

FACULTY SENATE COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

September 15, 2016 meeting



The swift-footed abstract

The 2016-2017 MSU Faculty Senate held its third regular meeting of the year in Breck 302. Well over half of the scheduled meeting was reports or presentations. The rest was the body's continued discussion of the proposed revisions to PAC-26.

“He knew the things that were and the things that would be” (Announcements)

- The AAUP speaker coming to campus to discuss university budgets, Howard Bunsis, had to cancel his September 16th visit due to a death in the family. The presentation has been tentatively rescheduled for the morning of November 4, 2016.
- The TEC met last Wednesday. It has begun work on business that was previously tabled.
- The Executive Council of the Senate will be meeting with the presidential search consultant, Funk, on Tuesday, September 20th, from 11:10 a.m.-11:40 a.m.

“Everything is more beautiful because we are doomed” (Provost report)

- The Provost had a good meeting with representative from Faculty Welfare and Concerns regarding upcoming PAC work. PAC-27: Tenure will be brought back to Senate for consideration soon.
- We are progressing with our NIPI proposals. One program is now being seriously evaluated.
- We are completing a needs assessment on the CHER building, which accommodates our expanding Nursing program and is essential to our partnership with St. Claire's Regional and the proposal to create a DPT (Doctor of Physical Therapy) program.
- The Provost offered a foretaste of the upcoming CPE meeting:
 - The CPE is now against the very consortium (SARA) they had favored in the past. Presidents and Provosts around the Commonwealth, who support this consortium, hope the reverse the CPE's thinking.

- The CPE has revised its diversity plan. We're still waiting to see the full particulars. We are also moving forward with diversity initiatives on our own.
- Performance funding is coming; it looks better than it did, but we still need to determine how we will compete for funds.
- Academic Affairs may be seeing the rosy fingers of dawn: the Provost hopes to start possible hiring. He has found money for lines, and he's waiting to hear back from Budget Offices to make sure the drachma is really there. (Note: according to the Provost, there is **no** talk of cutting positions.)
- The Biology 4+1 program is still a go. Right now the Registrar is looking into how the overlap between grad and undergrad credit can be recorded in our system.
- During a rather lengthy Q & A, the Provost addressed questions about the web page and enrollment, and entertained suggestions about increasing our graduate programs via international students. He urged Senate to invite various administrative stakeholders (among them Jami Hornbuckle and Jason Bentley) to address the body.

“What is proper to hear, no one, human or divine, will hear before you” (Senate Committee Reports)

Governance

- Tim Thornberry is replacing Gilbert Remillard on the University Graduate Committee.

Academic Issues

- In consultation with J. Ernst, Senator Reigle and her committee have discussed: the wisdom of 1st year students taking on line classes, out of state student support, mental health resources for students, and the possible reimaging the first year seminar (FYS).

Evaluations

- Evaluations continues to accept surveys in advance of the September 20th meeting with Funk (and Regent Berglee's continued work on the search committee).

Faculty Welfare and Concerns

- Faculty Welfare and Concerns met with the Provost: PAc-27 (Tenure) will come back to us after a stint with the Dean's council; PAc-10 (Extraordinary Faculty Compensation) will be revisited to account for, among other things, winter session; and PAc-29 (Faculty Workload) and 34 (Alternative Career-Track Faculty), will be rendered fully congruent with each other.
- The committee also discussed a bonus concern: determining whether all release time is flexible workload agreement (FWA).

Issues

- Senator Adams gave a presentation that verified internal and IPEDS FTE #s and demonstrated, via institutional budgets, the decline of support for instruction at MSU.
 - Provost Ralston asked that this presentation be shared with the Budgets Office and suggested that Senate invite Beth Patrick to offer a response.
 - A number of Senators noted that an administrative response would be helpful, while a few others contended that the data was already clear. Senator White considered the report a “distraction” from the real issue

of decreased instructional funding and is in favor of presenting a narrative that outlines faculty needs. Senator Carlson argued that the proper path forward was a narrative with supplementary hard data.

