

UFAC Meeting Minutes March 10, 2022

Meeting Participants: Randy Reif (at-large, Chair), Eric Bonds (CAS, Secretary), Caitie Finlayson (at-large), Lance Gentry (COB), Jennifer Barry (at-large), and Kyle Schultz (COE)

Draft Motion to Amend the Faculty Handbook Language Regarding the Honor Code

Dave Rettinger has proposed language to amend Section 5.2 of the faculty handbook regarding the honor code. We discussed these proposed changes, and made some suggested changes. (Please see UFAC proposed edits.)

Our main concerns were that some of this language may be contrary to academic freedom in the classroom and is simply unnecessary. For instance, while we understand that there are valid concerns with automated proctoring services, administrators should educate faculty about problems or shortcomings with these systems rather than imposing a strict rule for all faculty in all situations for future years. It doesn't seem appropriate to use the faculty handbook in a way that limits faculty professional discretion.

Similarly, the suggested statement that "All alleged Honor Code violations are to be reported to and handled by the Honor Council, assuring due process and fairness" seems too heavy handed to us, undermining faculty's ability to make situation-specific decisions based upon context and severity of the violation.

Lastly, we encourage the UFC to consider restating the final section of 5.2.3 in the handbook so the wording is positive, rather than keeping the negative language that threatens termination (which is now written as: "Willful failure to support and abide by the Honor Code may serve as a basis for termination of a faculty member for cause"). New language might simply say: "Faculty should support the honor code."

Faculty Morale:

The UFC discussed the issue of faculty morale at the 3/9/2022 meeting. UFC members discussed that Surupa Gupta sent a survey to faculty in the Women's and Gender Studies program. Dr. Barry was asked to bring the request for a more comprehensive UMW faculty wide survey to UFAC members.

UFAC members agree that an updated survey (the last morale survey was conducted in 2015) would be appropriate and have agreed to administer the survey. UFAC members then agreed that we could use the 2015 survey in consultation with the WGST survey as a template. Other members also suggested we use the 2015 responses to assess and compare results.

We also discussed the potential benefits of reframing this discussion from faculty “morale” to faculty wellbeing or faculty “burnout,” to reframe the focus and move away from generic language that appears to be no longer useful given President Paino’s remarks on February 23 (re: faculty morale always being low. *Link to recording available below). UFAC members are particularly interested in topics regarding the return of professional development opportunities and thank Dean Mellinger for highlighting some of the conversations taking place at the cabinet level during the UFC meeting.

Additionally, several UFAC members talked about how faculty wellbeing is directly connected to student experiences at UMW, student recruitment, and student retention. It is imperative that we recognize that these conversations must always be placed in connection with one another. Members did want to spotlight the new Arts, Sciences, and Humanities Social Sciences Institute as an example of a positive step toward prioritizing faculty and student focused initiatives. We are especially eager to see the return of funding opportunities that recognize the value of faculty time and expertise.

Early Retirement Plans

We discussed the need to make sure that new initiatives to offer early retirement were standardized and would be issued in an open and transparent way. So far, we see indication that this will be the case.

We asked whether or not this initiative can be made available to lecturers who have worked at UMW for many years? This seems to be a state-supported program that may not be open to lecturers. But perhaps the university could look into this further.

Predatory Syllabi Publishing

We discussed the need to raise awareness about predatory online entities that copy professors’ class syllabi in order to sell them for profit.

Creative commons copyrights could be useful here because they allow faculty to share syllabi for noncommercial use, but also gives faculty power to insist that syllabi be taken down if someone is trying to profit from them.

*Topic: 10:30-11:30 AM Virtual Conversations with President Paino & Cabinet
Start Time: Feb 23, 2022 10:30 AM

Meeting Recording:

https://umw-ssso.zoom.us/rec/share/OTec5xH5zqrIqVqiSixDL_JkCMbysB8YCy1iOacR5qnH9iceN0myvQuBZyqWoO0f.CsJ4_jl0uLfDVkuM

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