

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

9-16-2016

Present- Claire Abernathy, Mary Donaghy, Richard Burns, Hans Hacker, Win Bridger, April Sheppard, Manu Bhandari, Brinda McKinney, Annette Bednar, Jody Long, Debbie Shelton, Larry Morton, Amber Wooten, Bob Bennett, Bruce Johnson, Suzanne Melescue, Nikesha Nesbitt, Mike McDaniel, Greg Phillips, Richard Segall, Phillip Tew, David Holman, Gwen Neal, Loretta McGregor, Amy Pearce, Shivan Haran

Proxy- Sarah Labovitz for Kyle Chandler, Sandra Combs for Pradeep Mishra, Hilary Schloemer for Sharon James

Visitors- Chairs council rep, Marika Kyriakos, Wayne Wilkinson, ?

Quorum & Call to Order—Quorum was established and Dr. Mike McDaniel called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

First order of business was to approve minutes from the previous meeting. Greg Phillips made a motion to accept the minutes upon corrections. Brenda McKinney seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

New Business-

Dr. McDaniel introduced Dr. Chuck Welch as the guest speaker and turned over the floor of discussion to him.

Welch stated he wanted to attend the senate meeting today to give opportunities for questions, voice concerns, address e-mail phishing scheme, and any other issues needed to be discussed. He stated six faculty members fell victim to the phish which entailed an error in paychecks. Money was placed in incorrect accounts as a result and the proper steps were being taken to correct this situation. Members of the FBI and on campus IT services confirmed there was no data breach and that this was an isolated incident.

Henry Torres was recognized and reminded everyone that A-State will never request sensitive information via e-mail. Also, if concerned about your account, change your password and pin often. Never follow an e-mail link to replace your password, go directly to My Campus or Self Service Banner.

Welch- The interim Chancellor will be Dr. Doug Whitlock and should be on campus within the next (couple of weeks?) and has been charged with the task looking for policies that have not been upheld, could new policies be put into place, shared governance concerns and internal communication. He will be working closely with Dr. Lynita Cooksey to address these major initiatives. Dr. Whitlock's interim term will expire on June 30, 2017 with the provision to extend month by month if needed. There will be a formal permanent chancellor search expected to begin January 2017 with a tentative interview schedule of May 2017 and start date of June 1, 2017. There will be a search committee, possible 20-25 members consisting of faculty members, staff, and administrators. This should be a collective process with input from all members of the search committee to find the best fit for our campus. Dr. Whitlock can

hopefully address current issues although no expectation should be that all problems will be solved during his tenure here. It would be ideal for the new chancellor to step in with a “clean slate” and carry on Dr. Whitlock’s initiatives.

Dr. Welch opens the floor to questions from anyone in attendance.

Sandra Combs-Voiced concerns about the new city convention center and wonders if we can handle it.

Welch- Tim O’Reilly is the builder of the convention center being built on A-State property. He has a good reputation as a builder- his family owns O’Reilly’s Auto Parts. The hotel will be an Embassy Suites, a Hilton property, with the #1 rating for reservations, an on-site restaurant, and high end features. The hotel and convention center will be 40,000 square feet and A-State has no financial responsibility to the property and in fact the land will be rented from us and will be revenue for A-State. “I am fully confident this property will be highly successful.”

Loretta McGregor- Clarified that A-State will have NO financial engagement with the property, including the maintenance thereof.

Welch- A-State will not fund anything, including maintenance. It will be the responsibility of the property and its owners.

John Hershberger raised concerns that A-State has “no vision”. Will the new chancellor address this issue?

Welch- “When I came to interview for system president I asked the same question. What is A-State known for?” Welch stated he would like A-State to be really good at few things, rather than mediocre at many. Plans are to conduct massive revenue and staffing study to identify the following:

“What programs are successful?”

“What are not successful programs?”

“Which faculty/staff lines could be better utilized elsewhere?”

“Are all administrative positions needed or do they need to be restructured?”

