Faculty Senate Welfare Council Minutes  
March 21, 2019  
Board Room, MUC  

Present: Undrah Baasanjav, Kathryn Bentley, Nic Guehlstorf, Lisa Green, Andrew Gross, Steve Kerber,  
Kate Newman (scribe), Dan Segrist (chair)  
Absent: Jeff Banker, Kamran Shavezipur, Emily Trukenbrod  
Guests: Jamie Ball, Tom Jordan, Phyleccia Reed-Cole

1. Dan called the meeting to order at 2:33pm and introduced the guests

2. Discussion about a potential anti-bullying policy with guests

Dan had invited Jamie Ball, Tom Jordan and Phyleccia Reed-Cole at the request of this committee to attend our meeting and provide guidance and insight about the possibility of drafting an anti-bullying policy. Phyleccia began by presenting some background/concerns about a policy like this. Most of her concerns centered on a freedom of speech consideration. She also shared a recent letter the University received from FIRE (Foundation for Individual Rights in Education). This letter outlined some of our existing policies that had language that the organization felt might infringe on 1st amendment rights. Phyleccia outlined that certain words and phrases seem to be most concerning including things like “offensive” which is open to interpretation. She also advised us that a policy like anti-bullying would likely be a target for groups like FIRE. Administration plans to discuss the FIRE letter and more generally how to balance promoting our University values while still protecting freedom of speech. Phyleccia also asked us to consider President Trump’s recent executive order related to free speech on college campuses. Phyleccia also asked us to be sure that if we looked at policies from other Universities that we look at public institutions instead of private since this type of policy might be easier to pass in a private institution.

The group discussed examples of faculty situations related to bullying and Tom Jordan provided background on the discipline process including how cumbersome it has been to use. However, this language has already been changed under the collective bargaining unit for those faculty represented. Tom also expressed concern about the challenge of drafting an all-encompassing policy (faculty, students, staff, etc) as that would beyond the scope of welfare council and would require approval from multiple groups. Jamie Ball suggested that we could focus on the development of tools and resources related to handling these issues instead of only looking at a policy. Tom also expressed concern that a policy like this could be seen as terms and conditions of employment which would require each collective bargaining unit to separately consider the language. In this case language that we propose and even pass may be changed to something very different after negotiation.

It was also discussed that lack of documentation is often a challenge in these situations and that the power dynamics can cause a lot of issues. Although Phyleccia expressed that these are management issues that should be addressed by someone’s supervisor, Tom highlighted the difficulty in academia that the hierarchy of supervision may not be as clear as it is for staff or in other business settings.
We discussed the use of the ombuds in this case and their ability to provide resources to faculty who feel they are being bullied. We also discussed how to create other visible resources for both leadership positions (chairs, deans, etc.) as well as faculty. Dan will ask Lynn Bartles about faculty development opportunities as well as adding some information and training in New Faculty Orientation.

3. Minutes Approved with one error in spelling corrected

4. Old Business

- Discussion of Honorary Degrees and Distinguished Service Award (HDDSA) committee request for additional members.
  After last meeting, Dan sent a request to the HDDSA committee for additional rationale and information behind their request to add more members. No response to this request has been received to date. Will plan to resume discussion after response is received.

- Grievance Procedure Revision
  Dan is working on drafting revision language for this policy as discussed last meeting. Plans to discuss potential changes at April meeting.

5. New Business

- Request to consider new policy on freedom of expression
  A faculty senator approached Dan with a request for Welfare to consider drafting or adopting a policy from the University of Chicago related to Freedom of Expression. Steve shared policy 6E1 “Policy on Expressive Behavior” and asked for clarification if the individual making this request was aware of this policy or what specific issue did this individual feel needed to be addressed. Dan will ask for further information and clarification.

6. Public Comment – none received.
7. Adjournment – Meeting was adjourned at 4:08pm