

Minutes: BSUFA Meet & Confer w/BSU Administration 02.25.09

BSUFA: C.Brown, D.Leif, D.Peterson, S.Cutler, J.Ueland, M.Wolf, B.McManus;

BSU ADMIN: J. Quistgard, N.Erickson, W.Maki, L.Erwin,

C.B. Questions: 1. Are you considering retrenchment?

N.E.: No, not at this time.

C.B. Are any faculty currently under investigation?

N.E. Is this the appropriate group to which we are to bring names of faculty under investigation?

C.B. In regards to the data-practices act, the BSUFA Exec. Board is the appropriate group.

N.E. Not sure about that. After all, faculty may have BSUFA representative at any relevant meeting.

C.B. This is the appropriate venue for this data.

C.B. & J.Q.: There are no faculty under investigation and no investigations have been completed.

Budget Update:

C.B. with the tentative contract settlement, faculty are giving up 3% per year in accepting a pay freeze, so we are asking that be counted on cuts that may be proposed. Students come here for the classes we teach, the education we provide.

D.L. if concerned that a 10% across the board cut is being indicated to departments by Deans. Is this true? Is there a coming purge of Adjuncts & Fixed-termers? Can we get a list at whose classes etc. will be cut? Objects that sizable amounts in salaries are being taken out by faculty undertaking administrative duties. Adjuncts are needed to fill in. Adjuncts are also revenue generators, their classes turn profits.

N.E. We are following the IFO contract on dealing with budget crisis. We are looking at non-contractual reassigned time, then at adjuncts and fixed-term positions. It is said that adjuncts are cheap, but we want to build on full-time faculty.

C.B. It is sometimes appropriate to hire adjuncts to backfill faculty who have administrative duties.

N.E. Departments' curricula should, for example in Liberal Education, rest on full-time faculty.

D.L. agreed Carol Nielson was not replaced by a fixed-term position.

N.E. Did not know about this. Full-time tenured faculty should be the basis of our economic plan.

D.L. But now we hear searches for probationary positions have been paused.

C.B. The Deans are meeting to discuss program shifts.

N.E. Faculty and Departments have not made things as lean as they need to be. Deans are also trying to get at this. Non-contractual reassigned time is now being examined.

C.B. What are the criteria?

N.E. No criteria have been stated; this is being examined. One Department has 44 credits of reassigned time and they want a position.

S.C. What happens to Departments that have to rely for a course on an adjunct, when there is not specific expertise in the available faculty to teach the course, a course needed for the degree or for licensure?

C.B. We will take up that issue ahead on positions.

N.E. The pause applies to all but three faculty positions in the search pipeline, the ones where candidates have been invited to campus.

C.B. Once the budget data is in, we want to know there will be transparency.

N.E. That's the intent.

J.U. What is the governor's schedule? When will it become clear how BSU will fare?

J.Q. About ten days after the budget announcement (on c.3 March) we'll have a better idea. In particular, it's not clear how the federal stimulus bill will affect things. The governor must further explain.

W.M. It looks like the end of March will be the time when a firm proposal will come down. The MnSCU Board then will set tuition parameters.

J.Q. Agrees.

C.B. Is there any truth to the rumor that higher-cost universities (like BSU) may get a lower rate of tuition increase.

W.M. No such decision has been made yet.

V.P. Lisa Erwin arrives:

ENROLLMENT REPORT

L.E. Enrollment indicators have flattened out a bit. We're 10% ahead in applications & 4% ahead in transfer.

M.W. When do we get firmer evidence?

L.E. By the time of AAR in March.

RESIDENTIAL LIFE REPORT

L.E. We are moving to a point system for residence. We have 355 applications. It's hard to fill all the requests without Maple. About 1,400 rooms total.

D.P. Has noticed more students in the Union.

L.E. Beaverbucks programs have been helpful.

M.W. Can Aramark's success translate into more services in Summer?

W.M. & L.E. (discussion): Overall, the Aramark arrangement is not working for summer. They are losing money in the summer. Aramark may not be able to provide the same level of service this coming summer as they did last summer.

POSITIONS

N.E. We have decided to pause faculty searches, except for the three (Nursing & Math Education) that have brought candidates to campus until the budget picture is clearer. The Speech position has been attached to the English Department; English intends for the time being to use that position to hold a faculty person teaching College Writing.

L.E. Student Affairs will use temporary positions to deal with necessary workload.

N.E. If the budget picture drops far enough, even the non-paused positions could be pulled back. We really hope it will not.

D.P. Great concern that cutting positions for the smaller programs such as Geology & Computer Science will be tantamount to cutting Majors. Urges that consideration of small programs' necessity be taken into account and that they be protected.

N.E. We are looking for ways to sustain small programs, to staff them possibly for a while on an interim basis. No intention to eliminate programs. They will need more time to look at reasonable ways to realign curriculum to sustain their programs.

