



FACULTY SENATE COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

November 17, 2016 meeting

“That chip off the block/of your favorite schoolhouse” (Overview)

The 2016-2017 Faculty Senate held its seventh regular meeting on October 20, 2016. The majority of the meeting was devoted to the presentation of an invited guest, the new Vice President of Student Success, Dr. Jason Bentley.

“Verb! That’s what’s happenin’” (Announcements)

- The Open Enrollment deadline is Friday, November 18th
 - For those who still need to complete their tobacco test to receive reduced healthcare premiums: there are no open times for cotinine tests on campus—the next date is the 21st, and all the slots are taken. People can try doing a walk in if they so desire.
- Ms. Jami Hornbuckle, Assistant Vice President for Communications and Marketing, will be a guest at the December 1st Faculty Senate Meeting.
- Dr. Howard Bunsis’s November 4th presentation is available on the Faculty Senate BlackBoard site. A summary of highlights (in pdf form) will be mailed along with this report.
- Information regarding the Andrews Hall refunds (and the problems with US Bank that led to some of these refund checks bouncing) is available on The Source in the Portal. Interested faculty can log on to My Morehead State to read VP Patrick’s helpful overview. Senator Adams also has some additional information that she was personally provided by VP Patrick. Anyone interested in specifics regarding the “pots” of money from which these refunds were extracted should contact Senator Adams (a.adams@moreheadstate.edu).

“So we unpacked our adjectives/I unpacked ‘frustrating’ first.” (Statement from Senator Cottingham)

Senator Cottingham, a faculty member in the Department of Biology and Chemistry (which houses two of MSU’s programs of distinction) made the following statement on the Senate floor:

We have, on multiple occasions, been asked by the administration to come up with ideas to improve student retention. In that spirit, I have two suggestions: hire more faculty, and re-think priority registration for special groups. During the recently completed advance registration period, one of my sophomore advisees was unable to get a seat in two required courses which are traditionally taken by students at her current point in the curriculum. One of the two courses had a fair number of seats taken by Craft students well before this advisee of mine was able to register. Even setting aside Craft students, there are numerous other “special categories” (e.g., scholarship athletes and Honors students) not bringing in tuition dollars who are getting first choice of seats over, and possibly driving away, tuition-paying students. For the other course, we simply did not have enough seats available in the single section to accommodate the demand, and no ability to add another section, due to insufficient faculty. This particular advisee informed me that, if she was unable to get into at least one of the two required classes, and therefore fell behind in her curriculum, she would transfer to another university where she would be able to get into the courses she needed when she needed them. I relay that story just to provide a specific example of the issues we are currently facing, but her story is not at all uncommon. At least in my department, we inevitably have many students unable to get into the required classes they need (to say nothing of upper-division electives they merely want to take) at every academic level. Come January, we will have 3 open tenure-track lines in our department, only one of which we have been given permission to fill. We also recently had a long-standing instructor line eliminated, with the instructor herself now being covered by one of the open tenure-track lines. This is on top of another instructor line recently lost when an instructor was moved into a separate open tenure track line. All of this means that we, a large department with the number one and number three undergraduate majors by enrollment, will likely be down a net of two faculty members going into the next academic year. It’s only a matter of time before the word gets out that you can’t get into the classes you need when you need them at MSU, if it hasn’t already.

In the brief discussion that followed, a select number of Senators voiced their concerns, particularly their concerns with priority registration. Provost Ralston, who noted that having too many students is actually a good problem to have, made a point of stating that he and his office would ensure that there would be people in place to teach however many sections of required courses programs can fill.

“Well, everybody’s act is part of the show/And no one’s job is more important.” (Presentation from Dr. Jason Bentley, VP of Student Success)

At the invitation of the Executive Council, Dr. Bentley came to the Faculty Senate to discuss the current state of enrollment (and enrollment management) at MSU. The main points of the

presentation are outlined in a PowerPoint that faculty may request from their departmental Senators (or the Chair of Senate). Faculty may be pleased to know that Dr. Bentley considers it his job to support that academic mission of the university, and he believes it is vital for his unit to work with faculty to ensure the success of the university.

