

**UNITED UNIVERSITY PROFESSIONS
LABOR MANAGEMENT MEETING
Friday February 23rd 2024 via zoom**

Attendance: Susan Orr, Sara DiDonato, Jamie Guillian, Heidi McPherson, Becky Gagne, Martin Abraham, Tammy Gouger, Lorraine, Acker, Mike Andriatch

- I. Update on Professional Performance Programs and Evaluations
 - a. 77% of performance programs have been received so far – that is 284 out of 370
 - b. 93% of evaluations have been received from last year.
 - c. Follow up is ongoing and all supervisors have completion of employees PP and evals in their own PP. They are ineligible for DSI if they have not been completed.
 - d. Chapter President and LRS thanked the administration for continual effort on this.

- II. Discussion about scheduled training over break
Chapter President made the following points:
 - a. Thanks for giving chairs advanced notice of training over winter break – this is something we had previously requested and we appreciate the follow through.
 - b. However – in this instance, the Initial invitation for training came from CELT and did not seem mandatory. Then, much closer to the event, a second invite came from chair/dean in which it seemed attendance was not optional. This seemed to undermine the advanced warning especially as one of the events connected with the training was an evening reception.
The Provost responded
 - c. Attendance at the training was required but not at the evening reception. In the future communication will be better, and clearer so not to confuse or cause anxiety.

- III. Discussion about scantron exams
Chapter President made the following points;
 - a. Some faculty, with large intro level classes rely on convenient scantron exams. Understandable, the college is seeking to cut costs for scantron services.
 - b. Might we transition to a couple of small scantron machines that faculty operate – low-cost solution that provides a big benefit, the college saves costs and faculty get convenience of scantrons. <https://www.scantron.com/higher-education/>
Provost Responded:
 - c. This is already being discussed as a solution by KSSPE department. It's possible for the departments to buy a machine and be able to maintain and run them themselves so personnel won't be required to.

- d. The transition is already happening, and Jeff Thompson is helping a department start. Things are open for discussion, and Administration is open to hearing ways to make this transition better.
- e. For smaller departments that may not be able to get one, they could possibly use one in a different department if arrangements are made.

Chapter President responded

- f. Could this be done at a collegewide level so that ALL faculty can be sure of access even if departments cannot purchase?

Provost responded

- g. Arrangements can be made for smaller departments to gain access via larger departments perhaps for a small fee.

IV. Discussion about sabbatical applications

Chapter President made the following points:

- a. This has been the decision that I have received most comments about – it has been hugely detrimental to morale across campus.
- b. Faculty perceive a shift in evaluation criteria and perceive denials to be unfair – essentially the “goal-posts” were shifted.
- c. Any possibility of reconsideration of this round of applications and changing criteria moving forward?
- d. The language that the sabbatical must be “transformational” has caused anxiety – this is not what the policy requires, though the statement that applicants must show value to the college is in the BOT policy
- e. The denials have a ripple impact across departments as faculty “take-turns” to apply so that departments can meet student needs and allow faculty sabbaticals. Denials mean departments have challenges as multiple colleagues are eligible but cannot all be on leave at the same time.
- f. Explanation of denials led to conversation about time allocated to various tasks – this has potential to encourage a culture of “time allocation” this seems to push faculty to divert attention to research over student focused tasks because they have been informed that they will not be awarded sabbaticals for projects they should be achieving in regular research time. Protecting any research time is a challenge in the current environment.
- g. 10 hours a week for research seems out of touch with faculty experience – this is a workload and morale issue.

Provost responded:

- h. “Transformational” was taken the wrong way, it was not meant as SCHOLARSHIP that is transformational, but Individual wise. Apology about the language and how it was perceived. But was merely about the individual on the sabbatical and the opportunity to develop new skills/begin new projects etc. It is agreed that clarification on this will be valuable to faculty in the future.

Provost responded and Collage President reiterated.

- i. The transition to being more critical of sabbatical applications is meant to change the culture.
- j. Pushing faculty to produce better proposals will help them with external goals such as grants etc.
- k. Martin Abraham offered to have 1:1 meetings with applicants if they have questions, or guidance on their applications.
- l. There is now a precedent that applications must be of great quality, and demonstrate the applicant has a great understanding of what they are going to accomplish during their sabbatical.

Chapter President and LRS reiterated across the board.

- m. because this wasn't transparent faculty who applied and were denied feel the goal posts were moved in the middle of their application process and they were harmed since they didn't know that their applications were going to be assessed by new criteria – that a culture shift was underway.

College President interjected

- n. We have had a long discussion – your message has been heard. The Provost and I will discuss the matter – no commitment on reconsideration or denials but will consider.

V. Discussion about restructuring and mergers

Chapter President made the following points:

- a. This project is causing a great deal of anxiety and mistrust.
- b. Faculty believe it is a plan to merge departments and ultimately to disinvest in the liberal arts.
- c. Faculty cannot see the point – why the need to “balance numbers” – affinities exist across many departments.
- d. Is this a budgetary issue?
- e. Faculty believe that the solicited input will make no difference – that decisions have already been made and a veneer of consultation.
- f. General sense is that articulating a vision or purpose – direction forward for the college would be helpful – then faculty would know how to respond, how to assess models etc.

Provost provided the following comments:

- g. Purpose of restructuring is “balance” and to help create equity for chairs in departments, and to focus/highlight programs for perspective students.
- h. The task force has worked independently from the Provost Office, and the task force collects information, research and then the administration gets to make decisions based on their results. Administration decides what “if any” input to utilize.
- i. Taskforce undertook extensive research and presented models. Provost responded with a hybrid – it was NOT a model he would have initially created. The current step in the process is faculty and department feedback to those ideas. This is the time for an opportunity to comment about those changes, so they make an informed choice.

Mergers are not on the table as of right now. Does not mean they could not be in the future

Chapter President Susan Orr responded

- j. It would be very helpful for the administration to share vision and purpose for the restructuring and explain how the “balance,” “equity” and highlighting of programs is best facilitated by restructuring rather than vi other means. Also, to share information about the impact of restructuring on budget/structural deficit.