

FACULTY AND PROFESSIONAL STAFF MEETING MINUTES – December 10, 2019
FACULTY SENATE WEB PAGE <http://www.wpunj.edu/senate>

PRESENT: Aktan, Alford (for Pozzi), Andreopoulos, Brillante, Chung, Crick, Diamond, Duffy, Ellis, Finn, Gazzillo Diaz, Griswold, Hack, Hill, Jurado, Kalaramadam, Kaur, Kearney, Kecojevic, Kollia, Liu (for Najarian), Marks, Natrajan, Nyaboga, O'Donnell, Orr, Potacco, Powers, Ranjan, Rebe, Rosar, Silva, Simon, Snyder, Spagna, Steinhart, Swanson, Tardi, Vega, Verdicchio, Vishio, Wallace, Watad, Weisberg

ABSENT: Ashnai, Owusu, Shekari

PRELIMINARIES: Chairperson Natrajan called the Faculty and Professional Staff Meeting to order at 12:32pm. He noted that the Minutes of this meeting will preserve the anonymity of speakers to encourage free discussion.

He opened by asking the body: What are our top priority concerns?

A senator said that the President had promised that academic support services would be increased and that they would work more with faculty. That doesn't seem to be happening.

A senator asked how Senate representation would be calculated after the consolidation of departments.

A senator expressed concern about how reorganization will affect Latina and black women.

A senator stated that we need more and better data, and sees a need for more granular data.

A senator is worried about the mental health of our students, noting that there is a rising rate of suicides in New Jersey. How is WPU preparing and dealing with this crisis?

A senator wondered if everyone will feel welcome in the Multi-Cultural Center.

Two senators from the same college reported that the three-day class schedules were making it very difficult to create the Spring schedules. Some sections aren't open to all students who might want to enroll in them – and are then being cancelled due to low enrollment. Pre-packaging is also an issue.

Two more senators from that college noted that prepackaging is bad for at least some of the area studies programs, and that “scheduling went to hell.”

A senator said that the Registrar's Office has not been responsive.

A senator reported that the greater availability of online courses is leading to a decline in the quality of education.

A senator noted that students should not be scheduled for back-to-back classes on different campuses. The busses don't always get students to class on time.

A senator stated that WPU is not friendly to disabled students and faculty.

A senator's class was increased from 24 to 36 students two days before classes started. Individual advisement works better.

A senator wished the administration were working more for the faculty.

A senator has complained that the department's name is incorrectly listed on the WPU webpages.

A senator suggested less focus on consolidation and more on recruiting foreign students, who would enjoy working with our faculty. Approximately 30% of USA college faculty are foreign born.

A senator asked how WP101 cohorts will be dealt with to account for student failures.

A senator noted resistance from the Registrar when a larger classroom was requested.

A senator raised questions about planned moves to standardized online course evaluations. Faculty-specific and course-specific questions are being used, and they are two quite different things.

Another senator supported that point and said that faculty should have more input.

Several voices said that this is a Union issue.

Another senator questioned who will control the data and how will they be used.

A senator called the evaluations mere "opinionaires," not rigorously tested valid instruments.

The discussion turned to international partnerships.

Several senators noted some of the difficult issues that need to be discussed at length before WPU commits to such partnerships, especially in areas where human rights violations are concerned.

What is WPU's policy? Do students have any power?

A senator stated that foreign institutions can restrict faculty rights and academic freedom.

A senator complained that the Senate has been given far too little information on the proposed agreement.

The Chair stated that the topic will be brought to the full Senate in the Spring and more information should be available then.

Another senator described the relationships between retention and reputation, and urged WPU not to focus only on retention.

A senator said that the quality of the students is an issue, not just the quality of instruction.

A senator asked for more data on these issues.

A senator asked for data on the results of WP101. It must be monitored, and fixed or dropped if there are problems.

A senator said there is a strong relation between class size and the amount of individual attention a faculty member can devote to each student.

A senator said that decisions are made without analyzing data. Some things that worked – such as Learning Communities – have been dropped as administrators move to try their new ideas.

A senator said that some students go elsewhere to get a better deal.

A senator said that all colleges have to deal with the “quality of the students” issue, but we are who we are. We must work to motivate our students.

A senator suggested that WPU do a study, using a control group, to examine how the new techniques and programs are working.

A senator pointed out that many students don’t know what “appropriate behavior” is.

A senator noted that if we don’t fix these problems students will “start bugging out.”

There was considerable discussion of the Union’s efforts to work out an agreement with the administration that would assure that all meritorious proposals would be fully funded.

A senator noted that the Provost’s move to increase class caps will work against retention.

A senator stated that the M-W-F schedule is causing great pain among the adjuncts who teach more than 60% of those courses.

A senator said that we must avoid an adjunct-vs-full-time faculty fight. The administration will use divide and conquer techniques.

A senator noted that our downstate rival is thriving while we are struggling. We have a lot of work to do.

A senator stated that we need more support for writing grants.

The Chair read a statement from Provost Powers:

Provost's letter on Online Course Evaluations

Faculty Colleagues –

I unfortunately cannot join you today at Faculty Senate as I am at the Middle States Accreditation Conference. Murli graciously said he would share this with you.

In Fall 2018, Academic Affairs, in collaboration with Instruction & Research Technology, began a feasibility project for deploying course evaluations online. Pilot tests were done with two departments, one this past Spring and another this semester. In addition, questions were compiled across all departmental evaluations to see if a subset of the most common questions/types could be drawn for the purposes of a modestly sized universal set that could be used in all evaluations and instructional setting circumstances.

The PowerPoint provided in the Faculty Senate materials for this week (Dec. 10) provide additional context for this effort. In summary, however, here is the project rationale:

- A set of valid and reliable questions, and for capturing qualitative comment, is more informative to a faculty member with respect to insight on teaching as well as to committees and persons involved in the sense making of such data as one component of teaching performance review.
- A common set of questions across the campus enables helpful psychometric sufficiency to consider such matters as rating bias, nuanced professional development opportunities across the campus, and anonymous compiling of department, college, and university teaching data. This element is of noted importance for our Middle State accreditation review.
- A majority of institutions have moved to an online evaluation process that enables better information security with appropriate safeguards, greater ease of deployment and compiling of data, and the ability to augment with program, department, or college specific questions if needed.

Having had preliminary conversation with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, and the AFT, we are now seeking broader faculty input. Specifically, we are inviting all to review the PowerPoint and for departments to hold a discussion on the draft questions included. At the Faculty Senate Executive Committee's request, they also invite you to review a report I had completed on this topic this past Spring as Administrative Fellow at the Vermont State Colleges System. A set of universal questions drawn from national surveys and studies is found on p. 6. This document will be posted to the Faculty Senate meeting packets link for Dec. 10. We will be asking that Department Chairs, or a departmental designee, submit compiled thoughts by February 20 to Gamin Bartle (bartleg@wpunj.edu). That input (e.g., feedback on specific

questions, other question ideas with universal applicability), and closure consultation with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and the AFT, will result in the finalization of the process and survey questions for an anticipated deployment for Spring 2020 courses if time permits.

Sincerely ~ JP

ADJOURNMENT:

The Faculty and Professional Staff Meeting adjourned at 1:47pm.

The next regular meeting of the Faculty Senate, will be held on Tuesday, January 28th at 12:30pm in Ballroom C.

Respectfully Submitted: Bill Duffy, Secretary

THIS AND OTHER SENATE DOCUMENTS ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE AT:
www.wpunj.edu/senate