussion during Question Period and a meeting between the deans and many members of the Gen Ed Council devoted considerable time to summaries of the discussions and thoughts about how to address the various concerns that had been raised. It decided to have a “Think Tank” session with a number of faculty members not on the Council who have taught U designated courses for some time and discuss what participants thought should and should not be in the statement of learning outcomes. This session was held last Thursday and was very productive. The Council will be continuing its discussions. I am expecting a new proposal before the end of term, but it is too early to say exactly when the Council will report it to the Faculty Senate.

Notes on the meeting items.

Address by Former State Representative Ellen Story

As members know, longtime State Representative Ellen Story decided to retire and therefore did not run for re-election. We had initially planned to give her an opportunity to speak and use an opportunity to thank her for her long service to the district at the
December meeting, but the House was called to meet that day. So, after a short pause, we now follow up on our plan.

**Announcements and Question Period**

Winter break does not entirely stop activity on campus, so it is reasonable to expect announcements. With or without announcements, Senators usually have questions.

**Approval of a Rules Committee Action taken on Behalf of the Senate in January.**

The Bylaws provide in 6-3-1(m) that the Rules Committee may act for the Senate on routine matters when “necessary, appropriate, and expedient.” The Rules Committee used this power earlier in the month to approve a new Graduate Certificate in Trust, Assurance, and Cybersecurity so that it would be available at the start of spring term registration at the Springfield Center where the courses will be offered. It is a more advanced parallel to the existing undergraduate certificate and permits the University to contribute more effectively to local need for high-level training in the area of cybersecurity.

**Annual Report of the Ombuds Office**

University Ombuds Carol Booth is presenting the first annual report she has prepared. It details the office’s activities and changes being made to implement the campus’s decision that the Ombuds Office should function in accordance with the standards developed by International Ombuds Association (IOA). These include a set of Uniform Reporting Categories, which allow for more consistent comparisons of conflicts and conflict-resolution across organizations.

**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 notifies the Senate Office before the meeting, but this is not required.

This consent agenda includes 12 courses recommended by the Academic Matters Council, 8 recommended jointly by it and the Graduate Council because they are proposed as 500-level courses open to both undergraduate and graduate students, and 17 recommended by the Graduate Council.

**New Business: Graduate School Grievance Procedure**

This item has been set as a separate agenda item because it is restoring to the set of academic grievance procedures a set of provisions relating to situations that arise in graduate programs only. These had been dropped in 2000 when then-existing policies were consolidated into a single academic grievance policy. As that single policy was being revised last year, the fact that the 2000 policy referred only to disputes over grades was noted. The Graduate Council then undertook this work to reinstate in academic grievance
policies provisions covering the other sorts of academic disputes relevant to graduate programs. Adopting this separately assists in tracing the legislative history.

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This consent agenda covers 3 proposals: 2 on revising existing undergraduate certificates and 1 on revising and adding new concentrations within the Bachelor of Arts Geography Degree (these do not affect the department’s Bachelor of Science Geography Degree Program.)

New Business: Calendars

The Senate will consider two items of new business relating to academic calendars. The first is a new set of Principles and Procedures for Composing Academic Calendars to replace a 1982 statement that has been rendered obsolete by changes in course registration technology, modes of instruction, development of Continuing and Professional Education’s online programs, and initiation of the partly on-campus, partly online graduate programs being offered in partnership with Shorelight. The second is the Academic Calendar for 2019-20.

Old Business: Policy on Undergraduates Declaring Their Majors

This item was tabled at the December meeting to provide additional time for discussing the policy’s implications.

Old Business: Calendars

The Academic Calendars for 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19 need to be amended to provide for the University Summer Session to be used by the graduate programs being offered in partnership with Shorelight.

MJ Peterson
Secretary