

University Faculty Affairs Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 12

3:00 pm via Zoom

Attending: Caitie Finlayson (chair, at large), Jenny Barry (at large), Miriam Liss (CAS), Kyle Schultz (COE), and Jessica Zeitz (acting-secretary, at large).

Guest: Grant Woodwell (Associate Dean) joined at 3:00 PM.

Caitie called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM.

Old Business

- **Enrollment and Online:** Grant Woodwell joined to discuss these issues.

Significant drop in FTEs even before Covid. We have 1000 fewer students on campus (21% drop) than we did about 5 years ago. That translates to several thousand course seats. The effects of this are not evenly distributed across departments. Changes in general education requirements have affected as well. For example, many students come to UMW with the language requirement completed. Ten years ago, we had 18 adjuncts for Spanish, this year we have no adjuncts and under enrolled Spanish courses. Grant specifically can discuss Arts and Sciences (business and education have similar processes).

Grant explained the process of building the course schedule. Grant coordinates with department chairs and sends rolled spreadsheet with information (courses, number of sections, and actual enrollments) about previous equivalent semester. We want to meet at least the demands from the previous semester. If a class had a cap of 30 and an enrollment of 25, you would not want to put the cap for next semester below 25.

There is guidance from the Provost's office about class size expectation from a working group in 2016 under Provost Levin. The document was discussed with CAS chairs and it gave benchmarks expected for classes (15 students in a seminar, 25 in an upper level course, 35 in lower level course, 20 for WI/SI). These are guidelines and not hard rules. The document also includes guidelines about minimum enrollment. Any class with enrollment below 9 would be canceled. Departments can provide reasoning as to why a course should remain on the books below 9 (i.e. course is required for graduation or if there is nothing else for the faculty to teach).

At the end of the early registration period, Grant asks chairs to review current enrollments. Classes that are severely under enrolled or overly full can be dealt with and

faculty may be reassigned or more sections added. For Spring 2023, 20 sections (mostly upper level) were canceled and about 10 new sections (mostly lower level) were created. In the past, 5 sections might be canceled)

It is more challenging to use past data to predict future needs than it used to be. We have been more surprised recently by enrollments and historical enrollments have not been as helpful as in the past.

Some departments (e.g. Digital Studies) are still having exploding growth.

During the regular year, the majority of online courses are meant to support two programs:

1. BSN - the entire curriculum is online. There are some CAS courses that need to be taught online (e.g. Medical Ethics and Death and Dying in Philosophy). If they do not fill with BSN students, it opens to all of campus.
2. BLS - We have a track that BLS students can be taught completely online. They are mostly business courses but some CAS courses as well.

Online courses happen if that is the only way an adjunct can teach. Ten years ago, the College of Arts and Sciences was spending \$1.4 million on adjuncts. Now we are down to about \$400,000. We needed to bring that down because we were in deficit spending on adjuncts. When Nina became Provost, she charged Grant with reducing adjunct spending. If you have a program where the adjunct is teaching a full class and a full time person is teaching 3 students in an upper level course, we cannot afford that.

Jenny suggests a new working group to address new issues about enrollment. We also need to communicate this information to more people so we can understand the situation.

There was concern about an endowed course that was canceled (we were not paying). It was canceled because of low enrollment (2-3 students) and Grant felt it was a bad optic. The recommendation from the Dean's office was to use that money on special lectures and events throughout the semester that might be better attended.

There is a sense that we need more communication about these decisions. There are advantages to having small courses. That is why people come to UMW.

Some faculty are not sure what to do when courses are cut. Grant recommends creativity. For example, in Arabic the number of students has collapsed, therefore the RTA in Arabic now has an assignment to support the Center for International Studies. Someone

in English, now has an assignment with the library which was desirable for the particular faculty member.

Caitie asked how will major numbers will affect our cap and enrollment expectations. Grants says departments may want to reassess requirements or program delivery. Retirements are likely not being replaced. There is more of a concern about departments who are losing students at a faster rate than the University is declining.

Grant was surprised that faculty are unaware of details about chairs' meetings. Many discussions about these enrollment issues have happened during these meetings.

Jessica asked about enrollment cap adjustments after early registration and how no adjustments causes section inequality. When more sections are offered departments may want to lower caps so that the sections become more even. We want to try to keep sections even if possible. Moving around caps is controlled at the department level.

Grant left the meeting after an information discussion.

Concern: does enrollment inform decisions about faculty lines? Is the faculty taking the brunt of this downsizing? What is happening on the administrative side? There is some admin restructuring. As everything is shrinking, is administration shrinking as well? Faculty are constantly being asked to provide reasoning for courses and decisions. Is this also happening with administration?

Concern: what is our expected teaching load? If we are shrinking, is it ok for our teaching load to drop? This is not being discussed. There is inequity with teaching loads across campus.

Concern: we have a decade-old document outlining course enrollment expectations and teaching load and this is a problem.

Concern: is reassigning to solve low course load actually exacerbating the problem?

Adjuncts do not advise, therefore adding load to full-time faculty.

Low morale breeds more nit-picking about inequities.

The committee thinks this is a discussion to have with Tim. Kyle asserts more transparency would be positive.

Action: We can invite Tim to our next meeting and explain we need a new working group to discuss these issues.

- **Morale and Burnout Faculty Survey:** The Faculty Experiences Survey (we modified the name) is ready to send to the UFC. We will send it to get general feedback or concerns. Debra Schleef will administer the survey.

Our next meeting will be at 3:00 PM on Thursday, February 9.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM.

These minutes were electronically approved by the committee on January 17, 2023.