This study needs to be proactive with research, data, and collective thoughts. Welch and the board of trustees voiced some of these questions, as did faculty/staff of A-State, and the decision needs to be informative. This is stemming from the fact that no new government funding is being received. We currently receive \$61,000 and that number is not expected to increase in the near future. A-State will not receive inflationary adjustments; therefore we rely heavily on private funding. This includes faculty endowments and often has a specific purpose such as student scholarships. These funds cannot be used for operational costs.

Bob Bennett asked Dr. Welch if all administrative lines are needed and if that will be addressed in the study.

Welch- Yes it will be evaluated in the staffing study along with staff and other non-faculty employees. A brief explanation followed as to how formulas are set up to fund faculty and non-faculty employee lines.

Mike McDaniel- Raised concerns about shared governance. He feels that once before people had an opinion and felt that their voice counted for/against issues, but now we don't get a voice anymore. This includes hearing about the change in health benefits. There is a lack of shared governance and do the upper administrators feel that they are above shared governance?

Welch- Brought notes and shared several instances where initiatives had been through shared governance: guns on campus, non-discrimination, sexual discrimination, faculty handbook. On the other hand Welch stated that some issues are a matter of state law and cannot go through shared governance. In regards to health benefits changes A-State coordinated with a health care consultant from Memphis who examined our current plan. Jennifer Smith, Lori Winn, and members of the benefits committee worked to examine 3 options which would be considered for one month before giving an answer to Welch. A lengthy discussion followed as to the process that ensued when A-State voted for/against grandfather status. The new and old health care plans were compared and features were outlined-Signa provides a better discount rate, almost 100% of Northeast Arkansas doctors are in network, large out of state in network coverage, and six month administrative fees waived for leaving Blue Cross Blue Shield. Welch reassured that campuses get input, but do not necessarily get to be a part of every step of the process. He tries to make decisions in the best interest of all employees on all campuses.

McDaniel- Asked if we are at risk of jeopardizing our accreditation

Welch- No, shared governance is used. The systems benefits committee may not communicate information to all employees that could be perceived as not following shared governance, but that is not the intention.

McDaniel- Shared governance needs to be improved to include the system

Welch- "What are we trying to solve?" Does McDaniel believe administration has avoided shared governance? No evidence has been brought to Welch to prove lack of shared governance. "I am open to examples...." Campus initiatives may be to blame for lack of communications, but the system is not avoiding shared governance.

McDaniel-It is not always clear to A-State employees if it is a campus issue or a systems issue so there appears to be a lack of shared governance.

Welch- Visited with Dr. Cooksey and talked with Dr. Whitlock about concerns with hopes this can be the focused initiative of Dr. Whitlock.

Amy Pearce- If any employee has an issue to address with Dr. Whitlock how are they to submit suggestions or concerns?

Welch- Follow proper protocol as has previously taken place, but if it shared governance issues, those should be directed to Dr. Whitlock- dwhitlock@astate.edu

Pearce- Will Dr. Cooksey remain involved in the process once Dr. Whitlock arrives?

Welch- Yes, shared governance should be a shared responsibility with everyone remaining open-minded and proactive.

Hans Hacker- Raised concerns regarding innovation and change. Faculty are trying to perform research and funds are limited. Former chancellor stripped funds that crippled opportunities for faculty development. College deans need funds for small programs and initiatives, will this issue be addressed?

Welch- "This is a valid issue". There is an academic excellence fee for this for special projects and faculty salaries. This is yet another reason to conduct a staffing study, collect qualitative data, and look internally to keep from raising tuition. All programs and initiatives need to be evaluated to see which are effective and where money could be used elsewhere.

McGregor- Dr. Welch spoke about campus specific issues to which Dr. Whitlock has been charged with task to improve shared governance on campus. This also includes improving communication issues on campus. There tend to be three "groups" on campus- administration, faculty, and an "out group". This out group are characterized as "disgruntled and set in their ways" and do not represent the faculty as a whole. Whitlock may not have the time to solve all of these issues. Will Welch continue to help him create a better environment on campus in light of all these issues?

