FSEM Committee Meeting Notes

6 April 2020

A Zoom Chatroom Somewhere in the Ether

Members Present: April Wynn (Chair), Robert Rycroft, Debra Hydorn, Cate Brewer, Jeb Collins and Dan Hubbard (Acting Secretary)

Chair Wynn called the meeting to order at 15h02.

Discussion opened on the possibility of adding “voluntary modules” to allow interest groups of various FSEMs to coalesce around a particular theme. This would allow “nested grouping” from the small FSEM cohorts to a larger group having a similar focus. Concerns were expressed that this might lead to a flood of non-academic “topics of interest” creating a voluntary module glut that would be difficult for the FSEM Director to manage. A suggestion was made that perhaps only a single theme per year might be made available.

Two possibilities emerged from the discussion. One was that a cluster of FSEMs around a single theme might be proposed a year in advance to allow those interested to begin to link ideas and themes. A second possibility was to create an advance list of future themes for several years, perhaps in conjunction with the re-imagined “Common Read”. This might be an effective recruitment tool for additional FSEM instructors, and might even have “rejuvenation potential” for former instructors who might enjoy the collaborative and supportive atmosphere this could create.

Discussion then turned to themes for upcoming FSEM training, realizing the limitations imposed by the current “remote work” environment. Committee members agreed that new instructors should receive assistance in planning the organization of their syllabi because of the added demands created by FSEM requirements. Other concerns included how to increase faculty accessibility to best practices and how best to deal with students in crisis. Director Wynn noted that the EAB Alert system would be activated for all FSEM instructors, which would allow the FSEM director to directly receive reports about students in potential difficulty.

A further problem created by the current work situation is how best to make the annual Call for FSEM proposals. Concerns were expressed that the added stresses on faculty members meant that any call sent out immediately following this semester’s completion would likely have little impact. Another issue is that a call later in the summer might cause conflict with faculty members who would consider it an imposition during the period when they were not under contract. The Committee unanimously agreed that the best course of action was to send the initial Call for Proposals to all department chairs, and to rely upon their judgement as to when best to extend it to their individual faculty members. A second Call for Proposals will be made at the start of the 2020-2021 Academic Year in August.

Finally, while the Committee feels very strongly that department members should approve new FSEM proposals, because dedicating departmental resources to FSEMs means that other faculty members will have to bear additional burdens to support existing departmental duties of instruction, the Committee does not have the authority to mandate such an approval process. The Committee hopes that, in the interest of transparent governance, department chairs will seek the consent of their department members prior to approving FSEM proposals.

Robert Rycroft, Dan Hubbard and Cate Brewer will be ending their terms of assignment to the Committee at the close of the Spring 2020 Semester. In the interest of continuity, April Wynn will continue as Committee Chair until August, when the newly empaneled Committee will be able to select its leaders. Jeb Collins will similarly serve as Acting Secretary until the August elections.

Following unanimous agreement, Chair Wynn adjourned the meeting at 16h.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Hubbard