During the presentation, Dr. Bentley noted a number of changes that he either has made or will make in regards to data management, recruitment strategies, and planning efforts:

- Enrollment services will focus on IPEDS data, not CPE, because his office is looking at more than just the Commonwealth. Echoing the President, Dr. Bentley noted that we have been heavily reliant on in-state and service region students. In an era when the population of the service region continues to decline, and all political prognostications suggest a decrease in state appropriations, it makes sense for us to think outside of the Commonwealth.
- Recruitment will be more targeted. We were right to adjust our financial aid package and expand out of state recruiting, but our efforts have been too diffuse. We need to be more specific and selective. One way in which we could do this in-state is to target students from areas that have a seamless transition rate from high school to college (this will net us better prepared students who will, in turn, move through their degree programs more effectively).
- His office will articulate MSU's competitive advantage. In an era of declining funding, we need to operate like a competitive private institution, and the best way to do that is to show students that they are receiving a quality education at a good price.
- He will insist on multiyear planning and lead instead of follow. In the past, we've tended to work on a year-by-year basis and follow what other schools have done. Dr. Bentley would like to see us do things like plan tuition changes that fund more than next years operations, and he wants us to create an MSU specific playbook that puts our school at a distinct advantage in terms of marketing.
- His office is committed to producing scholarship. Every year he is here, faculty can expect—and will receive—reports based on consistent data.

In the brief discussion that followed, Dr. Bentley was asked a number of questions, some of which (like those regarding priority registration) he was not in a position to answer (as that was beyond his purview). One question that was in his purview, that he did definitively answer, was a query regarding international students. At this time, Dr. Bentley and his office are focusing on domestic students and planning locally to make immediate changes. (Note: Dr. Bentley has only been in his position for a few months, and the broad reach of his office does place him over some elements that would appear to be removed from student success per se, such as the availability of the cotinine tests faculty and staff must complete in order to get a healthcare discount.)

“Then I go to the Senate and the whole thing starts all over again.” (Provost Report)

After a number of weeks when he was otherwise occupied during our Thursday meeting time, the Provost was able to return to the Senate floor. During a relatively brief update (other reports had run long, so there was only a limited amount of time for the Provost to speak), the Provost noted:

- The reconciliation process for PAC-26 will begin with an initial meeting of the reconciliation teams on the 21st of November.
- General education review has begun. The email sent out previously outlines the purpose and scope of the faculty-led review. The Provost wished to underline that this review is really just a LOOK at our program to see whether or not we are compliant with CPE and other standards. If we are, or if we’re close to being so, then we’re done with our review. This process will take place in Spring 2017.
- He is in receipt of the revised UAR 331 regarding communication that he received from the Executive Council of Senate. He has taken this revised UAR to the President’s Cabinet, but no action has been taken because the web and portal update will open two new channels for faculty-wide communication. The Provost would like to wait until these channels are available and then revisit the UAR to see what may need to be changed in light of the new options open to faculty. (Note: when this update—which has long been foretold—would actually occur was not specified. It is something Senators can ask Ms. Hornbuckle about at the next Senate meeting.)
- There are 4 sabbatical proposals on his desk.
- The ad hoc Diversity committee will meet Monday morning, and hopes to have an official committee formed soon.
- We need to have predictable enrollment and better scheduling. We’re not there yet, but, when we are, we will be able to make the appropriate staffing decisions and thus head off the sorts of problems outlined in Senator Cottingham’s statement.
- Faculty should never be expected to teach overload classes without pay. (This has been in issue in some programs.)

In this brief discussion that followed, Provost Ralston was asked about priority registration (which is a tricky issue, particularly in regards to Craft students, as those are our students) and freshmen taking online classes. Currently there is no move to change either priority registration or students’s abilities to enroll in online classes. This, of course, could change if we can demonstrate that change is warranted.

Provost Ralston was also asked about the 2016 financial audit and the rumored \$1.4 million cut to Academic Affairs. The audit, as far as Provost Ralston knows, has been submitted to the BOR workgroup. Given the fact that the last BOR meeting was a work session, wherein no official action is taken, he assumes that the audit will not be officially approved until the December BOR meeting. Academic Affairs was asked to cut \$1.4 million—a figure we should all recall from discussions of the recurring budget shortfall last May and June. The Provost was pleased to report that the President wished to meet this shortfall (which was always designated as Academic Affairs’s responsibility) *without* cutting faculty pay (the method articulated in the message from BOR Chair Goodpaster last term). He is also pleased report that his team was able to make the cuts without sacrificing tenure/tenure track lines. Their completed proposal is currently on the President’s desk, where it awaits approval. (Note: there was not time to follow up on specifics of the proposal.)

“Darn! That’s the end!” The next regular meeting of the Senate is scheduled for December 1, 2016 (at 3:45 p.m. in Breck 302).



Submitted by the 2016-2017 Faculty Senate Communications Officer, who has been “hooking up words and phrases and clauses,” despite the fact that she has been suffering because of suffrage.