D.L. What about a pause for Deans searches? The Hibbing position – is that going forward?

N.E. not aware of that.

J.U. There is another Dean search ready to begin. Will that be held back.

N.E. We are not planning to pause Deans searches at present.

C.B. Regarding the finalists for the Dean search. What are their names? Why has there been a delay in notifying us?

N.E. We are just getting going. There has not been a delay or withholding of notification.

C.B. Please get the list out to faculty quickly. What about the second Dean search? And the third: will there be a search for that? Is the current Interim Dean a one-year or two year position?

N.E. 1 year with a possibility of renewal for a second year.

J.U. How is this renewal done? Does the faculty have input on renewal. Is this like a search?

N.E. We have not considered fully how we are going to proceed on this. The AVP has the say.

C.B. Concerned that the budget timeline will push searches into the summer, particularly the Deans, would like to avoid that.

S.C. Regarding Adjuncts, if they cannot be hired, how does Professional Education cover courses essential for licensure when current faculty do not have that expertise?

N.E. We know there must be some accommodation. Departments that need adjuncts will have to make the case -- in this case, reading expertise & language arts. What do Departments absolutely need? Required courses are most important. We have to realign resources to fit needs. Tenured faculty should be teaching the courses required for Majors. Programs that are dependent on adjuncts teaching required courses – that is something that must be rolled back.

C.B. Can Departments draw from retired faculty?

J.Q. There are the two criteria that must be satisfied. Those faculty who have accepted an early retirement incentive would be a problem. There are two conditions for allowing that.

D.L. The MnSCU cost-study provides an important basis for looking at this. Is this a criterion?

N.E. Yes, it is.

D.P. There is concern that the information in the cost study is not good in many cases. For example, mixed Grad-Undergrad courses appear to double-count the faculty salaries. To whom can we bring problems with the data?

W.M. Institutional Research and Finance worked on the cost study. Double counting of salaries should not have been able to happen.

D.P. Cost of Graduate Study appears to be assigned to upper division. Reassigned time should not be counted, it should be pulled out. But it appears to have been counted. The result is often based on erroneous data. Even trying to understand the data, we get rationale but not figures. Ivan Weir has not been responsive.

M.W. Faculty have been asked to be mindful of the cost study, but we have no real idea of how it works. Department data vary wildly year-to-year, which is a signature of bad data.

N.E. Discussion over how this goes. We could have an informational session. Points out that low-enrolled courses in the upper division hurt us.

J.Q. *et al.* Agree there is a need for such an informational session. Looking at the best forum for doing this.

The list of retiring faculty is presented.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

C.B. What do we know about Federal stimulus package?

J.Q. Still not clear how the stimulus education funding will be allocated and how it can be spent. Time will tell.

C.B. Lobby Days brought more horror stories from the legislators. The meeting with the legislators at the AIRC went well, well-attended. Noted the statements from BSU students and from Deb Peterson. The legislators seem to have been looking for a tax increase, but they need public urging and support for this to overcome the governor. The cuts in local-government aids may also have serious ramifications for BSU.

J.Q. We need to emphasize training of the work force. The high-skilled work force will be extremely important for recovery and future growth. The announced candidates for governor need to address this issue. The federal stimulus is substantial, but it is only 2-years of money.

C.B. Short term money could be used for retirement incentives.

J.Q. is that a segue to the M.o.A. on extending the retirement timeline?

C.B. OK. It seems like that will happen and that more retirements may be possible.

Retirements Announced:

S. Gurney, English; D. Kingsbury, Tech. Studies; R. Richards, Computer Science; D. Sakrisan, Prof. Ed.; M. Schmidt, Tech. Studies; R. Womack, Nursing.

Additionally, S. Rosselet, Computer Science, has declared intention to retire effective 12/17/09.

C.B. Communications from the BSU Administration has been less than ideal. It seems like sometimes we need to initiate grievance to get answers to questions. Professional Education may go that way. Information is coming through other channels. The Deans seem to be releasing information faster than it's coming through Meet & Confer.

N.E. This has been discussed a bit already. Administration is in favor of co-sponsored events to get information out. Open forums are good. Transparency is very important. The grievance process revolves around contract violations or misinterpretations. Administration is responding to sudden problems. These are not policy issues, they are operational issues. The "pause" in searches, for example, does not mean policy change. We don't want to wait to minimize the lasting effects.

C.B. The pause is a policy change. Also, the Chairs are being used to receive communications in cases where Meet & Confer is the appropriate venue. It is not appropriate to announce policy changes to the Department Chairs.

N.E. The pause is not a policy change.

C.B. Yes, it is.

J.Q. Sometimes, informal communications are best. Administration believes transparency is very important. With budget information and rumors coming in so quickly, we are reluctant to say some things because they are not final.