Welch- "I will be involved". Whitlock will have the ultimate say during his time here on campus, but realistically he will not be able to address all issue and will not be able to make everyone happy during his short tenure here at A-State. Discussions need to be open to involve everyone in the process. This will make it harder to be upset with decisions if you have a deeper interest. If administrators are not transparent conspiracies theories will ensue and give the appearance that decisions are being made without shared governance.

Greg Phillips- Is it a mistake to think Whitlock can solve all issues, will his initiatives be carried forward to the new chancellor?

Welch- "Absolutely"

Bob Bennett- It seems as though the importance of shared governance changes as chancellors change. Some chancellors like shared governance and utilize it well, while other who do not will avoid it. Shared governance should be upheld regardless of chancellor changes.

Welch- Agreed. The new chancellor search will involve someone with an interest in shared governance. That was the mentality for the interim chancellor search. This will continue to be a work in process after Whitlock leaves.

Richard Burns- That is why there is such an importance to have a mediating organization between administration and faculty, and why faculty members should take advantage of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).

Welch asked for any additional comments or concerns. McDaniel thanked Welch for addressing the senate today. Welch exits meeting.

Old Business-

McDaniel reminds the senate about the letter Greg Phillips shared into record at the last meeting. This letter was submitted to the Jonesboro Sun and shared on the faculty list serve. There is a question as to whether the faculty senate should formally adopt the letter.

McGregor clarifies what is meant by “adoption”. “Should the faculty make a stance?”

Greg Phillips says a motion will be needed if the senate wants to adopt the letter.

McDaniel reads from the previous minutes as to why the discussion was tabled at the last meeting and now considered old business. That is why the letter is being mentioned again.

Phillips Tew expressed he was confused about why a motion is needed and why we are wanting endorsing the letter.

Hans Hacker makes a motion to endorse the letter. David Holman seconds.

McGregor clarifies stating if the senate votes “yes” to the motion at hand then the senate is agreeing with the letter. If the senate vote is “no”, then they do not agree with the letter.

McDaniel agrees with McGregor’s explanation.

Brinda McKinney- asks the question does everyone know about the letter, it was signed by the concerned faculty members, it was read into the senate minutes, it has been published in the sun, sent to Dr. Welch, and he replied-----why are we now wanting to endorse it as a collective body? Wasn’t every faculty member already given the opportunity to sign the letter?

Richard Burns- “Are we just beating a dead horse here?”

Hans Hacker asks if every senator took this letter back to their constituents and asked for their opinion. Four senators said they had not and Hans rescinded his motion to adopt the letter until all have a chance to poll their constituents.

Nikeshia Nesbett asked if faculty could still sign the letter if it has already been sent to Welch. “Why should we sign?”

Phillips states the original was sent to Welch with 19 signatures and a discussion followed where several senators expressed the letter would “carry more weight” if endorsed by the faculty senate.

Hacker makes a motion to table the discussion until the next meeting and Bob Bennett seconds.

McDaniel calls for discussion.

Amy Pearce asks if Phillips has received any correspondence from Dr. Welch regarding the letter.

Phillips states the letter was shared on the faculty list serve and with Dr. Welch on August 28, 2016. Signatures were gained as a result. On Friday September 2, 2016 a physical letter with the signatures was mailed to Welch. He responded the week of September 12th.

Hacker asks if Welch’s response could be shared with all faculty members.

McDaniel states again that this discussion will be tabled until all senators poll their constituents. All senators need to come prepared to vote on this letter at the next meeting, schedule for Friday September 30th. The motion will again need to be whether or not to endorse the letter.

McDaniel makes closing remarks that shared governance is a communication problem and not culturally considered. We must all be collectively involved. Decisions are being made with shared governance and faculty need to be a priority. There have been reports of record enrollment for the past four years yet we have not received raises.

David Holman asks where specifically is the increased enrollment being seen, graduate/doctoral level or undergraduate level? Where is the money going?

McDaniel says there was once a committee that will need to be “resurrected” to determine the answers to those questions.

McGregor moved to adjourn the meeting at approximately 5:20 and it was approved by acclamation.

Respectfully submitted for your consideration,

Amber Wooten