“Fate stands now upon the razor's edge” (PAC-26 update)

Senator Carlson updated the Senate on the reconciliation committee’s meeting with select members of the Board. (The faculty side: A. Adams, K. Carlson, M. Dobranski [ex officio], and G. Remillard; the BOR side: P. Goodpaster, S. Harr, and P. Price, and those the BOR have asked to attend in an ex officio capacity: J. Fitzpatrick and S. Ralston) This advisory body met to discuss the revision and mark which faculty suggestions might be amenable to the BOR as a whole.

The August 18th and September 1st communication reports outline the limited number of issues Chair Goodpaster is willing to address and articulate the faculty response to said issues. After conversing with his constituents and considering the faculty feedback, Chair Goodpaster determined:

- The limited appeal process in the current draft will be replaced by the more carefully articulated process outlined in the new version of PAC-22 (which has been vetted and approved by both the administration and the Senate).
- Rank will be preserved in the order of termination sequence, but this order must be prefaced by a notation that the order may be superseded by “compelling” academic and accreditation concerns (Note: the faculty side argued strenuously against the inclusion of “academic,” as that undefined term allows great latitude to administrators, and most of the examples for the need to terminate were financial, not academic in nature, but these arguments did not win the day.)
- Tenure-track faculty will not be given “special privileges” in this new PAC—they will no longer be granted limited employment contracts after being taken off of the tenure line. (Note: Senator Carlson stated that removal of “privilege” did not preserve rank; it just made the policy even worse for faculty than it already was, as now other protections were being taken away.)

At the end of the meeting, Chair Goodpaster stated that he heard faculty concerns and noted that he would be in contact with Senator Adams after he was able to consult with the administration. (Point of clarification: this contact is a courtesy. Neither the Senate nor the administration has formal authority in this matter.)

The good: this is the most open and direct dialogue faculty have ever had with the Board. Chair Goodpaster also appears to be genuinely interested in keeping the dialogue going (Senator Adams noted as much during the discussion).

The bad: Chair Goodpaster is still committed to keeping “consolidation” and “reorganization” as mechanisms for faculty termination, and the revised version sent out for BOR consideration on the 16th (and vote on the 30th) will be a version to which faculty are substantively opposed. Furthermore, Chair Goodpaster explicitly stated that his understanding of shared governance is everyone having a seat at the table to express opinions. It is not the dispersal or apportioning of governing power (which the BOR alone possesses).

“Take up the heart of courage, and have consideration for each other in the strong encounters” (possible actions re: the PAc-26 revision)

Note: in the course of the discussion, Senator Carlson moved to extend the meeting time until 6:00 p.m. The motion passed.

Chair Dobranski outlined a number of possible Senate responses to the proposed revision:

- a letter to the BOR outlining our opposition (which Senate effectively did in May),
- a letter to AG Beshear, requesting an opinion on the proposed policy (somewhat similar to what KCTCS did when their Board abolished tenure, keeping in mind that the situation here is not identical)
- a no confidence vote in the President, the BOR, or both

After a number of Senators had expressed a range of views on these various options, Chair Dobranski asked the Provost to address the body. The Provost urged the Senate not to act prematurely, as no action has been taken by the BOR. He also cautioned against the potential fallout of a no confidence vote (which would anger the BOR). If the policy is passed, Senate, in his estimation, will still be able to express its concern in a letter; this is to be “expected.” Senator McBrayer, who noted that he shared the Provost’s conservatism of approach, asked the Provost how faculty might be able to forestall the approval of this PAc without being considered confrontational. No one had an answer. Senator Carlson advised that the proper time to have a vote of no confidence, should the Senate decide to hold one, is before the policy is passed, and faculty jobs are changed, as a vote after the fact will not cause the BOR to reverse its actions.

The meeting adjourned before any decision was made. At the session’s close, Senators were left to consider “let[ting] all this be a thing of the past, though it hurts us, and beat[ing] down by constraint the anger that rises inside us” or refusing to “die ingloriously and without a struggle” without “first do[ing] some great thing.”



“There will be a time afterwards when you can go there as well. But now let us go to bed. . .”

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m. A special session, to address the revision to PAc-26 and possible responses to it, has been scheduled for 3:45 p.m. on Thursday, September 22nd.



Submitted by the 2015-2016 Faculty Senate Communications Officer, Annie Adams, a.k.a., Cassandra, who calls out to all the city.