C.B. Why not more email communications?

J.Q. We want to communicate in ways that are flexible and adaptable.

C.B. We are not trying to restrict communications.

J.Q. agrees with that.

C.B. regarding “Department Snapshots,” recommendations that courses be cut or offered as Ind. Study etc. we have concerns that these adjustments are based on bad data. Much consternation has followed from the distribution of these recommendations.

N.E. These are just suggestions about course offerings and frequency of offerings. The current curriculum is too broad. Snapshots are an attempt to make the problem clear and how it could be corrected.

J.Q. Regarding the accuracy of the data, please bring evidence of inaccuracy to the Deans immediately.

C.B. We’re just pointing this out. We agree that good data must be used.

S.C. In some cases, low-numbered classes are suggested to be dropped. In some cases, either the grad. or the undergrad. side of a double numbered course was suggested to be dropped. Also, even courses that have high enrollment but are taught by adjuncts have been suggested to be dropped.

N.E. agrees good data must be used.

J.U. Many classes used to establish course capacity, including on-line, even to 100 students. It is being suggested that some high-enrollment classes be cut in Liberal Education so as to allow other classes to fill. This may not be a good strategy or the right strategy.

N.E. It may not be the right strategy, but the goal is important.

J.Q. We need to have and publicize good data; if the data is bad we’ve got to improve it.

D.P. It’s good to have the philosophy of these suggestions, e.g., that Lib.-Ed. courses across campus be allowed to fill.

N.E. the sequencing of courses and the rationale for various courses could be better expressed.

C.B. These suggestions from a Dean are not just advice. There is an element of authority behind them that makes Departments worry.

J.Q. agrees that transparency is important, necessary in the process of adjusting the curriculum.

C.B. Manny Lopez’s Memo from December was not communicated to the Faculty. What questions were being asked that this was a response to?

J.Q. We will take this issue under advisement.

M.W. Regarding Overload pay for Spring, some faculty have not received a dime of it.

N.E. The processing of load sheets must be holding things up.

C.B. Regarding the E-schedule, this idea has been generally well-received and will actually be helpful. More awareness of the “print” button on the e-schedule would be helpful.

J.Q. & L.E. Students have supported the idea of a shift to an e-schedule.

L.E. We are required to keep students informed and we are looking to make sure the shift to an e-schedule will satisfy requirements.

J.Q. also appreciates Dave Carlson’s work and the chance to meet with the Senate to deal with Federal Financial-Aid reporting requirements.

C.B. Is the administration looking to purge courses that have not been offered in some years?

N.E. Yes, we are looking to do this.

C.B. We would like to follow the existing curriculum process in doing this.

N.E. In the past, cuts of this sort have been effected without going through the curriculum process.

Over 2,500 courses fall into this not-offered group.

C.B. & M.W. The Curriculum Committee, the faculty, needs to be consulted on this.

J.Q. urges that simpler ways be found to resolve this issue of non-offered courses.

C.B. The faculty and the BSUFA Curriculum Committee are the guardians of the process.

C.B. The BSUFA Senate voted that the Physics Department not be moved into the CAS.

J.Q. was the representative of the Physics Department present?

C.B. Yes. This will be discussed a bit later.

N.E. Well, the faculty and the Senate has supported the Reorganization.

C.B. No. In Spring 2008, the BSUFA Senate voted 13-10 (with two abstentions) on a motion against the reorganization.

J.Q. & N.E. were not aware of that.

J.Q. Regarding IT, urges that faculty & departments who have issues please report them to VP Erickson.

D.P. There seems to be an assumption that computer labs are under the control of Departments, when some are under the control of Programs. In the new combined departments, some Chairs do not know much about labs attached to programs. Upcoming changes to these labs must be communicated to the correct program coordinators. Also, if there are to be changes made in the summer, we need notice well in advance.

W.M. A proposal on course fees and summer profits will be presented soon.

C.B. There are other summer issues on which we will need notification. Meet & Confer in the summer can be tough to arrange.

L.E. Two new programs 1) a New Student Orientation program for all new students, to be implemented in the Fall of 2009. The program will include conference-style sessions for new students, with a range of topics to be offered. A call for volunteer presenters for the sessions will be going out via a fac/staff announcement.

2) The Division of Student Development and Enrollment is interested in sharing the division's strategic plan with academic colleagues. To that end, we will be contacting Department Chairs to find out if we could visit department meetings in pairs to provide a very brief presentation of the strategic plan, and to communicate our desire to partner with faculty. Strategic plan for student enrollment: L.E. wants to share that, talking with Departments about this.

[Vice-President Erwin kindly provided the summary after the Meet & Confer Session.]

D.L. Will Deans & Chairs be notified also about these?

L.E. Yes, gladly.

Meeting adjourns at 6:00